

Speech of Honourable Deepak Balgobin Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation

Live Conversation with
Dr Sultan Al Neyadi
Emirati Astronaut onboard the International
Space Station

Mauritius Research and Innovation Council
Mohamed Bin Rashid Space Centre

11th May 2023 at 14.15hrs
Sir Harilall Vaghjee Hall, Government House

- **His Excellency, Eddy Boisezon, Acting President of the Republic of Mauritius,**
- **Honourable Leela Devi Dookun Luchoomun, Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology,**
- **Honourable Members of Parliament present,**
- **His Excellency, Dr Salem AlMarri, Director General of the Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre**
- **Representatives from the Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre,**
- **Dr Kaviraj Sukon, Chairperson of the MRIC,**
- **Professor Theesan Bahorun, Executive Director, MRIC,**
- **Students and Teachers in Mauritius, Rodrigues and Agalega,**
- **Members of the Press,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**
- **All Protocols observed**

Good afternoon.

"The exploration of space will go ahead, whether we join in or not, and it is one of the great adventures of all time, and no nation can expect to stay behind in the race for space."

The words of former US President, John Fitzgerald Kennedy still ring true today.

The exploration of space is not only a scientific endeavour but also a symbol of human curiosity and ingenuity.

It represents our desire to understand our place in the universe and our quest for knowledge and discovery.

But space exploration is not just about technological achievements and scientific discoveries.

It also inspires us to dream big and strive for greatness.

It shows us what we are capable of achieving when we work together and push the boundaries of what is possible.

And it is by working together that this event has been made possible.

My heartfelt thanks to the team from the Mohamed Bin Rashid Space Centre who flew all the way from Dubai to be here today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The year 2021 was a turning point in the history of our country when our first nanosatellite MIRSAT1 was launched, making Mauritius a space faring nation.

This marked the beginning of our space journey.

In January of this year, my Ministry and the MRIC signed a framework agreement with the Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre for collaboration to take Mauritian Space agenda forward.

And today's event is the fruit of this collaboration and the beginning of many more to come.

Through this event, we want to inspire the young generation of Mauritius

- to also dream big,
- to kindle in them the passion for space exploration and science,
- to develop a vision for themselves and our nation.

For the live conversation with the Emirati Astronaut, Dr Sultan Al Neyadi, we have gathered:

- 180 students from 55 educational institutions in Mauritius
- 80 secondary schools' students in Rodrigues Island.
- We are also connected to students from Agalega Island.

My message to all the students who are present here and to those who are online:

The astronaut, Dr Sultan Al Neyadi, with whom a few of you will be speaking to in a few minutes, has spent countless hours training for his mission.

He has demonstrated remarkable courage and dedication, and his work will contribute to the advancement of science.

As college students, you are at a critical point in your lives where you are starting to explore your interests and passions.

Events like this, can serve you as a source of inspiration.

I hope that it will encourage you to pursue your dreams and strive to achieve the impossible.

The conversation you are about to have with Dr Al Neyadi is a testament to the power of Science and Technology to connect us all, regardless of our location or background.

We are privileged to have this opportunity, and I am sure that it will be an unforgettable experience for all of us.

Our wish is that this event will plant the seed for your future career in Space or STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics)

Let us continue to explore space and push the limits of human knowledge and achievement.

And let us embrace the spirit of adventure and curiosity that drives us to explore new frontiers.

Thank You