

New specialised port for cruise ships on the anvil

Plans are also developing to organise trips using amphibious buses

● **Corona pandemic has cancelled 55 port of calls of cruise ships**

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Plans are on the anvil to develop a specialised port for cruise ships, with the Diyar Al Muharraq, the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Tourism Zayed bin Rashid Al-Zayani revealed. The minister also said that the authorities are also working to organise land and sea trips using amphibious buses.

The expectation is that all these and other umpteen projects in the pipeline will help the Kingdom alleviate the effects of the painful blow dealt by the coronavirus outbreak to the tourism sector.

The outbreak had forced operators to cancel 55 cruise ship port of calls in Bahrain during the 2019/2020 season, said the minister.

"This happened at a time when the Kingdom was expecting the travellers footfall to reach 103,000, but COVID-19 derailed all that."

"Nearly 81 thousand tourists



came to Bahrain, mostly Europeans, during the 2018-19 cruise season." That season, which began in October 2018, continued until April 2019.

Replying to a parliamentary question by MP Ali Zayed, Al Zayani said the Kingdom at-

taches great importance to the tourism sector, which witnesses rapid global growth.

Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority is working according to a strategy to make Bahrain an elite family tourist destination based on a boutique

lifestyle making full use of the thriving business environment, vibrant modern lifestyle and the status as a hub for conferences.

The strategy, the minister said, follows a four-pronged approach, which includes promoting Bahrain globally, ensuring ease of access and mobility, developing and increasing various types of accommodations, and diversifying tourism revenues.

The authority is keen on mar-

keting the archaeological and modern sites in Bahrain, increasing cruise ship port calls by providing incentives to shipping companies, developing and improving port facilities with the private sector, operating tours for cruise ship passengers and participating in relevant international exhibitions.

Explaining, the minister said work is currently underway to develop several waterfronts directly and in cooperation with the private sector, which includes beaches, restaurants, cafes, walkways and public facilities.

In the past five years, Bahrain, the minister said, introduced 21 tourism activities like operating tours, diving trips and pearling to enhance marine tourism revenues.

The number of activities licensed to practice in the sector reached 16 during the last four years. "These are proving crucial to the growth in the number of cruise ship visitors."

The minister also attributed the recent jump in tourism revenues to islands like Jarada, Hawar that provide opportunities to practise various marine activities.

Shellfish collection trips also turned out as a major tourist magnet, the minister added.

"Amongst them, the most im-



work is currently underway to develop several waterfronts directly and in cooperation with the private sector, which includes beaches, restaurants, cafes, walkways and public facilities.

ZAYED BIN RASHID AL-ZAYANI

portant being the addition of the Dive Bahrain, the largest of its kind in the world."

"These activities are consolidating Bahrain's position on the global marine tourism map," added the minister.

Labour Minister inspects Child Protection Centre



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Labour and Social Development Minister, and Chairman of the National Childhood Committee, Jameel bin Mohammed Ali Humaidan, yesterday held an inspection visit to the Child Protection Centre in Manama.

The visit was part of efforts to deal with cases of abuse, violence or negligence against children.

The minister verified the services and procedures to protect children, treat them and reintegrate them into society within a secure family environment.

The minister affirmed the ministry's keenness to develop the Child Protection Centre.

The centre receives complaints through the toll-free hotline (998).



JEE last-minute cancellation: Indian Embassy says in touch with NTA

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Students might get another chance to sit for the Joint Entrance Examination or JEE (main) 2021 in Bahrain after the exam to be held on 23rd this month was suspended at the last minute, citing COVID-19 restrictions.

Indian Embassy, in a statement to *Daily Tribune*, said they are in "touch with the National Testing Agency (NTA) of India regarding the conduct of JEE (main) 2021 in the Kingdom."

Talks are also ongoing regarding "the February Session exams not held in Bahrain due to Covid related restrictions."

The embassy confirmed: "A suitable plan will come for the conduct of B.Arch/ B.Planning papers, in the interest of the candidates."

For B.E./B.Tech, the embassy said, "The candidates could appear in the March session, along with other candidates."

For further updates, the embassy said, "The students should remain in touch with the National Institute of Bahrain, as well as NTA and Embassy websites, and Social media handles."

Many students had told *Tribune* that the authorities left



Representative picture (Courtesy of Hindustan Times)

them in the dark until the last minute regarding the decision to cancel the exam.

"The exam centre informed an hour before the first batch was supposed to write the exam on 23rd that due to COVID-19 restrictions the exams cannot be held," students and parents told *Tribune*.

The Joint Entrance Examination (JEE Main) comprises two papers. The Paper1 is for admission to Undergraduate Engineering Programmes (B.E./B.Tech) at NITs, IIITs, other Centrally Funded Technical Institutions (CFTIs), Institutions/

Universities funded/recognised by participating State Governments, as well as an eligibility test for JEE (Advanced), which is for admission to IITs.

Around 200 students were supposed to appear for this exam on 23rd this month.

Parents say they approached the Indian Embassy but were told, "Since they were involved at the last minute, they were unable to assist."

Parents said they are now left worried about their kids and wondering if Bahrain will continue to be an examination centre.

Most of the students and parents said their recommendation is to conduct the missed exam again.

The "best course of action would be for the missed exams to be held again for these students," parents told *Tribune*.

They also urged to ensure that Bahrain will continue to be a centre for such examinations in the future. According to the Ministry of Education, India, "The JEE (Main) is being conducted in multiple Sessions (February/March/April/May 2021) for admissions in the next academic session."