

A special registration day for qualified Filipino voters

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The Embassy of the Philippines has announced a special registration day on Friday from 9am to 12 noon for Filipinos who will cast their votes in the May 2022 Philippine national elections.

Qualified voters who have not registered yet should visit the embassy located in Mahooz as personal appearance is required.

Details or biometrics will be captured and those who want to register must bring along a photocopy of valid passport. For seafarers, seaman's book is required aside from a copy of the Philippine passport.

Overseas registration started in December 2019 and will run until September 30, 2021.

The next Philippine general elections – set to take place on May 9, 2022 – will select the successor of current President Rodrigo Duterte, as well as vice-president, 12 senators and a party-list representative.

Filipino voters may cast their votes at the embassy for one month, from April 10 to May 9 next year.

All qualified Filipino citizens residing and working abroad – better known as the Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) – should contact the embassy for details on how to proceed. More details can also be found on the embassy's official website: <https://manamape.dfa.gov.ph/>

Cyprus: A diverse, family-friendly Mediterranean destination

TDT sits down with Deputy Minister of Tourism from the Republic of Cyprus, Savvas Pedios, who highlights the major strides his country has undertaken over the past 18 months, in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, to vastly reshape its tourism industry and make the sector 'more resilient, more competitive, more green and more digital'

By P Unnikrishnan

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The Republic of Cyprus has taken major strides in vastly developing its tourism industry over the past 18 months, and has successfully done so despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, says Deputy Minister of Tourism Savvas Pedios.

In an exclusive interview with TDT, Pedios highlights that the eastern Mediterranean island has worked on creating "a more resilient tourism industry" that is a reflection of the times and that can cater to all kinds of travellers.

He admits that his country's tourism sector, like everywhere else in the world, has taken a big hit because of the coronavirus crisis, but that hasn't stopped them from looking towards the future and bolstering everything Cyprus has to offer to the world.

"The pandemic is here, it's been a disaster for tourism, but there will be the day when the pandemic finishes, and we need to make sure we show up in a different way," Pedios told TDT.

"We cannot come out of this pandemic in the same way we went in. We have worked a lot over the past 18 months to be



Deputy Minister Pedios with TDT Chairman and Managing Director P Unnikrishnan

able to deliver something new to travellers that is COVID-proof, and that is in line with how the new tourism is going to look.

"I think we have done a very good job of that."

Pedios is currently in Bahrain on an official visit during which he aims to promote Cyprus' recent tourism achievements while also meeting with the Kingdom's high-ranking officials to further develop bilateral relations for the benefit of tourism for both island nations.

He explained that Cyprus' tourism ministry built on three main pillars in their planned expansion of the sector.

The first was developing the country's rural and mountain areas, which he described as the focal

point of their product. "We have noticed that people want to move towards the rural areas, they want to meet the locals and mix with them, and want to have these kinds of experiences," he said.

Pedios said that the second pillar was improving Cyprus' infrastructure especially in special-interest tourism. "We have added a couple of marinas and integrated a casino resort and entertainment, which is going to be great for many markets," he explained.

"Our golf courses are now of international standard—we have one of the biggest PGA golf tournaments in the Cyprus Open.

"We have improved facilities in diving centres and hiking trails, and we have been adding shelters

"We have worked a lot over the past 18 months to be able to deliver something new to travellers that is COVID-proof, and that is in line with how the new tourism is going to look. I think we have done a very good job of that."

- SAVVAS PERDIOS, CYPRUS DEPUTY MINISTER OF TOURISM

in the forest so that people can backpack or go with their bike.

"We have been improving accessibility to cultural sites for people with mobility problems, improving the quality of our beaches and taking away plastic sunbeds and replacing them with more natural, wooden sunbeds and umbrellas."

The Cypriot deputy minister then explained that the third pillar was utilising funding received from the European Union from its recovery fund in order to build "a more resilient tourism industry—an industry which is more competitive, more green

and more digital".

"We are using some of that money to improve health, wellness and medical facilities in hotels, to renovate restaurants that are serving Greek cuisine, changing the chairs, the front-of-house for customers, and renovate shops that sell traditional products that are handmade in Cyprus," he enumerated.

"We are using the money as well to create authentic experiences within the destinations, and giving funds for the renovation of agrotourism and hotel facilities in the mountains.

"A lot of money is being invested, not only on mega projects, but also in the more boutique, smaller-style accommodations and businesses.

"Ultimately, the whole point of all of this is Cyprus has realised that tourism is changing."

Pedios expressed his country's enthusiasm in welcoming visitors from Bahrain in the near future, stressing that Cyprus is a very family-friendly destination where travellers from Bahrain don't need to quarantine anymore.

"We have been attracting families to Cyprus for 40 to 50 years; it is a very safe destination, very diverse, very tolerant," he said. "I think Cyprus has a good future from a tourism perspective."

Historic step on path to regional peace

● Bahrain participates in first anniversary of historic peace agreement signing with Israel

New York

The bilateral relations between Bahrain and Israel have been progressing remarkably following the signing of several memoranda of understanding in various fields.

This has led to establishing a promising cooperation that contributes positively to the peace and development process in the region.

Bahrain's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York Jamal Faris Al Ruwaie made the remarks as he participated in the celebration of the first anniversary of the



The ceremony marking the occasion

signing of the historic peace agreements between the Kingdom and Israel.

The arrival of Bahrain's Ambassador to Israel and the expected official opening of the Bahraini embassy in Tel Aviv constitute another milestone in the growing bilateral relations, he added.

Al Ruwaie highlighted the approach of Bahrain under the

leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, and of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, based on promoting peace in the region and on the values of coexistence, mutual respect and true cooperation.

Al Ruwaie expressed appreciation for the US role in taking

the historic step on the path to peace, security and real and lasting prosperity in the region and stressed Bahrain's keenness to advance the values of coexistence, tolerance and harmony for the good of humanity.

He also affirmed that based on its belief that a just and comprehensive peace is the best guarantee for the future of the peoples of the region, Bahrain will continue to work with its international partners to achieve the desired peace and meet the peoples' aspirations for security, stability and prosperity.

The UAE Permanent Representative Lana Nusseibeh, Morocco's Permanent Representative Omar Hilale and Israel's Permanent Representative Gilad Erdan also participated in the ceremony held in the presence of the US Permanent Representative Linda Thomas-Greenfield.

Boost for fight against money laundering

● Labour Minister hails Bahrain's top ranking on Basel AML Index

● Boost for role in combatting terrorist financing

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Minister Humaidan

Labour and Social Development Minister Jameel bin Mohammed Ali Humaidan has praised Bahrain's top ranking on the Basel AML Index.

Bahrain ranked first in the Arab region and second in the Middle East, for the second year in a row, on the Basel AML Index, an independent annual ranking that assesses the risk of money laundering and terrorist financing (ML/TF) around the world.

Bahrain scored 4.5 points according to the report, the only independent indicator issued by a non-profit organisation that rates countries worldwide according to the risk of money laundering.

This achievement that confirms Bahrain's prestigious international status in numerous areas, including efforts to combat money laundering and terrorist financing, was achieved

thanks to the wise leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and the sound directives and vigorous follow-up of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, the minister said.

They have strengthened Bahrain's regional and international role in combating money laundering and terrorist financing in accordance with the national vision in this regard, he added.

The minister also paid tribute to the Interior Minister General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, the Chairman of the Committee to Combat Extremism, Terrorism, Its Financing and Money Laundering, and to the Governor of the Central Bank of Bahrain, Rasheed Mohammed Al Maraj.

Bahrain ranked 11th globally in traffic congestion

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Bahrain has been ranked 11th globally in traffic congestion, according to figures released by the Economist.

The Kingdom came fourth among the Arab countries that appeared on the list of the countries with the most traffic jam across the globe.

It has been listed behind the UAE, Kuwait

and Jordan, respectively. As per the figures, there are 154.8 cars in each kilometre in Bahrain's road network.

The Economist's traffic congestion indicator included 50 countries, 10 of which are Arabs, and the UAE topped the list with 587.4 cars in each kilometre. Monaco was second with 427.3 cars per kilometre.



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