

Tut brings EU, Egypt closer

FRIDAY's call to destroy the Sphinx and Pyramids, made by Morgan Al-Gohari, an Islamist leader who served two jail sentences under former president Hosni Mubarak for inciting violence, has done little to dampen the fanfare surrounding the launch of the two-day EU-Egypt Task Force Conference, writes

Nevine El-Aref.

To mark the opening of the conference European Commission Vice President Catherine Ashton and Minister of Tourism Hisham Zizou unveiled an exact replica of the tomb of Tutankhamun.

The unveiling comes almost 90 years after British archaeologist Howard Carter discovered the boy king's tomb in Luxor on 22 November 1922.

The replica is a gift to Egypt from the Factum Foundation, Madrid, the Society of Friends of the Royal Tombs of Egypt, Zurich and the University of Basel. It is one of three tomb reconstructions, the other two being Queen Nefertari's and Seti I's, first mooted by the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) in 2002.

"Those of us who have the privilege of visiting this country, this is a wonderful symbol of the richness and the culture and the heritage that exist in Egypt," said Ashton.

"It is also a wonderful expression of what we are trying to do here in Egypt with the Task Force: bring Europe and Egypt closer together and promote Egypt, this rich and great country, to show that it is a place to invest, a place to visit, a place to feel welcome at and the place we want to see succeed."

Neighbouring the Conrad Hotel, Tutankhamun's replica tomb will be open to visitors until the end of this week. It will then be dismantled and presented to the Ministry of Antiquities.

Minister of Antiquities Mohamed Ibrahim says no decision has been taken as to where the tomb will be reassembled, though in 2010 the SCA announced that a replica would be built at the entrance to the Valley of the Kings, close to Carter's rest-house on the West Bank in Luxor.

