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SPOTLIGHT ON HISTORIC TIES

HIS Majesty King Hamad, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, has expressed pride in Bahrain's historical relationship and close partnership with the US.

He said the relationship is underscored by trust, respect and co-ordination as he received US Naval Forces Central Command, US Fifth Fleet and Combined Maritime Forces Commander Vice Admiral Charles B Cooper II, yesterday at Sakhir Palace, to mark the end of his tenure.

He commended the continuous progress of bilateral co-operation, particularly in the military field, to achieve shared goals, highlighting the

efforts of the commander in this regard. They reviewed the latest regional and international developments.

His Majesty emphasised the kingdom's appreciation for the crucial role the US and other allies play in ensuring the safety and freedom of navigation and trade in the region and international corridors, and addressing potential threats.

The Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces bestowed the Order of Bahrain – First Class on Vice Admiral Cooper, in recognition of his role in further developing Bahraini-American relations.

Vice Admiral Cooper expressed his gratitude to His Majesty for the honour, and commended his efforts in enhancing the strategic partnership between Bahrain and the US. He also highlighted Bahrain's vital role in promoting efforts to maintain stability and regional peace.



■ His Majesty presents the Order of Bahrain – First Class to Vice Admiral Cooper

World this morning

Israel forces push back into Gaza city

ISRAEL launched an assault on Gaza's main northern city weeks after pulling back from it, while Washington vowed to take "all necessary actions" to defend its troops after they suffered the first deadly strike in the Middle East since the Gaza war began. Inside Gaza, residents said air strikes on neighbourhoods across Gaza City killed and wounded many people. While tanks shelled the eastern areas of the city, naval boats fired shells and gun rounds at the beachfront areas in the west, they said. Israel said late last year that it had largely completed operations in northern Gaza. The push back into Gaza City, where residents reported fierce gun battles near the main Al Shifa hospital, indicated that the war was not going to plan.

Full report – Pages 16-17

Football fever

THOUSANDS of football-mad Bahrain fans are preparing to travel to Qatar by plane, car and coach to cheer on the national team as they take on one of the pre-tournament favourites, Japan, in a last 16 knock-out encounter. More than 10,000 supporters from the kingdom are set to converge on Doha tomorrow to watch the clash live at the 44,400-capacity Al Thumama Stadium with kick-off at 2.30pm in the hope of securing a place in the quarterfinals. National Team Supporters' Group leader and Al Khaldiya Sports Club Cheerleaders' Group head Younis Salman told the GDN that tickets for the clash had all been snapped up.

Full report – Page 3

Dangerous act

LEGAL action has been initiated against the driver of a car after a shocking video circulating online showed a young girl standing dangerously on a window of the moving vehicle. Two boys were also seen sticking their upper bodies out the window on the other side. The Interior Ministry said the General Directorate of Traffic took legal measures against the driver for endangering the children's lives. The driver's nationality or age was not revealed.

UK King returns

BRITAIN'S King Charles and his daughter-in-law Kate, the Princess of Wales, both returned home from hospital yesterday after undergoing planned treatments. Charles, 75, who had spent three nights in hospital after undergoing a corrective procedure for an enlarged prostate, smiled and waved to crowds as he left the London Clinic accompanied by his wife Queen Camilla. A few hours earlier, Kate also headed home after spending two weeks at the same private hospital following abdominal surgery.

Full report – Page 19

Cabinet condemns attack on troops

THE Cabinet yesterday condemned, in the strongest terms, the terrorist attack that targeted an outpost on the Jordanian-Syrian border, killing three and injuring several others from the US troops co-operating with the Jordanian Armed Forces in combating terrorism and the cross-border smuggling of weapons and drugs.

The Cabinet expressed Bahrain's firm solidarity with Jordan and its support for ongoing anti-terror efforts.

Deputy Prime Minister Shaikh Khalid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa chaired the weekly Cabinet meeting at Gudaibiya Palace.

The Cabinet congratulated His Majesty King Hamad, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Com-

mander of the Armed Forces and Prime Minister, on the 56th anniversary of the Bahrain Defence Force (BDF). It also congratulated members of the BDF, noting their progress and readiness under the patronage of the King.

The Cabinet took stock of preparations for the 33rd Arab League Summit, to be held in Bahrain, wishing His Majesty and leaders of the Arab countries success in finding ways to enhance joint efforts.

The Cabinet commended Bahrain International Airport and its Pearl Lounge for receiving a five-star rating from Skytrax for the third consecutive year. It affirmed the kingdom's commitment to continue developing its airport services and capabilities.

The Cabinet discussed several memorandums, and approved some of them.



The conqueror

■ Adventurer Mohamed Isa has reached a new peak of endurance for his country by becoming the first Bahraini to conquer Mount Kosciuszko. It is the highest mountain in mainland Australia at 2,228 metres and the challenge comprised a 26.1km trek – 35,006 steps – from base

to the summit, with an elevation gain measuring 1,137m. "I am proud to have represented my beloved country on this adventure," the fearless 45-year-old told the GDN. Above, Mohamed Isa making Bahrain proud on the peak on Mount Kosciuszko. Full report – Page 10



Ain't no mountain high enough!

■ Mr Isa



By MELISSA NAZARETH

ADVENTURER Mohamed Isa has reached a new peak of endurance for his country by becoming the first Bahraini to conquer Mount Kosciuszko.

It is the highest mountain in mainland Australia at 2,228 metres and the challenge comprised of a 26.1-km trek – 35,006 steps – from base to the summit, with an elevation gain measuring 1,137m.

"I am proud to have represented my beloved country on this adventure," the fearless 45-year-old told the *GDN*. "It marks the first step in my quest to conquer the Seven Summits Challenge, an ambitious goal to climb the highest peak of each of the seven continents."

The Seven Summit list, which can vary, includes Mount Everest, Kilimanjaro, Denali,

Aconcagua, Vinson Massif, Elbrus and Kosciuszko.

"Trekking for 26.1kms is like walking from University of Bahrain's Sakhir campus to The Avenues-Bahrain mall ... but uphill!" he explained.

"There were moments of exhaustion and fatigue, but giving up was never an option. I took breaks when needed and listened to my body's signals, ensuring I pushed myself while allowing for necessary rest.

"The most challenging part was the mental and physical strain of moving towards an invisible goal. I knew that the Merritt's Nature Trail (located in Kosciuszko National Park) would finish at the chairlift station next to Eagles Nest Restaurant, the highest dining spot in Australia, at 1,137m. You get to see Mount Kosciuszko only after hiking another 1.5km from there.

"I vividly remember the sudden change in weather when I reached the station. The strong headwinds made the final stretch even more challenging, and I admit I wished for better conditions.

"When I finally reached the peak, however, I experienced a profound moment of gratitude for those strong winds. They made the Bahrain flag wave proudly against the backdrop of the Australian skies, creating a memory I will treasure forever."

The mountaineer prepared for the challenge by walking half a million steps in 2023, in addition to training with renowned American fitness coach, Richie Fearn.

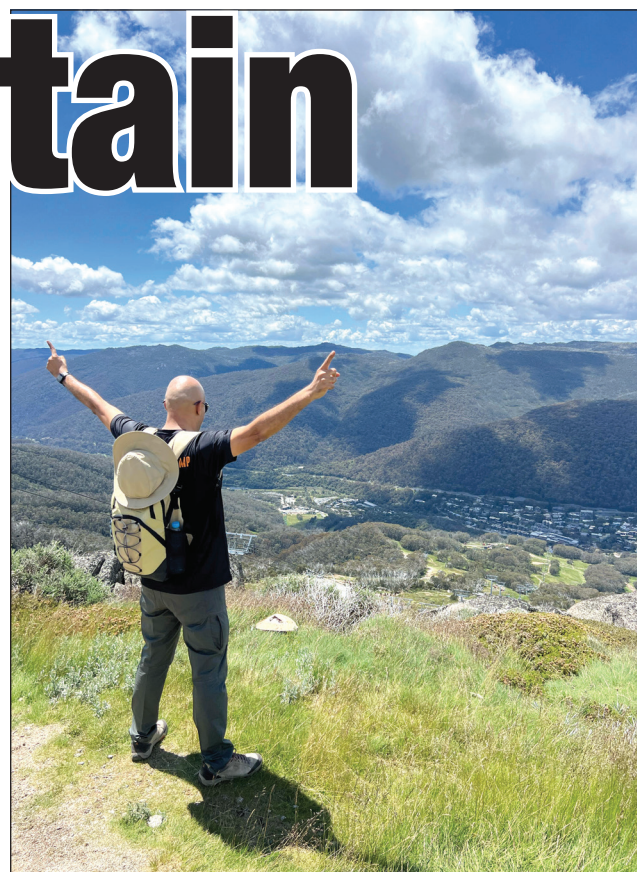
Despite suffering from a long-time back injury he was determined nothing would stop him. "Our workouts were based on bodyweight exercises and resistance bands," he revealed. "As for the diet, I did not deprive myself of any food. I generally eat in moderation and supplement my diet with multivitamins daily. Occasionally, I indulge in some Aloo Basheer from Manama Suq too!

"I believe in self-reinvention and growth. One way of doing that is to add new dimensions to your life. I chose mountaineering.

"I also recommend climbing to anyone interested in advancing their career. Mountains can teach you a lot about leadership, teamwork, planning, problem-solving, risk management and resilience in volatile environments," the Saar resident added.

Mr Isa highlights that mountaineering is not just about physical fitness but also a mind game, which is why climbers need to be mentally prepared to succeed. Despite doing the groundwork, anything can happen in hostile environments and preparation remains a key to success.

"I made sure to have a head torch and a spare hand torch



■ Breathtaking view of Thredbo village

in case I did not return to the village where the climb began, before sunset," he added.

Even getting from Bahrain to Thredbo was dramatic as it included a 14-hour flight from Dubai to Brisbane in which he witnessed a medical emergency on-board the aircraft. A passenger suffered breathing difficulties and had to be rushed to hospital on arrival.

In 2022, Isa successfully scaled a height of 5,364m to the Everest South Base Camp in Nepal. That's when he fell in love with the mountains. It's also when he met Suleiman Al Naabi, the first Omani national to complete the Seven Summits Challenge, who he considers a role model.

This year, the adrenaline junkie plans to publish a book called *Everest Inspiration*, documenting his experience and journey, which also inspired him to start the podcast *Peak Leadership*, featuring interviews with top mountaineers

from the world.

"Next on my list is the highest (peak) in Africa, Mount Kilimanjaro, which is 5,895m above sea level," he said. "Overall, I aim to finish the Seven Summits by 2030."

A man who wears many hats, the former football player was known as 'The Axe' because he used to score most of his goals with his head.

Currently, he is chief financial officer at a reputed investment bank and has GCC-wide business experience, including being a board member at well-known organisations in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.

The author, Toastmaster, coach and motivational speaker has also written a series of books on a range of topics, including investor relations, entrepreneurship and startups, management and public speaking.

For more details on the next adventure, follow @mohamedisa3ds on Instagram.

melissa@gdnmedia.bh



■ The ice caps on Mount Kosciuszko create several streams and waterfalls

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