

Hurghada Museum: 1,000 Egyptian artifacts awaiting Red Sea tourists

Author:

Tue, 2020-01-07 01:13

CAIRO: The Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities is putting the finishing touches to the Hurghada Museum, which will open by the end of January, coinciding with the national day of the Red Sea governorate.

The Hurghada Museum is the first to be inaugurated in partnership with the private sector in Egypt.

It houses 1,000 artifacts including royal pieces that date back to the royal epoch in Egypt at the beginning of the 20th century.

The museum is expected to contribute to boosting tourism in the Red Sea governorate east of Cairo.

Hurghada is a city in the Red Sea governorate, a major tourist center 400 km from the capital.

The museum, which covers 10,000 square meters, displays artifacts, and has an entertainment area, shopping complex and parking lots. It cost 160 million Egyptian pounds (\$10 million).

Tourism and Antiquities Minister Khaled El-Anany said in a statement issued by the ministry that a few changes were being made to the displays so that pieces would "match certain places in the museum."

El-Anany said that the museum would also include a section to display the cultural heritage and monuments of the Red Sea.

He said the inauguration of the museum "would contribute to a great extent in attracting tourists to visit museums during their stay in Hurghada in addition to enjoying beach activities. Thus, this will increase the state's income and promote Egyptian antiquities."

Museum officials have put on show the statue of Queen Meret Amun, replacing the King Tutmoses III plate.

They decided to give the statue a more prominent place in front of the museum.

Bashar Abu Taleb, head of the Red Sea Tour Guides Union, said that the artifacts reflect the elements of beauty in Egyptian civilization across the eras.

Abu Taleb said the museum introduces beauty at a deeper level and in more detail, in addition to displaying instruments used in daily life, such as makeup, cooking utensils and clothes.

The museum will include a special section displaying the cultural heritage and monuments of the Red Sea.

Abu Taleb said that the museum would include all the monuments of the Red Sea governorate, which were selected from museum storehouses in Cairo.

The selected pieces include artifacts from Al-Hammamat Valley, the Roman city monuments in Safaga, the Roman city in Gouna, and Wady Gasus, south of Sinai, in addition to monuments belonging to various eras, including gold pieces, artifacts belonging to the family of Mohamed Ali, regarded as the founder of modern Egypt, and a Roman theater. The Red Sea governorate announced on its official Facebook page that Red Sea Governor Amr Hanafy was following up on construction work at the museum.

Hanafy inspected a number of pieces prior to the museum's inauguration on the national day of the governorate scheduled for Jan. 22.

However, the Ministry of Antiquities has yet to officially announce the inaugural date.

World-renowned antiquities expert, Zahy Hawwas, said that the Hurghada Museum was one of the best projects implemented by the Ministry of Antiquities in partnership with the private sector, which built the museum and covered the cost of its completion in accordance with the terms and conditions stipulated by the ministry.

Hawwas said that the Ministry of Antiquities would solely supervise the museum's administration and that it would attract more tourists, encourage holidaymakers to visit museums during their stay in coastal areas, and would also promote Egyptian antiquities.

He said that the museum would highlight the beauty of the displayed pieces.

"It was designed in accordance with international museum standards," Hawwas said.

"The scenario of its displays would manifest beauty and luxury in Egyptian civilization throughout the ages. Some pieces feature the luxurious home environment of the ancient Egyptians such as furniture, makeup, wigs, clothes, ornaments, perfumes, and accessories."

Hawwas said that the museum's displays would also feature sports equipment used for Nile fishing and hunting on land, in addition to musical instruments and dance starting from the Pharaonic era to modern times.

A special daily program will feature cultural activities that will be held at the museum's entertainment zone.





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Egypt displays restoration of Tutankhamun gilded coffin
Opera about Egypt's King Tutankhamun set to debut in 2020

Surge in Lebanese crossing into Syria for supplies, new year celebrations

Author:

Tue, 2020-01-07 01:04

BEIRUT: Officials in Syria on Monday reported a surge in the number of Lebanese citizens crossing into the war-torn country for supplies, and new year celebrations.

Of the 26,500 people who passed through border controls on Dec. 30 and 31, at least 11,000 of them were Lebanese, Al-Watan newspaper quoted a Syrian source as saying.

Since the start of the conflict in Syria, Lebanese visitor numbers to the country have dropped significantly, with the majority of those entering being Syrian workers, merchants, foreign relief workers and diplomats.

However, a customs official at the Al-Masnaa border post with Syria told Arab News: "The movement of Lebanese entering Syrian territories on Dec. 30 and 31 was very active ... Talking about 11,000 Lebanese is very reasonable and perhaps the number is greater than that.

"We have not seen such a movement (of Lebanese citizens) since the beginning of the war in Syria. (The movement was) mostly confined to the Syrians."

Cheaper prices for food and domestic products coupled with lower health care costs have been cited as the main reasons for the sudden influx of Lebanese into Syria.

Due to the economic crisis in Lebanon, hard-pressed citizens have been returning to Syrian markets to stock up on home supplies.

Khaled Al-Husseini, who owns a communications store in Chtoura near to Al-Masnaa crossing, said that \$100 was equivalent to 85,000 Syrian pounds, which could buy a month's supply of food items such as sugar, rice, pasta, grains and other consumables, including cleaning materials, in Syria.

Meat was also cheaper in Syria than Lebanon, he added, with the price of a kilogram of lamb in Syria being 19,000 Lebanese pounds (\$12.58) compared to 30,000 Lebanese pounds in Lebanon. This was "after its price increased due to the liquidity crisis and the high dollar exchange rate in Lebanon," said Al-Husseini.

He noted that there were many reasons for Lebanese crossing the border into Syria.

"It may be for a visit to a religious place and to buy home supplies, clothes

and shoes at the same time because these things are cheaper in Syria than Lebanon, especially sports shoes. Some visitors go to Syria for medical care because the costs there are cheaper than Lebanon.”

A money changer at an exchange located on a road leading to the border at Al-Masnaa, said business was brisk.

“There are some Lebanese people who enter the free market at the Lebanese-Syrian border point to buy cigarettes and tobacco because it is cheaper than Lebanon, and they pay in hard (foreign) currency.

“And there are those who take dollars with them to Syria, and most of them are families of members of Hezbollah who get paid in dollars.”

One resident of a town near the Syrian border, said: “There were people, especially the younger generation, who spent New Year’s Eve in Syria, and they told me that the evening was very enjoyable and cheaper than in Lebanon.”

It takes less than one-and-a-half hours to drive between the capital cities of Beirut and Damascus with travel times even less from central Bekaa to Damascus where many Lebanese saw in 2020.

The customs official pointed out that restrictions applied to Lebanese citizens on the quantity of food and other items they could take out of Syria. This was limited to an estimate of personal needs and larger quantities meant for trade were not allowed.

A treaty signed between Lebanon and Syria allows Lebanese to reside in Syria for up to six months, while Syrians can stay in Lebanon for 15 days provided that they have hotel reservations. However, Syrians with a Lebanese sponsor have the right to stop in Lebanon for one year.

Lebanon hosts about 1 million Syrian refugees on its territory.

Their return to Syria is conditional on obtaining approval from the Syrian authorities.



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Government formation in Lebanon still facing obstaclesLebanon's Aoun hopes government will be formed next week, former minister warns of need for huge bailout

[Soleimani strike threatens UK 'lives and interests'](#)

Author:

Tue, 2020-01-07 01:01

LONDON: When the sun rose on Jan. 3, the world woke to unprecedented contemporary tensions between the US and Iran.

As an American drone fired missiles at the convoy of Iranian Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad at around 1 a.m., most of Washington's allies were in the dark.

British sources said the government was not informed ahead of the strike, despite the heavy UK presence in the region and Iraq.

Washington's failure to forewarn London amid heightened regional tensions has

caused confusion and concern among commentators and politicians.

"I've long believed that the purpose of having allies is that we can surprise our enemies and not each other," said Tom Tugendhat, a Conservative MP and chair of the foreign affairs committee in the previous UK Parliament.

The failure to share information has become "a pattern," and it is "a bit of a shame that the US administration of late has not shared with us, and that is a matter of concern," he added.

A source close to Downing Street told Arab News that UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson – who is currently holidaying on the private Caribbean island of Mustique – was unaware that the strike was due to take place.

As global leaders weighed in on the incident, Johnson remained silent until Jan. 5, when he was careful not to deliver a statement that was overly supportive of US President Donald Trump's orders.

Johnson said Britain "will not lament" the loss of Iran's top general, but fell short of supporting the attack.

A surprisingly short statement from Britain's Foreign Office did not contain a line of support for Trump's decision to kill Soleimani.

In a statement, UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said Britain had "always recognized the aggressive threat posed by the Iranian Quds force," but he called for de-escalation, adding: "Further conflict is in none of our interests."

Lucy Fisher, defense editor at The Times, said Iran was "convinced of its status as a world superpower," and the chance of it launching attacks on British interests was "very possible given the UK is inextricably linked with the US in the eyes of Iran."

A senior commander in the Quds Force – Iran's international military force, responsible for supporting proxy militias – told The Times on Jan. 6: "Our forces will retaliate and target US troops in (the) Middle East without any concern about killing its allies, including UK troops, as this has turned into a fully fledged war with much collateral damage expected."

The commander added: "We request (the) UK, the key US ally, and other Western allies ... to not stand with this Trump regime."

His inflammatory comments come as Iraqi police confirmed that two rockets had injured six people in Baghdad's Green Zone, where the US Embassy is based.

Iraq's Parliament has backed a resolution supported by Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi to expel foreign forces – including British troops – from the country.

Raab responded by urging Baghdad to abandon the resolution. He told Iraq's government that an ejection of NATO forces would allow Daesh to "exploit the vacuum" left behind.

Arab News understands that Britain's Defense Ministry is preparing new plans to secure UK interests and personnel after the resolution.

The 400 British armed forces personnel based in Iraq have shifted their mission from training local forces to fight Daesh, to defending NATO bases and high-value individuals.

The Royal Navy now plans to resume its escort of merchant vessels through the Strait of Hormuz following the heightened tensions.

HMS Montrose and HMS Defender, a frigate and a destroyer respectively, had ended their escorting duties in 2019, but will now return to their duties.

But despite the widely perceived threat to British interests, and the predictable trouble this has brought to London, the US failed to consult or even brief the UK ahead of the attack.

The diplomatic silence over an assassination that has huge ramifications for British security has led to some questioning the value of the "special relationship" between the two nations.

"We pride ourselves on the so-called 'special relationship,' yet there's often little evidence that the US has a special relationship with anyone other than itself," said Charlie Herbert, a former British Army major general.

Kyle Orton, an independent terrorism researcher, told Arab News: "British interests are at risk, arguably more than American interests if Iran is looking for a calibrated response that doesn't provoke worse from Washington."

But he added: "The need for speed and secrecy makes it imperative to keep the circle of people aware small."

According to reports from the Los Angeles Times, that circle was small but included Israel. Barak Ravid, a journalist with sources in Israel's government, said on Jan. 4 that the "US informed Israel about this operation in Iraq apparently a few days ago."

A well-informed Israeli army officer told the Los Angeles Times that the attack "did not come as a surprise."

After decades of fighting alongside American troops, and with thousands of British military and governmental personnel deployed in the Middle East to work alongside US forces, many Britons will be wondering what more they must do to enjoy the kind of advance notice afforded to Israel.



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How Iranian, Qatari media glorified Qassem Soleimani

[Protesters in Iraq slam Iranian, US 'occupiers'](#)

Author:

Mon, 2020-01-06 02:01

JEDDAH: Protesters in Iraq denounced both Iran and the US as “occupiers” on Sunday as the fallout continued from the death of Iranian warlord Qassem Soleimani.

The Iraqi parliament voted for all foreign troops to leave, Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah said all US forces in the Middle East would pay the price for Soleimani’s death, and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Iran was likely to “make a mistake and ... go after some of our forces in Iraq or northeast Syria.”

Soleimani, the Quds Force chief who set up and controlled proxy militias for Iran throughout the Middle East, was killed by a US drone missile strike near

Baghdad airport early on Friday.

Black-clad mourners packed the Iranian city of Mashhad on Sunday as a coffin carrying Soleimani's remains was paraded through the streets.

"Iran is wearing black, revenge, revenge," they chanted as darkness fell and they followed the truck carrying the coffin toward the floodlit Imam Reza shrine.

In Iraq, however, attempts to hail Soleimani as a hero were resisted. Many Iraqis blame him for propping up the government they have been trying to bring down since early October, and protesters in the southern city of Nasiriyah blocked a mourning procession for him.

In Diwaniyah, also in the south, hundreds of young Iraqis marched through the streets chanting: "No to Iran, no to America." One protester said: "We're taking a stance against the two occupiers."

Meanwhile, Iraq's parliament called on Sunday for all foreign military forces to leave.

"The Iraqi government must work to end the presence of any foreign troops on Iraqi soil and prohibit them from using its land, air space or water for any reason," the resolution said.

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah said Soleimani's killing marked a new chapter in the history of the Middle East, and revenge attacks on the US military in the region would force them to withdraw "humiliated, defeated and in terror ... as they left in the past."



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Iraq parliament demands removal of US troops after Soleimani killing
King Salman calls Iraqi president, expresses Kingdom's keenness on stability in Iraq

[Lebanese refuse Nasrallah's 'declaration of war' on US](#)

Author:

Mon, 2020-01-06 02:00

BEIRUT: There were mixed responses in Lebanon to a speech by Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah on Sunday about the assassination of Qassem Soleimani.

A media activist, who declined to be named, said Nasrallah's speech amounted to "a declaration of war" on the US. "How can the leader of a Lebanese party declare such war?"

Former MP Fares Saeed said: "There is nothing new in Nasrallah's speech except that it is a high tone, an attempt to call to arms and a statement that Iran's prestige still exists despite the assassination of Soleimani."

"The results will not change what is happening," he said. "There is an American decision to blockade Iran."

On the impact of the speech on internal matters in Lebanon, he said: "Before and after the assassination, Lebanon is governed by Hezbollah and it is unable to save Lebanon from the crises that it is suffering from, economically and financially."

But Wafa Sharif, a retired employee, said that she listened to Nasrallah's speech to find out what would happen and "he assured me that there is no war in Lebanon but (the war is) in Iraq. There are no American bases in Lebanon. And if this is the limit of revenge, then this is reassuring, but I do not know how far they will succeed and what are the repercussions of this step."

Hania Kinao, a Twitter activist, said: "Go back to Iran; we know that you don't care about Lebanon."

In his speech, Nasrallah called the assassination of Soleimani, the commander of Iran's Quds Force, "a landmark separating two stages in the region. (It is) A new phase not only in the history of Iran or Iraq but for the whole

region.”

“Trump’s policy aims to bring Iran to the negotiating table, but his term will end before Iran goes to him, and he will not receive a phone call,” he said.

Nasrallah said that the deputy head of the Popular Mobilization Forces, Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis, “was with me about two months ago in the southern suburbs of Beirut and asked me to pray for him to be a martyr.”

“The bombing of the convoy of Soleimani and Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis turned everyone into pieces that are difficult to distinguish,” he said.

“The Iraqis were united in the funeral of Soleimani and Al-Muhandis, and they will not let any American soldier stay in Iraq,” he said. “The resistance forces must cooperate because the region is going to a different stage. The resistance forces must decide how to deal with or act with this event. Iran will not ask for anything. It is not permissible to content ourselves with consolation and memorial, the process is not against Iran, but against all our axis, and we must all work for just retribution.”

“This means the American military presence in the region, the military bases, the American military battleships, every American officer and soldier on our lands. The American army is the one that killed, and it will pay the price.”

There is nothing new in Nasrallah’s speech except that it is a high tone, an attempt to call to arms and a statement that Iran’s prestige still exists despite the assassination of Soleimani.

Fares Saeed, Former Lebanese MP

He said: “By fair retribution, we do not mean the American people throughout our region. There are American citizens who should not be harmed. Harming them serves Trump’s policy.”

He added: “The martyrdom seekers who drove the Americans out of our area in the past are still there and much more than they were before. And when the American coffins return to the US, Trump and his administration will realize that they lost the region, they will lose the elections, and the response to the killing of Soleimani is to remove the American forces from all of our region and the goal will be achieved.”

Nasrallah’s speech was accompanied by the deployment of the Lebanese army in the southern suburbs of Beirut, on the roads from Baalbek to Dahr Al-Baydar, and from Sidon to Beirut.

Pictures of Soleimani were hung on billboards on the Beirut airport road and in the southern suburbs. Supporters of Hezbollah also raised a picture of Soleimani at the Barakat Al-Naqqar Gate on the border with the occupied Lebanese Shebaa Farms and wrote on it: “With your blood, we will cross it.”

The pictures on the Beirut airport road were criticized by social media activists. Rania Al-Khatib published a picture of the scene and commented: "These pictures are not in Iran but in Lebanon on the airport road."

Another activist said: "Hanging the pictures on the airport road is totally and completely rejected. Those who love him should hang his picture in their homes; the airport and the airport road are only for the Lebanese. We respect your sorrow, respect our Lebanese identity."



Main category:

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Hezbollah's disquieting presence in South America
Pompeo sees 'real likelihood' Iran will try to hit US troops