In a related context, Hurghada received the first tourist groups visiting Egypt from Berlin, Germany and Bratislava, Slovakia after the resumption of tourism early July. These trips are an outcome of efforts of the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Egyptian Embassies in Germany and Slovakia, in coordination with the Ministry.

On Tuesday 15 December, the decree of the Egyptian Cabinet granting tourist visas to tourists with valid, previously used visas from the United States of America, the UK or Schengen countries, arriving at all Egyptian airports, was activated. This is a positive step towards

Launching "Enjoy Your Winter in Egypt" Initiative

Saqqara Discovery Among the Top 10 of 2020

A song to Celebrate a New Year

The Ancient Egyptian Calendar
Launching "Enjoy Your Winter in Egypt" Initiative for Domestic Tourism

The Minister, and the Minister of Civil Aviation, met with the President of the Egyptian Tourism Federation, Chairman of the Egyptian Hotels Association, a number of investors in South Sinai and officials from the two ministries, to discuss ways to revitalize tourism and keep workers in the tourism sector. During the meeting, a number of issues related to the tourism and aviation sectors were discussed, including ways to encourage domestic tourism to touristic cities. They talked about launching the "Enjoy Your winter in Egypt" initiative soon to revive domestic tourism by granting discounts on domestic airline tickets and hotel accommodation prices.

The Coffins of Saqqara Among the Top 10 Archaeological Discoveries of 2020

For the third year in a row, the discoveries of Saqqara archaeological site is on the list of the top 10 most important discoveries of the year, according to the American “Archaeology” Magazine. The colorful Saqqara coffins, which were discovered and announced by the Ministry in mid-November, are among the top 10 most important archaeological discoveries of 2020. They are classified among the most attractive discoveries this year, and a picture of one of these coffins is placed on the cover of the magazine for the January-February 2021 edition.

This archeological discovery included more than 100 colored wooden, sealed coffins containing mummies in good condition of preservation and are almost 2,500 years old. These coffins were found in 3 burial shafts and belonged to senior statesmen, officials and priests of the temple of the goddess Bastet in the 26th Dynasty.

Egypt Among 200 Tourist Destinations with the Safe Travels Stamp of the WTTC

The World Tourism and Travel Council (WTTC) published a report about the 200 tourist destinations around the world, that have obtained their Safe Travels stamp. Egypt was among those 200 destinations. This stamp was launched by the WTTC last May to restore the confidence of travelers and tourists and revive the global travel and tourism sector. WTTC granted Egypt this seal last June for the precautionary measures and hygiene safety regulations implemented by the Ministry in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Population and in accordance with the standards of the World Health Organization for the resumption of inbound tourism.

697 Hotels Received the Hygiene Safety Certificate

During the month of December, the total number of hotels that obtained the Hygiene Safety Certificate approved by the Ministry, the ministry of Health and Population and the Egyptian Hotels Association so far is 697 hotels in 23 governorates. As well as 63 floating hotels; between Luxor and Aswan. The inspection committees of the ministry continue to inspect hotels and tourism establishments that have applied for the certificate.

Following Up on Restaurants and Cafeterias that were Closed by Administrative Decrees

In December, the hotels and tourism establishments monitoring sector of the ministry sent anonymous committees to follow up on restaurants and cafeterias that were closed down by administrative decrees for violating regulations, operating without a licence or not complying with precautionary measures and hygiene safety regulations set by the ministry. The committees found 8 establishments operating in violation of administrative decrees. Closing and revoking the operating licenses of those establishments is currently being studied.
A Serbian Fam Trip to Egypt

The Egyptian Tourism Promotion Board in coordination with the Egyptian Ambassador in Belgrade, organized a fam trip to Egypt for a Serbian media delegation with 12 senior journalists, media officials and social media influencers, from 28 November until 5 December. The delegation visited Cairo, Giza, Hurghada and Luxor. They praised the precautionary measures and hygiene safety regulations implemented in tourism facilities to counter the spread of COVID-19 and said they will transfer their experience through their writings to promote Egypt in Serbia. The delegation met with Vice Minister of Tourism and Antiquities for Tourism, where she discussed Egypt’s efforts to support the tourism sector during the COVID-19 crisis, and the facilities put forward to encourage international tour operators to organize trips to coastal governorates.

News Highlights

The First Tourist Group from Spain Visits the Pyramids ... and a Ukrainian Tourist Promotes Sharm El-Sheikh

The Pyramids of Giza received a Spanish tourist group of intellectuals, writers, university professors and public figures. It is the first tourist group from Spain to visit Egypt since the COVID-19 crisis. They met with Dr. Zahi Hawass.

In a related context, a Ukrainian tourist, on her personal Instagram account, invited people to visit the city of Sharm El-Sheikh and enjoy the charm and beauty of its sunny beaches and learn about the ancient Egyptian civilization in Sharm El-Sheikh Museum with its diverse and unique collection reflecting the emergence and development of the Egyptian civilization.

Spanish Group with Dr Zahi Hawass at the Sphinx

Visits of the Serbian delegation in Egypt

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The Pyramids of Giza Host a “Sky Diving Show” and “Egypt Walk for Inclusion”

On 2 December, the Minister, Minister of Youth and Sports, and Minister of Civil Aviation, attended a sky diving show that was held at the Pyramids of Giza organized by “Tazkarty” and “Sky Dive” in cooperation with the three ministries. A number of sky diving professionals from five different countries; namely “Egypt, America, Spain, Italy and Slovenia, participated in the event as part of the promotion of the Pyramids of Giza.

In a related context, the Pyramids of Giza hosted on 18 December “Egypt walk for inclusion” where fifty disabled Egyptian athletes and children participated. It was organized by the United Nations Development Program in Egypt and the Egyptian Sports Federation for Mental Disabilities, under the auspices of the Ministry of Youth and Sports in cooperation with the Ministry. The athletes and children were accompanied by the Minister, the Minister of Social Solidarity, and endurance sports professional and goodwill ambassador for Arab countries in the United Nations Development Program, Michael Haddad.

The CEO of the Egyptian Tourism Promotion Board Visits Jabal Al-Tair

During the month of December, the CEO of the Egyptian Tourism Promotion Board, visited Minya, to follow up on work progress on the route of the Holy Family journey in Jabal Al-Tair in Samalout. Where the ancient church that the Holy Family took refuge in one of its caves, during their journey in Egypt. He also visited hotels and rest houses around the church to see how ready they are to receive visitors. He also visited a number of hotels in the governorate to follow up on their commitment to implementing precautionary measures and hygiene safety regulations issued by the Ministry.

A Lecture at the Institute of Diplomatic Studies

On 20 December, the Minister gave a lecture at the Institute of Diplomatic Studies at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to a number of Egyptian diplomats. This lecture is to inform them on the status of inbound tourism to Egypt and the state’s efforts to support the tourism sector, preserve employment and overcome the crisis of the Coronavirus pandemic. During the lecture, the Minister highlighted the latest discoveries, museum openings and new archaeological projects, as well as foreign archaeological exhibitions. In addition to the efforts made by the state to preserve its cultural heritage which contribute the promotion of Egypt.

The Citadel Receives a Sudanese Delegation

On 29 December, the Citadel of Salah Al-Din Al-Qalayoubi received a delegation of Sudanese trainees, at the International Endowments Academy to train and qualify imams and preachers. They also visited the Muhammad Ali Mosque.
A New Archaeological Discovery in Saqqara to be Announced in 2021

The Minister, accompanied by Dr. Zahi Hawass, former Minister of Antiquities, and Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, visited the excavations of the Egyptian archaeological mission working next to the Pyramid of King Titi I in Saqqara archeological site. The mission is headed by Dr. Zahi Hawass. Excavations resulted in the discovery of burial shafts with coffins and huge archaeological findings from the New Kingdom. This discovery will be announced early 2021.

Upgrade the Lighting Systems in Al-Muizz Street

The Ministry completed the work of the first phase of the project to upgrade and develop the night lighting systems in Al-Muizz Street and all its archaeological buildings. This project is part of the ministry’s plan to develop archaeological sites and highlight their artistic aspects. In a related context, The Ministry has also completed the restoration and development work on the Isis Temple in Aswan, in preparation for its opening.

Restoration of a Mural in the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir

A team of Egyptian Museum restorers began restoring a mural from tomb No. 100, that was discovered in Kom Al-Ahmar (in Qena), in cooperation with the British Museum. The tomb is one of the oldest known in Egypt with colored drawings. The mural dates back 6000 years, and it was transferred from the tomb to the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir in 1898 and was reconstructed in the early twentieth century.

85 Ancient Coins Seized at Cairo Airport

The archaeological unit in the Goods Village at Cairo International Airport, in cooperation with the FedEx Customs Administration, seized 85 ancient coins from Greeko-Roman, Byzantine, Ptolemaic and Ayubid eras, in addition to three small scarabs, before being smuggled out of the country. These objects were hidden inside magic pockets with a parcel sent to the United States of America via mail.
A Set of Commemorative Medals for Historic Cairo on its 1050th Anniversary

To celebrate the 1050th anniversary of the founding of Historic Cairo, and in cooperation with the Public Treasury and Coinage Authority, and Historic Cairo, the Authority issued a set of commemorative medals. This is in line with choosing Historic Cairo as the capital of culture and Islamic civilization for the year 2020. Those medals bear pictures of a group of iconic Islamic landmarks; like Al-Azhar Mosque, Al-Aqmar Mosque, the Dome of Imam Al-Shafi’i, Mosque of Sultan Hassan and the Mosque of Muhammad Ali.

An Exhibition at Luxor Museum to Celebrate its 45th Anniversary

To celebrate its 45th anniversary, Luxor Museum, in cooperation with the joint Egyptian-American mission, held a temporary exhibition for one of its unique artifacts, which is a pyramidion of sandstone. It is a result of the joint Egyptian-American archaeological mission working in the South Al-Asasif archaeological burial ground. This special exhibition will continue until next June.

Manial Palace and the Museum of Islamic Art Celebrate their Anniversaries

To celebrate the 117th anniversary of Prince Muhammad Ali Palace in Manial, Egyptians were given free entry to it on December 24. The minister also gave Egyptians free entry to the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo on December 28, on the occasion of the 117th anniversary of its opening.

The museum, in cooperation with the Baron Empain Palace in Heliopolis, organized two art exhibitions titled “Treasures of Lead”, at the Museum and another titled “From Bab Al-Khalq to Heliopolis”, at Baron Palace, from December 28 2020 to 13 January 2021. The Museum also began receiving photographs participating in the art exhibition “Lens 2”(March 23- April 1, 2021), in cooperation with the BA Calligraphy Studies Center, titled “The Arabic Letter: Multiple Visions”.

The Commemorative Medals

The Exhibition

The Exhibition

Prince Muhammad Ali Palace in Manial

The Museum of Islamic Art
Celebrations and Events

The Ministry Releases a Song "Egypt, the Land of Beauty" on New Year's Eve

On 31 December, The Ministry released a music video titled "Egypt, the land of beauty" in Egypt and the world, wishing everyone a happy new year. Through the song, the ministry shed light on the beauty of Egypt, its tourist attractions, its picturesque beaches, its warm sun, and its unique civilization, and sent a message of optimism and hope. The song is performed by singer Sherine Abdel Wahab. It coincides with the launch of the "Enjoy your winter in Egypt" initiative to promote domestic tourism during the winter season.

Promoting Egypt in Albania and Serbia

Within the framework of the Ministry’s plan to open new tourism markets and increase inbound tourism to Egypt, Vice the Minister for Tourism, visited Albania and Serbia in December. She held a number of professional meetings and media interviews to promote Egypt and shed light on the various tourism products.

International Exhibitions and visits

Egypt Participates in “Towards the Mosque" Exhibition in Saudi Arabia

An exhibition of Islamic antiquities titled “Towards the Mosque” is held in Ithra’a museum in Dhahran, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It is part of the cultural cooperation agreement between the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The artifacts that are scheduled to participate in the exhibition have been transferred to be displayed in the Islamic Civilization Hall (Kunooz) where the exhibition will be held. The exhibition will showcase 84 artifacts from the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo. It highlights the origin and history of the mosque with 130 artifacts from various parts of the Islamic world.

Celebrating Solar Alignment in the Temples of Karnak

On 21 December, the temples of Karnak witnessed a solar alignment on the main axis of the Karnak Temple. A phenomenon that occurs on this day every year. This date coincides with the beginning of the winter season. A large turnout of Egyptian and foreign visitors at the temples watched this phenomenon.

The Pyramids of Giza and the Sphinx Light Up in Blue

On 10 December, in celebration of the International Human Rights Day, the Pyramids of Giza and the Sphinx were lit in blue. This marks the day on which the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 announced the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
The First Replicas Factory in Egypt

On 5 December, the Minister visited the new archaeological replicas factory. It is the first of its kind in Egypt. It is scheduled to be opened early 2021. The minister visited the manual and automated production units, in addition to the service area for workers.

The total area of the factory is around 10,000 m². The Factory has 44 artists and workers specialized in this field of work. It is equipped with high tech machines, in addition to an exhibition hall to showcase replica produced.

Preparations In Full Swing for the Opening of the Museum of Egyptian Capitals

Work in the Museum of Egyptian Capitals in the New Administrative Capital, is at full swing in preparation for its opening. The Minister and Adviser to the President for Financial Affairs, visited the Museum to follow up on the progress of work there and see the display cases of the artifacts.

The Museum narrates the history of Egyptian capitals through different eras. It consists of a main hall in which the relics of a number of ancient and modern Egyptian capitals are displayed, numbering 9 capitals, in addition to displaying a group of different holdings that represent the patterns of life in each historical period for each capital separately. There is also a pavilion that represents the after life in ancient Egypt, the museum’s display will use modern technology, where the exhibition galleries are equipped with screens displaying an interactive panoramic film showing the history, and an illustration of each of the ancient Egyptian capitals.

In the last month, the museum has received a number of artifacts; among them are two carpets. In addition to ceramic pieces that simulate daily life from the decorations and motifs of ancient Egypt, and a bronze bust of Khedive Ismail, which enriches the section dedicated to displaying Islamic Cairo, Khedive and daily life in these eras.
Meetings

Meetings with Representatives of the Private Tourism Sector

During the month of December, the Minister held meetings with representatives of the private tourism sector. On 1 December, he met with the President of the Egyptian Tourism Federation, heads of chambers and heads of associations of tourism investors. The meeting tackled challenges facing the sector in light of the second wave of Corona Virus worldwide. In addition to reviewing proposals and future visions to develop tourism products.

On 26 December, the Minister held another meeting to discuss preparing an integrated promotional, marketing and media strategy and launching an international campaign to promote Egypt and choosing an international company to put forward this strategy and lay the proper foundations for this campaign which is scheduled to last for 3 years.

The Supreme Council of Antiquities Supports Cultural Tourism

The Board of Directors of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, in its session chaired by the Minister on 29 December, approved decisions to promote cultural tourism in Egypt. They included, participating in "Enjoy your winter in Egypt" initiative, by granting a 50% discount on prices of entry tickets to museums and archeological sites open for visits, for Egyptians in January and February 2021. This initiative was launched by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in cooperation with the Ministry of Civil Aviation and the Egyptian Hotel Association from January to February 2021. A 50% reduction will also be granted on entry tickets to museums and archaeological sites open for visits in the governorates of Cairo, Giza and Alexandria to fans of the Men’s World Handball Championship, hosted by Egypt from 13-31 January 2021, provided they have a Fan ID. To mitigate the economic effects of the Corona Virus crisis, the Board agreed to extend a complete exemption from rental fees to all cafeterias and bazaars in museums and archaeological sites affiliated to the Council during the months of January and February 2021, and to postpone increases in prices of entry tickets to museums and archaeological sites until November 2021.

Promoting Egypt During the World Handball Championship for Men 2021

On 2 December, the Minister met with the Minister of Youth and Sports, and the President of the International Handball Federation, to discuss cooperation to promote the 27th edition of the World Handball Championship for Men 2021, hosted by Egypt from January 13 to 31, 2021. During the meeting, they discussed ways of promoting the tournament and at the same time promoting Egypt’s diverse and unique offerings.

An International Conference to Discuss the Resumption of Tourism

The Minister participated in the conference organized by Spain in cooperation with the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) and the UNWTO, via video conference. The meeting discussed the resumption of tourism worldwide and how to support the recovery of the tourism sector after the crisis of the Corona Virus pandemic. The Prime Minister of Spain and a number of tourism ministers from around the world attended the conference.

A Call With the Minister of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities in Iraq

On 24 December, the Minister had a phone call with the Minister of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities in Iraq. The two ministers discussed the importance of exchanging experiences and working jointly in recovering stolen and smuggled antiquities. In another context, the Minister received Ambassador of Japan in Cairo, on 23 December to discuss strengthening the cooperation between the two countries in tourism and archaeology and boosting inbound tourism from Japan to Egypt.

The Committee for Senior Managerial Positions of the TDA

On 14 December, the Minister chaired a meeting of the permanent committee for senior managerial positions of the Tourism Development Authority. The purpose of this meeting is to conduct interviews and evaluations of young applicants for two senior managerial positions in the Tourism Development Authority. The two positions are: the Director of Cases Management, and the Director of the District Planning Department.
A Decree to Form and Organize the Board of Directors of the GEM

During December, the Prime Minister issued a decree to form and organize the Board of Directors of the Grand Egyptian Museum, headed by the minister in charge of antiquities.

In another context, the committee of experts formed by the decree of the Prime Minister No. 3211 of 2019 met on 26 December. The committee is headed by the Deputy Minister of Finance for Financial Policies. During the meeting, the process of offering and operating services at the Grand Egyptian Museum has been finalized and reviewed, in preparation for announcing the winning coalition soon. This will be followed by the conclusion of a contract with the winning team to operate the services of the Grand Egyptian Museum. The Minister of Tourism and Antiquities participated in the last meeting of the committee, as well as members of the coalition preparing international documents (PWC-Lord-Hill).

Testing Accessibility Facilities of The Museum

As part of the Grand Egyptian Museum’s commitment to accessibility, the museum invited Professor Ahmed Nagy, General Director of the Department of Museum Education for People with Special Abilities in the Ministry, Professor Amr El-Sohagy, Captain of the Egyptian Paralympic Swimming Team and a member of the National Council for Women, to experience firsthand the facilities in the soon to open GEM. During the visit, they examined different aspects of accessibility at GEM including ramps and moving walkways to ensure the effectiveness for visitors.

The Egyptian-Japanese Symbol of Friendship

The Egyptian Embassy in Japan and the Museum proposed an idea to promote GEM before its official opening in 2021, by creating a symbol of friendship, sponsored and marketed by the Egyptian Embassy in Japan. The idea was presented to the museum’s Board of Directors. The General Supervisor of GEM prepared its design, which intertwines both Egyptian and Japanese civilizations; the sun disk with the unique facade of GEM. Following endorsement of the design by the board, the promotional plan was put into action. Egypt International Station Magazine, in Japan implemented the promotional campaign, in which 475 Japanese magazines took part. The Egyptian-Japanese Symbol of Friendship won first prize for its distinguished design and the associated promotional campaign.

"We Never Stopped" a Brochure Issued by the Museum

The museum has issued a brochure titled “We never stopped”, to document the precautionary measures taken by the museum since March 2020 and to demonstrate how the museum has overcome the Corona Virus pandemic, and how the staff will deal with it in the future.
A Lecture for Tour Guides at the Royal Carriages Museum in Bulaq

In line with the Ministry’s initiative to organize visits to tour guides in the newly opened archaeological museums, the Royal Carriages Museum in Bulaq organized a lecture for a group of 35 tour guides. During the tour the curators of the museum explained the history of the museum, as well as its purpose and mission.

Kom Al-Shuqafa and Alexandria National Museum Receive Trainees from the Presidential Leadership Program

Kom al-Shuqafa and Alexandria National Museum received a delegation of trainees from the Presidential Leadership Program, as part of the field visits program planned to develop their cultural knowledge. During the tour, the trainees listened to a detailed explanation of the history of the ancient tombs of Kom Al-Shuqafa and the two Al-Wardian tombs, which, in their architectural design art, combine ancient Roman and Egyptian styles. They also learned about the most important unique artifacts in the Alexandria National Museum.

Artistic Workshops for People with Special Needs and Cancer Patients

The Egyptian Tourism Promotion Board in cooperation with the General Administration of Museum Education for People with Special Needs at the Ministry, organized a number of artistic workshops for people with special needs and cancer patients in Alexandria. One was at the Alexandria National Museum, and the other in Citadel of Qaitbay.

The First Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Museum

After the Prime Minister’s decree on December to form the board of directors of the Museum headed by the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities. The first meeting of the museum’s board of directors was held on 14 December, at the museum’s headquarters in Fustat, in the presence of all council members. During the meeting, many important topics were discussed, including preparations for the opening of the museum and proposals for its service area, in addition to setting the opening and closing hours, tickets prices, restoration laboratories, and fees for the parking.

A Meeting to Discuss the Transfer Process of the Royal Mummies

On 18 December, the Minister held a meeting at the Museum, with representatives of the ministries of Defense and Interior, security agencies, the Supreme Council of Antiquities, and the company Organizing the transfer of the royal mummies from the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir to the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization in Fustat, in order to follow up the necessary procedures and final touches for the transfer process. The Minister also met with members of the Supreme Committee for the Museum’s Display Scenario. They discussed the technical and scientific preparations for transporting the royal mummies and how they be displayed with their coffins in the gallery, in additional to discussing the high tech equipment used in restoration labs and exhibition showcases.

From The Museum’s Exhibits

Model of a boat from Amenhotp the 2nd collection. New kingdom

A vessel of copper inlaid with silver, decorated with floral designs and writings. Islamic period
The Ancient Egyptian Calendar

Ancient societies were interested in the reckoning of time, and measuring the moon's cycle was the easiest way to do that. The lunar phases can be observed from a new moon until the waning crescent becomes invisible.

However, the ancient Egyptians, creative and pioneer as usual, employed a solar calendar, the first and most accurate calendar in the world, which is the origin of the Gregorian calendar used to this day. It was established in 2421 BC, in the city of the sun "Oun" (Heliopolis), a major city of ancient Egypt in the Predynastic periods, now located in the Arab Al-Hisn region.

The Egyptians were highly influenced by the Nile River and its flood, which determines the dates of cultivating. They linked the beginning of the flood with the appearance of the star Sirius (Sothis) and its conjunction with the sunrise. That was the first day of the year. Sometimes, they considered this star to be Isis, who brought the inundation. Crying over the death of her husband Osiris, her tears filled the river causing it to flood.

The year was divided into three seasons, corresponding to the agricultural cycle. The first is Akht, the flood season, the second is Peret, the planting or germination, and the third is Shemu, the harvest or summer. Each season consisted of four months of 30 days each, making the year 12 months, with a total of 360 days. Five days were added at the end of each year, which are the five days of Nasi, to make the year 365 days.

A quarter of a day should have been added to each year to avoid the calendar creep, but this was not done, which in turn led to a discrepancy or difference of one day every 4 years between the conjunction of the star Sirius with the sunrise and the arrival of the flood at the beginning of the actual new year. A correction of the ancient Egyptian calendar was introduced at the time of Ptolemy III, in 238 BC in Alexandria, by adding a day every four years to the five days of Nasi, which is known today as a leap year. This calendar is still used today in Egypt, being known as the Coptic calendar.

Dr. Ali Ahmed Ali
Assistant to the Cheif of Cabinet of the Ministry