

# Salameh tours site of rare find in Sidon

*'A place that is surprising us year after year'*

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Culture Minister Ghassan Salameh and Sidon MP Bahiya Hariri visited an archeological site Sunday, two days after the announcement that Bronze Age graves had been uncovered in the southern city.

Salameh and Hariri visited the site accompanied by Frederic Husseini, director-general for antiquities at the Culture Ministry. The visit followed a Friday announcement by the British Museum's excavation team in Sidon, headed by Claude Doumet-Serhal, that several graves had been unearthed.

The excavation project has also benefited from donations from the Hariri Foundation, Byblos Bank and Nokia Lebanon.

Salameh held an inspection

tour and visited Eshmoun Temple just north of Sidon, where he addressed the press.

"I can picture Sidon three years from now when the British delegation will have accomplished its digging activities in a place that is surprising us year after year with the history it treasures," he said.

One grave appeared to be that of a warrior buried with a bronze duck-bill ax with a well-preserved wooden handle.

The team from the British Museum also discovered four Middle Bronze Age children buried in jars, two with Egyptian scarabs, as well as a piece of pottery with a Phoenician inscription. It was the first of its kind found in the southern city, according to archeologists.

The minister told the press that it was time to turn Sidon in-

to a major tourist site. A preliminary study will be produced by the ministry to restore the Sidon seaside citadel at an estimated cost around \$800,000 he added.

"We have included this sum in the loan project that the ministry will sign with the World Bank in three months for the rehabilitation of Sidon archeological sites," Salameh explained.

Regarding future plans relating to Eshmoun Temple, the minister said the situation was different there.

"My aim," he said, "is to place the temple on the list of international protected sites, which prohibits the construction of buildings in front of it."

Salameh also criticized the theft of artifacts during the civil war but said pieces have recently been returned.