



## The Egyptian Museum in Cairo

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Now, it's time to explore the most enchanting collection—the artifacts discovered from the tomb of Tutankhamun in 1922 at the Valley of the Kings in Luxor by famous British archeologist and Egyptologist Howard Carter. The nearly intact tomb, the best preserved and most intact tomb of a pharaoh found in the Valley of the Kings, made King Tut or the 'boy king' an icon of what we know about ancient Egypt today.

5,398 objects, mostly made of gold, were discovered from the tomb and are now on display at the Egyptian Museum. The center of attraction is Tutankhamun's mask, made of 10.23 kilogrammes of gold, one of the best-known works of art and most famous object from ancient Egypt. It has been kept in a separate room along

with other ornaments of Tutankhamun. The shining mask is now thought to be originally intended for his step-mother, the even more famous Queen Nefertiti. Be aware about the fact that photography is strictly prohibited inside this room—you might be jailed for taking pictures here! Other treasures from Tutankhamun's tomb in the adjacent corridor include the Anubis Shrine, thrones, sandals, a golden chariot, canopies filled with his internal organs, dummy boats and army, among others are on display.

Other objects discovered in the surrounding galleries are from the tomb of Hetepheres I, the mother of Khufu (of the tiny ivory statue mentioned earlier) and the tombs of Yuya and Tjuya, and their daughter Tiye. The tomb of Yuya and Tjuya is considered one of the finest after the tomb of Tutankhamun and the objects

found from the tomb represent some of the finest examples of furniture from the New Kingdom period. It was suggested that Yuya could probably be Joseph, or Prophet Yusuf, though mainstream Egyptologists don't accept this theory.

In the western part of the second floor, there are hundreds of wooden coffins of royal mummies and nobles lying on the floor and paintings in glass cases. There is little information about these, but most of these coffins have mummies inside. Animals were an important part of ancient Egyptian life and cows, cats, and dogs were often considered as gods. As a result, it was also common to mummify the body of the pets of the royal families. The museum has a separate gallery for the animal mummies. There are also galleries with papyrus rolls inscribed with paintings and writings of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs.

Besides these, there are other galleries



## Objects from the Tutankhamun Tomb

crowded with hundreds and thousands of small and medium artifacts such as statues, tablets, papyrus, scarabs, canopies, ornaments, armories and many other objects. Unfortunately, in most of these galleries, there are no labels or interpretations of the displays and exhibitions. If visitors do not have in-

depth knowledge on ancient Egyptian history, the importance of these objects can get overlooked among all these ancient artifacts. You can hire a professional guide in front of the museum for better understanding of these objects and be taken to look at the museum's most attractive collections. All guides in the museum premises have a university degree either in Egyptology or in Museum Guiding and also have an official guiding license.

There is a garden and open area in front of the museum building where a number of large statues of the pharaohs and a piece of a broken obelisk stand. It is a good place to observe the museum's beautiful outer design and façade. If you spend some time sitting here observing the statues, you find yourself lost in thoughts of life in ancient Egypt.

If you are visiting Cairo this year or next, the Egyptian Museum should top your list of places to visit. The entire collection of Tutankhamun is scheduled to be transferred to the Grand Egyptian Museum within the next two years. 50 percent of the artifacts have already been transferred and the rest are to follow soon. The royal mummies will also be transferred to the newly constructed National Museum of Egyptian Civilisation. Nobody knows if once transferred from Egyptian Museum, when these wondrous historical objects will come on display again but definitely not within the next three to five years.

It's time you pack a bag, pick up a book on ancient Egypt, and venture forth to explore the treasure vault of ancient Egypt.

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## HUMAN RIGHTS

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The *nouka* polling agents did not let the voters go behind the curtain to cast their vote—and whoever was voting for any party but the ruling party was being made to vote on 'boat' on another ballot," admitted another assistant presiding officer. He could not remember the identities of the polling agents inside his room, but his colleague Belal Hossain could remember the designations. "I had a polling agent who was a labour supervisor in a brick field," he told this correspondent over the phone.

Ruhul Amin was a labour contractor for brick fields, according to locals. The other rapists apprehended were all labourers working under him.

"Ruhul Amin made my son Murad believe the dreams of development and led him astray. My son is a labourer," said the father of the alleged rapist to this correspondent over the phone.

Another father also claimed the same. "My son is a labourer and used to hang out with Ruhul Amin for work," said Abdul Mannan, the father of Swapan, one of the alleged rapists arrested. When asked whether his son does politics with the ruling party, he agreed.

The frail old man, who seems to be in his 80's, recently stood up onstage at a protest meeting organised by Nijera Kori, an NGO, and denounced his son in front of a full crowd. "My son is a rapist. I want him tried and hanged. I don't care whether he is hanged or he goes to hell." Saying this, the man could not say anything more. He hung his head and walked off the stage.

To validate their conclusion, the NHRC report cites the First Information Report (FIR) of the criminal case filed by the rape survivor's husband. Truth be told, the FIR has no mention of any election-time altercation, stating that the rape happened because of past enmity between the survivor and the rapists. But the problem is that

Mohammed Sirajul Islam, the survivor's husband claims that he did not write it—that it was written for him.

"I am an illiterate man, how can I write the FIR?" he has said over and over again to *Star Weekend* and other media. "I narrated to them what had happened and a police officer wrote it for me."

He claimed that this is what he narrated to them: Parul had gone to vote at the polling booth at Madhya Bagga Primary School when she was accosted by men who told



## People protest the Subarnachar rape incident.

her to vote for the "boat" insignia. Parul refused to yield and was threatened by the men "that they will put her in her place that evening." None of these details, however, was in the FIR.

"He did not tell us any of this. We only write in the FIR what the person filing the case dictates," said Mohammed Nizam Uddin, the officer-in-charge of Charjabbar police station to *Star Weekend*. On the other hand, his superior,

Mohammed Ilias Sharif, the police superintendent of Noakhali believes that Sirajul himself wrote the case statement. When this correspondent pointed out that Sirajul is illiterate, he said, "If you believe that, then the conversation ends here."

In fact, NHRC's report itself acknowledges that Sirajul did not write the FIR himself. "The *daroga* came and took me to the police station. He wrote the case statement and I signed," reads the commission's report. Sirajul's signature too is somewhat telling of his lack of literacy—he shortened his name to "Siraj" and the letters are disjointed and drawn in a wobbly hand.

Yet that is the FIR upon which the rights body is basing its conclusion.

Meanwhile the OC and SP—the two men who insist that the rape was linked to a personal feud instead of the election—were two of the people the NHRC spoke to during their fact-finding mission. Other than them, the only officials they purportedly spoke to were the district commissioner and the head of the Noakhali General Hospital. According to the report they published, they did not interview any officer or witness who may have been present on election day at the polls.

There is a wide array of evidence pointing out that the rapists were linked to the ruling party, and at least two of them were present at the voting centre where Parul Begum cast her vote. Not just Parul, but witnesses around her are willingly offering proof. It is utterly baffling, that none of this evidence was taken to account by the NHRC when it concluded that the rape was not linked to the polls. The NHRC is condemning the rape—as they should—but their rejection of the possibility of this being polls-time violence refuses to recognise that Parul's democratic rights are not limited to physical safety, but also include the right to vote for whoever she wants.

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