

UAE

Oldest UAE falconer rules the roost at falconry racing

78-year-old Obeid Salim bin Shannah wins at the Fakhr Al Ajyal championship

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Angel Tesorero, Staff Reporter

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78-year old Emirati falconer Obeid Salim bin Shannah

Dubai: At 78, Emirati falconer Obeid Salim bin Shannah's eyes are still as sharp as a falcon's and his legs and arms

His falcon named Kahal clocked in 19.12 seconds in the falcon owners category for Qarmoosha Jirnas (falcons over one year old). Obeid won Dh80,000 and gained the huge admiration of falconers three times younger his age.

Obeid told Gulf News, through an interpreter, that he has been raring to win a race in Dubai organised by the Hamdan Bin Mohammed Heritage Center (HHC) in the past 18 years.

Obeid said he has won several competitions in Abu Dhabi and other emirates but he has never won any big prize in Dubai, including the Fazza Championship for Falconry.

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Around 300 birds and 120 falconers have participated in the four-day Fakh Al Ajyal Championship for Falconry, which saw competition in various categories, including juniors, sheikhs, general public, falcon owners and Al Noukhba (Elite).

Sharing his personal experience, Obeid recalled he started in falconry when he was a teenager. He received his first pair of falcons as gifts from Emirati sheikhs, whom he accompanied in various hunting expeditions and races abroad, including Iran, Pakistan and GCC countries.

“Falcons were used in olden times for hunting food. Then it became a popular heritage sport. Eventually, I bred and trained my own falcons and participated in various races.”

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“There were not so many falconers when the competition was initiated by the HHC 18 years ago. Now everything is different and the level of competition is very tough – but, Alhamdulillah, I still won first place,” added a jubilant Obeid.



Obeid: “I will continue to breed and train falcons. I have with me a wealth of knowledge of the traditional sport and I am happy to see the younger generation who are keeping the spirit and excitement of falconry alive in the UAE,”

Image Credit: Supplied

Asked about his secret to training champion falcons, Obeid shared: “It takes several months to train the falcons. The long hours of training with your bird can be very time consuming but you have to be prepared to spend time to build a strong relationship with your bird.”

Falcons are trained day and night so they can identify their owner’s voice; react quickly and fly as fast as possible to reach the lure. Falcons used in the competition are not from the wild that is why training is vital to improve their speed,” he added.

Obeid said he is not planning on hanging up his cap yet. “I will continue to breed and train falcons. I have with me a wealth of knowledge of the traditional sport and I am happy to see the younger generation who are keeping the



Obeid's falcon in flight during a recent competition

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Fastest-flying birds

Falcons, known locally as Shaheen, are raptors and considered as the fastest-flying birds in the world that can dive up to 300 kilometres per hour to hunt their prey.

During the competition, falcons fly one at a time over a distance of 400 metres. Each bird would dash to a falconer who is vigorously brandishing a bait (telwah in Arabic), which is usually a pigeon wing, to lure the bird.

Rashid bin Merkhan, Deputy CEO of Hamdan Bin Mohammed Heritage Center, said thousands of falcons join the falconry racing every year during the winter months.

Flashback

Falconry, known locally as Al Qanas (hunting in English) originated in the Arabian Peninsula around 4,000 years ago as a tool for hunting food. People would capture falcons passing across the Arabian Peninsula at the start of winter and tame the birds and turn them into highly-skilled predators. Falcons (called Shaheen in Arabic) are considered as the fastest birds in the world that can dive up to 320 kms per hour to hunt their prey. Nowadays, the birds are no longer used for hunting but falconry has been preserved as a heritage sport. Competitions are broadly separated into Farkh (for falcons under one year of age) and Jirnas (over one year), and each category has races for the Saqr (male) and Shaheen (female)



Obeid's falcon hones in on its prey

Image Credit: Supplied

Fast facts about falcons

Did you know that falcons are the only animals in the UAE that are legally allowed to travel inside planes? But they can only travel in business and first class.

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GDRFA Dubai launches ‘We Are Here For You’ campaign at Ibn Battuta Mall

Highlights visa services, exit permit services, golden entry and residency permits

Published: May 23, 2024 09:56

Aghaddir Ali, Senior Reporter

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For you, we are here campaign

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Join us in Ibn Battuta Mall

2024 مايو 26 May 2024 مايو 22 May

10:00 صباحاً
10:00 مساءً

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شخصيات سالم و سلامه
Salem and Salama characters

مسابقات و جوائز
Competitions and Rewards

توعية بالخدمات
Awareness of services

Dubai Residency invites visitors to Ibn Battuta Mall to participate in the campaign from May 22 to 26, interact with mascots characters (Salem and Salama), enjoy various activities, competitions, drawing corners for children, interactive activities, informative exhibitions, and souvenir gifts for platform visitors.

Dubai: Individuals who need to avail of services from the General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs (GDRFA) in Dubai can do it with ease. This is thanks to the GDRFA Dubai smart application.

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The same services are also available on its website, which provides a platform for submitting and following up on relevant transactions.

GDRFA-Dubai continues its customer-centric efforts by launching the information drive “We Are Here For You” to inform the public about its smart services which customers with internet access can use.

Info drive

The campaign is aimed at introducing users to the services provided, as well as informing them about the procedures and ways to apply for services in the quickest and easiest manner.

The campaign runs for a week at Ibn Battuta Mall from May 22 to 26, and features visa services for Indian nationals on arrival, exit permit services, golden residency , entry permits, visual communication services, and the smart gate service.

This campaign reflects Dubai Residency’s commitment to providing innovative and distinguished services to enhance user experience and satisfaction, meeting users’ requirements and aspirations.

Dubai Residency invites visitors to Ibn Battuta Mall to participate in the campaign, interact with mascots characters (Salem and Salama), enjoy various activities, competitions, drawing corners for children, interactive activities, informative exhibitions, and souvenir gifts for platform visitors.

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ASK THE LAW

Ask the law: Piece-work employee seeks clarity on maternity leave

Understanding legal rights for unpaid annual and maternity leave

Published: May 23, 2024 08:52

Mohammad Ebrahim Al Shaiba, Special to Gulf News

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A pregnant woman working on her laptop. For illustrative purposes only.

Image Credit: File

Question:

I have been working in a private company for two years on a commission basis without salary. My question: I have currently applied for maternity leave. My question: Do I have the legal right to ask for this leave? How maternity leave allowance is calculated and how long is this leave? For two years, I have been taking my annual leave without pay. Do I have the right, according to the labour law, to claim annual leave allowance for a period of two years? Please advise.

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Answer:

I would advise the following:

You have the right to request for maternity leave since you are working for the company with an official employment relationship. The female worker, according to Article (30) of the Federal Law no. 33 of 2021, shall be entitled to a maternity leave of (60) sixty days, according to the following:

- a. The first (45) forty-five days with full wage; and
- b. The following (15) fifteen days with half wage.

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You shall be also entitled to the annual leave because the employer, according to Article (29) of the above mentioned law, may not prevent the worker from benefiting from his annual leave accrued for more than two years, unless the worker wishes to carry it forward or receive a cash allowance for it, in accordance with the regulations in force at the establishment and the Implementing Regulation hereof.

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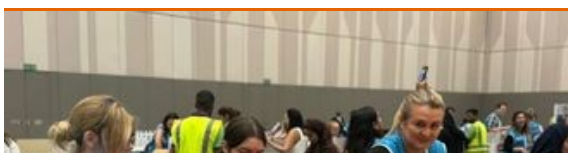
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