

Bad Nauheim ready for Saudi Arabia's footballers

Bad Nauheim (Germany), June 6 (DPA) The Koran instead of the Bible in hotel rooms, a prayer room facing Makkah and city maps in Arabic. Bad Nauheim is preparing to play host to Saudi Arabia's footballers.

For hotel boss Michel Prokop it is something of a fairytale.

+ACI-To host a national team in a World Cup tournament, is a unique event,+ACI- enthuses Prokop, manager of the Dolce hotel in Bad Nauheim, a central German town renowned for its spas.

The Saudi football team will use the four-star hotel as their accommodation base during the World Cup.

+ACI-The team's stay is like a state visit,+ACI- says Prokop.

Hotel staff will even roll out a red carpet to greet their guests.

For the 60 team members, it is not enough to have the beds freshly made or the rooms, each 30 square metres in size and highly polished.

Bibles must be banished from the night tables to make way for the Koran.

+ACI-How we will do that has not yet been determined, it is very complicated,+ACI- says Prokop.

There are exact instructions to follow when dealing with the Koran. On such matters of religion the hotel has turned to the local Islamic community for advice.

A conference room, usually used for managerial training, will function as a prayer room, with prayer mats facing Mecca.

In the minibars of the 60 rooms reserved for the team, water and juice will replace wine and champagne.

The team's dietary requirements must also be planned down to the last detail.

Ingredients for Arabic meals are simply not available in the supermarket in the large quantities required to feed a 60-strong team.

Around 70 hotel employees are being trained in preparation for the Saudi team's visit. +ACI-They must not be put off by the idea of contact with a unknown culture,+ACI- says Prokop.

To make the guests feel at home, the hotel has installed satellite dishes in order to broaden the choice of television channels available.

+ACI-There are 35 Arabic channels and we will be able to receive them,+ACI- said Prokop.

Game consoles - complete with a football game - will also be provided to help the players relax.

The footballers will get to practice the real thing during training sessions at Bad Nauheim's forest stadium, which - as the name suggests - lies in idyllic green surroundings.

Konrad Doerner, former city councillor and the city's sports department head, is even hoping for a visit from the Saudi royal family. He expects around 2,500 guests in all.

For the World Cup the city has even published maps in Arabic. Doerner hopes that through its Arab guests Bad Nauheim can heighten its profile too.

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