



PHOTO: STAR

An exhibition of sculptures by Tajas Halder began at the Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts in the city yesterday. The exhibition titled 'Dual Contraction' will remain open from 12:00 noon to 8:00pm daily up to August 28.

Angkor under 'serious' threat from development

AFP, Phnom Penh

Uncontrolled development around Cambodia's Angkor temples poses a serious threat to one of the region's great wonders, said the archaeologists who this week revealed the full extent of the site.

Angkor was a "vast and populous network ... stretching far beyond the well known temples of the central archaeological park," said the Greater Angkor Project (GAP) at the University of Sydney on its website.

"Delicate traces of that network ... remain on the surface even today and are of great archaeological significance, but are under serious threat from uncontrolled development in the Siem Reap area," the group warned.

The group on Monday published a paper saying that during its height of power between the ninth and 14th centuries, Angkor -- covering about

1,000 square-kilometres -- was "the most extensive city of its kind in the pre-industrial world."

Angkor was at least three times larger than archaeologists had previously suspected, eclipsing comparable developments such as Tikal, a Classic Maya "city" on the Yucatan peninsula in Mexico.

Using digital mapping to detail some 3,000 square-kilometres around the temples, the group found evidence of an urban centre supported by a complex series of canals and waterways that became too vast to manage.

Deforestation and erosion caused as the city extended its rice fields to feed its bloated population led to a collapse in infrastructure, and Angkor was eventually abandoned.

The temples today remain Cambodia's largest tourist draw, attracting almost one million visitors last year and bringing more than a

billion dollars to the impoverished country.

But along with the tourists has come a massive building boom in and around the Siem Reap town -- the gateway to the temple complex.

Officials have long voiced concern over the effects of this explosion of visitors on the temples themselves, but attention has now been turned to development around the park.

Most seriously, huge hotels, along with dozens of smaller guesthouses have begun to suck the area's water supply dry and have raised fears that the temples could collapse as the earth beneath them is destabilised.

According to GAP, its digital mapping database was presented to Cambodia's Apsara Authority, the government's Angkor management group in order "to safeguard the archaeological landscape."

Australia to close detention centre for asylum seekers

AFP, Sydney

Australia is to close a detention centre at the heart of long-running controversy over its treatment of foreign asylum seekers, the government announced yesterday.

The Baxter detention centre, north of Adelaide in South Australia state, will revert to the defence department, Immigration Minister Kevin Andrews said, although no date was specified.

Andrews said that it was possible to close Baxter because of Australia's system of processing asylum seekers offshore, particularly in its Pacific neighbour of Nauru.

"Stemming the flow of illegal arrivals has been a key part of the measures to make Australia's borders secure and assure the integrity of its immigration program," Andrews said.

Australia's use of offshore processing centres has been widely criticised at home and abroad as flouting international norms on treatment of refugees.

Refugee advocates welcomed the closure but said it was overshadowed by the building of a new detention centre on Australia's remote Indian Ocean possession of Christmas Island.

High blood pressure toll to boom within 20 years

BBC ONLINE

High blood pressure is out of control around the world, with the number of sufferers expected to exceed a billion within 20 years, experts warn.

One in four adults already has the condition, which increases the risk of heart disease, stroke and death.

But unhealthy modern lifestyles mean the toll could hit 1.56 billion by 2025, up from 972 million in 2000, The Lancet medical journal reports. The biggest problem is poor compliance with treatment, an editorial claims.

TIME BOMB

Despite very effective and cost-effective treatments, target blood pressure levels are very rarely reached, even in countries where cost of medication is not an issue, says the editorial.

"Many patients still believe that hypertension is a disease that can be cured, and stop or reduce medication when blood pressure levels fall.

"Physicians need to convey the message that hypertension is the first, and easily measurable, irreversible sign that many organs in the body are under attack.

"Perhaps this message will make people think more carefully about the consequences of an unhealthy

lifestyle and give preventative measures a real chance," it says.

Currently, a person in the Western world has a greater than 90 percent lifetime risk of developing high blood pressure or hypertension.

But lifestyle factors, such as physical inactivity, a salt-rich diet with high processed and fatty foods, and alcohol and tobacco use, mean the problem is spreading at an alarming rate from developed countries to emerging economies, such as India and China, says The Lancet.

Professor Gareth Beevers of the Blood Pressure Association said: "This shows that high blood pressure is a ticking time bomb and should be taken seriously.

"This is preventable, if people of all ages start looking at their lifestyles and start taking the right action to reduce their risk."

PREVENTION

Dr Isabel Lee, of The Stroke Association, said: "Every five minutes someone in the UK has a stroke - that's 150,000 every year. Yet, over 40 percent of these strokes could be prevented by the control of high blood pressure.

"Whilst it is important to get your blood pressure measured regularly, it is equally important that people

who are prescribed blood pressure medication continue to take it even once their blood pressure is back under control.

"GPs need to ensure that patients are made fully aware of the importance of continuing with their blood pressure medication."

People can also take additional steps to help improve their lifestyles and reduce their risk of high blood pressure by stopping smoking, having a healthy diet and exercising regularly, she said.

A British Heart Foundation spokeswoman said high blood pressure often remained undiagnosed until a person encountered something as serious, and potentially fatal, as a heart attack or stroke.

"That's why it's vital that people know what their blood pressure is and how they can reduce it if it is high.

"Everyone over 40 years of age should talk to their GP or practice nurse about having a full risk assessment for heart and circulatory disease carried out."

Russia delivers air defence system to Syria

AFP, Moscow

Russia has begun delivery of modern air defence units to Syria while rejecting speculation that some of the weapons could be forwarded secretly to Iran, a newspaper reported yesterday.

"The first part of the delivery to Syria has started," the centrist daily Nezavissimaya Gazeta reported, quoting information from a domestic military information agency.

A spokesman for Russia's arms export agency Rosoboronexport, contacted by AFP, declined to comment on the newspaper report.

The report acknowledged that the delivery of the weapons, the Pantsyr-S1E self-propelled short-range missile air defence system, was particularly sensitive in light of Israeli claims last year that Russian arms sold to Syria had ended up in the hands of militant group Hezbollah.