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EDITORIAL

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has taken care of the archaeological and cultural sites located in various regions of the Kingdom, and spared no effort locating, excavating, and preserving them. Moreover, the Kingdom established an official body annexed to the Ministry of Education concerned with locating, excavating, and preserving antiquities and cultural sites named as the Department of Antiquities and Museums. Furthermore, the government has done every effort to organize and develop them, provide requirements for maintaining antiquities, and carry out field exploration work under the supervision of qualified scientific expeditions. The government has also been keen to enhance its role in the renovation of archaeological sites, with restoration, protection, and overcoming any obstacles that might stand in the way of archaeological development work in the Kingdom.

In addition, the government has always considered archaeological and cultural sites a fundamental part of the Saudi national history, and a major tributary of the national economy. This consideration for antiquities and cultural sites goes in line with the status of the Kingdom and its values, care given to preservation of antiquities, and invigorating their contribution to cultural heritage and economic development. The Kingdom has also been keen to establish museums, provide qualified cadres to supervise and develop them, and enhance archaeological work in the Kingdom; the cradle of Arab and Islamic civilization.

Consideration to antiquities, discovering archaeological sites belonging to different prehistoric, pre-Islamic Arab kingdoms, and kingdoms of the Islamic era would contribute to the sustainable and successful development of the national tourism industry. As a first step in preserving the cultural heritage of the Kingdom, the antiquities and museums sector has strengthened its ability to survey, excavate, protect, register and study antiquities, in addition to developing museums and architectural heritage, increasing knowledge about the elements of the Kingdom's cultural heritage, and more effectively managing antiquities and museums.

The Department of Antiquities was established in 1386 AH / 1966 AD, and then transformed into an auxiliary agency for antiquities and museums in the Ministry of Knowledge in 1396 AH / 1976 AD, and to the General Authority for Tourism and National Heritage in 1421 AH / 2000 AD. Since the establishment of the Antiquities and Museums Sector until its annexation to the Ministry of Culture in this year 1441

AH / 2020 AD, many valuable achievements have been made in developing the antiquities, museums and national heritage sector, establishing an integrated system that tourism development depends on, and the consequent demand and treatment with credibility from all segments of the Saudi society.

Relying on the established types of archaeological surveys used at that time, the comprehensive archaeological search project for Saudi Arabia started. More recently, surveys have been developed using geographical information and other modern archaeological survey systems.

Archaeological surveys and excavations have confirmed that human settlement in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia stability dates back to about a million years, the period of the ancient Stone Age where there are antiquities that date back to the Stone Age in Ash Shuwayhitiyah, Al-Jouf region, and Shoaib Dahdah in Najran region.

Archaeological surveys that began in the Kingdom in 1396 AH / 1976 AD and continued until 1400 AH / 1980 AD provided information that reflect the wide and intertwined network of civilizational relations that the Arabian Peninsula has witnessed since the prehistoric times and the dawn of history, and the Arab kingdoms of the pre-Islamic and the Islamic era.

Work in Archaeological surveys started in February and April 1976 AD in the Eastern and Northern regions and then extended to all parts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Work at that time, was planned and supervised by the Department of Antiquities and Museums. Each field team was formed and managed in cooperation with Saudi and foreign specialists.

The comprehensive archaeological survey was followed by excavations, and the beginning was in Tayma in 1399 AH / 1979 AD. It was discovered that this site dates back to the beginning of the 8th millennium BC.

This was followed by exploration of the sites of trade and pilgrim roads, particularly their paths and stations. The first registration of rock drawings was made, and then the first archaeological survey of rock drawings and ancient Islamic writings was in 1404 AH / 1984 AD.

Surveys and excavations progressed with Saudi archaeologists. Recently, joint expeditions began with archaeologists from Europe, America, China and Japan in various archaeological sites. Publications on the surveys and excavations were

published in The Saudi Arabian Archaeology annual journal titled *Atlal*, with its first issue in 1397 AH / 1977 AD.

The Departments of Antiquities and Museums at King Saud, Hail, and Jazan universities also contributed to the surveys and excavations of archeological sites. Numerous archaeological teams have also been organized, and conducted many archaeological excavations in several sites in the Kingdom. The findings of these surveys were published in peer-reviewed journals, whether issued by those universities or other scientific journals, including ADUMATU. This endeavor contributes to enriching information on archaeological sites in the Kingdom, as well as to the historical documentation of the human civilization history and the ancient kingdoms that prevailed during previous historical periods.

By annexing the responsibility for cultural and archaeological sites, heritage and museums to the Ministry of Culture, the government in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia hopes to advance with more institutional work and give surveys and excavations in the archaeological sites abundant, the attention worthy of our country with its civilization and history through the ages.

Editor -in-Chief