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Ancient shipwrecks discovered in Jeddah



HIDDEN TRUTH: A member of the Saudi-German team of archaeologists checks the wreck of a ship in Jeddah's Red Sea. (Photo courtesy: Gerd Knepel)

JEDDAH: FOUZIA KHAN

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Saudi and German archaeologists have discovered two ancient shipwrecks along the Jeddah coast, in a joint project between the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities (SCTA) and the Philipps University of Marburg in Germany.

This was revealed recently at a lecture organized by the German Consulate in Jeddah. Michaela Reinfeld, a German archaeologist who spoke at the event, had been part of the dive team that made the find.

The Roman ship discovered is the oldest archaeologically documented shipwreck found along the Saudi Arabian coast, she said. The other ship dates to the early Islamic era. There was also an ancient jetty found, she said.

The team had made dives near Jeddah, Rabigh in the north and Al-Shoibah in the south, along 200 km of coastline. Reinfeld said that citizens in Jeddah had provided the dive team with many leads on other archaeological sites.

The team would be following up on the information.

Reinfeld said the team, with archaeologists from the SCTA, plan to document all discoveries made in Jeddah. There are also initiatives underway to help Saudi Arabian scientists and archaeologists protect ancient relics found under the sea and set up public exhibitions.

Reinfeld said the project is being run over five years, with 16 people receiving training. The project started in 2013.

The Saudi team members would soon sit for their final exams to get their diving licenses, she said.

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Annette Klein, the new consul general of Germany, had said earlier that the project was an opportunity to further develop cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Germany because it would see students from the countries working together.

The team included Winfried Held, a professor and head of the institute for classical archaeology at Philipps University of Marburg, Gerd Knepel, an archaeologist from the university and dive instructor, six archaeologists from the SCTA, and archaeology students from the university.

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