

Leaving a mark as he forges ahead

National on walking mission braves hardships

BY NAHEED ZAFAR
AND SHAFAT AHMED

"ONE can only realise life is a mission only when you walk in a desert and what you hear is your heart-beat and wind blows on your face, always determined to bog you down," these pearls of wisdom can make one feel a veteran sage is talking, but that is UAE national Jalal Bin Thaneya, 20, for you.

With high aims, a broad vision for society and the zeal to achieve something meaningful in life, the 20-year-old has set out on a mission to create awareness among people about the needs of special-needs people and to raise fund for Dubai Autism Center

Third week into his "around UAE walk" and despite what he calls "a lukewarm response" from people he has so far treaded through out UAE and is slowly inching towards his finishing point — Abu Dhabi, which he estimates to reach by the weekend.

When Jalal touched sharjah on his way to Dubai, these correspondents walked the talk with the zealous youth and

found him as determined and tenacious as he was in the early days of his mission. In fact, he is more toughened up after "failing to attract attention from many quarters." "I am keeping my fingers crossed, I still have to complete my mission. I think people are waiting for me to finish and then they will take notice.

"But, what is more disappointing is the attitude of my friends, they know a friend of their's is on a noble mission trying to convey a message, and if they can't do anything they can at least have a word of encouragement for me. They have their cars, they could have come up to me or could have at least called, to my surprise they did not even bother to know my whereabouts," laments Jalal, who suffers with a kind of depression called mild bipolar.

But he doesn't look to be the one who will get bogged down by the public apathy, "I have my family and my sponsors firmly behind me and that is enough for me to continue with my mission and attain my goal.

"My father came up to me after the most difficult part of my walk, the up and down hill

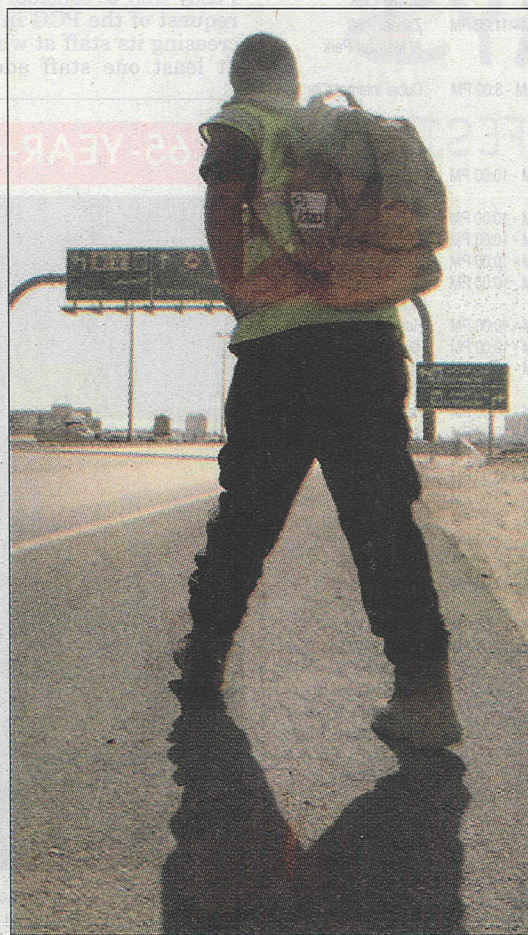
walk of Hatta, that was comforting. My mother too calls me up often from the UK, they both have deep-rooted trust in me and in what I am doing."

And as the tired Jalal waits, behind Sahara centre in Sharjah, for his driver to bring him lunch he asserts, "Most importantly, Allah is watching every step that I have put and the hardship that I have been going through and he also knows my humane intentions, so I believe he will not let me down."

When Sarfaraz (after spending three weeks together, more a partner in the mission than the driver that one of his sponsors ETIC provided) reaches with the food, a broad smile appears on the faces of both.

"Sarfaraz has been really patient trough out the walk. With an odd argument or two apart, ours has been a very good wedding. He has been more than a driver, he made the experience look easier."

Leaving with his profound thoughts he forged ahead with his pegometer in hand fading into the sunlight that was unusually beating hard for this winter.



Photos by Kamal Kassim / The Gulf Today

...The march continues.

Mercury dip predicted

BY ALAA AL ARNAOUTI

TEMPERATURE will considerably drop on Tuesday and Wednesday ranging between 5-7 degrees Celsius in different regions of the country. The maximum temperature will range between 18-21 degrees Celsius, according to official sources at the main forecasting centre at the meteorological department of the Ministry of Communications.

There's a possibility of moderate to heavy rains in different regions of the country. The weather will be partially cloudy in general with dust-stirring winds, and it will be cloudy with likelihood of showers.

The maximum temperature will range between 23 -25 degrees Celsius while the minimum between 12 - 16 degrees Celsius.

Winds will be easterly to south-easterly and dust-stirring during the day between 14 - 20 knots and up to 25 knots in some regions.

Jalal Bin Thaneya.