

English articles

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Articles of the week



King Charles III leads Britain's Remembrance Sunday ceremony for war dead



By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — King Charles III led Britain's annual ceremony of remembrance for the country's war

dead on Sunday, under November sunshine and the shadow cast across Europe by the almost 4-year-old war in Ukraine.

As Parliament's Big Ben bell tolled 11 a.m., thousands of military personnel, veterans and members of the public gathered in central London fell still for two minutes of silence, broken by a single artillery blast and Royal Marines buglers sounding "The Last Post."

The 76-year-old king, dressed in the uniform of an army field marshal, laid a wreath of red paper poppies on a black background at the base of the Cenotaph war memorial. Erected over a century ago to honor the British and allied troops killed in World War I, it has become the focus of annual ceremonies for members of military and civilian services killed in that war and subsequent conflicts.

The national ceremony of remembrance is held every year on the nearest Sunday to the anniversary of the end of World War I on Nov. 11, 1918, at 11 a.m. Similar memorial services are held in dozens of towns and cities across Britain and at U.K. military bases overseas.

A military band played as heir to the throne Prince William followed his father in laying a wreath on the simple Portland stone monument inscribed with the words "the glorious dead."

Wreaths were also laid by Prime Minister Keir Starmer, other political leaders and diplomats from across the Commonwealth of Britain's former colonies.

Queen Camilla, the Princess of Wales and other members of the royal family watched from their traditional place on a balcony of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

Many of the wreaths were made of poppies, and most people in attendance wore paper poppies on their lapels. The scarlet flowers that bloomed on the muddy battlefields and makeshift graveyards of northern France and Belgium during World War I — made famous by the poem "In Flanders Fields" — have become a symbol of remembrance in Britain and other countries.

Like many other NATO members, Britain has increased its defense spending since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Britain says it will spend 3.5% of GDP on defense by 2035.

After the wreath-laying, some 10,000 military veterans with gleaming medals marched past the Cenotaph, accompanied by jaunty military music and applauded by well-wishers lining the sidewalks. Among them, in wheelchairs, were about 20 of the dwindling band of WWII veterans, the youngest of them 98 years old.

Donald Poole, 101, who served in as a Royal Army Ordnance Corps explosives handler in the conflict that ended 80 years ago, said it was "a great honor to be able to pay tribute to the poor souls who have died in all conflicts.

"I know how lucky I am to still be here thanks to all those who have fought and served, past and present," he said. "I also want to pay tribute to the civilian services who suffered during the Second World War, particularly the fire service, who saved so many lives during the Blitz — many of whom lost their own."

With pharaoh-like fanfare, Egypt unveils a huge new museum dedicated to its ancient civilization



By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — In an extravaganza of pharaonic imagery with a drone light show depicting ancient gods and pyramids in the sky, Egypt on Saturday inaugurated its long-delayed Grand Egyptian Museum, a megaproject aiming to give the country's millennia-old heritage a rich, modern display.

Two decades in the making, the museum located near the Giza Pyramids and the Sphinx is the centerpiece of the government's bid to boost Egypt's tourism industry and bring cash into the troubled economy.

At the elaborate grand opening ceremony, attended by a number of European and Arab royals and other presidents and prime ministers, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi sought to give the event an international scale.

He called on attendees to “make this museum a platform for dialogue, a destination for knowledge, a forum for humanity, and a beacon for all who love life and believe in the value of humankind.”

A bid to join the ranks of the world's top museums

The museum, known as GEM, is one of several megaprojects championed by el-Sissi since he took office in 2014, embarking on massive investments in infrastructure with the aim of reviving an economy weakened by decades of stagnation and battered by the unrest that followed the 2011 Arab Spring uprising.

Egypt's pharaonic history has long made it a tourist magnet. But it has also long struggled to organize and display the sheer huge amount of artifacts — everything from tiny pieces of jewelry and colorful tomb murals to towering statues of pharaohs and animal-headed gods, with more as discoveries are constantly being made across the country.

Touted as the world's biggest museum dedicated to a single ancient civilization, the new building, in contemporary style is a stark contrast. Its large, open halls give space for some 50,000 artifacts on display, along with virtual reality exhibits. It displays the entire collection of treasures from the tomb of the famed King Tutankhamun for the first time since its discovery in 1922.

The museum replaces the Egyptian Museum, housed in building more than a century old in downtown Cairo that — while elegant in its Neo-Classical style — had become antiquated and was often compared to a warehouse, overpacked with artifacts with little explanation.

Construction on the \$1 billion project began in 2005 under then-President Hosni Mubarak. But work

was interrupted by turmoil surrounding the 2011 uprising that brought down the Egyptian strongman. Further delays ensued, and a planned grand opening over the summer had to be put off after the 12-day-long war between Israel and Iran erupted in June.

GEM is expected to attract 5 million visitors annually, said Egypt's tourism and antiquities minister, Sherif Fathy. That would put it in the realm of the most popular museums in the world. In 2024, by comparison, Paris's Louvre brought in 8.7 million, the British Museum 6.5 million and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York 5.7 million.

An elaborate opening ceremony

Saturday night's grand opening stoked the pharaoh-mania.

As an orchestra played fanfares, lines of actors dressed in ancient Egyptian garb arrayed around the museum, the pyramids and the Sphinx. Hundreds of drones created a light show in the sky, depicting well-known Egyptian gods like Isis and Osiris and the pyramids.

El-Sissi posed with delegates from more than 70 countries, including members of the royal families from Belgium, Spain, Denmark, Jordan, Gulf Arab nations and Japan, and a number of European and regional presidents and prime ministers. It was a throwback to the grand opening of another megaproject in Egypt, the 1869 inauguration of the Suez Canal, when Egypt's rulers gathered a host of European royal families.

Ramses the Great and King Tut

The museum boasts a towering, triangular glass façade imitating the nearby pyramids, with 24,000 square meters (258,000 square feet) of permanent exhibition space.

It opens to a granite colossus of Ramses the Great, one of ancient Egypt's most powerful pharaohs who reigned for around 60 years, from 1279-1213 B.C., and is credited with expanding ancient Egypt's reach as far as modern Syria to the east and present-day Sudan to the south. The statue greets visitors once they step inside the museum's angular atrium.

The museum's 12 main galleries, which opened last year, exhibit antiquities spanning from prehistoric times to the Roman era, organized by eras and by themes.

Two halls that will be opened for the first time after Saturday are dedicated to the 5,000 artifacts from the collection of King Tutankhamun — a boy pharaoh who ruled from 1361-1352 B.C. The tomb was discovered by British archaeologist Howard Carter in 1922 in the southern city of Luxor. The old Egyptian Museum did not have enough room to display the whole collection.

The collection includes the boy pharaoh's three funeral beds and six chariots, his golden throne, his gold-covered sarcophagus and his burial mask, made of gold, quartzite, lapis lazuli and colored glass.

Zahi Hawass, Egypt's most renowned archaeologist and former minister of antiquities, said the Tutankhamun collection is the museum's masterpiece.

“Why this museum is so important, and everyone is waiting for the opening?” he told The Associated Press. “Because of Tutankhamun.”

Boost to tourism and economy

Officials hope the museum will draw more tourists who will stay for longer periods and provide the

foreign currency needed to shore up Egypt's battered economy.

The government has also revamped the area around the museum and the nearby pyramids and the Sphinx. New highways were built, and a metro station is being constructed nearby. An airport, Sphinx International Airport, has also opened west of Cairo — 40 minutes from the museum.

The tourism sector has suffered during years of political turmoil and violence following the 2011 uprising. In recent years, the sector has started to recover after the coronavirus pandemic and amid Russia's war on Ukraine — both countries are major sources of tourists visiting Egypt.

A record number of about 15.7 million tourists visited Egypt in 2024, contributing about 8% of the country's GDP, according to official figures. Fathy, the tourism minister, said about 18 million tourists are expected this year, with authorities hoping for 30 million visitors annually by 2032.

This will translate into more jobs and pump foreign currency into the economy, said Walid el-Batouty, a tour guide.

“It will be boost the economy of Egypt tremendously not just the hotels and the museum itself,” he said. Whenever a tourist rides a cab or even just buys a bottle of water, “that is pumping money” into Egypt's coffers, he added.

Associated Press journalist Ahmed Hatem in Cairo contributed to this report.

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