

Oman's pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai pays a fitting tribute to frankincense

Thu, 2021-11-25 23:34

DUBAI: Frankincense, the aromatic resin harvested from trees that grow in a narrow climate belt from the Horn of Africa to India and parts of southern China, has been used for 6,000 years as both a perfume and panacea for a host of ailments.

Most of the world's supply comes from Somalia, Eritrea and Yemen. But it is Oman that famously produces the world's finest – and most expensive – frankincense, a rich and spicy aroma that ancient Egyptians called the “Sweat of the Gods.”

Trade in frankincense has flourished in this region for centuries, and was one of the most valued commodities of the ancient and medieval world.

Today, the resin, harvested from the Boswellia tree, is still highly prized, as Oman's pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai shows. With sustainability experts warning that the tree variety globally is under threat, the pavilion provides a fitting tribute to frankincense and its rich history.



Lab50, an initiative involved in the pavilion's design, engaged more than young 300 Omanis from sectors including government and SMEs to develop the narrative and content of the pavilion. (Supplied)

The word frankincense comes from the Old French “franc encens” (“noble” or “pure incense”), and is the English version of the Arabic Al-luban.

Today, the value of frankincense resin is still determined by its color, clump size and oil content. The most valuable grade, known as hojari, comes from a narrow, dry belt of the Dhofar Mountains in Oman. Boswellia trees studding this region are a feature of Oman’s UNESCO-appointed Land of Frankincense World Heritage site.

The Omani pavilion, located in the Mobility District, pays homage to the precious substance. Even the mandatory hand sanitizer is enhanced with the resin’s aroma and natural antiviral properties.

Given frankincense’s long history, stretching over millennia, one might expect Oman’s pavilion to be built on tradition or to be rooted in the past. In fact, the pavilion is a testament to Oman’s future generations, and has been created by Omani youth, the future of the country’s economy.

EXPECTED EXPO 2020 DIVIDEND

A long-term investment ‘in the future of the UAE’



Expo 2020 and its legacy will boost economic activity by
33.378 billion
2013-2031



And support
905,200
full-time equivalent (FTE)
job-years
2013-2031



Restaurants & hotels:
\$3.1 billion



Construction:
\$7.35 billion



Events organization &
business services:
\$18.757 billion



Economic activity will equal
1.5% of UAE GDP during expo
October 2020 – April 2021



Spending in SME sector
\$1.279 billion
supporting **12,600 job-years**
November 2013 – October 2020

Source: EY Report: The economic impact of Expo 2020 Dubai

ARAB NEWS

Lab50, an initiative involved in the pavilion’s design, engaged more than young 300 Omanis from sectors including government and SMEs to develop the narrative and content of the pavilion.

The result is a modern story-telling experience, with frankincense at its center. The pavilion’s design was led by recent graduates, and its technology designed and built by young Omanis. Multi-sensory and mixed-reality audiovisual content was written, shot and produced by local talent.

The exterior of the pavilion shows how a young eye can interpret tradition. The sweeping, intricately detailed exterior echoes and exploits the features of a frankincense tree.

Visitors entering the pavilion on the ground floor are greeted by a replica of the “Mother Tree,” and introduced to the resin extraction process and the uses of frankincense throughout history.

FASTFACTS

*** For the past 6,000 years, frankincense has been used to raise spirits and encourage well-being.**

*** Pavilion’s five zones show how frankincense contributed to Omani progress in different fields.**

*** Exhibits offer interactive experiences using AR and mixed reality technology.**

Displays highlight the role frankincense played in worship and medicine, from the mummification of ancient Egyptian rulers to its role in traditional Chinese medicine. On the first floor, visitors discover the Forest of Sustainability, a modern exhibit in which tree-shaped displays tell the story of Oman’s plans for sustainable innovation.

Through digital displays and QR codes, these stories come to life: There is a feature on Oman’s collaboration with the UAE to harvest wind power, and another on Oman’s “million date palm” project.

Many case studies are linked to Oman’s efforts in wildlife conservation, including birds of prey, the Arabian snow leopard and rare plants.



The Omani pavilion highlights the country's commitment to sustainability, not only of its precious natural flora, but also its youth. (Supplied)

Despite its pervasive presence at the Omani pavilion, the *Boswellia* tree is under threat and may die out within 20 years, according to sustainability experts. Scientists who have studied the issue say many older trees have not produced a new sapling in half a century.

When the UNESCO site at Wadi Dawkah in the Dhofar governorate was established in 2000, only about 1,200 frankincense trees were growing there. Since then, thousands more have been planted, with the goal to reach 10,000 on the site.

An irrigation system has been installed to help nurture saplings, and there are also wild trees flourishing beyond the perimeter fence. Oman's investment in sustainability and the future generations of frankincense trees appears to be paying off.

From the Forest of Sustainability, visitors enter the Frankincense Crystal Hall, where precious frankincense crystals in hanging lights add a modern touch to the journey. Exiting the hall, visitors enter the "trade tunnel and trade shore," which tells the story of Oman's history as a trading hub, with more than 200 sea lanes and 86 global ports within two weeks' journey by sea.

ARAB COUNTRIES IN WORLD EXPOS

Year of first participation in a World Expo

1967

Montreal

Kuwait
Algeria

1958

Brussels

Syria
Saudi Arabia
Jordan

1970

Osaka
UAE

1939

New York

Lebanon

1851

London

Egypt
Tunisia

1992

Seville

Oman

2010

Shanghai

Bahrain

ARAB NEWS

On the third floor, visitors are invited to “step into the future.” Ancient traditions are reframed through a modern, scientific lens, with a focus on technology and the future of frankincense.

Modern uses of frankincense extend from personal to religious, spiritual and medical. According to Oman pavilion information, “frankincense is scientifically proven to fight cancer, depression and asthma” and “is still used as a disinfectant when burnt.”

Visitors to the pavilion also have an opportunity to take the sweet aroma of frankincense home. Gifts on offer range from traditional weaving to Omani silver and products based on frankincense.

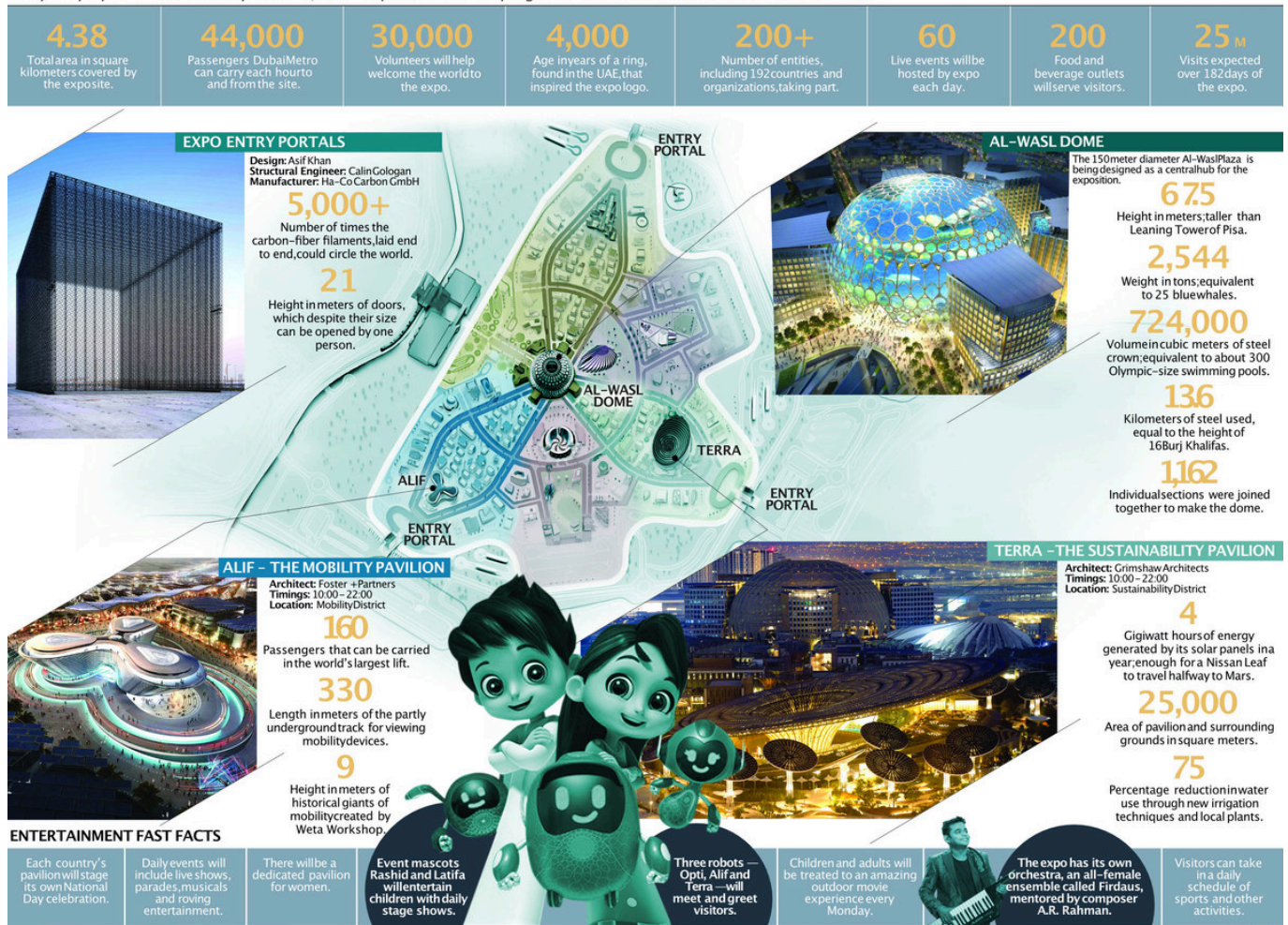
The Omani pavilion highlights the country’s commitment to sustainability, not only of its precious natural flora, but also its youth.

Innovation created by and for young Omani talent will provide inspiration and opportunity for future generations of Omanis.



EXPO 2020 DUBAI UAE: KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

Delayed by a year because of the pandemic, the showpiece event finally begins on Oct. 1 and continues until the end of March



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France's pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai showcases the French art of living in new exhibition
Egypt's Expo 2020 Dubai pavilion heralds a future well-grounded in the past
From traditional to abstract, Arab pavilions at Expo 2020 Dubai seize the imagination

[Morocco halts France flights amid](#)

coronavirus spike

Thu, 2021-11-25 23:58

RABAT: Morocco has decided to suspend flights to and from France, where daily coronavirus infections are rising, the foreign ministry said on Thursday.

"This decision will go into effect on November 26 at 23:59 p.m. local time and until further notice," the ministry said in a statement carried by the official MAP news agency.

The number of daily new cases in France has skyrocketed in recent days, hitting a seven-month high of 32,591 on Wednesday.

French Health Minister Olivier Veran said Thursday that COVID-19 booster shots would be made available to all adults from this weekend to counter a fifth wave of infections.

France has the world's largest Moroccan expatriate community, with more than one million Moroccans living in the EU member.

In October, Morocco said it was suspending flights to and from Britain, Germany, the Netherlands and Russia due to concerns about coronavirus trends in those countries.

And earlier this month, the North African country decided to tighten controls at its borders due to a spike in COVID-19 cases in Europe.

Morocco has officially recorded around 950,000 COVID-19 cases and more than 14,500 deaths.



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Scientists raise alarm over COVID-19 variant with 'horrific' number of mutations
France extends COVID-19 booster shots to all adults

[Bahrain's King Hamad invites Pope Francis to visit Manama](#)

Thu, 2021-11-25 23:15

LONDON: Bahrain's King Hamad on Thursday sent a message to Pope Francis that included an official invitation to visit the kingdom. The message was delivered by Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmed bin Mohammed, the king's adviser for diplomatic affairs, during a meeting with the pope at the Vatican.

Sheikh Khalid expressed King Hamad's appreciation for the pontiff's "pivotal and prominent role in establishing and strengthening interfaith dialogue and understanding between different cultures and civilizations, and spreading the values of human brotherhood and coexistence among all," Bahrain News Agency reported.

He reiterated the king's support for the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together, also known as the Abu Dhabi declaration, and the importance of building on it to ensure a more prosperous future for all of humanity.

Pope Francis thanked King Hamad for the invitation to visit Bahrain.

He said the invitation embodies the kingdom's "character as a role model for openness and coexistence among all components of society," praising King Hamad's constant keenness to promote a culture of dialogue and tolerance, and his initiatives to spread the principles of coexistence and brotherhood among all countries and peoples.

The Abu Dhabi agreement was signed by Pope Francis on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church, and the grand imam of Egypt's Al-Azhar in 2019 in the UAE, during the pope's historic visit to the Arabian Peninsula.







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[Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together](#)

[King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa](#)

Kings of Bahrain, Jordan agree to continue cooperating on Arab causes and regional security

[Palestinian seriously hurt after settlers hurl stones at car](#)

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1637800768501626800

Wed, 2021-11-24 19:04

RAMALLAH, West Bank: A Palestinian man was critically wounded after Jewish settlers pelted his car with stones as he drove through the occupied West Bank on Wednesday, causing him to veer off the road and crash, Palestinian

officials said.

Raid Kharaz lost control of his vehicle when rocks hurled by settlers smashed through the windshield near the West Bank village of Al-Mughayir, according to Ghassan Daghlis, a Palestinian Authority official who monitors settler violence.

Kharaz was flown to a nearby hospital, while his son, who was also in the vehicle, sustained lighter injuries, the official Palestinian Wafa news agency reported.

The Israeli army referred questions to the police, who did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The autumn has seen a sharp uptick in settler violence. In mid-November, dozens of settlers attacked a group of Palestinians and Israeli activists with stones and clubs, hospitalizing a woman and wounding several others. In the same week, Jewish settlers attacked a group of Palestinian farmers with pepper spray and clubs near an evacuated settlement outpost, wounding four people.

Recent months have also seen a steep rise in settler vandalism of Palestinian property known as "price tag" attacks, a term coined by far-right settlers in response to perceived efforts by Israel to restrict settlement expansion. Israeli officials have spoken out against the violence, especially after dozens of settlers attacked a Palestinian village in September, wounding a toddler. But the Palestinians and rights groups say Israeli soldiers rarely intervene and often side with the settlers.

Israel captured the West Bank in the 1967 Mideast war, along with east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, territories Palestinians seek for a future state. Most of the international community views settlements as illegal and a barrier to peace. Israel views the West Bank as the biblical and historical heartland of the Jewish people, and says its status should be decided in negotiations.

Nearly 500,000 Jewish settlers live in over 130 settlements across the West Bank. Many are highly built up and resemble urban suburbs, while more radical settlers have established dozens of rural outposts without Israeli authorization.



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Jordan's king calls for stepping up efforts on Palestinian two-state solution in UAE during Gulf tour
Two Israeli police officers stabbed, Palestinian assailant killed – police

[Iran accused of stalling redress for downed Ukraine flight](#)

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1637800417531619500

Wed, 2021-11-24 22:55

OTTAWA: Britain, Sweden and Ukraine on Wednesday accused Iran of stalling redress for the families of victims of a downed Ukraine flight, saying Tehran has yet to agree to talks.

The Islamic republic shot down Ukraine International Airlines flight PS752 shortly after take-off from its capital Tehran on January 8, 2020, killing all 176 people aboard, including 85 Canadian citizens and permanent residents.

Three days later, it admitted that its forces had mistakenly targeted the Kiev-bound Boeing 737-800 plane.

"We, ministers representing Canada, Sweden, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom, express our deep disappointment that the Islamic Republic of Iran has not accepted our multiple requests to meet on November 22, 2021 to negotiate on the matter of reparations for the downing of Flight PS752," the four nations said in a joint statement.

On Friday, Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly spoke with her British counterpart Elizabeth Truss, and committed jointly "to seeking justice by holding Iran accountable."

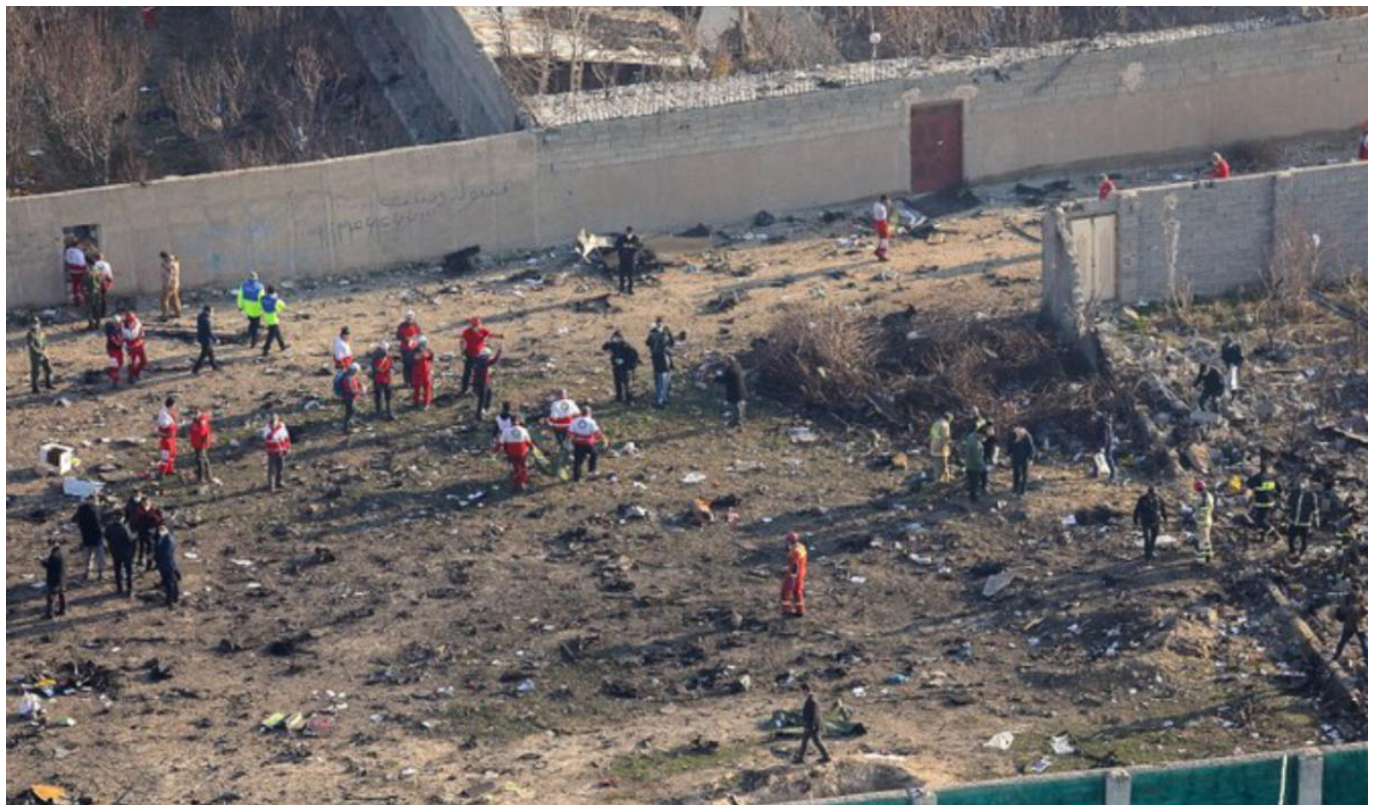
The four nations seeking redress said Wednesday that if Iran continues "to avoid negotiating with the group, (they) will have no choice but to seriously consider other actions and measures to resolve this matter within the framework of international law."

On Sunday, the trial of 10 soldiers in connection to the jetliner's downing opened in Tehran.

In a final report in March, the Iranian Civil Aviation Organization (CAO) pointed to the missile strikes and the "alertness" of its troops on the ground amid heightened tensions between Iran and the United States at the time.

The Islamic republic had just attacked a US base in Iraq in response to the killing of General Qassem Soleimani, and were expecting a response from Washington.

Ukraine, which lost 11 citizens in the disaster, said the report was "a cynical attempt to hide (the) true causes" of the tragedy, while Canada said it contained "no hard facts or evidence" and pledged to soon release the results of its own investigation.



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