

Egypt places colossus of Ramses II in atrium of new museum (Update)

January 25 2018, by Menna Zaki



A drone hovers as a statue of Egyptian Pharaoh Ramses II is relocated at the Grand Egyptian Museum near the great Pyramids, in Cairo, Egypt, Thursday, Jan. 25, 2018. The museum is scheduled to open later this year. Arabic at top reads, "long live Egypt." (AP Photo/Amr Nabil)

With much fanfare, Egypt on Thursday placed the ancient statue of one of its most famous pharaohs, Ramses II, in the entrance hall of a new antiquities' museum under construction near the pyramids of Giza, just outside Cairo.

This was fourth time the statue, which dates back 3,300 years, had been moved. It was first discovered in 1820 near ancient Memphis by Giovanni Battista Caviglia, an Italian explorer and Egyptologist who was also a key figure in the excavation of the Sphinx of Giza.

Ramses II, also known as Ramses the Great, ruled Egypt for around 60 years, from 1279 B.C. to 1213 B.C. He is credited with expanding ancient Egypt's reach as far as modern Syria to the east and modern Sudan to the south.

The placement of the colossus, weighing over 80 tons and towers at a height of about 12 meters (39 feet), took place amid a ceremony attended by Egyptian officials and foreign diplomats.

The massive statue—which for over 50 years had graced the Ramsis Square, named after the statue, in downtown Cairo—was moved in an iron cage hung like a pendulum on a steel bridge for about 400 meters (yards) from where it stood earlier, at the museum compound.

"We are celebrating the arrival of the first artifact to its final venue in the atrium of the Grand Egyptian Museum," Antiquities Minister Khaled al-Anani said, referring to the colossus.



A giant statue of pharaoh Ramses II arrives at the atrium of the Grand Egyptian Museum in Cairo, Egypt, Thursday, Jan. 25, 2018. The museum is scheduled to open later this year. Arabic reads, "Long live Egypt." (AP Photo/Amr Nabil)

The relocation of the colossus cost 13.6 million Egyptian pounds, al-Anani said, which today is about \$770,000, and involved military corps of engineers and a contracting company.

Al-Anani said the museum entrance hall will also host some 87 other artifacts, including 43 massive statues. He said that the first phase of the new museum, including the atrium, will be inaugurated later this year. The grand opening of the new museum is expected to take place in 2022.

The museum covers about 490,000 square meters (586,120 square yards) and will house some of Egypt's most unique and precious artifacts,

including many belonging to the famed boy King Tutankhamun.

Egypt hopes the inauguration of the new museum, along with a string of recent discoveries, will help spur a vital tourism industry that has been reeling from the political turmoil that engulfed Egypt following the 2011 popular uprising that toppled longtime autocrat Hosni Mubarak.

On Thursday, Egypt marked the seventh anniversary of the uprising.



A man poses for a selfie with a statue of the ancient Egyptian Pharaoh Ramses II as it is relocated at the Grand Egyptian Museum, in Cairo, Egypt, Thursday, Jan. 25, 2018. The museum is scheduled to open later this year. (AP Photo/Amr Nabil)



A statue of the ancient Egyptian Pharaoh Ramses II is surrounded by honor guards as it is relocated at the Grand Egyptian Museum, in Cairo, Egypt, Thursday, Jan. 25, 2018. The museum is scheduled to open later this year. (AP Photo/Amr Nabil)



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Cameramen film a giant statue of the pharaoh Ramses II as it is relocated at the Grand Egyptian Museum, in Cairo, Egypt, Thursday, Jan. 25, 2018. The museum is scheduled to open later this year. Arabic reads, "long live Egypt." (AP Photo/Amr Nabil)



A drone films a giant statue of the pharaoh Ramses II as it is relocated at the Grand Egyptian Museum, in Cairo, Egypt, Thursday, Jan. 25, 2018. The museum is scheduled to open later this year. (AP Photo/Amr Nabil)



The statue of Egyptian Pharaoh Ramses II is surrounded by honour guards as it is moved to be displayed at a permanent location at the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM) in Cairo, Egypt, Thursday, Jan. 25, 2018. (AP Photo/Amr Nabil)

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