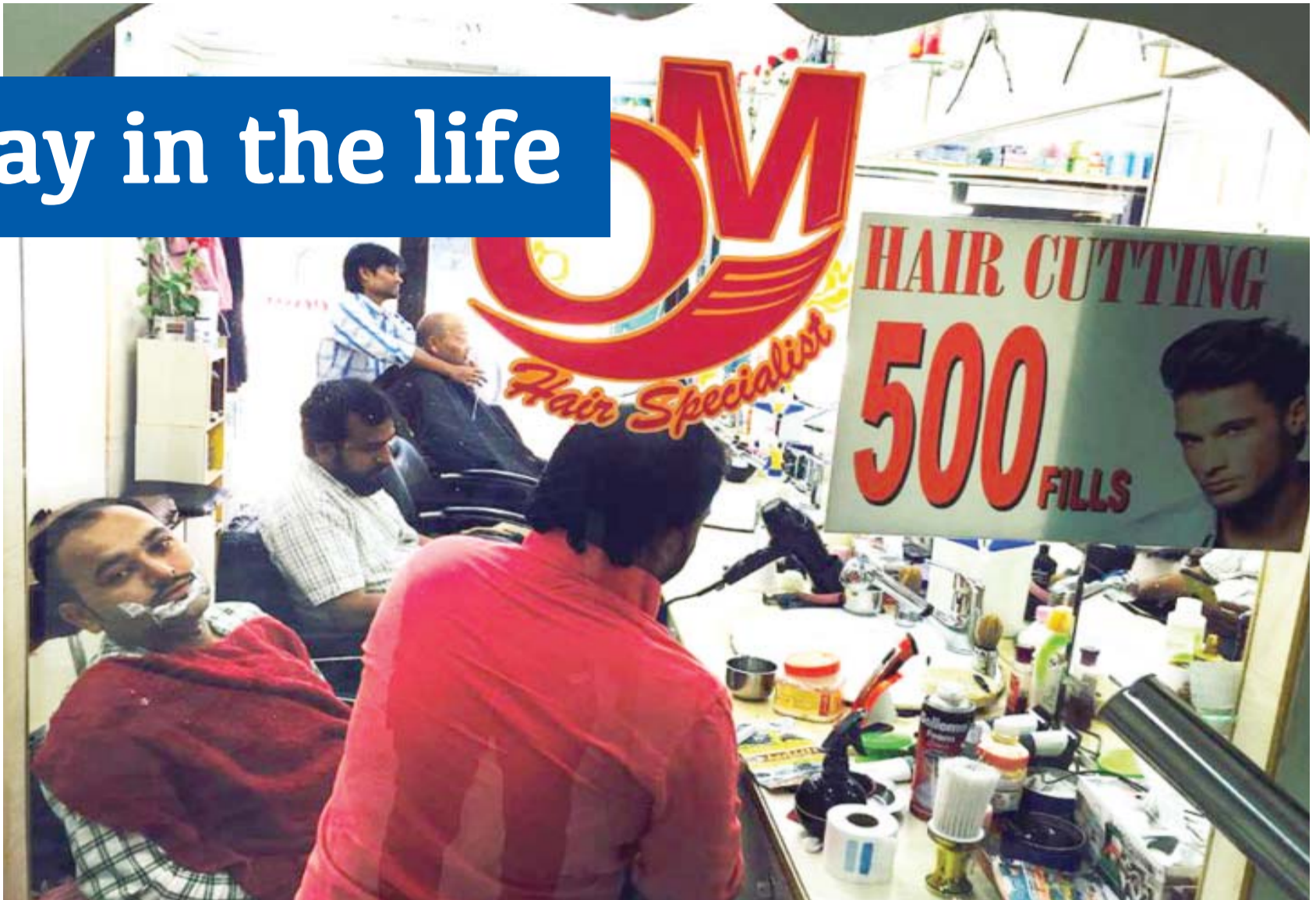


# A day in the life



## A CUT ABOVE: INDIAN BARBER THRIVES IN KUWAIT

Since he started working at Om Salon with his brother in Mirqab, Sunil has made a name for himself among many Indian customers.

By Ben Garcia

**S**unil Gehlot was born with a cleft palate, but this didn't stop him from pursuing his dreams. Sunil is a barber who works with his brother in Kuwait. His wife and three children live in India. Since his childhood, his father taught to survive since he knew it would be difficult for him to lead a normal life, especially since his condition affects communication with others. Sunil learned many skills, from farming to cutting hair, which he eventually made his career. 'Sunil the Barber' was a household name for many years in his hometown in the Indian state of Rajasthan until he decided to work abroad. "It was a difficult decision to leave my family, but the money I was earning was barely enough for them. I wanted to help my parents, besides save money for my children's education. Thankfully, I had my brother to assist me. I paid for a visa to come to Kuwait and started working at my brother's barbershop," he told Kuwait Times.

Sunil's father is a simple man but a good life coach. Sunil learned many things from him, including facing people bravely and working hard for a living, despite his cleft lip. "I was born with it, so I live with it, as long as people around me understand my condition. The other option was to stay at home and do nothing. I chose to work and lead a normal life. I hear people saying bad things about my condition, but thank God there are people who really care and understand," he noted. Sunil also didn't have any problem securing a

visa to Kuwait. "There are friendly people here and they don't discriminate," he said.

Since he started working at Om Salon with his brother in Mirqab, Sunil has made a name for himself among many Indian customers. He has been working in the salon for nearly four years and has earned his own set of regular and loyal customers. "I am happy for him. I helped him get a visa. It was hard to convince him to come here, but he eventually gave in," said his brother Om at his eponymous salon.

At the shop, some customers said they only want Sunil to care for their hair. "I have been his regular customer for two years now. I come for a haircut, shave and dye," a customer said. Om is happy about the loyalty expressed by customers. "He is our lucky charm here," he said dotingly. "He is not only my brother, but a good barber. I have four workers here including Sunil. Half of my earnings are paid to the workers and the remaining 50 percent is for operational expenses and rent of the salon. I also give a percentage to my Kuwaiti business partner," he revealed.

Friday, Saturday and Sunday are the busiest days of the week, since these are days off for many domestic workers. The salon is open every day from 9 am to 11 pm. Customers are offered additional services other than a haircut, which costs 500 fils. The price is relatively low compared to other places in Kuwait, because of the shop's location in Mirqab. "We need to keep the price low because many other barber-shops here are charging the same amount," said Om.

