

Recipes for world peace!



CRYPTIC CROSSROADS
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Bahrain at Dakar
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ICE ICE BABY
National Ice Hockey
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COMMUNITY REPORT
By NAMAN ARORA
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BAHRAIN-BASED chef and food consultant Faisal Aldeigan is joining hands with 11 Michelin-starred chefs to share their culinary creations and raise awareness about reducing world hunger.

The #CookingforWorldPeace initiative brings together 12 chefs, with 24 Michelin stars between them, including David Toutain and Claude Bosi from France, Atul Kochhar from India, Franck Giovannini from Switzerland and Jan Hendrick van der Westhuizen from South Africa.

Each chef is offering up one of their unique recipes to raise awareness and funds for the United Nations' World Food Programme 'Share the Meal', which was awarded the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize.

"We are hoping to donate 10,000 meals to the programme, focusing especially on children in Jordan, where hunger has become a critical issue," Chef Faisal, 38, explained to *GulfWeekly*.

The Saudi-born chef, who has called Bahrain his home for the last



Chef Faisal's Choco Beef Burger

Chef Faisal

22 years, has offered up his recipe for a Choco Beef Burger.

Meanwhile, Chef David contributed his favourite recipe for Mushroom Soup, Chef Claude gave some tips for Cornish Turbot a La Grenobloise and Chef Franck offered up the secrets of how to make delicate Green Asparagus Royale soup.

Chef Faisal's latest endeavour is the cherry on top of a rich tapestry of culinary experience which, although only five years old, has encompassed more than 50 clients and 7,000 recipes.

Cooking was not his first passion – in fact, he only came around to it, after more than a decade in banking. He holds a Bachelor of Science

The Cooking for World Peace Initiative launched by 12 chefs



degree and a Master's in Business Administration from the New York Institute of Technology.

During his banking stint, Chef Faisal started to take culinary courses across Europe and then made the leap into becoming a restaurateur.

He soon found that with his business background, he enjoyed the consultancy side of the business more. Although at one point he

owned six restaurants, he decided to delve into menu engineering and helping other restaurants market their brands.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, despite facing initial turmoil, he found a niche amongst cloud kitchens, helping brands in Bahrain, the UAE and Saudi Arabia get discovered by customers in an increasingly competitive delivery world.

"My journey in food was not very nice in the beginning, but it turned out to be nice," he said.

"I went through a lot of experience; a lot of failures; I lost money. That experience taught me a lot.

"There was a lot of negativity coming to me. I was almost afraid, to be honest. There were challenges and difficulties; a lot of pain. But coming after that, a successful story."

Visit www.cookingforworldpeace.org for more details about the Cooking for World Peace initiative.

To learn more about Chef Faisal's niche, turn to Page 2.



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Chef Faisal



Chef Faisal with his team

Food from the cloud!

GOURMET REPORT
By NAMAN ARORA
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CLOUD kitchens may have been around for a while, but they've taken centre-stage during the Covid-19 pandemic, as eateries struggle to stand out in a competitive and quickly evolving foodscape, according to a top culinary consultant in the kingdom.

The kitchen of yesteryear usually serviced one brand or restaurant, but many different business models are emerging during the pandemic.

This includes restaurants launching multiple brands operating out of a single kitchen, start-ups 'renting' space in established kitchens and existing restaurant brands offering delivery out of white-label ministry-approved kitchens.

Ultimately, the business models are in response to quickly shifting consumer tastes.



The risotto ball, dissected



Plating... a lost art in the era of delivery but one which Chef Faisal is still passionate about



Bahraini tuna risotto balls to cater to local palates

"In the past, restaurants used to be a one-for-all, as in you would have multiple different cuisines under one roof, but today, customers look for specialisation," Chef Faisal, 38, added.

"Now, when a client comes to me, I tell them to

specialise – for example, a brand focusing on just beef burgers is more likely to succeed than a new restaurant trying to be a one-stop shop."

This change in tastes comes as delivery has become the preferred method for dining out, and customers no longer feel limited by the choices of a single restaurant.

A group of five friends, for example, can order from up to five different specialised restaurants, based on what they are feeling like eating, instead of all ordering from the one place.

In response, established restaurants are also responding by creating multiple brands catering to different niches within their menu. According to Chef Faisal who operates an eponymous consultancy that helps food

brands stand out, some restaurants have created as many as 16 marques operating out of a central kitchen.

Other established brands are servicing multiple parts of the kingdom with delivery-only kitchens.

Meanwhile, start-ups are foregoing the hassle and expenses like rent and capital expenditures like equipment by utilising space in existing commercial kitchens during their off period.

"The key today is to have dishes that can easily be standardised – so simple but delicious is the key to success, but you also have to consider things like portability," Chef Faisal explained, while treating the *GulfWeekly* team to a quick lunch at his 'food lab' in Saar.

"As more and more people order through Talabat, diners have changed their decision-making process. Instead of location, they look for the

best restaurant serving their cuisine of choice, and in Bahrain especially, making a good first impression and maintaining consistency is key to success."

Chef Faisal sees localised

In the past, restaurants used to be a one-for-all, as in you would have multiple different cuisines under one roof, but today, customers look for specialisation

brands being better-suited for success instead of international ones, as they can adapt to local tastes.

While he does respect the roots of food, in particular

Italian cuisine which was his first culinary love, he also appreciates the importance of adapting to a local cuisine.

"For example, Bahrainis love grills and in particular, enjoy the flavours of black lemon, while Saudis lean towards meat and rice, with a different spice mix, leaning towards cumin, coriander, cardamom and turmeric," the Saudi chef, who is a member of the World Master Chefs Society, added.

Chef Faisal has worked with more than 50 brands in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE. He has also created more than 7,000 recipes.

Most recently, he has been working with a burger concept in Bahrain which is set to open its doors in the next couple of months, and another in Riyadh, which has grown under his tutelage from one to more than 30 locations.

Follow @cheffaisalco on Instagram for details.

Cryptic challenge!

COMMUNITY REPORT
By NAMAN ARORA
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EXCEPTIONAL 'enigmatologist' Sowmya Ramkumar has published her third book of crosswords and is eager to see more people turn to the hobby during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Enigmatology – the study and design of puzzles – and especially cryptic crosswords have enamoured Sowmya, better known as Hypatia in the crossword circles, for the last nine years.

Her third book, *Cryptic Crossroads – Volume 3*, is comprised of puzzles made exclusively for Gridfest, a month-long carnival of cryptic crosswords which took place from August 16 to September 19 last year.

“It features 26 crosswords, detailed explanations as well as insights from the compilers,” the ex-banker, financial consultant and long-time resident of Bahrain explained.

“Some are themed around the books of authors such as Agatha Christie, PG Wodehouse and Christopher Paolini. There are also puzzles themed around the Olympics, global warming and movies, to name a few. A few puzzles have been built like mini games and have secret messages and Easter eggs buried in them, waiting to be discovered by the solvers.

“All the puzzles were made exclusively for the Gridfest and this compilation, and have not been published before. The puzzles range in difficulty from easy to excruciating!

“The book comes with solutions and explanations



Sowmya

for each puzzle which makes it possible for even relatively new solvers to try and understand how they work.”

During Gridfest, 143 registered contestants took part, solving 25 puzzles – one a day. There were two main categories of prizes – solvers and the crossword setters.

Within the paper and electronic copies of the book are links to solving each crossword interactively.

With puzzles set by 30 settlers including Eclogue, Bingo, Afterdark, Dr.X, Kriskross, Avatar and of course, Hypatia herself, the book promises challenges for the veterans, while also introducing aspiring puzzle masters to the hobby.

Crossword setters from India, the UK, US, Australia, Germany and Thailand came together, including a celebrated Bollywood cinematographer, two medical professionals, a

college professor, a US-based high school math teacher, entrepreneurs and graduates fresh out of highly rated business schools.

“Although women are generally under-represented in puzzling, I am particularly proud that 11 out of the 30 setters are ladies,” noted Sowmya.

In addition, the cover has been designed by Apoorva Sethuraman, a former St. Christophers school pupil, who holds a degree in architecture and is currently pursuing her Masters at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in the US.

Cryptic Crossroads – Volume 3 has already attracted the eye of titans in the crossword universe including Will Shortz, crossword puzzle editor for *The New York Times* and the only person known to hold a college degree in enigmatology.

Sowmya hopes that her latest book draws even more people into the niche world of cryptic crosswords, which add a layer of puzzle-solving to the linguistic art.

To explain, she adds: “While non-cryptic crosswords generally rely on knowledge of pop-culture and trivia, cryptic crosswords are a whole different ball game. Learning the rules is like learning a new language and the joy of cracking even a few clues can be quite unparalleled.

“For example, there is a book titled “Pretty girl in crimson rose (8)” by Sandy Balfour.

“This is a cryptic clue in itself. The answer has eight letters, as indicated in brackets. While a casual

reader might imagine a girl wearing a rose, the cryptic solver knows that nothing is what it seems.

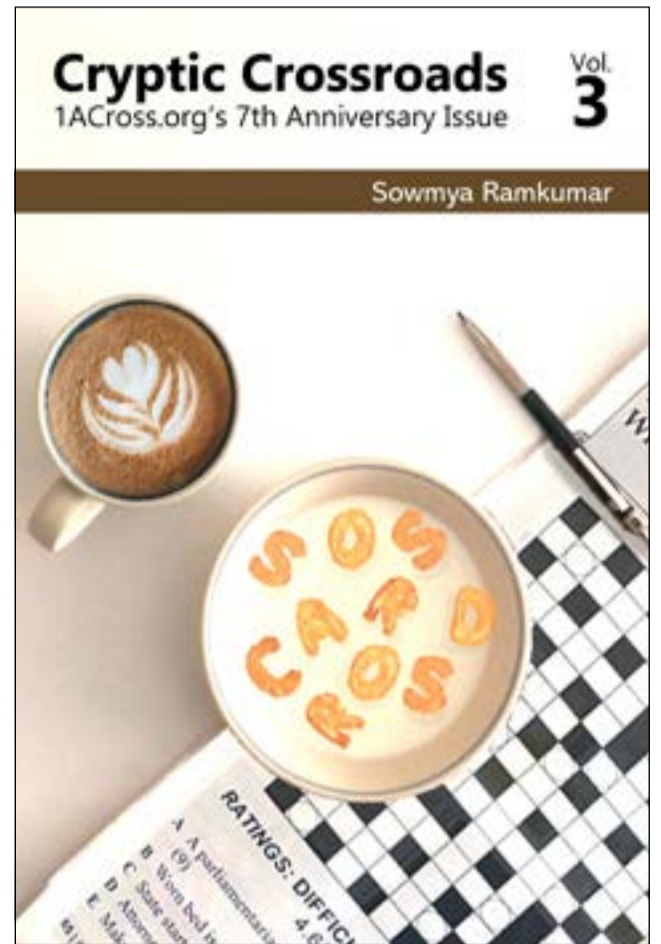
“The wordplay is an instruction. It tells you to insert a word meaning “pretty girl” into a word meaning “crimson” to get a word meaning “rose”.

“Here “rose” is the definition. It is a synonym of the solution word that you need to get. In a non-cryptic crossword you only have this synonym to work with.

“In a cryptic crossword you have the second route to the answer through wordplay. If you insert Belle (Pretty girl) in Red (Crimson), you get Rebelled (Rose). The setter has also cleverly disguised “rose” as though he was talking about the flower but has clued it as the past tense of rise (rebel).

“Once you understand the language of cryptic clues, there is no looking back.”

As a special treat, Sowmya has created a unique crossword for *GulfWeekly* readers. Two winners have a chance to win a copy of her new book and learn more about what it takes to be a cruciverbalist. The competition runs until January 15.

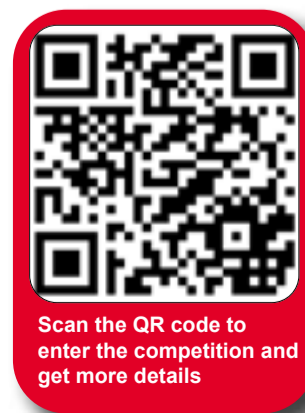


The book cover

Sowmya has designed a special crossword just for GulfWeekly readers, based on key events in Bahrain during 2021. Solve the puzzle for a chance to win a copy of Cryptic Crossroads - Volume 3. The deadline for submissions is January 15. The first all-correct entry as well as one lucky winner, picked randomly from all the all-correct entries, will receive copies of the book. Scan the QR code to submit your solution.



- ACROSS**
 2 12's celebrating this jubilee (6)
 5 12's healthcare insurance system (6)
 7 Peak accomplishment of the Royal Guard? (7)
 10 Traffic light based Covid-19 alert system (4-4)
 11 Sport that has put 12 on the Olympics map (8)
 13 Carbon emissions target for 12 by 2060 (3,4)
 14 1 got off to a flying start with a new terminal here (7)
 15 12's satellite is named after this book by His Majesty King Hamad (5,5)
- DOWN**
 1 Hindsight? Plus 1 (6,6,3)
 3 CBB approved payment system that uses digital signatures (1-6)
 4 Name of Muharraq souq that was recently revamped (9)
 6 Where 12's five newly announced cities will be located (8)
 8 ----- weaves opportunity in 12's Expo 2020 Pavilion (7)
 9 12's Grand Prix Champion for 2021 (8)
 12 The Land of "Two seas" (7)



Scan the QR code to enter the competition and get more details



Will Shortz with all three of Sowmya's books



FEBRUARY: Issue 6 – Shaikha Hala bint Mohammad Al Khalifa's feature in *Vogue Arabia* highlighted the work of local sculptor Khalid Farhan on the global scale. His sculpture Planets in the Sky located at the newly-unveiled Green Corner in Muharraq paid homage to the love and unity amongst humanity.



FEBRUARY: Issue 7 – Pop culture enthusiast Hamad Al Kooheji talked to *GulfWeekly* about setting the world record for the most number of authentic autographs at his museum. Hamad is also rejuvenating the age-old craft of clay modelling with his unique pop culture sculptures using raw materials from A'Ali.



MARCH: Issue 10 – Bahraini movie director Deena Alsawer has given a voice to Bahraini women with her short films and animated series, hoping to inspire more ladies to join the industry. Deena also directed the No Sleep Challenge reality series, focusing on the importance of sleep.



DECEMBER: Issue 48 – The Bahrain Pavilion's cuisine has built quite a name at Expo 2020 in Dubai. *GulfWeekly* talked to Chefs Lulwa Sowailh and Bassem Al Alawi about their menu, what makes it so special, and how they plan to take it to the next level in the coming season.



NOVEMBER: Issue 45 – HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, laid out a plan to achieve net zero emissions in Bahrain by 2060. Arnab Sen Gupta released a prescient book about a team of teenagers fighting to protect the world from climate change and its disastrous consequences.



NOVEMBER: Issue 44 – The Bahrain University's Team 'Go Smart' built an environmentally friendly smart home as part of the Solar Decathlon Middle East and ended up winning third place across the region, while also being recognised as the most creative solution and the winner of the People's Choice Award.



OCTOBER: Issue 41 – Think Pink Bahrain's 2021 edition of breast cancer campaign attracted an outpouring of support, with its ambassador Sameera Al Bitar cycling for awareness as part of the Dinar for Distance initiative. The former two-time Olympic swimmer worked with Professor Julie Sprakel to bring the project to fruition.



MARCH: Issue 13 – March also saw the return of F1 and spectators to the Bahrain International Circuit for the Bahrain Gulf Air Grand Prix. Lewis Hamilton started his season in style, with a close win over Max Verstappen, kicking off a year that ended as excitingly as it began.



APRIL: Issue 15 – Amal Albadawi designed a robot that dispenses medicine, files lab reports and sets up appointments and won \$2,000 to take her project to the next level. She was ranked second amongst more than 5,000 students from across the Middle East and North Africa region.



APRIL: Issue 16 – Hala AlAbbsi's unique Ramadan-inspired stickers became a hallmark of Instagram stories during the holy month, after the social media network reached out to her, requesting to use her incredible illustrations. Her creations also gave Muslims around the globe a way to share key Ramadan traditions.

What a rollercoaster year it has been! As the world and Bahrain entered the second year of the Covid-19 pandemic, it was more than a bit magical seeing humanity come together during both triumphs and tragedies.

As vaccines were rolled out and restrictions were lifted, we breathed a sigh of relief. But as we made it through wave after wave of variants and booster doses, many couldn't help but be anxious about a dark cloud constantly looming.

Questions about Covid-19 have now become ubiquitous in our interviews but what kept us going was talking to some astounding individuals who powered through it all, with a razor-sharp focus on the light at the end of the tunnel.

Seeking silver linings, we spent time talking to young Bahrainis about the projects they have finally gotten around to during the

pandemic, the dreams they have for the kingdom's future and what keeps them driven every day.

We would like to wish our family of readers, advertisers, website visitors, social media friends and YouTube viewers a lovely and lively 2022.

The *GulfWeekly* continues to be the most home-delivered English-language weekly newspaper in the kingdom – so once again, a big 'thank you' for your continued support.

The *GulfWeekly* is delivered every Wednesday to homes, clubs and businesses across the kingdom. Many subscribers to our sister newspapers, the *Gulf Daily News* and *Akhbar Al Khaleej* also enjoy the *GulfWeekly's* artistic and community features.

As the country celebrates more than 50 years of independence and jettisons towards His Majesty King Hamad's Vision 2030, we have particularly

enjoyed highlighting the work that people have done within their communities to improve the kingdom.

Now in our 21st year of publication, we continue to offer local businesses a unique multi-channel (print, online and social media) advertising platform to connect with our readers so they too can share in our success.

Our website www.gulfweekly.com has had thousands of visitors from Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and even as far afield as the US, Canada and Europe. We are also part of the GDN Media group of platforms, providing greater reach for our advertisers and variety of content for our readers.

We remain ever grateful to our weekly contributors and look forward to bringing you even more stories affecting the kingdom's diverse community.

- Naman Arora, on behalf of the *GulfWeekly* team



MAY: Issue 21 – An outbreak of conflict between Palestine and Israel inspired artists from across the kingdom to show their solidarity for the Palestinian cause, as part of the global #Art_For_Palestine social media campaign. Mohammed Al Majed and the Art Attack Krew were among the Bahraini artists showing solidarity.



OCTOBER: Issue 40 – Expo 2020 kicked off in Dubai and the kingdom's Pavilion was draped in a beautiful art installation by Bahrain-based 'thread-setter' Mhairi Boyle. The installation, called What She Sees, is comprised of weaved panels created by Bani Jamrah's traditional artisans, under the theme Density Weaves Opportunities.



AUGUST: Issue 32 – Retaj Al Abbasi became the first Bahraini president of the Arab Parliament for the Child, as well as being the first female in the role. Retaj is leading a team of 62 future leaders from 17 Arab countries in deliberating children-specific concerns across the region.



JUNE: Issue 24 – 2021 proved to be another fantastic year for Jiu-Jitsu World Champion Ali Monfaradi, who brought home more than a dozen international accolades. The cherry on top was recognition by His Majesty King Hamad and Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro at the end of the year.

Time Out



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crossword break

1		2		3			4		5		6
7							8				
					9						
10							11				
12					13						
				14					15		16
			17						18		
19		20							21		
22						23					
24							25				

Solutions in next week's issue.

ACROSS

- 7. Grain (6)
- 8. Zeal (6)
- 10. Contain (7)
- 11. Boast (5)
- 12. Huge (4)
- 13. Despise (5)
- 17. Hasten (5)
- 18. Besides (4)
- 22. Slack (5)
- 23. Shorten (7)
- 24. Fix (6)
- 25. Bearing (6)

DOWN

- 1. Accomplish (7)
- 2. Operation (7)
- 3. Indefinite (5)
- 4. Courage (7)
- 5. Knave (5)
- 6. Hackneyed (5)
- 9. Fickle (9)
- 14. Pacify (7)
- 15. Cheer (7)
- 16. Under (7)
- 19. Fissure (5)
- 20. Cavalry (5)
- 21. Impudent (5)

who, what, where, when

WHO ... wrote the children's story *The Children of the New Forest*?

WHAT ... was the value of the former US gold coin a half eagle?

WHERE ... in Europe is the mountain the Wetterhorn?

WHEN ... did the Antarctic explorer Sir Douglas Mawson die?

WHO ... wrote the 1997 novel *Timequake*?

WHAT ... is distinctive about a Woulfe bottle?

WHERE ... is the Hamersley Range of mountains?

just so

FIAT LEAF
N N E R I
O L THE C A
A NIMBUS

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

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

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

darn tough sudoku

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

Sudoku

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

Sudoku

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

Last Week's Leisure Solutions

CROSSWORD BREAK:

Across: 1 Quail; 4 Steward; 8 Abreast; 9 Basis; 10 Rude; 11 Belabour; 13 Ever; 14 Tend; 16 Two-faced; 17 Scan; 20 Raise; 21 Outlast; 22 Lengthy; 23 Poser.

Down: 1 Quadrilateral; 2 Acrid; 3 Leap; 4 Settee; 5 Embraced; 6 Abscond; 7 Discriminator; 12 Decadent; 13 Emotion; 15 Melody; 18 Class; 19 Stop.

JUST SO: Not long for this world, Noah's Ark, Lo and behold, Too big for one's boots

WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN:

Wilhelmina; Red and yellow; Mexico; 1967; Joseph Wright; Xe; France; 1960.

Darn Tough Sudoku

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

Motoring Weekly

The top motoring and motorsport news

Unstoppable!



BAHRAIN Raid Xtreme (BRX) team continues to stun at the Dakar Rally 2022, with nine-time world rally champion Sebastien Loeb winning the second stage of the Dakar Rally in Saudi Arabia to trim Qatari Nasser Al Attiyah's overall lead to just over nine minutes.

The 47-year-old Frenchman finished three minutes and 28 seconds ahead of the Toyota driver, who won Saturday's prologue and Sunday's first stage but had to go first and clear the way on Monday's 338km timed stage from Ha'il to Al Qaisumah.

"It was a long and difficult stage, but the strength of the car allowed us to keep a good rhythm and pace," Loeb said after the stage.

"The navigation was really tricky at some points while in some places it was quite rough. We had two punctures, but overall, a good day and we are happy to have this result."

The overnight bivouac was moved from Al Artawiya due to heavy rain, with a planned marathon stage cancelled.

Three-time Dakar winner Nasser Al Attiyah took an overall lead of 12 minutes 44 seconds in his Toyota Hilux as Loeb, fifth fastest on the previous day's prologue, moved into second position overall.

The stage featured a huge

variety of terrain. It had high speed sections, complicated navigation and rocks, and even Loeb suffered two punctures before recovering with a burst of sheer pace towards the end of the test.

Gus Beteli, BRX team principal, said: "We are happy with the cars as it's still the first big stage. However, there is a long way to go."

Britain's Sam Sunderland took over the lead in the motorcycle category from Australian GasGas team mate Daniel Sanders, who lost his way and finished 23rd in the stage to drop to third overall.

"We missed a way point because we went one valley too far to the left. We spent a fair bit of time there trying to find it. I lost about 20 minutes, so it was pretty crazy," said the Australian.

Spaniard Joan Barreda was the stage winner on a Honda. Former MotoGP rider Danilo Petrucci requested an airlift after his debut Dakar ended with his KTM suffering mechanical problems he could not fix.

Loeb's stage win was his 15th in the annual endurance event and first since 2019 as

well as a first for Prodrive, the British motorsport company that runs the BRX team.

Argentina's Lucio Alvarez was a distant third overall, 40 minutes off the lead, in a Toyota.

The electric Audis of triple champion Carlos Sainz and 14-times Dakar winner Stephane Peterhansel finished the stage third and fourth respectively after a nightmare Sunday wrecked their overall chances.

Defending champion Peterhansel, nicknamed 'Mr Dakar' for his success in the event on two wheels and four, resumed 23 hours behind triple champion Al Attiyah after his car was sidelined with a smashed rear axle.

The Dakar, now in its 44th edition, is the first major motorsport event of the year and one of the most dangerous and gruelling.

The rally started in 1978 as a race from Paris to the Senegalese capital, Dakar, but moved from Africa to South America for safety reasons in 2009.

It is now held entirely in Saudi Arabia.

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SPORT REPORT

By **NAMAN ARORA**
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Ice is the last thing that comes to mind when one thinks of Bahrain's sunny shores, but the country's very own National Ice Hockey team hopes to break that stereotype and build a strong local hockey community, as it gears up for the third GCC Games in Kuwait.

The team may not have a big budget and may be relatively young on the Bahrain Olympic Committee's roster, having been established under its umbrella in 2016, but it has what any team aspiring for underdog glory – heart.

"Ice hockey was first introduced in Bahrain in 1991 when Funland, the kingdom's first and only permanent ice rink opened," Bahrain Hockey Committee vice-president Abdulla AlQasemi said.

Paying a visit to the men's team during their weekly practice every Sunday evening, is like walking into a scene from *Cool Runnings* – the 1991 movie chronicling the efforts of the Jamaican national bobsleigh team to compete at the 1988 Winter Olympics.

The rink may be half the size of a competitive rink and the budget almost non-existent, but the boys play hard, learning from experienced ice hockey-loving expatriates, usually serving at the US Navy base, as well as from each other.

"One of our biggest challenges is the size of the rink – this one is half the size of what we play on at the regional tournaments," Captain Sameh Hegazi explained to *GulfWeekly*.



The team in action

BREAK THE ICE



Turki, Tamer Fakhroo, Salman Al Thawadi, Rashed Albahri, Ahmed Othman, Majed Alsarraj, Abdulrahman Turki, Salman Sulaibeekh, Muhanad Azzoz and Said Al Ozairi.

Coaching the team are Jason Mejia, Abdulla Jenahi and Hegazi.

The team has competed in the 7th Asian Winter Games in 2011, 2nd Arabian Gulf Cup in 2012, Dubai International Open Tournament from 2010 to 2017, Qatar Invitational Open Tournament from 2012 to 2016, UAE President Cup from 2014 to 2016, GCC 1st Professionals Championship Kuwait in 2018 and Kuwait Arab Clubs Open for Professionals in 2020.

"One of the major goals of the committee is to develop the age groups of both genders and bring out a new generation to compete in this rare and difficult sport to keep up with sports developments at an international level," noted AlQasemi.

The Bahrain National Ice Hockey team will be competing at the GCC Games in Kuwait in May, after the games were recently postponed in line with Covid-19 guidelines.



The squad

"For the GCC Games in Kuwait, planned for May, we are hoping to go a week earlier so that we can practice strategy and adapt to the tougher regimen.

"But we have a lot of

enthusiasm. Every week, 20-25 people show up with their gear, eager to learn more, get on the ice and give it their all!"

The team play five-a-side at the regional tournaments,

but can only practice with three- or four-a-side teams at Funland, owing to the rink's size, but they don't let that dampen their spirit.

Hegazi yells encouragement from the sidelines and when

players come off the ice, as they do every few minutes to give others their ice time, he makes suggestions about how they can improve their game.

Hegazi grew up watching the likes of Alexander Ovechkin take to the ice and considers the Washington Capitals to be his favourite team, but he is also practical about the team.

"We have some young bucks, which is fantastic to see, but it's just as important for them to learn strategy off the ice as it is to improve performance on the ice," he noted.

The team is comprised of captain Sameh Hegazi, Rashed AlMutlaq, Abdulla Al Adhab, Abdulla Al Mutawa, Albduallatif Hejres, Abdulla



The junior men's and women's teams, which play every Saturday evening