

Egypt's tourism 'will return to pre-COVID-19 levels by fall 2022'

Author:

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CAIRO: Tourism in Egypt will return to pre-pandemic levels by fall 2022, according to a government minister.

Khaled Al-Anani, who is minister of tourism and antiquities, said the sector's recovery and restoration to pre-pandemic levels would be because of countries' COVID-19 vaccination programs as well as Egypt's efforts in developing archaeological sites in the Red Sea and South Sinai areas. He said that, in the last three months of 2020, Egypt had received between 270,000 and 290,000 tourists on a monthly basis, equivalent to 10,000 tourists a day.

Al-Anani said the Grand Egyptian Museum would be finished during the third quarter of 2021 provided that, within the next few days, the winning international coalition to manage the museum's operations was announced. He added that the ministry had contacted 30 companies that organize concerts and Olympics to participate in the opening ceremony of the Grand Egyptian Museum but, while three had been chosen to organize the event, the pandemic had disrupted these plans.

The tourism sector is one of the Egyptian economy's main pillars. It made revenues of \$4 billion in 2020, compared to \$13.03 billion in 2019. The country received about 3.5 million tourists last year, compared to 13 million in 2019.

At the start of 2020 it was expected that Egypt would receive over 14 million tourists.

It received 2 million tourists in the first quarter of last year until the pandemic hit and led to a contraction in tourism, according to the minister's adviser and ministry spokesperson, Soha Bahgat.

"The tourism sector in the whole world has been affected in an unprecedented way due to the pandemic ... and Egypt has taken strict precautionary measures to limit the spread of the virus, and at the same time supportive measures for the economy, including supporting the tourism sector," she said.

Egypt managed to attract about a million tourists from last July to the start of 2021.

Bahgat added that although the number was small, it had led many establishments to resume operations and slowly maintain the tourism sector.



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Egypt has overcome peak of coronavirus second wave, says health official
Egypt backs Sudanese proposal to mediate GERD negotiations

[Egypt has overcome peak of coronavirus second wave, says health official](#)

Author:

Sun, 2021-02-28 00:15

CAIRO: Egypt has overcome the peak of the second wave of coronavirus, according to the president's health adviser Mohammed Awad Taj El-Din. He said that new coronavirus cases were currently decreasing, pointing to the continued presence of the disease, but that precautionary measures still needed to be followed in order to reduce infection rates among people. "The second wave was high, but there is a decrease in new cases. As for cases that need hospitals or ventilators, their numbers have decreased," he added. Taj El-Din regarded the fluctuation in the number of cases, whether it was an increase or decrease, as natural because COVID-19 symptoms appeared in some people up to two weeks after they had contracted the virus.

FASTFACT

Egypt on Tuesday morning received 300,000 doses of the Chinese Sinopharm coronavirus vaccine, the second batch from the company after the first shipment of 50,000 doses in December.

He said that intensive care rooms were available as were respirators and, as long as there was a decline in the number of new cases, there was no reason to be worried.

Egypt on Tuesday morning received 300,000 doses of the Chinese Sinopharm coronavirus vaccine, the second batch from the company after the first shipment of 50,000 doses in December.

It also received 50,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine in early February, as part of its program to vaccinate health workers.

Taj El-Din said the antibodies produced by the coronavirus vaccines could last up to nine months, and the immunity to coronavirus that was produced by the vaccines, the period in which people were protected from contracting the virus again, varied between three and nine months.

He explained that the immunity period varied from one person to another, as some vaccines gave 86 percent protection from the virus while others gave up to 90 percent.

He said it was necessary to limit gatherings and follow precautionary measures during Ramadan so that there was no new coronavirus wave in Egypt.



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Egypt backs Sudanese proposal to mediate GERD negotiations
Egypt's foreign investments in government debt instruments amounted to \$29bn

Lebanon facing coup threat, Maronite leader warns rally

Author:

Sun, 2021-02-28 00:02

BEIRUT: The leader of Lebanon's influential Christian Maronite church has warned that the country is facing the threat of a "full-fledged coup," and called for an international conference to avert "chaos, hunger and oppression."

In an emotional address to thousands of followers on Saturday, Patriarch Bechara Boutros Al-Rai said that he was "drawing red lines for anyone who harbors evil for Lebanon, regardless of their sect."

His comments were widely seen as a veiled reference to Iran-backed Hezbollah along with the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) and its founder President Michel Aoun.

"We are facing a full-fledged coup attempt," Al-Rai told Lebanese who traveled to the church's headquarters in Bkerke to support his demand for a UN-sponsored international conference to save Lebanon.

In response to the patriarch's speech, people chanted: "Hezbollah is terrorist," "Get out, Iran" and "Michel Aoun, leave."

Cries of "Revolution! Revolution!" were also heard.

The Bkerke rally went ahead despite measures to limit gatherings amid the coronavirus pandemic, with some observers suggesting it could signal an end to the stalemate in Lebanese politics.

We want to provide support to the Lebanese Army, making it Lebanon's sole defender.

Patriarch Bechara, Boutros Al-Rai

The FPM, led by Gebran Bassil, did not attend, saying it feared that the gathering "would be used against it," according to affiliated websites. Sources at Bkerke told Arab News that Al-Rai decided to speak out "because Lebanon is facing an existential threat" following the failure of a string of initiatives, including his efforts to reconcile Aoun and Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri.

Banners unfurled on the dome of the Bkerke church read: "Neutrality, sovereignty, and stability," "Lebanon comes first and last," and "Bkerke for all of Lebanon."

Al-Rai said at the outset of his address: "Long live a single, united and

neutral Lebanon that is active, positive, sovereign, independent, free and strong.”

He said: “We are demanding this now because all other solutions have reached a dead end, and we have not been able to agree on the fate of our country, nor even to discuss our homeland’s affairs. We support finding a solution inside Lebanon.”

BACKGROUND

The Bkerke rally went ahead despite measures to limit gatherings amid the coronavirus pandemic, with some observers suggesting it could signal an end to the stalemate in Lebanese politics.

He added: “To let hunger and oppression destroy the country is something we do not accept in any way. Rejecting the proposed solutions means chaos and seizing the levers of power.”

Al-Rai called for an international conference to ensure Lebanon’s neutrality, so that it “is no longer a victim of conflicts and wars, and a land of division.”

He added: “We want the state to extend its authority over the entire Lebanese territory. We want to provide support to the Lebanese army, making it Lebanon’s sole defender.”

Al-Rai said the UN-sponsored conference also should agree on a plan “to prevent the resettlement of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and ensure a safe return for Syrian refugees to their homeland.”

He said: “We do not want armies and camps, nor do we want Lebanon to be undermined. Lebanon’s borders are not subject to amendment, its Christian-Muslim partnership is untouchable, and its democracy is not subject to veto.”

The patriarch called on protesters to continue to speak out, saying: “Do not remain silent in the face of corruption. Do not tolerate the theft of your money, the fluid borders, the failure of the political class, the chaos in the investigation into the Beirut port explosion, or the imprisonment of the innocent.

“Do not tolerate the failure in forming a government and implementing reforms.”

Participants in the rally, many from different sects, told Arab News that Al-Rai is their last hope.

“No politician cares for the collapsing state. Politicians have left us on our own,” said one.

A Muslim woman in her 50s said: “This is an opportunity to raise our voice. The patriarch’s stances are patriotic, and history will remember him. The country is collapsing.”

A man in his 40s said: “I have come to Bkerke to say that people suffer from hunger and despair, and there is nothing left to lose.”

Internal security forces personnel were deployed on the road to the church’s headquarters, and those entering the square were searched.

Before the gathering, Hezbollah and FPM supporters took to social media to share tweets opposing the event.



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UN court to try Hezbollah member for Lebanon attacks

[Houthis take 500 families hostage in Marib battle](#)

Sat, 2021-02-27 22:30

AL-MUKALLA: Hundreds of Yemeni families trapped inside their camps in Marib province by Iran-backed Houthis are being used as a human shield against government forces, a Yemen government unit has claimed.

In a report seen by Arab News on Saturday, the internationally recognized government's Executive Unit for IDP Camps said that militia fighters had besieged camps and planted land mines on main roads to stop families escaping and hinder advancing troops.

"Houthis have prevented 470 families from fleeing, using them as human shields. Until today, many families in the camps are still trapped by the Houthis," the report said.

Militants recently stormed several displacement camps in Serwah, west of

Marib, blocking people's escape to safer areas.

The government unit has appealed to the rebels to stop using displaced families as hostages and allow them to leave the camps.

"The Executive Unit for IDP Camps calls on the Houthis to respect international humanitarian law and stop targeting civilians and displaced persons, and to open safe corridors in order to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid."

The Houthis earlier this month renewed a bloody offensive on Marib, an oil-rich city and the government's last bastion in the northern half of the country. For four weeks, the Houthis have faced stiff resistance from government forces backed by massive air and logistics support from the Arab coalition.

Army commanders say that hundreds of Houthis have been killed, wounded or captured and their advance on Marib halted.

Maj. Gen. Nasser Al-Thaybani, commander of the army's Military Operation Authority, said that more than half the Houthi fighters sent to seize Marib have died or been wounded in the fighting, while army troops and allied tribesmen have pushed back all of the Houthi attacks on government-controlled areas.

Yemeni government forces also suffered heavy casualties during fierce clashes.

Local officers and media said on Saturday that Brig. Gen. Abdul Ghani Sha'alan, commander of the Special Security Forces in Marib, was one of several government soldiers who died in fighting with the rebels near Balouq mountain in Serwah district, west of Marib city, on Friday.

A local military officer, who declined to be named, told Arab News that Sha'alan was leading government troops pushing back a Houthi attack on the peak, which was claimed by government forces last week.

Several army commanders and tribal leaders have been killed since the beginning of the rebel offensive on Marib.

Yemen's Foreign Ministry on Saturday criticized international rights groups over their failure to "name and shame" the Houthis for attacking residential areas after the densely populated city was targeted by 10 ballistic missiles in the previous 24 hours.

"Since the beginning of February, the province has come under the largest and fiercest Houthi attack in which the militia used all kinds of heavy weapons, including artillery, explosive-laden drones and ballistic missiles," the ministry said in a statement.

On Friday, Yemen's Prime Minister, Maeen Abdul Malik Saeed, hailed military support from the Arab coalition to help tilt the war in the army's favor, vowing to continue backing army troops and tribesmen until they push the

Houthi out of areas under their control.



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Yemen's children starve as UN seeks billions to avoid vast 'man-made' famine
Yemeni government makes military gains in Jouf and Marib provinces

[Syria strikes: Biden warns of 'consequences' for Iran's militia support](#)

Author:

By LOLITA C. BALDOR, ROBERT BURNS and QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA | AP

ID:

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LONDON: US airstrikes in Syria demonstrate that Iran should expect retaliation for supporting militia groups that threaten American interests, President Joe Biden has warned.

"You can't act with impunity. Be careful," he said when asked about Friday

morning's strikes on Syria's eastern border with Iraq.

The Pentagon said the attack was carried out by two US Air Force F-15E aircraft that fired seven missiles.

The pair destroyed nine buildings used by Iran-backed militias and heavily damaged two others in eastern Syria.

Officials said the strikes were not intended to destroy the groups, but to demonstrate that the US "will act firmly" to avoid greater regional escalations.

The airstrikes were "legal and appropriate" as they "took out facilities housing valuable capabilities used by the militia groups to attack US and allied forces in Iraq," officials said.

Sen. Jim Inhofe, the leading Republican on the Senate Committee on Armed Services, said the decision was "the correct, proportionate response to protect American lives."

Jen Psaki, the White House press secretary, said Biden "used his constitutional authority to defend US personnel."

She said the strikes were designed to deter future actions by Iran-backed militias following a rocket attack on Feb. 15 in Iraq that killed one civilian contractor and wounded a US service member.

Pentagon chief spokesman John Kirby said the strikes resulted in "casualties," but declined to comment on the details.

An Iraqi militia official with close links to Iran said one fighter was killed in the strike and several others wounded.

The group housed in the compound is known as Kataeb Hezbollah, or Hezbollah Brigades – an Iraqi Shiite paramilitary group sponsored by Iran.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based monitoring group, said the strikes targeted a shipment of weapons. It reported that 22 fighters from an Iraqi umbrella group of militias were killed.

Kataeb Hezbollah confirmed that one of its fighters was killed and warned that it had the right to retaliate.



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Biden: US must address Iran's 'destabilizing activities' Saudi Arabia's King Salman and US President Biden discuss regional security