

Gulf Weekly

The community newspaper at the heart of Bahrain

February 17 - 23, 2021

BAHRAIN.OURS.YOURS.

Vol 20 - Issue 7

www.gulfweekly.com

GDNlife

facebook.com/gulfweeklyonline

gulfweekly

gulfweeklyonline

+973 17299181

Live the *life* with **Gulf Weekly**

The community newspaper at the heart of Bahrain



People • Fashion & Beauty • Home & Interiors • Travel • Shopping • Sports • Leisure • Motoring



COMMUNITY REPORT
By NAMAN ARORA
naman@gulfweekly.com

PASSIONATE pop-culturist Hamad Al Kooheji hopes to secure the world record for the most number of authentic autographs at his special signature museum.

While autographs can trace their history to the first scratched by a scribe on an Iraqi clay tablet circa 2600BC, collectors, known as 'autograph hounds' have seen their numbers grow since the birth of the cinema industry and the advent of the movie star.

Hamad boasts more than 500 autographs but he plans to more than double his collection before applying for a vaunted spot in the Guinness Book of World Records, which does not currently have a set record for 'most number of autographed items.'

"In all the countries I have visited, I have never seen a museum dedicated purely to autographs," the 27-year-old Bahraini collector told *Gulf Weekly*.

"So, with the aim of making Bahrain a hub in the autograph collecting world, I started visiting events in Bahrain, across the region and wherever I went on holiday, to collect a hand-signed autograph ideally alongside my name.

"In addition, wherever I spot an autograph shop, I pick up a few pieces. In particular, I have been working with Hollywood photographer and autograph dealer Michael Medlin who has met countless celebrities during his career and helped me get off to a solid movie start."

A personalised autograph by movie star Michael Fassbender thanking Hamad for flying out to meet the German-Irish actor is the crowning jewel in Hamad's collection.

Marks of a masterpiece



Hamad's autograph from actor Michael Fassbender



Scan the QR code to check out *Gulf Weekly's* interview with Hamad

Hamad has sorted his collection into categories based on cinematic universes and put them on display at his Masterpiece Museum in Riffa.

There are sections devoted to The Godfather, Rocky Balboa, Harry Potter, Marvel Cinematic Universe, Detective Comics (DC) Cinematic Universe, Star Trek, Star Wars, Disney, Game of Thrones, Lord of the Rings and more – covering almost every degree on the popular nerd culture spectrum.

The 'nerdvana', which opened its doors last summer, is unlike

any other museum in the region, as it is also the home of carefully handmade models, LEGO sets and other archetypes of popular cultural phenomenon.

The young Bahraini, who left behind a career in aviation to launch this venture, explained: "I started collecting when I was a child. I was the boy with autographs on my walls and some of the coolest toys, which I kept in their original box in mint condition.

"My friends and family always wanted to see what new items I had in my collection and over time, some of them even kept their own mint-condition action figures and memorabilia with me.

"I started to keep some of these items in storage and when that started filling up, I knew I was ready to found this museum."

An homage to memorabilia, Hamad's collection also inspired him to start creating his own pieces of popular culture – miniature versions of famous statues and landmarks.

He can be found almost every evening curating and creating pieces for his museum, perfecting a centre aimed at attracting, in particular, the younger masses.

Learn more about how Hamad is reusing age-old material to revitalise one of Bahrain's traditional industries. Turn to Page 4.



MASKED IN BAHRAIN
Artistic Initiative
SEE PAGE 2



TRENDY TRADITION
Call for collaboration
SEE PAGE 2



PALETTE OF THE PAST
Colourful history
SEE PAGE 3



FASHION 'PUN-DIT'
Dramatic draping
SEE PAGE 5

Masking together

ART REPORT
By MAI AL KHATIB-CAMILLE
mai.alkhatib@gulfweekly.com

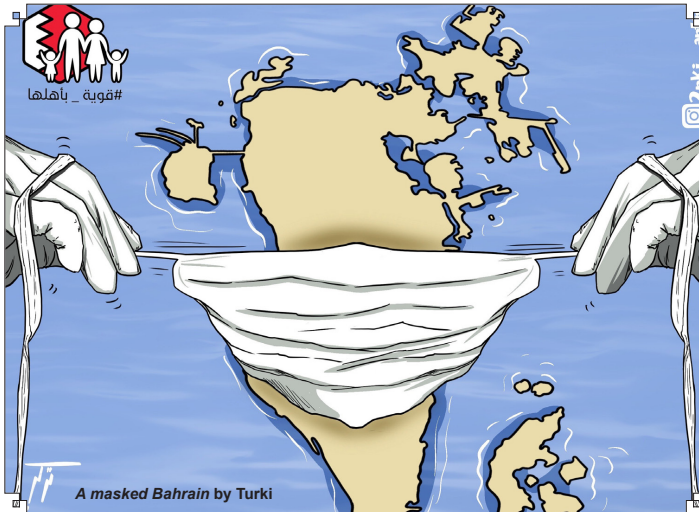
BAHRAINI artists from across the kingdom have taken to social media posting colourful illustrations of themselves in masks in a bid to raise awareness about staying committed to combatting the spread of Covid-19.

For the past week, sites have been inundated with images of Bahraini cartoonists, artists, graphic designers and illustrators in artsy form to draw attention on the spike in Covid-19 cases and to remind people to stay safe and responsible.

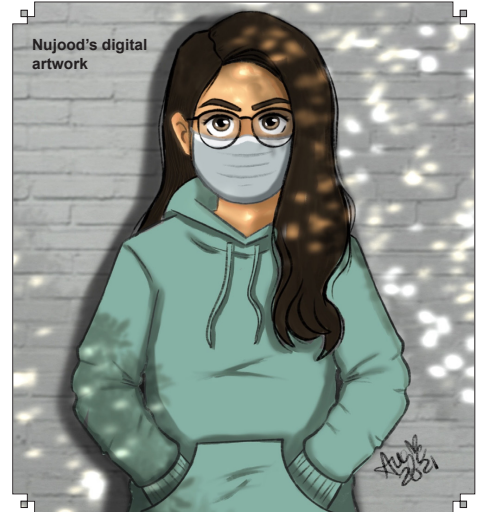
Graphic designer Nujood Al Mahmood came up with the idea to rally around 30 other like-minded creative individuals to join the artistic campaign called Artists #commit4Bahrain.

"The numbers of cases are increasing and I thought since the danger is there, I wanted to remind people to remain cautious by wearing a mask and staying as safe as possible," said the 31-year-old, from Muharraq who is a directing assistant of Watani children's magazine.

"I hope all our artistic illustrations will trend on social media making it viral in order to reach a larger audience. Our



A masked Bahrain by Turki



Nujood's digital artwork



Nujood

aim is to make a difference. Maybe with more people seeing the masks it will make them more committed to the cause."

Earlier this week, as reported by our sister newspaper, the GDN, health promotion director Dr Wafa Al Sharbati underlined the importance of adhering to precautionary measures to combat the

spread of Covid-19, calling it a 'national duty'.

"The current phase requires more commitment to ensure the safety of the entire community – especially the elderly and those

with chronic illnesses," she warned.

As of last week, there were 4,812 confirmed cases and the average number of Covid-19 cases per day increased to 687.41 from 506 cases a day registered the previous week.

Nujood, who used digital art to create her illustration, added: "Anyone can join our artistic campaign and they can use whatever medium they'd like, be it digital art, traditional art or a normal selfie in a mask."

"The aim is to get people posting and sharing so that others will be reminded of our national duty to care for one another. "They can post for a week or as long as they want. The goal is to spread awareness. Remember, please wear your mask, wash your hands and keep social distancing. "I'd like to thank all



Zahra's artwork

the artists and people participating as it showcases that we aren't alone, we are all in this together!"

Self-taught artist and cartoonist Turki Rashid Yaqoob, created a few digital artworks for the creative campaign. "Art is a message that can reach everyone in

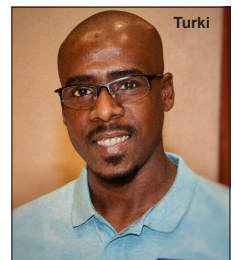
the simplest way to educate people," said the 36-year-old from Hamad Town, who has been a cartoonist for five years. "Your drawing doesn't have to be perfect; the main goal is the idea behind it. Let's show that as Bahraini artists we can make a difference."

Freelance artist and graphic designer Zahra Awadh was also more than happy to participate. The 24-year-old from Muharraq, who graduated from Bahrain Polytechnic with a visual design

degree, said: "I hope people take safety measures more seriously and understand that they can live their daily lives while being safe especially for the sake of their families and loved ones. We can still have fun but we must stay safe at all times. Safety comes first, always!"



Zahra



Turki

Freelance illustrator Mahmood Al Khaja, 34, used digital art as well to create his artistic awareness piece and promotes safety during the pandemic.



Mahmood in digital art form

'Made in Bahrain' push

Designers are being urged by the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities (Baca) to collaborate with local artisans to help create more 'Made in Bahrain' products, writes Mai Al-Khatib-Camille.

There are also plans to host workshops for art lovers to join in the fun once it is safe to do so, post the pandemic.

Shaikha Hala bint Mohammed Al Khalifa, Baca's director-general of arts and culture, said: "We are opening the doors for designers and artisans in Bahrain to share with us their proposals on



Shaikha Hala

what they'd like to produce in collaboration with the craftsmen at Al Jasra Handicraft Centre. "And, when the Covid-19 situation is under control, we will introduce workshops

conducted by the craftsmen of the centre themselves, with a small fee to cover the cost of materials.

"The audience will be able to learn about the history of the craft, about the materials and equipment used and the basic skills needed to make an object."

Having launched last December, the 'Made in Bahrain' initiative stresses the significance of handicraft products as integral to Bahrain's identity and culture.

These new lines of products aim to expand the potential audience base, increase interest in Bahraini traditional crafts and raises awareness

regionally, locally and globally.

"The proposals will be discussed with a committee of team members and advisors," added Shouq Al-Alawi, curator and head of visual arts at Baca.

"The products have to be unique and designed by the participants. Bahraini crafts have to be highlighted and collaboration with the craftsmen is highly encouraged."

"We will be in touch with the designers to then workout the best production method and pricing. The designer fee will be included in the price of the item and authorship will be recognised. "Products can vary



Al Jasra Handicraft Centre gift shop

from household items to accessories, gift items, souvenirs, beauty products, collectibles, furniture, jewellery, etc."

'Made in Bahrain' was the brainchild of Shaikha Mai bint Mohammed Al Khalifa,

Baca president.

People can apply by visiting www.culture.gov.bh.

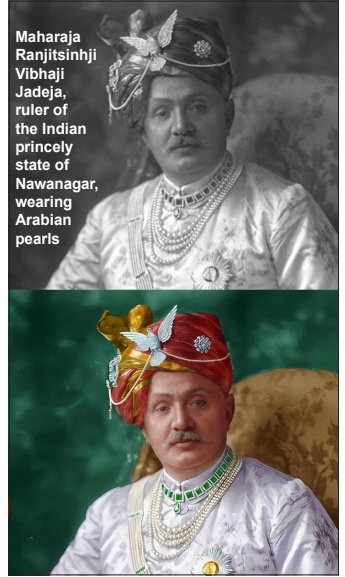
To find out about 'Made in Bahrain' connect via email madeinbahrain@culture.gov.bh or follow @culture_madeinbahrain on Instagram.



Hakim of Bahrain Shaikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, photographed on his arrival at Folkestone, UK



His Majesty King Hamad, aged 14, Crown Prince and designated heir apparent at the time of this photo in June 1964



Maharaja Ranjitsinhji Vibhaji Jadeja, ruler of the Indian princely state of Nawanagar, wearing Arabian pearls

The hue of history

HERITAGE REPORT
By NAMAN ARORA
naman@gulfweekly.com

A Bahraini history buff is adding colour to the pages of history by recolouring old photographs, of Bahraini royals, notable figures as well as scenes dating back nearly a century.

Firas Al-Obaidly has been spending time during the Covid-19 pandemic leafing through his archive of old black-and-white photographs and recolouring those that caught his eye, after carrying out extensive research.

"I have always been a bit of a history junkie and I was fascinated with what the photos I have in my archive would look like in colour," the 30-year-old architectural engineer told *GulfWeekly*.

"Architecture is linked to art and keeping up with the latest graphic design tools and applications helped me develop the skills for this undertaking."

"It started with an old family photograph which had been partially damaged due to extensive sun exposure. During the lockdown, I had a bit of free time so I started to explore the possibilities of repairing that photo, and quickly the project grew bigger as I got a positive response on social media."

"Descendants of some of the figures featured in the images I shared have contacted me thanking me for restoring the photos and sharing a bit of history with my followers."

While recolouring a photo may seem like a simple



From left, the late premier HRH Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa with the late Amir Shaikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa. Photograph taken in Bahrain circa 1960s

process given the technology we have access to these days, each of Firas' pictures is akin to taking a deep dive into that historical moment.

The history buff researches each image, finding reference pictures and scouring through historical collections

to find the exact colours for each uniform, garment and accessory.

When he started, it would take him more than six hours to colour an image because he had no reference or idea of garment, skin or eye colours, but as he has

gotten better versed in the minute details of history, his workflow has sharpened as well.

Citing examples of recent work, Firas explained: "I recently coloured a photograph of Shaikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, past ruler



and Hakim of Bahrain. To find the accurate colours,

"I took a look at the garments in the photos which are displayed at the museum and some garments I recognised from the looks of the texture of the black-and-white photos."

"In a photo of British Intelligence Officer, Thomas Edward Lawrence, better known as Lawrence of Arabia, he was wearing a World War I officer uniform and there are websites dedicated to preserving records and pictures of those uniform colours. Sometimes there's even a palette and colour name."

"After the colouring comes the enhancing process which is harder because you want to enhance it without destroying the quality of the photo because there's always a limit in enhancement or depixelation."

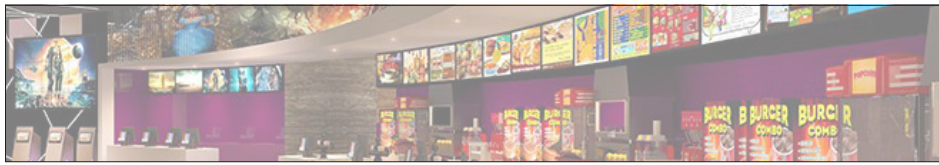
Alongside each image, Firas also shares lesser known vignettes from Bahrain's history to explain the context of the photograph, getting his information from a wide variety of primary and secondary historical sources.

Recently, the artist has also been exploring ties to Bahrain in the histories of neighbouring regions.

He cited the example of a recently recoloured photo of Maharaja Ranjitsinhji Vibhaji Jadeja, who is seen wearing pearls from the Gulf region, highly sought after by Indian royalty.

While this is just a new hobby for now, the photo artist, who is camera-shy himself, is eager to see if he can display his pieces in an exhibition once the pandemic is done.

Follow @firas.ii on Instagram for more details.



Culture

Maverick of marv



COMMUNITY REPORT
By NAMAN ARORA
naman@gulfweekly.com

WHEN he is not busy curating his 500-strong and growing autograph collection, memorabilia maverick Hamad Al Koheji is busy moulding an alternative future for Bahrain's clay industry with his handmade statues.

The young Bahraini creator from Riffa has been putting a little piece of his own heritage into each pop culture miniature using raw materials from the area known for its high-quality and easily malleable clay.

"The pottery industry that has emerged from the readily available clay in Bahrain dates back thousands of years, but, of course, in this day and age, we don't really use many clay-based utensils," Hamad explained.

"So, when I started creating miniatures of large existing statues, I thought to myself, let's use the same clay to create something different – same material, but a new form."

To date, Hamad has created miniature versions of the effigies of Michael Jackson, Harry Potter, Muhammad Ali and Elvis Presley, to



From left, miniatures of Muhammad Ali, Shaikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan (founding father of the UAE) and Michael Jackson



Hamad

name a few.

Each miniature takes five to six days to complete, starting with thorough research of the original larger statue. The clay artist gets images of the sculpture from every angle.

When he was able to travel pre-Covid, he got these in person but now, by and large, he relies on internet research.

After getting the images and creating a 3D model in his mind's eye, he starts shaping the figures layer-by-layer, a gargantuan task since he has to know when to take a break, let the clay dry and come back to it the next day.

He uses scalpels and knives to accentuate deeper details in each piece and when done, he paints over them using a metallic or coloured paint.

"For me, when I started the Masterpiece Museum, I wanted to create a place where people can learn everything about a famous character or personality in one place, without solely relying on the internet and the statue is just another way to engage with the celebrity," Hamad explained.

"Each one of my statues is an homage to a collection I already have. So, for example, I have a lot of Harry Potter autographs, LEGO models and collectibles, so I created a miniature version of the young wizard's statue in Leicester Square in London, UK."

Beyond the miniature statues sprinkled amongst his museum of memorabilia, Hamad, who has been fascinated with miniature versions of icons since childhood, has also been trying to preserve aspects of Bahrain's architecture

Hamad's miniature of the Harry Potter statue



Harry Potter statue in London

and large-scale art with his miniatures.

He created a wooden model of the famous clock tower in Riffa to forever preserve its memory. The easily-recognisable tower has been the subject of much debate recently as the Southern Municipal Council approved a plan to revamp roads in that area and potentially move the iconic building.

No matter how successful that is, Hamad has his own miniature version of the tower and wants to start working on some of the sculptures dotted across the kingdom.

"It's not always possible for

people to appreciate every angle of a large sculpture especially when they are just passing by so by creating these miniatures, I am hoping that people take some time to appreciate the artistic talent that Bahrain has to offer in a more digestible size," Hamad explained.

"For example, I have been hoping to do the nearly 40-year-old falcon statue in Muharraq which may not always get the attention it deserves because people just drive by it. But in this museum setting, people can take time to appreciate its beauty."

As his autograph collection grows, so will his miniature portfolio, and with each lump of clay, this young Bahraini artist blends a bit of



Captain Waleed



Jawad

EXPANDING HORIZONS

A direct flight route from Bahrain to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and deeper economic ties were discussed during a recent visit to Gulf Air by the Bahrain Bosnia and Herzegovina for Friendship and Business Society.

Bahrain's national carrier's acting chief executive Captain Waleed Al Alawi and the society's chairman Jawad Al Hawaj discussed the tourism and business ties between

the two countries as well as ways to enhance this relationship in the near future.

Over the years, increasing numbers of GCC tourists have travelled to the Federal Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina for leisure and medical tourism, in addition to expanding their real estate businesses. The society hopes that a direct flight route between Manama and Sarajevo will also attract seasonal charter travel.

Weekly

vels



Riffa Clock Tower miniature



'Bahrainia' with the global 'nerdvana' zeitgeist. For details, follow @masterpiece.museum on Instagram.



Chrissy wearing her Santa Claws t-shirt while ripping through presents



Chrissy and her dogs Poppy and Sophie

Gift of laughter

A Bahrain-based resident is giving the gift of laughter to fashion lovers across the kingdom with an array of humorous hoodies and rib-tickling tops.

Pun Love BH was born during the pandemic when South Korean Chrissy Kim, a provider of virtual assistant services in the kingdom, wanted to brighten up days working at home with comfy lounge wear that said something.

"The idea came about because of the prolonged working from home period," said Chrissy the founder of Kim Admin Solutions. "We no longer needed to wear formal clothes and instead started wearing casual lounge wear."

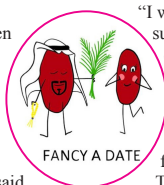
"Although I spotted fashionable hoodies and sweatshirts with fun prints on them online, there were none with embroidery or puns! "One needs to find a chuckle here and there to keep the spirit up during this Covid-19 pandemic. That's how the concept of 'punny' casual wear started and I hope to position the brand as a 'unique conversation starter' casual wear."

She then set out to create a collection of puns she could be proud of and people would be pleased to wear. She said: "I have a little book of puns whenever inspiration hits and, who knows, maybe I will publish a little booklet of puns in the future! Once your brain is on pun-mode, it's a little difficult to get puns out of your head."

Her first collection was created

FASHION REPORT
By MAI AL KHATIB-CAMILLE
mai.alkhatib@gulfweekly.com

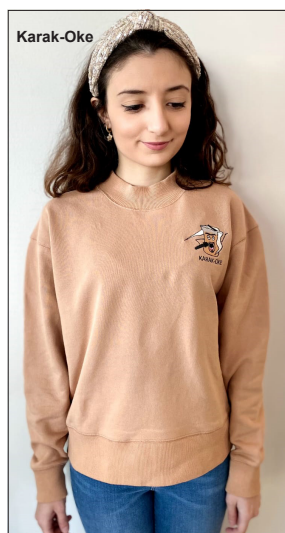
last year for Christmas featuring puns such as 'Santa Paws' and 'Santa Claws', 'Hap-Pea Holidays' and 'Have a Berry Christmas'.



A design for the Valentine's line

"I was delighted at the success of the first collection," she added. "I even had customers in London, during the pandemic, wearing the lovely hoodies in time for the festive season." The 2021 collection consists of six designs – 'You Mocha Me Crazy', 'Peas On Earth', 'You're One In A Melon', 'Karak-Oke', 'Donut Worry' and 'We Make A Nice Pear'.

St Valentine's Day on Sunday was



Karak-Oke

celebrated with a limited edition featuring sweet puns such as 'Fancy a Date' with an image of a male date giving a palm leaf as a bouquet of flowers to the female date.

As the weather gets warmer, she aims to add cotton T-shirts to the mix alongside the popular fleece-lined unisex hoodies.

All the embroidery artwork is hand drawn by an artistic friend, who wished to remain anonymous, and then transferred as an embroidered design to be hand-stitched by tailors.

"I can proudly say that our brand is 100 percent #Made in Bahrain, including the concept, design and tags, select hoodies and sweatshirts and, of course, the entire production," the Amwaj Islands resident explained.

"Our next summer collection designs will feature more Bahrain-related puns and artwork. In 'Karak-Oke' and the Valentine's designs, I have included what I believe is 'Bahrain'. For example, one of the upcoming designs will feature a hammour as an 'I Ha-amour you' pun."

Chrissy is also planning on offering greeting cards using her fashion-wear designs.

"I'm also thinking of creating children's clothing and matching family sets," she added. "I am keen to collaborate with individuals or organisations for a good cause as well and also to support charities by designing special artworks and puns. A while ago, we read an article of a resident in Bahrain raising awareness for marine life. As an example, we'd love to create a pun for that project to help raise awareness!"

Follow @pun.love.bh on Instagram for more details.



We make a nice pear



You're one in a melon

DELL | EMC²

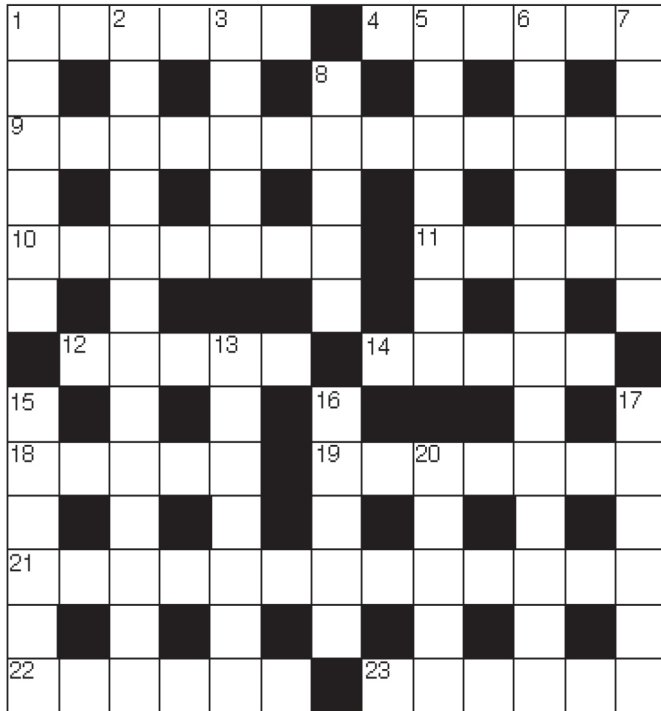
Service Partner



Hilal Computers Tel: 1729 3749 ext 2220

cerebrally crust & crema

crossword break



Solutions in next week's issue.

ACROSS

1. Most broad (6)
4. Mollycoddle (6)
9. Unintentionally (13)
10. Outstanding (7)
11. Sea (5)
12. Horrify (5)
14. Fables (5)
18. Topic (5)
19. Fend off (7)
21. Official (13)
22. Slumbering (6)
23. Association (6)

DOWN

1. Caprice (6)
2. Evolutionary (13)
3. Ointment (5)
5. Rhetoric (7)
6. Frightening (5-8)
7. Wearisome (6)
8. Fuse (5)
13. Dreadful (7)
15. Layers (6)
16. Corn (5)
17. Ebb (6)
20. Put (5)

who, what, where, when

WHO ... wrote the volumes of poetry *I Found This Shirt* and *Perfect Catch*?

WHAT ... is the capital of Gauteng province, South Africa?

WHERE ... did Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen graduate from with a Fine Art Honours degree in 1986?

WHEN ... was Fidel Castro born?

WHO ... won the men's marathon gold medal at the 1986 European Championships?

WHAT ... is the nickname of the character John Denham in the television series *Casualty*?

WHERE ... in South America is Lake Arapa?

WHEN ... did Leo Sayer have a No 1 single in the UK with *When I Need You*?

just so

£ back

b fruit & X

10p

phrase

10p



darn tough sudoku

So you think you're good enough at Sudoku to crack this baby? Remember, we were the first in the Gulf to bring you this bit of Japanese mayhem...so we don't kid around

Last week's sudoku

7	9	1	2	4	8	6	3	5
2	8	3	6	9	5	7	1	4
5	6	4	7	3	1	9	2	8
3	2	9	4	8	7	1	5	6
1	5	8	3	2	6	4	9	7
4	7	6	5	1	9	2	8	3
8	4	5	1	7	2	3	6	9
6	3	2	9	5	4	8	7	1
9	1	7	8	6	3	5	4	2

7	2	4	1	9	5	8	6	3
5	6	1	2	8	3	4	9	7
9	3	8	6	4	7	2	5	1
1	8	9	7	5	6	3	2	4
2	5	6	3	1	4	7	8	9
4	7	3	9	2	8	6	1	5
6	4	5	8	3	9	1	7	2
8	9	2	4	7	1	5	3	6
3	1	7	5	6	2	9	4	8

darn tough sudoku

5	6	9	8	4	2	1	7	3
8	7	3	1	6	5	2	4	9
4	1	2	9	7	3	5	8	6
9	2	6	4	1	8	7	3	5
7	8	5	3	2	6	9	1	4
3	4	1	7	5	9	8	6	2
1	9	7	5	3	4	6	2	8
2	3	8	6	9	1	4	5	7
6	5	4	2	8	7	3	9	1

Sudoku

	1		8		2			
	4			1			6	3
		9			4	2		
7		1			3			8
	2		6	7			5	
6						3		2
		6	1			4		
8	5			2			1	7
			5	9		3		

Sudoku

			8				4	6
6				3		1		
	8	1	9	6				
1				8	7	2		
	5	8				6		4
		6	4	5				7
				4	8	3	9	
8		9						1
5			2	3				

Last Week's Leisure Solutions

CROSSWORD BREAK:

Across: 1 Psychiatrist; 7 Spent; 8 Polar; 9 Ode; 10 Senseless; 11 Defame; 12 Vendor; 15 Recollect; 17 Top; 18 Thorn; 19 Alter; 21 Interruption.

Down: 1 Preponderate; 2 Hue; 3 Acting; 4 Represent; 5 Solve; 6 Proscription; 7 Shelf; 10 Semblance; 13 Deter; 14 Repair; 16 Clown; 20 Tip.

JUST SO:

The morning after the night before, Point of no return, Sinking heart, It's all over. WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN: Graham Greene; David Blunkett; Bangladesh; 1956; Red, blue, orange; On the Zambezi River between Zambia and Zimbabwe; February 11th.

Darn Tough Sudoku

			1		4			
		5	9		8	7		
	1						6	
2		4				3		6
6		1			4			5
	8						2	
		6	7		1	9		
			4		5			

MotoringWeekly

The top motoring and motorsport news

Wheels of success

THIS is a momentous year for Jeep as the off-roading mean machine marks its 80th birthday with the launch of a special series.

The '80th Anniversary' collection, which will be available throughout 2021 in Europe, Middle



MOTORING REPORT
By MAI AL KHATIB-CAMILLE
mai.alkhatib@gulfweekly.com

East and Africa (EMEA), will celebrate the brands eight decades of 4x4 leadership, open-air freedom and adventure.

Each model will be based on the best-selling variant including limited-edition models on Renegade,

Compass, Wrangler and Gladiator.

The first from the limited collection to debut will be the Renegade, which is already available at Jeep dealerships across Europe. Compass, Wrangler and Gladiator anniversary series will arrive in spring.

All of these models will boast the '80th

Anniversary' badging enriched by low-gloss Granite Crystal accents; diamond-pattern cloth seats with tungsten stitching and an '80th Anniversary' logo; interior high-gloss black accents and logo tag on seats and mats. Dedicated alloy wheels complete the exterior look of the new commemorative models.

The 4x4's will also be packed full of advanced technology and safety features. New high-tech content includes 8.4- to 10.1-inch touchscreens, DAB radio and navigation with smartphone integration and Uconnect services, full LED pack and new 'Since 1941' infotainment system screen

as the brand began that year with the first ever mass-produced 4x4, the Willys MB.

The other models will be launched throughout the year.

Further information on the special-edition models will be available on <http://www.media.fcaemea.com/em-en/jeep>



FintechFocus

An innovative approach to saving

The first-of-its-kind Arab Household Long-term Savings Conference is set to be staged in Bahrain in May, with a focus on financial

resilience and asset-building for families, writes Naman Arora.

The event, organised by FinTech Robos, aims to increase awareness on both the need to save, as well as increase knowledge

solutions offered by the financial industry, plus highlighting global innovation.

"Several reports by reputed consultancy groups almost

unanimously point to the fact that at least one third of people in MENA do not save any money, two thirds of people do not save enough or regularly, and close

80 per cent of people say they don't feel confident about their financial future," said Ebrahim K Ebrahim, chief executive of FinTech Robos.

"There's a direct relationship between household savings ratios and a healthy economy, and between household savings ratios and future social security.

"If savings is key to a healthy economy, then it must be reasonably high and sustainable



if any region is to fulfil its potential for higher real income and greater standard of living."

Leaders from regional banks, wealth management companies and economic think tanks are

set to speak at the event, which will be live streamed on May 25 and 26.

The conference will also highlight how digital challengers and FinTech firms are creating

new products and questioning paradigms of existing investment tools and vehicles.

These FinTech companies are under a new light as Bahrain has been recognised for its efforts to become a FinTech hub in the region by taking a country-wide approach to FinTech development and promotion, with the Central Bank of Bahrain overseeing the financial services sector.

The conference comes as the kingdom refocuses on its Economic Vision 2030 moving towards a private-sector-led economy, projecting to grow by 2.7pc in 2021, and recovering from a 4.2pc contraction in 2020, primarily due to the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on Bahrain's tourism sector.



Ebrahim

DELL | EMC²

Service Partner



Hilal Computers Tel: 1729 3749 ext 2220

GulfWeekly

SPORT

210 fils (includes VAT)
Gulf Weekly EAN



www.gulfweekly.com

TOP OF THE LEAGUE FOR LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL SPORT

February 17 - 23, 2021

Hardly pitch perfect

VOICE OF SPORT

By ABU GEORGE

CRICKET is high on the agenda and a Test-match series involving India always has keyboards humming.

The level of spin extracted and the manner in which the ball broke through the surface during the first two Test matches between India and England in Chennai has led some expatriates in Bahrain to claim that it is not fit to host a game of this magnitude.

Defenders of the groundstaff will point to opener Rohit Sharma's magnificent century although he rode his luck on multiple occasions. However, England were given a stark reminder of the challenge of touring India with its dusty pitch already showing sharp turn and some uneven bounce.

This has seen the argument return about the extent to which teams should be permitted to doctor pitches to their own needs and skills. Of course, this is an age-old debate.

The West Indies feared pacemen including 'Whispering death' Michael Holding, Malcolm Marshall, Curtley Ambrose and Joel Garner were never going to be asked to bowl on a slow turner. Similarly, with Muralitharan and Mendis to call upon Sri Lanka was hardly likely to produce a lifeless wicket.

With Shane Warne in the side Australia was far more willing to prepare wickets that deteriorated on the third day. Climatic conditions naturally play a part and influence the cricket played.

Typically wet and windy conditions in Auckland or Manchester generate generations of fast bowlers. Of course this, in turn, develops national mind-frames and skillsets. It would be surprising if any of England's current spin options would make it into a 50-man development squad in India.

Ironically, income to cricket from increased viewer levels



Sharma hits a six en route to his hundred

(both on TV and in the stadium) has played a part in neutralising one-sided home cricketing conditions. The need to facilitate games that finish on the fourth or (better still) fifth day has increased to maximise revenues. Simply put, the quicker the result, the less money is earned!

Such arguments can develop even within a country. England's county championship introduced an 'uncontested toss' allowing the visiting side to choose to bat or bowl. This arose from arguments that counties were producing unfair wickets. Ironically, this has now been scrapped in favour of penalising sides simply for producing poor pitches as the difference was intangible.

Historical comparisons

between successful touring nations is complicated as neutral Test umpires were only introduced in 1994 (one per Test) while in 2002 this was increased to include both ends. Unsurprisingly, a Harvard review conducted in 2018 found that neutral umpires reduced the number

of erroneous decisions made against a touring team while also treating the home side less leniently (by as much as 30 per cent).

The Pandora's box of neutral umpires has also unfortunately come to the fore in this Test.

Three controversial and incorrect Third Umpire

reviews has renewed the importance of impartiality, although given this is Anil Chaudhary's first 'day on the job' perhaps he can be forgiven the odd error. His decisions are unlikely to have affected the outcome of this match.

Jack Leach, one of the England bowlers that would have benefitted from an additional wicket, likened these decisions to football's VAR. Paul Collingwood, England's assistant coach simply questioned the host nation's camera operators, Star Sports' inability to provide Chaudhary with sufficient TV footage for the first stumping decision.

It is a little unfair to judge India's groundsmen on this one Test. England proved on

the first that they can win on a turning wicket if they win the toss. India won the toss this time. These are also unusual times. Before Covid-19, fixtures would never be played on the same ground twice in succession. For safety and logistical reasons this is the new normal. Wickets can be temperamental at the best of times yet to play on one that has been exposed and played on (indirectly) the week before means some leeway has to be given.

The pandemic has changed much in the world. Even the flawed means of determining the finalists has been adversely distorted by the decision made by the ICC's Executive Committee to make calculations based on a percentage basis in a myopic attempt to balance the effects of Covid-19.

Of course, all this discussion about tailored wickets falls a little, well, flat, here in Bahrain. Exclusively forced to play on concrete based astro-turfed wickets it is the only country in the GCC without natural turf. It's a fact not lost on Bahrain's national coach and game development manager, Azeem Ul Haque, who told *GulfWeekly* he believes it places Bahrain teams at a huge disadvantage while playing overseas. This is one of the reasons that Cricket Bahrain last week hosted an ICC Curator's Workshop with plans underway to introduce the first turf pitch to the kingdom.

This will be vitally important to the future performance of national sides participating in international competition. Ul Haque added: "Every player growing up in a different cricketing culture automatically mentally and physically - through muscle memory - adapts to those conditions".

Yet, as Ul Haque points out, 'different conditions and varying styles demonstrate the ability of the individual and the team to adapt and cope'.

"That's the beauty of cricket," he said.



England captain Joe Root celebrates his double hundred in the first Test