



SPACE REPORT

By NAMAN ARORA
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BAHRAIN'S first-ever satellite, which may revolutionise the global understanding of lightning storms, is set to be launched from the International Space Station (ISS) later this month.

And the kingdom's space team could not be more excited!

For the seven-person team at the National Space Science Agency (NSSA), the successful orbit of Light-1 will be the fruition of more than three years of diligent efforts, energy and collaboration with international space science agencies.

"Our team has been working on the project since March 2019, which is when we received the initial mission, definition and concept," NSSA engineering specialist Aysha Alharam told *GulfWeekly*.

"We were supposed to launch by mid-2021, but due to the Covid-19 situation, we postponed it."

"During 2019, we designed the mission concept and then did a critical design review in 2020. It was during the second half of 2020 that we started building the satellite."

After construction, the second half of 2021 was spent conducting final environmental and safety reviews.

The nanosatellite Light-1 was launched aboard the SpaceX Falcon-9 CRS-24 on December 21, 2021, from the Nasa Kennedy Space Centre in Cape Canaveral, Florida, US and



Aysha works on Light-1

MISSION POSSIBLE

docked at the ISS the next day.

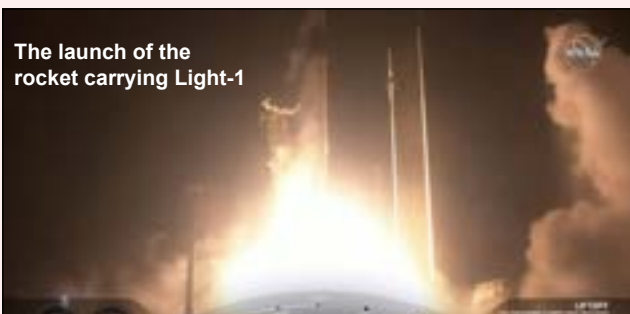
It is a joint project between Bahrain's National Space Science Agency (NSSA), UAE Space Agency, Khalifa University and New York University Abu Dhabi and it will be used to conduct research during lightning storms that will help civil aviation safety experts in future.

The Light-1 satellite was named after His Majesty King Hamad's book, *First Light*.

Now that it's on board the ISS, the astronauts at the space station will launch it in the next several weeks.

The nanosatellite – approximately 10cm x 10cm

The launch of the rocket carrying Light-1



x 34.5cm in size – will be in orbit at an altitude of 400km, at an orbital incline of 51.6 degrees. It will complete an orbit approximately every 90 minutes.

Its transceiver uses an ultra-high frequency (UHF) band, with a secondary S-Band for downloading large amounts of data transmitted to three

ground stations in Abu Dhabi, Denmark and Lithuania.

"We will be receiving data twice a day from the satellite," NSSA engineer Ahmed Bushlaibi explained.

"Our research from the data collected will focus on Terrestrial Gamma Ray Flashes (TGFs) – a topic about which there is very

little research and academic output.

"So Light-1 will add to the global research about the intensity of TGFs by measuring when and where these flashes will occur. Once we have this data, we can conduct our analysis to identify the impact of TGFs on airplane markets, the people on board the aircrafts and the atmosphere."

TGFs were discovered in 1994 by the Burst and Transient Source Experiment, on the Compton Gamma-Ray Observatory, an American National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) spacecraft.

TGFs challenge current theories about lightning, especially with the discovery of clear signatures of antimatter produced during lightning storms.

In the past 15 years, space scientists have determined that among the processes of lightning is some mechanism capable of generating gamma rays, which escape the atmosphere and are observed by orbiting spacecraft.

The role of TGFs and their relationship to lightning remains a subject of ongoing scientific study, to which Bahrain's space engineers and scientists are hoping to be significant contributors.

In the meantime, the team of seven is focused on building Bahrain's capacity and dreams of seeing the day when the kingdom's space sector can support a Bahraini astronaut's trip to outer space.

To learn more about the squad of seven, see Page 2



LOVE FOR LITERATURE
The People's Season 3
SEE PAGE 3



A GOLDEN GLIMPSE
Everlasting bond
SEE PAGE 4



AERIAL ART
Fitness takes off
SEE PAGE 5



F1 2022 BEGINS
Bahrain season opener
SEE PAGE 7



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SPACE SEVEN

LAUNCHING a nanosatellite may just be the advent of Bahrain's space programme, but the faces behind the space sojourn dream of a 'Made-in-Bahrain' satellite, a ground station and even a Bahraini astronaut.

The satellite team at the National Space Science Agency (NSSA) even sees the space economy as a potential source of foreign direct investment, and is ready for "bigger projects and challenges."

"This was actually the second satellite we built, having been part of the team that built DhabiSat along with other Khalifa University students," added NSSA space engineer Ali AlQaraan. "And keep in mind, this was done alongside our studies and we were constantly dividing our time between work and education."

In addition to Ali AlQaraan, engineering specialist Aysha AlHaram, senior data analyst Amina AlBalooshi, engineering specialist Ali AlMahmood, senior space engineer Ashraf Khater as well as fellow space engineers Yaqoob AlQassab and Ahmed Bushlaibi each played a key role in the mission.

The seven were part of a 30-person team, collaborating with the UAE Space Agency, Khalifa



SPACE REPORT
By NAMAN ARORA
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University and New York University Abu Dhabi.

At the helm of the Bahraini team, 30-year-old Aysha was part of the project management crew overseeing systems engineering, mission analysis and satellite programming.

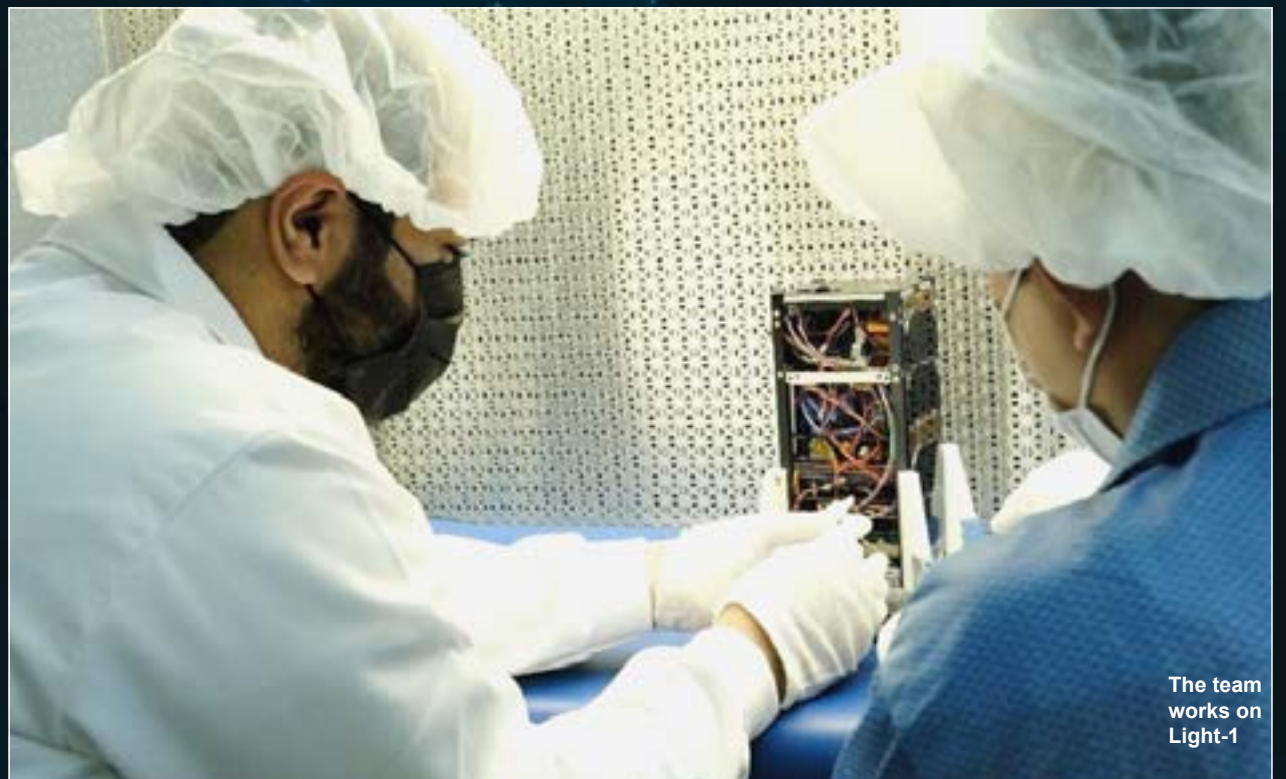
Having completed her Bachelor's in computer engineering and Master's degree in IT and computer science, she went on to add another Master's in electrical and computer engineering with a focus on space technology.

Amina, 28, also completed her Master's degree from Khalifa University and has spent three years at the NSSA.

Ali AlQaraan, 28, focused on space systems during his Master's, building on a foundational education at the King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals.

Yaqoob, 25, was part of the sub-team in attitude determination and control, building on his Bachelor's in Mechanical Engineering from Bahrain University and gaining his Master's in Mechanical Engineering from Khalifa University.

Ahmed, 24, also earned his Master's in Systems Engineering from Khalifa University during the satellite programme, building on his undergraduate studies at Bahrain University.



The team works on Light-1

Ali Al Mahmood, 26, meanwhile, also gained his Master's in Engineering during the programme, along with Ashraf, 28.

The squad-of-seven know that the satellite they just designed is but the start of the journey, while the dream of a space sector in Bahrain one day that is able to foster manned space travel remains distant.

For now, they are focused on the next step - a ground station to analyse the data generated by Bahrain's current and future satellites.

"We hope to have more satellite-based projects, and would love to see a satellite built by an all-Bahraini team," added Yaqoob.

"We are currently in a phase of capacity building and yes, a ground station to analyse our data would be next on our agenda, but to really sustain the industry, private global companies would need to enter the sector, and perhaps even use Bahrain as the base of their operations in the Middle East."

In addition to more satellites and capacity building, the team is also learning from regional



Yaqoob AlQassab



Amina AlBalooshi



Aysha AlHaram



Ahmed Bushlaibi



Ali AlMahmood



Ali AlQaraan



Ashraf Khater

We hope to have more satellite-based projects, and would love to see a satellite built by an all-Bahraini team

counterparts and dreams of even sending a vehicle to outer space, similar to the UAE which is planning to send Rashid the Rover to the moon later this year.

For details, follow @nssa_bh on Instagram.





BOOK REPORT

By NAMAN ARORA
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THE final 'season' of Bahrain's avant-garde public social reading space is set to kick off this weekend at a new location, with a renewed vision to highlight local creative talent.

The book-loving community, called The People, will be staging its third and final season at The Harbour Row, GFH's recently-unveiled promenade, starting this Friday and running until the end of March.

"Season 3, being our final chapter, is an idea that came up during our second season. The intention is that while The People will continue to exist as a community, we will have achieved the reading space's main objective of spreading awareness about reading as a public and social activity," The People's co-founder Noor Benshams, 25, told *GulfWeekly*.

Two years ago, Noor founded The People with her close friend Nejoud Alsharqawi with a goal of creating "a welcoming environment to give people, who may not be avid readers, a space where they can develop reading into a habit."

Since then, it has evolved into something more... a community bound by a love for literature and creativity.

The first home of The People was at Water Garden City, where passers-by could enjoy books curated by Mirium Al Zeera (@booksnessi on Instagram). This outdoor space ran from January to March last year.

The community's second site was Marassi Beach in Muharraq, where avid readers sat by sunny sands and enjoyed indoor and outdoor activities.

"Our second season was centred on our intern programme, through which we offered young people the opportunity to learn more about what goes into organising community events, approaching local businesses and working with different volunteer teams," explained onsite team leader and resource manager Mahera Emteyaz, 27.

"They got to learn about how a community initiative like The People operates and what goes into each event and activity."

Alongside its primary reading focus, The People has also found itself morphing into an ad-hoc training sandbox for the youth, and Noor, Nejoud and Mahera are hoping to build on that this season.

The final chapter



Muneera, seated, with volunteers at the new site

A total of 16 interns completed the second season, working with the public relations, marketing, events and logistics volunteer teams to create and curate literary events.

This season, The People is working with the Youth Affairs and Sports Ministry,

added.

This season, the group also aims to highlight more local creatives, including artists, musicians, poets and writers.

On Friday, there will be a range of activities between 5pm and 8pm, for both adults and children, as part of the space's opening event.

On Saturday, from 4pm to 7pm, The People is organising a Sherlock Holmes-themed "adventure of activities" in collaboration with AIESEC, a French acronym for Association internationale

des étudiants en sciences économiques et commerciales (International Association of Students in Economic and Commercial Sciences).

The two events will kick off 10 weeks of events, alongside a daily reading and working space, open every day from 4pm until 8pm.

"We are looking forward to leaving a big impact, and we

are proud of how we have expanded the footprint of books in our community's lives, with three distinct seasons" Mahera added.

"The first season showed me

how much people still love to read, the second season taught me how to lead volunteers of all kinds and most importantly, it has helped me discover skills I never thought

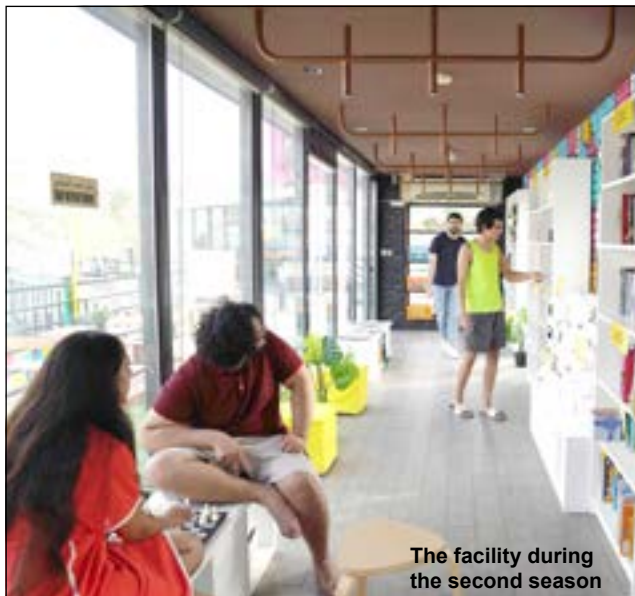
I had. This ranges from leadership to working under pressure and how to pitch and execute all kinds of ideas."

For details, follow @thepeople.bh on Instagram.

We are proud of how we have expanded the footprint of books in our community's lives

as well as a number of local businesses to organise events every week.

"While our first season was about attracting those in the area for a fun evening and our second season was targeted at beach-goers, our third season will have a more corporate feel, because of our location, but we are still aiming to have lots of fun events," Noor



The facility during the second season



Noor and Nejoud at the Marassi site

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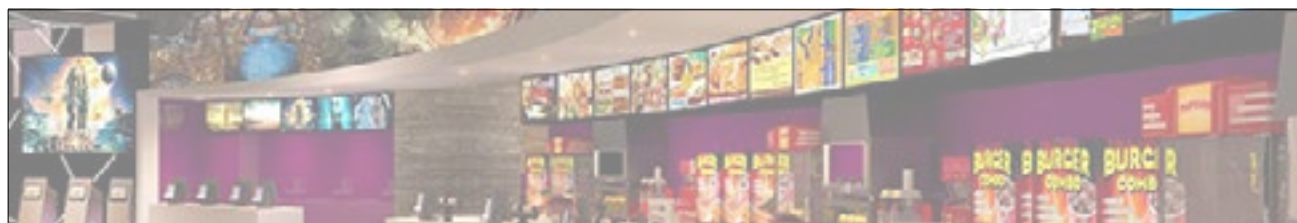
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Culture

A screencap from the documentary

Friends forever



FILM REPORT

By NAMAN ARORA
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A unique documentary, shining the spotlight on the kingdom's deep cultural connection and a half century of official diplomatic relations with India, was premiered in Bahrain last week.

The Golden Glimpse, directed by Rajeev Nair and conceptualised by Rajah Pillai, was screened during a private premiere at the Cultural Hall last week. It features interviews with eminent Indians in the kingdom interlaced with a narrative about the key milestones in the bilateral relationship.

"Having been a resident in Bahrain for the past two decades, I've witnessed the development of this country and the contributions of the Indian community – but when I tried to research it, I could not find a substantive documentary about it on the internet," Rajah, 47, told *GulfWeekly*.

"I approached Nav Bharat with the concept and idea, and got the green light. After the project was confirmed and we decided to use in-house talent, I discussed and explained my concept and how it should be

compartmentalised into different areas of Bahrain's development where Indians have played a major role."

In addition to a brief history of the two countries, the film is divided into sections delving into mutual topics including trade, migration, construction, medical, education, culture, delegations and future.

Alongside interviews, is rare footage from the mid-20th century, as well as a video coverage from bilateral visits by His Majesty King Hamad and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who visited the kingdom in 2019.

The documentary features interviews with top businessmen, key

government officials and eminent community leaders, including Indian Ambassador Piyush Srivastava, Dadabhai Group chairman Mohammed Dadabhai, QEL managing director KG Baburajan, former Labour and Social Development minister Abdul Nabi Al Shoala, Shura Council member

Sushil Muljimal, just to name a few.

"We sent across topics to the guests beforehand so they were prepared but we didn't want to have a question-and-answer session," Rajeev, 35, explained. "We let them speak on the topics one after the other and this way

I believe I got more than what I would have gotten from a traditional interview."

Even for stalwarts of the Indian community, the film packs in golden nuggets like the presence of early records showing that there were 2,500 Indian families settled in Bahrain in 1925, and insights from key Bahrainis about studying and living in India.

Filming for the project started on November 15 last

year and from start to finish, the project took less than six weeks to complete, including editing, musical scoring and animation.

The 30-minute documentary was produced by Pradeep Kumar, with Karthik Raj as assistant director, Ranjeesh Mundakkal as editor, Ajith Nair as photographer and cameraman, Kevin Francis providing the music for the documentary and Biju Hari creating the animation.

Kavya Hari and Maryam Khamiz play the roles of Indian and Bahraini girls, respectively, in secondary footage.

The film is currently being shown to dignitaries around the kingdom, and will soon be uploaded to social media.

For more details, follow @navbharatbh on Instagram.



Film logo

Muhammed Ali Al Khozai, Salmaniya Medical Complex accident and emergency unit chief resident Dr PV Cheriyan and King Hamad Global Centre for Peaceful Coexistence board member



A behind-the-scenes glimpse at the filming of one of the interviews



Rajah being recognised by Piyush

Politi





ng around



Happy students



FITNESS REPORT
By MAI AL KHATIB-CAMILLE
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THE community of aerial fitness fanatics is about to get bigger in the kingdom with the arrival of a larger studio space for them to climb new heights and twirl in style in an empowering environment.

Dina Elhifnawi's dream of teaching the art of poling in Bahrain became a reality when she launched Carousel Aerial Arts and Fitness Academy inside a gym in Zinj in 2019, offering women and girls 16 different types of classes with only six poles to practise their high-flying spins and tricks.

"I created a community of pole sisters with the aim of supporting each other and working towards a better version of ourselves," said the 31-year-old former creative director of Egyptian *Al Masry Al Youm* newspaper, who now lives in Amwaj Islands.

On January 1, 2022, the sisterhood grew even further with women of all ages, nationalities, shapes and sizes taking on the core strengthening and body-positivity sport in the academy's new home at the Bahrain Financial Harbour.

"Where we originally started, the space was smaller being 84sqm with a clear height of 3.3 metres," said Dina, the owner and lead instructor. "Now, it is 155sqm with a clear height of 4.3m high with 11 poles and six aerial hoops."

There are several strength and flexibility as well as aerial and dance classes for ladies and children to try their hands at including aerial hoop, pole sport, splits flexibility, headstands and more. The academy will also be featuring silk classes soon.

"Pole and hoop are very artistic," added Dina. "I believe that pole dancing and aerial hoop has evolved within the community and outside as well."

"More people are sharing that they are a part of the carousel community on social media now and many mums bring their children for the aerial arts classes because it's a beautiful way to work out and have fun at the same time. The benefits of poling and hooping are endless."

Pole and aerial fitness release endorphins commonly known as 'happy hormones' because of the physical exercise it involves. These endorphins help reduce the perception of pain and relieves stress, as well as lessening anxiety in the

process.

It also increases strength, flexibility, core and muscle due to constant repetitiveness to land a move. It also improves coordination; burns fat and, most importantly, builds up self-esteem while allowing for freedom of expression.

"Pole and aerial hoop can have a long-term positive impact on one's mental health," said Dina, who studied journalism, media arts, business administration and graphic design at the American University in Cairo. "It is not just about physical health, it makes you stronger emotionally and psychologically because it's incredibly liberating. It is about challenging your mind and overcoming your fears."

"The moves require a lot of trust and letting go. By trusting yourself and your ability to achieve the move, you open your eyes to a wealth of possibilities. It is empowering and eventually you resolve any doubts you had about yourself."

"Most girls start to pole because of a recent changing point in their life - losing a friend or a family member, going through a break-up, or, they just moved to the island. It helps you with whatever you are going through in your life."

"Also, aerial fitness has no age and size, it's for everyone and it definitely empowers women. You fall in love with your body rather than what it looks like in the mirror."

Pole fitness dates back to the 12th-century called Mallakhamba, where it was seen as a type of wrestling in India. It then became influenced by English competitive sports and took on the structural framework of British gymnastics. It eventually became an organised, extreme sport where some athletes perform acrobatic tricks, jumps and other manoeuvres.

The International Pole Sports Federation (IPSF) was formed in 2009 by Tim Trautman and Katie Coates to make poling an Olympic sport and has held world championships since 2012. Poling was one of seven sports granted observer status by the Global Association of International Sports Federations (GAISF) in 2017.

Professional pole-sports leagues were formed and classes have provided opportunities for students to bond with and support each other and encourage athleticism.

For details, visit @carousel.fitness on Instagram.



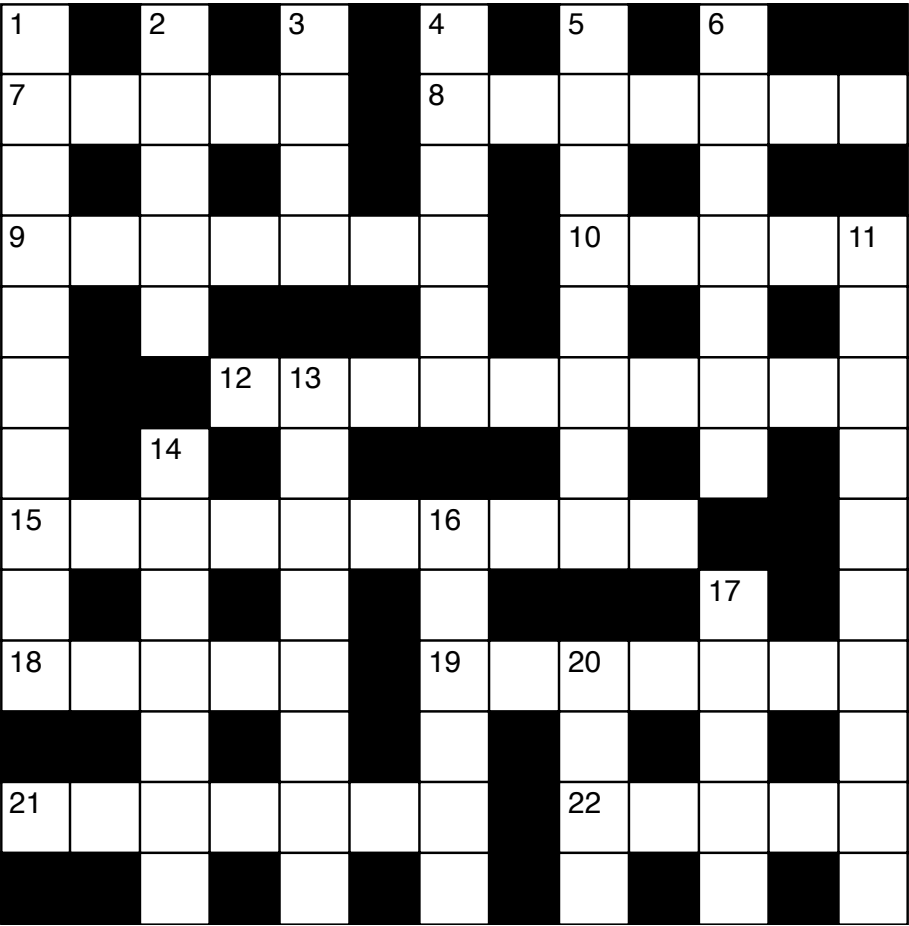
Dina

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crossword break



Solutions in next week's issue.

ACROSS

- 7. Pursue (5)
- 8. Oath (7)
- 9. Thorn (7)
- 10. Prestige (5)
- 12. Disclosure (10)
- 15. Faultless (10)
- 18. Madness (5)
- 19. Platform (7)
- 21. Unlawful (7)
- 22. Coronet (5)

DOWN

- 1. Incredulity (10)
- 2. Sorcery (5)
- 3. Feeble (4)
- 4. Orb (6)
- 5. Mixed drink (8)
- 6. Scorn (7)
- 11. Pietism (10)
- 13. Swap (8)
- 14. Shaft (7)
- 16. Gaily (6)
- 17. Brush (5)
- 20. Draw in (4)

**who, what,
where, when**

WHO ... was the eponymous founder of the city of Nineveh?
WHAT ... European country contains the province of Trento?
WHERE ... was the UK TV sitcom *Father Ted* chiefly set?
WHEN ... did Bonnie Prince Charlie die?
WHO ... wrote the BBC TV drama series *Blackpool*?
WHAT ... four elements did Empedocles suggest all matter was composed of?
WHERE ... are the Great Karoo and the Little Karoo regions?

just so

GVDGVDGVDGVD

least

opposite
hypotenuse



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

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

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

darn tough sudoku

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

Sudoku

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

Sudoku

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

**Last Week's
Leisure Solutions**

CROSSWORD BREAK:

Across: 1 Cowardice; 8 Own; 9 Malediction; 11 Pigment; 12 Troop; 13 Arrest; 15 Resist; 17 Smear; 18 Ecstasy; 20 Articulated; 22 Lei; 23 Hankering.
Down: 2 Ova; 3 Ridge; 4 Incite; 5 Epistle; 6 Concomitant; 7 Antipathy; 10 Legerdemain; 11 Plausible; 14 Stretch; 16 Beacon; 19 Salve; 21 Eon.
JUST SO: Too close for comfort, Nothing on earth, The evil eye, First things first.
WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN: Nicholas Hawksmoor; Seven; Cambridgeshire; 1927; Werner Karl Heisenberg; Sea of Japan (or East Sea of Korea); South Australia; 1610.

Darn Tough Sudoku

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

Your work pad space ...

MotoringWeekly

The top motoring and motorsport news

Ushering in a new F1 era



Captain Al Alawi, second from left, and Al Mahdy, second from right, with key BIC and Gulf Air officials, showcasing the 2022 F1 car in the Bahrain livery



F1 REPORT

By NAMAN ARORA
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BAHRAIN is set to make regional motorsport history in March when it kicks off three of the most anticipated global events - Formula 1, F2 and F3.

The Bahrain Gulf Air Formula 1 Grand Prix, the headlining motorsport event for the March 18 - 20 weekend, is set to be iconic on its own, becoming the first competitive stage for the biggest overhaul of

racing rules and a completely revamped F1 car.

"Our 2022 race is a landmark moment for the sport," said Bahrain International Circuit (BIC) chief executive Shaikh Salman bin Isa Al Khalifa.

"Fittingly being held under our slogan 'A New Era', the race will usher in the next chapter of F1 following perhaps the biggest revolution of rules in the history of the sport."

In addition to Formula 2 and Formula 3, whose stars have the opportunity to rise through the F1 ranks, the

BIC will also be the stage for the final race of the Porsche Sprint Challenge Middle East's 2021-22 season.

For a second year in a row, Bahrain will also be hosting preseason testing, for both F1 and F2.

The F1 preseason testing is set to take place during the March 10-12 weekend, and for the first time, will be opened up to spectators. Details about tickets will be released in the coming weeks.

The launch of the 18th Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix took place at a press conference

held on Monday, which included the unveiling of the new 2022 F1 car, with a special Bahrain livery.

Addressing the media and guests were BIC commercial director Sherif Al Mahdy and Gulf Air marketing director Mohamed Jamsheer, in the presence of Shaikh Salman and Gulf Air acting chief executive Captain Waleed Al Alawi. Grammy Award-winning DJ and producer Afrojack was also announced as the first megastar concert act of the weekend.

He is the first internationally renowned

artist to be announced for this year's F1 weekend at BIC and will be lighting up the stage at the F1 Village vending area on the Friday evening. All Bahrain Grand Prix ticket-holders will be able to attend the concerts at no extra cost.

Details about the Saturday and Sunday evening artists will be announced in the lead up to the event.

Amongst the other attractions at BIC over the race weekend are stage acts and roaming performers, such as renowned street performer Abraham Thill,

a life-sized Toy Brigade, Funky Style Band from Italy, Jam Batucada musical show from Spain, and plenty of other entertainment.

Tickets to this year's Bahrain Grand Prix have already been selling fast and they are currently still available with up to 15 per cent off under BIC's Early Bird promotion. This offer is available for a limited period only and it is the last chance for fans to get Grand Prix tickets at reduced prices.

Tickets can be bought online at BIC's official website www.bahraingp.com



All three BRX cars in Saudi Arabia were powered by the Prodrive EcoPower fuel



Loeb Lurquin of BRX with winners Al Attiyah and co-driver Baumel

TOYOTA GAZOO WINS DAKAR RALLY

TOYOTA Gazoo Racing's Nasser Al-Attiyah and co-driver Mathieu Baumel won the Dakar Rally for the fourth time in the car category over the weekend, edging out Bahrain's representatives who put on an impressive challenging show.

Al-Attiyah finished in Jeddah 27 minutes and 46 seconds ahead of France's nine-times world rally champion Sebastien Loeb who drives for Bahrain Raid Xtreme (BRX).

Loeb and Fabian Lurquin took their BRX Prodrive Hunter to the fourth best time on the 164km stage from Bisha to Jeddah to secure second place overall.

Nani Roma and Alex Haro also brought their Prodrive Hunter home to make BRX the first top Dakar team to complete the rally with a full complement of cars running on next generation advanced sustainable fuel.

It has been an impressive competitive debut for the new Hunter T1+, with all three BRX cars in Saudi Arabia powered by the Prodrive EcoPower fuel which reduces greenhouse gas emissions by 80 per cent compared to petrol.

"It was a good rally," Loeb said at the finish. "We lost some time at the



Terranova and Dani of BRX at the Dakar finish

beginning with some technical problems. After that we really pushed hard to close the gap with Nasser, but he did a really good job so it was impossible. But we finished second in a great rally, so it's not so bad."

Meanwhile, Saudi driver Yazeed Al Rajhi was third with the Overdrive Toyota team, his first podium finish in the event.

Al Attiyah won the Dakar when it was held in South America in 2011, 2015 and 2019 with Volkswagen, Mini and Toyota respectively.

He is now the joint-second most successful car driver in the history of the event, tied with Finland's four times winner Ari Vatanen and behind France's eight times winner Stephane Peterhansel who also won six times on a motorcycle. "We had finished second every time

since we came to Saudi Arabia two years ago, now we're really happy to achieve our goal," said Al Attiyah.

"We opened up a gap on the first day and have since managed our lead. We're really happy, and I reckon we'll start thinking of the next Dakar in a week or 10 days."

As for the bike category, British motorcycle GasGas rider Sam Sunderland took his second title. He took his first title in South America in 2017, finished three minutes and 27 seconds ahead of Chilean rider Pablo Quintanilla on a Honda. Austrian Matthias Walkner was third for KTM.

Alexandre Giroud became the first Frenchman to win the quadbike category. The Dakar Rally began in 1978 as a race from Paris across the Sahara to the Senegalese capital but switched to South America in 2009 for security reasons.

One of motorsport's most dangerous and gruelling events, the rally moved to Saudi Arabia in 2020 and is now in its 44th edition.

The Dakar Rally was the opening round of the new FIA World Rally-Raid Championship which continues in March with the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge ahead of the other rounds in Kazakhstan, Spain and Morocco.

Enter the dragon



SPORT REPORT
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DRAMATIC dragon boats will be slicing through the waters all over the world in the coming weeks and Bahrain is all set to join the annual global celebration once again with power and perfection of form.

Nine to 11 teams will be paddling with purpose at Water Garden City Beach on March 4 as they compete in the Chinese New Year Race from 8am to 4pm.

“What makes the event unique is that, for sure, dragon boat racers will be out and about racing all over the world at around the same time,” said Diane Prieur, chair of the Bahrain Rowing & Canoe Centre (BRC) Executive Committee.

The dragon boat has its roots in ancient Chinese folklore. One tale tells a story of a man, a councillor and a renowned poet in his time, exiled from his nation and seeing it fall into violence, threw himself into the river in deep despair. Beloved by the villagers, they rushed into the river on their boats with banging drums, to no avail.

Dragon boats have been making waves worldwide ever since and, in Bahrain since December 2016, not with the sadness of loss, but for the love of the sport and the comradeship born from it. “We paddle as one,” was the motto shared by Prieur. “What I love about the sport is my love to be out in the water, the discipline and hard work involved ... but the best thing for me is the teamwork.”

This sentiment was shared by the Mabuhay Paddlers team, who saw the sport as one where you have to ebb-

and-flow off one another to be able achieve any sort of victory.

“The team is as strong as its weakest link,” Prieur emphasised. “You can have the strongest paddlers in the boat, but if they do not work in unison the boat will just not move.”

And, teamwork is even evident through the interaction of Bahrain’s dragon boat teams, all of whom adjust their training schedule as they share the two dragon boats stationed in

Bahrain Bay, owned by the BRC.

This flexibility and sportsmanship to allow each team a chance to train with the boat would see some teams training as early as 4am or as late as 8pm.

“We train every week,” said Judee Linezo, who is one of the pioneering members of the Mabuhay Paddlers team. “Sunday is full paddle training in a pool and on Tuesday we have land trainings, reserving weekends for boat training.

However, we will have a ‘hell week’ two weeks prior to the Chinese New Year event - a whole week of nothing but intense nonstop training, followed by a week of rest.”

Linezo described how joining the team and being surrounded by a diverse group of athletes has been a core motivation that pushes her through the intense training.

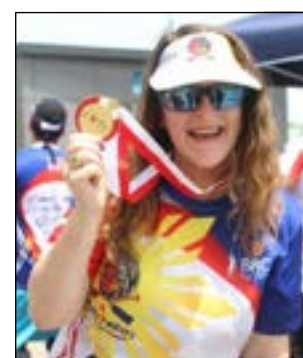
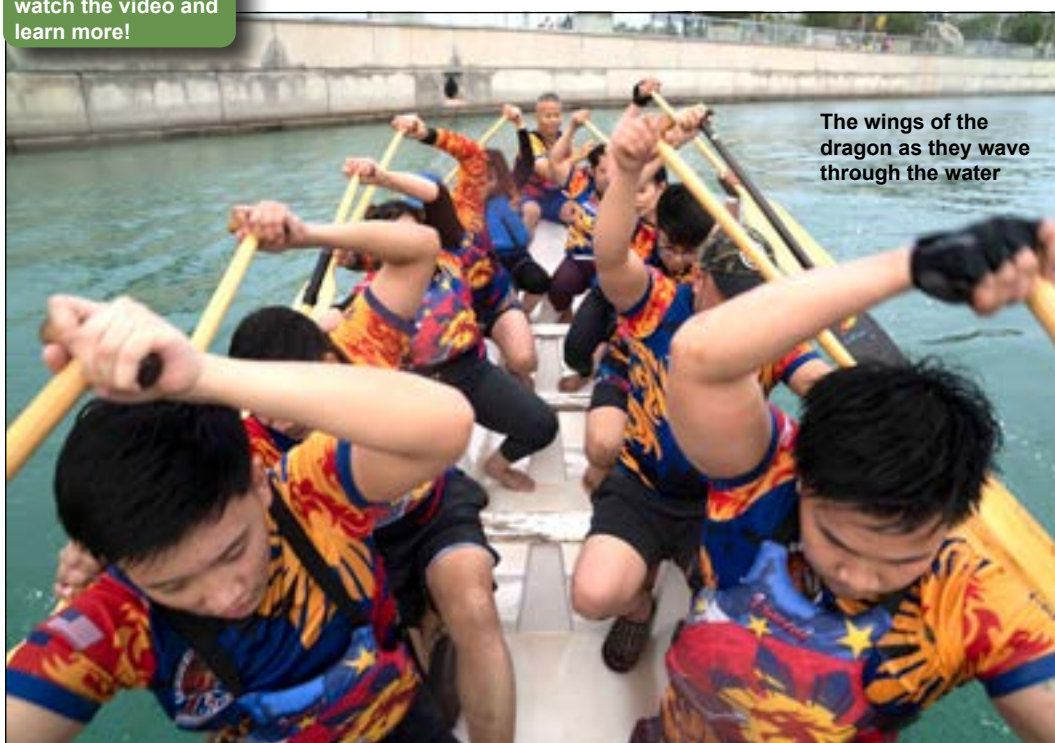
Dragon boating, in general, welcomes everyone to this teambuilding sport. It attracts

The Mabuhay team



GulfWeekly joined the Mabuhay Paddlers in the water to discover what it takes to be a star dragon boat team. Scan the QR code to watch the video and learn more!

The wings of the dragon as they wave through the water



Prieur



Linezo



A throwback to the Dragon Boat Tug of War competition

people from all walks of life and nationalities, including Bahrainis, Americans, Filipinos, Brits and Brazilians.

The sport is also open to all ages, as well as people of all shapes and sizes, from those with pure muscles to those who are more on the cuddly side.

“Part of the beauty of the sport is that we want it to be open to all,” added Prieur. “We want everyone to feel

welcomed.”

Recently 15 dragon boat teams entered a tug of war competition in Bahrain Bay. A rope linked two dragon boats as four contestants from each boat used every ounce of strength to pull the other boat across the line. “It was intense,” said Linezo. “It was a total test of strength and endurance.”

For more details, follow @bahrainrowing on Instagram.