

Bahrain ranks first in Ground and Port Infrastructure: WEF

● **Strong placements for Kingdom, including ranking 12th globally in business environment**

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Bahrain ranks first amongst Arab countries and second in MENA in Ground and Port Infrastructure, according to the World Economic Forum's 2021 Travel and Tourism Development Index.

The report also highlighted strong placements for Kingdom, including ranking 12th globally in the business environment.

Amongst GCC countries, Bahrain ranked second in the following areas: travel and tourism policy; price competitiveness; prioritization of travel and tour-



Ali Murtaza, Executive Director Investment Development - Tourism at EDB

ism; and demand pressure and impact - measured by the in-bound length of stay, seasonality of international tourist arrivals, interest in cultural and natural attractions, and quality of town and city centres.

Commenting on the index, Dr Nasser Ali Qaedi, CEO of the



Dr. Nasser Ali Qaedi, CEO of the Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority

Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority (BTEA), said: "Bahrain's ranking in the report is another testament to the unique offerings within Bahrain's tourism sector. The Kingdom is increasingly becoming a more attractive destination for tourists and investors alike.

With our new tourism strategy, we look forward to seeing the sector contribute more towards the Kingdom's economic growth."

Ali Murtaza, Executive Director of Investment Development - Tourism at the Bahrain Economic Development Board (EDB) said, "Bahrain's recognition for its advanced infrastructure, business environment, and travel and tourism policy comes as a result of our efforts in strengthening public-private partnerships and increasing our competitiveness to increase the tourism's sector contribution to GDP, attract more investment, and create quality jobs."

The new tourism strategy, as part of the Economic Recovery Plan, aims to increase the sector's GDP contribution to 11.4%, attract 14 million tourists by 2026, increase average visitor



spending to \$198, and increase average tourist nights to 3.5 days.

Bahrain has been ranked 15th among the world's emerging competitive markets and fifth in terms of business fundamentals, according to the Agility 2022 Emerging Logistics Markets Index.

Lavrov says plans to visit Bahrain, Saudi next week



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Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is planning to visit Bahrain on May 31 and Saudi Arabia on June 1, reports said.

"The next visit will take place soon. On May 31 and June 1, in accordance with the existing invitations, I plan to visit Bahrain first. Then, on June 1, a regular meeting of the Russia-GCC (the Gulf Cooperation Council) Foreign Ministers Forum will be held in Riyadh," Lavrov told RT Arabic.

'A new milestone in Bahrain, Israel ties'

Staff Reporter
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A new milestone is being created in the bilateral ties as the Kingdom hosts an event to mark Israel's 74th Independence Day, said Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Dr Shaikh Abdulla bin Ahmed Al Khalifa.

This came as Dr Shaikh Abdulla spoke at an event held at Wyndham Grand Manama last night, where many dignitaries, diplomats, senior government officials and prominent citizens and residents attended the 74th Independence Day celebrations of Israel.

"This is a landmark moment in the bilateral ties between Bahrain and Israel. Our relations are drawn from the vision of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa for a more peaceful and prosperous region," he said.

"Both countries can have many benefits through cooperation and this is not possible without boosting people-to-people relations.

"During my last visit to Israel, I held talks with government officials, ministers and interacted with the people in order to understand the social fabric of that country. I could understand that, very much like the Kingdom, Israel is also a melting pot



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EITAN NA'EH

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DR SHAIKH ABDULLA



of cultures. Like the Kingdom's people, Israelis are also proud of their national identity."

In a televised address, Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid thanked His Majesty King and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister for fostering bilateral ties with Israel. "We have now taken concrete steps towards the progress in relations. Since the opening of Israeli Embassy in Manama, we have gone from strength to strength. This is just a beginning and in the coming years we will see our relations scaling to new heights."

Speaking on the occasion, Israeli Ambassador to the Kingdom Eitan Na'eh said it's a mo-

ment of special glory for both nations. "As envisioned by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, both Bahrainis and Israelis are going to benefit from the increasing bilateral ties between both nations. Both governments are deeply committed to building long-term sustainable ties and people-to-people relationships.

"Israeli companies are keen on building business relations in the Kingdom. Many top executives of leading Israeli companies are in the Kingdom to explore opportunities for mutual growth.

"If materialised, both nations could see the value of trade and economic engagements growing to hundreds of millions in US dollars in the coming years.

"From tourism to fintech, oil and gas to logistics, we can create an ecosystem on the corridors of peace. It is very important for both nations to create opportunities for the youth to get to know each other." The ambassador thanked the US government for supporting Bahrain-Israel relations.

Many cultural events including a performance by actor and singer Tsahi Halevi added special attraction to the celebrations.



Many dignitaries including diplomats, senior government officials, Royal Family members, prominent citizens and residents attended the event

Chef Sasson prepared a special menu for the evening offering a fusion of Bahraini and Israeli dishes.

Heads of major companies

from Israel's oil and gas, cyber, manufacturing, fintech, high-tech, pharmaceutical, biotech and logistics sectors were in attendance.



Israeli actor and singer Tsahi Halevi performs as part of 74th Independence Day celebrations of Israel

Navy pilot programme in Bahrain provides local option for mental health care

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US troops deployed to Bahrain now have certain mental health services available locally for themselves and their family, freeing them of the necessity of returning stateside for care, Naval Forces Central Command announced yesterday.

A two-year pilot programme will allow people in military families who are experiencing acute mental health issues to receive up to a month of inpatient care from providers in Bahrain, a NAVCENT statement said.

The new programme also allows for intensive outpatient care, 5th Fleet spokesman Cmdr. Tim Hawkins said in an interview yesterday with *Stars and Stripes*.

"The protocols in place prior to this pilot program did not allow the military to refer our service members and their families to community-based providers in Bahrain for inpatient care beyond about one week, and intensive outpatient care at all," Hawkins said.

Naval Support Activity Bahrain includes about 6,000 US active duty and reserve troops, 1,200 family members, 500 military civilians and 300 contractors, Hawkins said.

