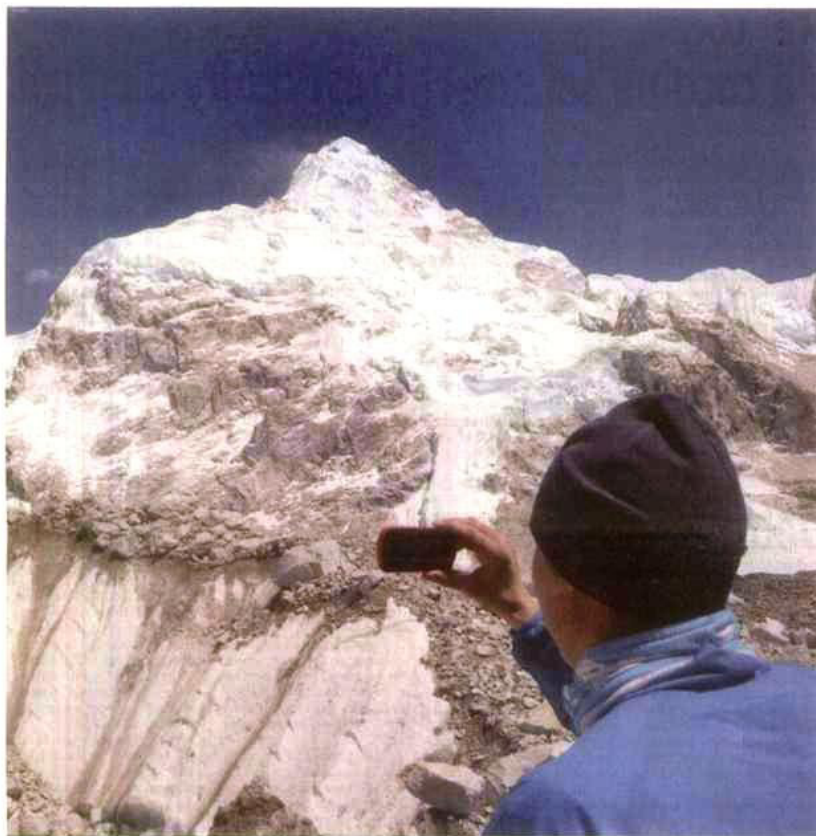


Mountaineer caps Everest conquest by winning hearts

An exclusive model of a cellphone handset and protective headgear, both used by Mount Everest's conqueror Atte Miettinen, have been placed on an online auction, the proceeds of which will go to the Dubai Autism Centre



Dubai-based Finnish mountaineer Atte Miettinen who recently climbed the peak of Mt. Everest, taking pictures of the mountain.

BY JAMIL KHAN

DUBAI: Supporting educational and skill training centres — especially those that benefit children with special needs — has always received huge response from all sections of society in the UAE. A step in this direction was taken by Dubai-based Finnish mountaineer, Atte Miettinen, who recently climbed the peak of Mt. Everest.

An exclusive model of a cellphone handset — Nokia's latest — and protective headgear, both of which were used by the man who conquered the world's highest mountain, have been placed on an online auction, the proceeds of which will go to the Dubai Autism Centre (DAC).

In an exclusive interview with The Gulf Today, Miettinen said on Saturday that he was honoured by Nokia by their donation of their latest gadget — the 808 PureView phone — ahead of its worldwide launch.

"Through the new 41 megapixel phone, I took some awesome pictures on my way up Mount Everest, besides staying connected

on my latest expedition," he added.

The online auction, which has got off the ground on Dubizzle.com, invites anyone to come and take part in it. The higher bidder will win a package, which includes the prototype Nokia 808 PureView that Miettinen took with him to document his journey to the top of the world in addition to a second Nokia 808 PureView, enabling the winner to keep the "Everest version" at home.

Besides, the winner of the auction will also get images taken by Miettinen on the mountain with the phone.

In addition, the package includes the protective headgear that Miettinen used while climbing several mountains, including Mount Everest.

It has been Miettinen's mission, who climbed Kilimanjaro in Tanzania for the second time in 2006, to climb all seven highest peaks in the world. So far, he has conquered six of the "Seven Summits."

"The last one will be Denali, the highest mountain in Alaska, North America. I am leaving for what should be a three-

week expedition this Thursday, so I hope everyone has fingers crossed for me so that I have good luck on the mountain," he added.

Living in the UAE for almost six years, Miettinen termed the emirate of Dubai "a great place to live in — the only thing missing here being high mountains."

Regarding the choice of Dubai Autism Centre (DAC) as beneficiary of the proceeds of the auction, he said, "I've been in Dubai for almost six years, so I've had a chance to get to know some of the local charities. The DAC does a great job not only in educating the community about autism but actually helps children with autism as also their families. It was a pretty easy choice for me," he commented.

Sharing his expedition experience, he said the journey took almost two months, as most of the time was spent in acclimatising the body to the low oxygen at high altitude.

"On the summit of Everest, the amount of oxygen in the air is only 30 per cent as compared to what we breathe here in Dubai, at sea-level, and

that takes time to get used to," he added.

The actual summit journey, from Everest Base Camp to the summit and back, took six days.

About the whole idea to climb Mount Everest, he stated: "The idea had been marinating for several years but it was difficult to see how I could make the dream come true. Then last year, after climbing one of the Seven Summits — Carstensz Pyramid in Indonesia — with my wife, I made the decision to take a sabbatical to pursue the remaining 'Seven Summits,' including Mount Everest. It's amazing to think that here I am, 12 months later, having climbed the highest mountain in the world as well as the highest mountain in Antarctica and in South America. It's been a great experience," he added.

In answer to a question regarding the next challenge, he said, "While I was on Everest, it was confirmed that my wife's expecting, so my next big challenge will be parenthood! I'm pretty sure that climbing Everest will feel like a piece of cake compared to becoming a father for the first time!"