



*Sketch drawing of a model image published by AFP*

were identical, and resemble ancient portraits as well as the mask that covered the king's mummified face when his remains were discovered in 1922 by archaeologist Howard Carter.



*Sketch drawing of published AFP image produced by American team*

### Face of Tutankhamun

Forensic artists have recreated the facial image of Tutankhamun, the most well-known ancient king of Egypt.

Three teams of scientists made separate models of the boy king's face using scans of his skull. The French and Egyptian teams knew who they were reconstructing, but the American group was not told.

The young king, who passed away 3,300 years ago, is popularly recognised as the sun god at dawn, with plump cheeks and a round chin, rising from a lotus blossom. Model reconstructions of the three teams



*Sketching drawing after published AP image created by French team*

CT scans made in January this year suggested that the king was a slightly built, but healthy 19-year-old when he died, and probably suffered from a broken leg prior to death. It has been a long-standing speculation that he had been murdered, largely due to an x-ray examination in 1968, which showed a bone shard in his skull, leading to the theory that he had been assassinated by a blow to the head.

Mystery surrounds Tutankhamun, as little is known about him and his 10-year rule after succeeding Akhenaten, who promoted monotheism, and angered those who worshipped the old gods of Egypt.

### Pagan's Tower of Myanmar

The 13-storey observation tower in the ancient site of Myanmar's Pagan city, the building of which has been a controversial project, was eventually opened in April. Regarded as a monstrous eyesore by some, the steel structure has been dogged by opposition mainly due to its incongruity to the open landscape of Burma's most significant archaeological heritage site of historic monuments. The building contains observation decks, conference rooms, offices, shops and restaurant.

Pagan is also one of Asia's most well-known ancient locations, with thousands of 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century temples spread over 80 sq kilometres. Burmese authorities insisted that the modern tower will increase tourism – the site attracts thousands of tourists each year – and

preserve the site from the damage caused by tourists trampling on it by providing a bird's eye-view of the city.

Even though Unesco has expressed reservations about the tower, local archaeologists have commented that it is quite a distance from the city centre and the more famous temples, thus making it unobstructive.

### Egyptian necropolis

Archaeologists in Egypt have discovered a necropolis which may be 5,000 years old. The site, between Luxor and Aswan in the southern part of the country, yielded evidence of an early form of mummification prior to the rule of Pharaohs. The remains of human beings and

other objects such as limestone fragments of life-size statue and fragments of ceramic masks and pots were found in an area that is considered to be the historic Hierakonpolis city of the Nile. It is thought to be the major city and capital of Upper Egypt.

### **Dinosaur fossils**

Fossils of dinosaurs and turtles dating to the Jurassic period have been found in Thailand. Ten dinosaur pieces – tail bones mostly – and remains of a pair of metre-long turtles were discovered on a site in Mukdahan, northeast of Thailand, where along with provinces such as Kalasin, Chaiyaphum and Khon Kaen, most dinosaur fossil traces have been found. These include fossils of the major Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous periods. Unsurprisingly, trading and trafficking of dinosaur fossils have increased. Shipment had been made to England, Hong Kong, Japan and China, with large stocks due for auction on the internet.

### **Philippines' haven for artists**

An artists' village in the Philippines has been attracting a rising number of visitors, including foreign tourists. Established on the edge of a Baguio resort in Cordillera, Tam-awan is a 2.5 hectare artists' haven founded in 1997 by painter Ben Cabrera and his friends. They were involved in a relocation and cultural preservation project concerning the heritage and abandoned huts of the Igorot hill tribes in the mountainous provinces of Ifugao and Kalinga.

Artists may rent one of the ancient hundred-year old huts or farmhouses to create, exhibit or sell their works. The village also has galleries, and obtains revenue from commissions, rentals, admission fees and coffee-shop business.

Tam-awan is also a curiosity, drawing students and visitors from afar to its arts' centre, exhibitions, performance art events, and workshops on traditional tribal crafts such as basket-making, and wine fermentation as well as textile art, portraiture, etc...

### **Eleven minus One Apostles**

As one of Australia's most well-known ancient landmarks, part of the Twelve Apostles rock pillars collapsed into the ocean in Victoria. Witnesses of the event were stunned when a 45m pillar fell after a crack

had appeared. Geologists believed that the pillar had taken 20 million years to form, only to become a pile of rubble on the Southern Ocean in a matter of a few seconds.

The Twelve Apostles pillars, along the spectacular Great Ocean Road, were formed by erosion with the constant impact of the sea on the limestone cliff, leaving separate rocks standing on the coastline. Originally known as the "Sow and Piglets", the popular tourist attraction is due to have more "apostles", with the cliff being eroded at a rate of 2cm per year.

### **City of the future**

Dubai of the United Arab Emirates has become an international showroom of visually striking and space fiction architecture. What used to be a creek on the deserts' edge some 30 years ago is now a sprawling metropolis of 1.3 million, marked by a construction frenzy of instant and designer architecture. Before 2010, the city will have built the tallest tower in the world, and replicas of Paris' Eiffel, the Giza Pyramid and the Tower of Babel.

A haven for architects and builders, Dubai is a transforming landscape of imaginative structures, for example the Emirates Towers, modeled after triangular prisms. Others include a skyscraper shaped as a monstrous piano keyboard; the financial centre building, The Gate, looking like a massive computer chip; and a residential area designed as a colossal trifle.

There have been criticisms about the lack of direction in turning the city into a free-for-all architectural zoo, and while some hotels and housing projects copied local and a mix of styles, such as Malaysian, Egyptian and Turkish, futuristic influences are the rule. Admirers, however, claim that Dubai is a vision of the future metropolis, creating its own vernacular tradition.

### **Prehistoric single-cell organisms**

Evidence of life between 230 and 345 million years ago – before dinosaurs existed – have been discovered at a limestone hill in Kanchanaburi, Thailand. The find in an area of 30,000 sq. m was made by young Thai archaeologists, who found fossils of prehistoric single-cell organisms in the rocks around the hill. Grains of fossilized wheat and rice were also collected. It is

believed that the traces of ancient life date back to between the Carboniferous and Permian ages.

### **Chad skull human or ape?**

*Nature* magazine reports that new discoveries of fossils in Chad, central Africa, and further analysis of the "Toumaï" skull, *Sahelanthropus tchadensis*, strengthen the argument that the species belonged to humans rather than apes. However, claims by the discovery team that it was the oldest hominid or human-like creature have been opposed by scientists. An anthropologist suggested that it belonged to a female ancestor of gorillas.

The Toumaï skull was unearthed in the desert of northern Chad by a team headed by Michel Brunet, at the University of Poitiers (France). It contains a mix of modern and primitive features, a skull shape and brain size similar to apes, but face and teeth closer to that of humans. The specimen has been dated at six to seven million years old, during which it is believed that the ancestors of humans and chimpanzees evolved separately.

The report details the latest find of two jaw fragments and the crown of a tooth by Brunet and his team in the same area where Toumaï was found, and how analysis support the proposition that it was a hominid. The research shows that the position of the hole – *foramen magnum* – for the spinal cord resembles that of humans, not apes, which makes Toumaï a bipedal (creature that walks upright). Researchers, who are not persuaded by such arguments, pointed out that the dispute was mainly connected to the distortion of the fossil, which rendered recognition of diagnostic hominid features problematic.

The debate has been vigorous because if Toumaï is proved as belonging to humans, it would appear that hominids evolved rapidly after diverting into their own evolutionary path. Questions concerning many assumptions of human prehistory would emerge.

Discovered about 2,500km west of the African Great Rift Valley (considered the ancestral home of humans), the specimens were found where large quantities of hominid fossils have been unearthed over the years.

### **Ancient date palm grows again**

BBC reports that Israeli scientists claim that they have succeeded in growing a date palm from a 2,000-year-old seed, believed to be the oldest sapling ever germinated.

The seed, named Methuselah (after the biblical figure who lived for 1,000 years), was one of several found during an excavation of the ancient mountain fortress of Masada.

Researchers, who believe that ancient medicines of the past can be the medicines of the future, say that the project could yield powerful medical benefits. The plant was said to be a great efficacy, and is from a type of palm variety that became extinct during the Middle Ages.

Methuselah is currently measured at about 30cm tall, and scientists hope that its growth will bear past secrets hidden in it.

### **Khao Yai Forest makes it into Heritage List**

The Khao Yai Forest area of Thailand has been confirmed as one of the new sites included in Unesco's World Heritage List 2005. It is the only site in South-east Asia added to the list for this year. Unesco reports that the Dong Phrayayen-Khao Yai Forest Complex, spreading over 230km between the Ta Phraya National Park and Khao Yai National Park, covers 615,500 hectares, 7,500 of which are 1,000m above sea level. The area is a mountainous region, rising to as high as 1,351m, with several tributaries of the Mun River, which is a tributary of the Mekong River. It contains scenic waterfalls and gorges, and over 800 species of fauna, 112 mammal species, 392 species of birds and 200 reptiles and amphibians. Many of these species are threatened and endangered. Substantial and important tropical forest ecosystems in the site provide habitat for the long-term survival of these species.

### **Cemetery ruins untouched**

Archaeologists reported that they have found a multi-level burial site at Pachacamac, Peru. They said that the cemetery contain mummies of families from different epochs, piled over one another.

Sixty-nine tombs have been excavated as part of the Ychsma excavations which commenced in 1999.

Pachacamac is located south of the capital, Lima, and believed to have been governed by the Ychsma lords between 900 and 1470.

The huge area is a popular tourist attraction, and had once been a pilgrimage site for the Incas. It fell into ruins after the Spanish arrived.

Researchers are excited about finding more information on the various cultures and eras of the site. They regard it as an "exceptional" discovery because the graves are intact, and had not been looted. The conditions of several of the remains reveal that it is possible the sick gathered at the site in search of cures for their ailments, perhaps from an oracle. A significant number of individuals on the top layer of the burial suffered from very serious diseases, such as syphilis, tuberculosis and cancer.

### **Archaeologists discovered treasure-filled burial site**

A golden crown, armour, ring and other artefacts dated 2,400 years old have been unearthed from what may be the tomb of a Thracian king close to the south-eastern town of Zlatnitsa, Bulgaria. The treasures were found with the skeleton of a young ruler buried with two horses and a dog. He appeared to have had been given a lavish funeral, and had a big ring on his finger which contains the image of a Thracian ruler on a horse being crowned by a Greek goddess. The bones of the skeleton are being dug up, and will be sent to Sofia for analysis.

The identity of the king is yet to be confirmed, as there were numerous kingdoms in Bulgaria during that time.

The dominant theory is that he was Sept – found in Greek writings pertaining to that period – who had inherited the kingdom from his uncle, and paid the Greek army to counter a rebellion from the locals.

As the Egyptians constructed pyramids, Thracians built mounds to bury their rulers inside. The burial site also yielded decorated bronze, iron and copper armour and body wear, engraved with scenes from Greek mythology.

### **Women lead the way in aboriginal art trade**

Aboriginal women are emerging as a significant force in Australian art, such as body painting, rock art, music and dance, etc.

An international interest has been driving indigenous artists to create, and women artists have found a place in the world of art, which had largely been the domain of aboriginal men. Changes have been afoot in the past 30 years, during which women have achieved more influence. In communities, painting has become a tangible opportunity to rise from poverty, securing a form of economy for the very poor.

Many of the artists lead nomadic and traditional lives. Having never been formally taught art, they are now involved in a multi-million dollar industry.

A recurrent theme in their art is the spiritual affinity Aborigines have with the land, expressing the energy and beauty of earth as filled with wisdom and mystery. Family, political and social issues are also found in their works.