

## Muslim tourists lured with more conservative areas

## Not just Bali: Indonesia hopes to develop more tourism sites

By Karin Laub and Niniek Karmini

Hundreds of tourists, many of them young Westerners, sat on gray stone steps atop the world's largest Buddhist temple, occasionally checking cellphones or whispering to each other as they waited for daylight.

Sunrise wasn't spectacular on that recent summer day. But even an ordinary dawn at Borobudur Temple – nine stone tiers stacked like a wedding cake and adorned with hundreds of Buddha statues and relief panels – provided a memorable experience.

The 9th century temple is in the center of Indonesia's Java island, a densely populated region with stunning vistas. Other highlights include the towering Hindu temple complex of Prambanan, like Borobudur a UNESCO World Heritage site, and Mount Merapi, the country's most active volcano, whose lava-covered slopes are accessible by jeep.

While the two temples draw many visitors, other foreigners head to the relaxing beaches of Bali, just east of Java and by far the most popular tourist destination in a nation of thousands of islands and almost 270 million people. More than 6 million tourists visited Bali last year, or about 40 percent of 15.8 million visitors to Indonesia overall, according to official figures.

Recently reelected President Joko Widodo wants to change this dynamic by pushing ahead with "10 new Balis," an ambitious plan to boost tourism and diversify Southeast Asia's largest economy.



Muslim women walk past a street busker in a traditional giant puppet called 'ondel-ondel' perform during the celebration of Islamic New Year in Jakarta, Indonesia, Aug 31, 2019. (AP)

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## Destinations

Key to the plan is to upgrade provincial airports and improve access to outlying destinations, such as Lake Toba on Sumatra island, more than 1,300 kilometers (800 miles) from Jakarta, the capital. Yogyakarta, the provincial city from where visitors head to Borobudur and Prambanan, is getting a second airport, expected to be fully operational later this year.

Widodo has been promoting his plan in meetings with foreign leaders and in recent interviews, including

with The Associated Press, in hopes of encouraging foreign investment. The president of the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation told the AP in late July that as part of his push, he would like to see more business ties with the Middle East.

"For investment and tourism, we would like to invite investors from the Middle East as much as possible because ... we have many tourism locations in Indonesia, not only one or two or four, but many," said Widodo. He did not give specifics.

Muslim tourists, including from the Middle East, might also be an easier fit for some of the more conservative

areas earmarked for tourism development. Tourism officials have played down the possibility of cultural friction that might accompany the influx of more non-Muslim visitors, arguing that Indonesia's brand of tolerant Islam can accommodate everyone.

"Maybe there are some particular locations that are very strict (religiously)," said Hiramshyah Thaib, who heads the "10 New Balis" initiative. "We believe we won't have any problems. Sometimes we have problems in the media, but not in reality."

Yet Islamic hard-liners have become more assertive in recent years, potentially spooking investors by undermining Indonesia's image as a moderate nation. Thaib said he believes investor confidence rose "significantly" after Widodo defeated former special forces general Prabowo Subianto in April's presidential election. Subianto had been backed by Muslim groups favoring Shariah law. The tourism plan remains key to Widodo's final five-year term, though at least one target – 20 million visitors this year – appears to have been too ambitious. The 2019 visitor tally is expected to be 18 million, based on current growth figures, said Thaib.

Still, the Indonesian tourism sector grew by 7.8 percent in 2018, or twice the global average, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council.

One of the 10 sites earmarked for development is the Borobudur Temple area and nearby Yogyakarta, a city of several hundred thousand people that is embedded in a large metro

area. The city is a center of Javanese culture and a seat of royal dynasties going back centuries.

In 2017, former President Barack Obama and his family visited the city, where his late mother, Ann Dunham, spent years doing anthropological research. Obama, who lived in Indonesia as a child, toured Borobudur and Prambanan during the nostalgic trip.

But while the Obamas got around with relative ease, including private jet travel, ordinary visitors struggle with congested streets packed with motorbikes weaving in and out of slow-moving traffic.

Travelers hoping to be in place at Borobudur just before sunrise need at least 90 minutes to get there from Yogyakarta, a journey of 40 kilometers (24 miles). A 230-kilometer (140-mile) round trip to the Dieng highlands, with terraced fields, small temples and a colorful volcanic lake, requires a full day of travel, some of it on bumpy back roads.

Anton McLaughlin, a 55-year-old visitor from York, England, said he was astounded by the number of motorbikes in the streets. Speaking during a jeep tour of the slopes of Mount Merapi, he said he's become more aware of the natural disasters Indonesians endure regularly. Indonesia straddles the Pacific "Ring of Fire" and is prone to earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions. Merapi's last major eruption in 2010 killed 347 people, and the ruins of one destroyed hamlet were part of the tour.

"People just seem to crack on with

life," McLaughlin said.

## Culture

Just a day after his tour, the volcano shot out hot clouds and lava that flowed 2,000 meters (6,560 feet) down its slopes. No casualties or damage were reported.

Jan Tenbrinke, 37, from Zwolle in the Netherlands, said Bali is the next stop for his family of four, but that he hoped to get a better sense of Indonesian culture in Yogyakarta.

In the city, tourists can visit workshops for Batik textiles, silver jewelry and Kopi Luwak – coffee made from partially digested coffee cherries that were eaten and defecated by wild tree cats, or civets. Billed as the "world's most expensive coffee," Kopi Luwak became known to a wider audience in the 2007 Jack Nicholson-Morgan Freeman movie "The Bucket List."

Local museums, including two royal palaces and a former Dutch fort, pose a challenge for foreign visitors eager to learn more about local history and culture because they mostly lack easily accessible explanations in English.

Thaib, the tourism official, acknowledged that there is room for improvement. He said Indonesia is determined to catch up to other Asian nations, including Thailand, which he said began developing their tourism industries much sooner.

"There is still a lot of work," he said of his nation's efforts. "We believe we are on the right track." (AP)

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## General

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**Free drum music classes:** Free professional drum music classes are available at Salmiya for all age groups from beginners to advanced by a well experienced drum teacher. For more details: 94974295.

**Indian Embassy SPDC notice:** Attention of all Indian associations/Indian schools in Kuwait is once again drawn to Scholarship Programme for Diaspora Children (SPDC) which was introduced by Government of India in the academic year 2006-2007 with the objective to make higher education in India accessible to the children of overseas Indians and promote India as a centre for higher studies.

Under the scheme, 100 PIO/NRI students were awarded scholarship of up to US\$ 4,000 per annum for undergraduate courses in Engineering, Technology, Humanities, Liberal Arts, Commerce, Management, Journalism, Hotel Management, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and some other courses.

The scheme is open to NRIs/PIOs from over 40 countries (including Kuwait) having substantial Indian Diaspora population.

The Scheme was revamped and launched in July 2016. Under the revamped Scheme, number of scholarships has been enhanced from 100 to 150 with introduction of 50 scholarships for children of Indian workers employed in the Emigration Check Required (ECR) countries. The Scheme is now applicable to four categories of applicants:

- Persons of Indian Origin
- Non-Resident Indians
- Children of Indian workers working in ECR countries (including Kuwait).
- Children of Indian workers in ECR countries – studying in India

The institutions that are covered under this Scheme are:

- NITs, IITs, Schools of Planning and Architecture
- "A" Grade institutions accredited by National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and recognised by University Grants Commission (UGC).
- Other institutions covered under Direct Admission of Students Abroad (DASA) scheme.

Income criteria will be applicable to all four categories. Applicants will seek scholarships after they obtain admission in the approved list of educational institutions.

Applications are required to be submitted online at SPDC portal – <http://spdcindia.gov.in/login/index.php>. Last date for submission of applications was extended till Oct 14, 2016. Nodal officer for SPDC is P. Bharadwaj, Deputy Secretary (OIA-II), Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, Tel: 00-91-11-24197952, Email: dsiao2@mea.gov.in

**Sastra Prathibha Contest:** Science International Forum (SIF) Kuwait in



Malabar Gold & Diamonds new store in USA at Iselin, New Jersey was inaugurated by John McCormac, Mayor of Woodbridge Township, New Jersey in the presence of MP Ahammed, Chairman, Malabar Group; Dr P. A. Ibrahim Haji, Co-Chairman, Malabar Group; Shamal Ahmed, Abdul Salam K. P., Asher O, Joseph Eapen and other directors, management team members, media and well-wishers on Aug 31.

## Malabar Gold &amp; Diamonds inaugurates second outlet in USA

Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one among the largest jewellery retailers globally with a strong retail network of over 250 outlets has opened its 2nd outlet in USA at Iselin, New Jersey. The brand new outlet of Malabar Gold & Diamonds was inaugurated by John McCormac, Mayor of Woodbridge Township, New Jersey in the presence of MP Ahammed, Chairman, Malabar Group; Dr P. A. Ibrahim Haji, Co-Chairman, Malabar Group; Shamal Ahmed, Managing Director – International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds; Abdul Salam K.

association with UNIMONI Kuwait announced the commencement of registration for the 6th edition of the Sastra Prathibha Contest (VVM Vidyarthi Vigyan Manthan). Sastra Prathibha Contest (VVM Vidyarthi Vigyan Manthan) is a pan India and GCC Science Talent Hunt initiative by VIBHA in association with NCERT, HRD Ministry (Government of India) and the Department of Science and Technology (Government of India).

Sastra Prathibha Contest 2019-20 will be a two level contest. First level written examination will take place on Nov 7, 2019. A one-day science camp (Level II) will be organized on Jan 10, 2020 for the selected students from Level I contest, where the Sastra Prathibha title winners for the year 2019-20 will be selected. Winners of Sastra Prathibha Title will get the opportunity to visit prestigious research laboratories in India and also get the opportunity for personal interaction with top scientists

P., Group Executive Director, Malabar Group; Asher O, Managing Director – India Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds; Joseph Eapen, President – US Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds; other directors, management team members, media and well-wishers on Aug 31. The new showroom is located at 1348 Oak Tree road, Iselin, New Jersey. Malabar Gold & Diamonds has made their grand entry in USA in November, 2018 by opening their 250th store globally and the first showroom in USA at Chicago, 2652 West Devon Avenue, Illinois.

Students from class 4 to class 10 are eligible to register under the categories Sub junior (Class 4, 5), Junior (Class 6, 7, 8) and Senior (Class 9, 10). Registrations for the same will be strictly through schools. Once the registration process is over, a Question Bank following the prescribed syllabus will be provided to the students. SPC will be a 80 question, one hour exam. 30 questions will appear from the question bank, 30 from existing syllabus, 10 analytical and 10 will be general questions. Those interested are requested to contact the science department HOD of respective schools.

SPC is the biggest and most prestigious contest of its kind in Kuwait, with the participation of more than 4500 students from the Indian schools in Kuwait. Registration forms are available at the science department / SPC coordinator of the respective schools. Registration closed on May 15, 2019. For further

updates on SPC Season VI, please follow [www.facebook.com/sifkuwait](https://www.facebook.com/sifkuwait), or email at [info@sifkuwait.com](mailto:info@sifkuwait.com)

**Islamic and Arabic courses:** Islamic and Arabic courses are being offered at the Enlightenment into Islam Center starting from 5:00-7:00 pm. Registrations can be done at the main office – Women's Committee in Qurtoba.

For more information contact: 24322684, 25362693, 97743327 and 25362681.

**Islamic classes in French:** The Enlightenment into Islam is offering Islamic Classes in French for ladies. Timings 4:30 to 7 pm. Every Wednesday. Please register at the office (Women's Section), 2nd floor. For more information please contact us. Telephone 25362684, 99789954, 99507076, 97743327. Fax 25342573 (attention – Enlightenment

into Islam)

**Bridge game:** Bridge tournament is being held every Sunday and Wednesday at 20:00 hours, played at the Graduates Club, next to Kuwait Engineering Society. Interested Bridge pairs or individual players please contact Mohammed Merchant, Tel: 24815622, 24841158, 99612287.

**Chess Round Robin Challenge:** Registrations are open for chess coaching and the Annual Round Robin Challenger Series. Send your name, Civil ID No., mobile number, age, rating to [saviosgomes@gmail.com](mailto:saviosgomes@gmail.com) with CCR in the e-mail subject. No entry fee.

**Kwt-Brits football supporters:** A new football supporters website for

British expats living and working in Kuwait has been set up by an Everton supporter, Trevor Powell. The Kuwait Brits Football Supporters Association (KBFA) site aims to provide contact information for supporters of each others' whereabouts and also in the future hopes to organise social events such as quizzes and even five-a-side matches on a home international teams basis. We need expats to register their support and hence we can then start to cast around for a suitable meeting venue. The site can be accessed at [www.kbfa.co.uk](http://www.kbfa.co.uk).

## Embassies

**Philippine Embassy notice:** In preparation for the upcoming 2016 Philippines national elections, the Philippines embassy in Kuwait is inviting qualified Filipino applicants for the temporary position of Project Term Personnel. Applicants, apart from being Philippines nationals, must also be computer literate holding a valid visa 18. The contract will only run for a maximum of three months, renewable based on the post's performance and attainment of registration target.

Project Term Personnel are to perform, but not limited to, the following duties and responsibilities:

- Assist with information dissemination
- Increase awareness on the ongoing Overseas Voter (OV) registration through promotional activities and events
- Encode the names and contact details of registrants
- Prepare materials for OV registration
- Answer queries regarding OV registration
- Assist OV registrants
- Perform Task of an alternate Voter Registration Machine (VRM) operator
- Remind registrants to vote and provide them with the necessary information
- Perform other services that may be required in the exigency of the service

Interested applicants may submit their resumes or walk into the Embassy and ask for Ms Girlice Caba, Administrative Officer. For further inquiry, please call 22528422-ext 2008.

**UK Embassy passport service:** The British Embassy would like to remind British nationals that full validity passports are no longer issued at the British Embassy's Consular Section in Kuwait. For full details on the application procedure, please follow the link 'Passports' on the British Embassy's website: [www.ukin Kuwait.fco.gov.uk](http://www.ukin Kuwait.fco.gov.uk).

British Embassy's Consular Section is located at British Embassy, Kuwait. Postal address: PO Box 2, Safat 13001. For emergency travel documents and Birth/Death registration enquiries call: 22594358.

For Consular/Notary enquiries (Not for Visa) call: 22594357. Opening hours: 08:30-10:30 Sunday – Thursday.

Admittance into the Embassy will not be possible before 08:30 hours. Please bring a form of ID with you to enable entry.

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## Campaign to raise awareness during back-to-school season

## KIB sponsors Mol's 'Our eyes are on our children' campaign

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 4: As part of their leading corporate social responsibility programs, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) sponsored a media campaign coinciding with the start of the 2019-2020 school year, which was launched by the Ministry of Interior (MoI) entitled 'Our eyes are on our children'. The campaign was held on the occasion of back-to-school season, aiming at educating parents and students about the importance of road safety and accident prevention at the start of the school year.

The campaign featured a series of awareness messages spread by the General Department of Public Rela-

tions and Security Media through various social media platforms, audio-visual media, SMS and instructional brochures. Additionally, the campaign included a special program for visiting schools to hold awareness lectures and seminars throughout the year.

On his part, Senior Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB, Nawaf Najia, said: "Our sponsorship of this campaign came as part of our strong commitment to positively impact the local community. For this reason, we aim at supporting both public and private organizations that seek to educate and spread awareness. We are proud



A photo from the event.

of the recent efforts made by the MoI's campaign in reducing traffic congestion, as well as spreading awareness amongst parents and students about the possible risks faced when going to school by car or on foot. Also, this campaign shed light on how to handle these risks and prevent them."

Najia also pointed out the importance of cooperating with security organizations and the MoI, which aim at protecting children and providing them with a safe environment. In turn, this reflects positively on the local community, improving its overall safety and stability.

At the end, Najia congratulated

students on the new academic year and wished them a year full of accomplishments. He also encouraged students to further their education and continue their academic pursuits, as education is undoubtedly the cornerstone of a better and brighter future for the nation.

It is worth mentioning that KIB always strives to organize school visits to spread awareness, as part of its series of back-to-school initiatives. The Bank aims at enriching students with vital and interesting information, as well as actively engaging with diverse segments of the local community through various activities and initiatives.