

# Ex-cult leader faces execution



■ **1955:** Born **Chizuo Matsumoto**. Blind in one eye due to infantile glaucoma

■ **1977:** Fails to win place at university – studies acupuncture Chinese medicine, and new age philosophy



■ **1984:** Founds spiritual group **Aum Incorporated**

■ **1987:** Changes his name to **Shoko Asahara** and name of group to **Aum Shinrikyo** “supreme truth”. Cult blends Hindu and Buddhist spirituality with “prophesies” of 16th century monk **Nostradamus**



*Aleph claims 2,000 members in Japan and Russia, down from peak of 40,000 in 1995*

■ **1991:** Aum expands into Russia

■ **1993:** Cult purchases farm in **Banjarn, Australia** – where sarin nerve gas tests on sheep carried out

■ **1994:** First sarin gas attack, in residential area of **Matsumoto, Japan**, kills seven and injures 144

■ **2002:** Aum renamed **Aleph**. Members revere Asahara’s teenage daughter, **Archari**



■ **2004:** Asahara sentenced to death after eight-year trial. 12 Aum members sentenced to date – none yet executed

■ **Jun 6, 2006:** Japan’s Supreme Court rejects defence motion against death sentence. **Decision paves way for execution to be approved within six months – death by hanging must then take place within five days**

*Brainwashing techniques included sipping Asahara’s blood and wearing electric caps to synchronise brain waves with guru*



■ **Mar 1995:** Sarin gas attack in **Tokyo subway** kills 12 and injures over 3,000

■ **Apr:** Investigation in Russia suggests cult tried to buy weapons of mass destruction

■ **May:** Asahara arrested – murder charges follow

■ **1996:** Supreme Court approves disbanding Aum, assets seized

Sources: Aleph, FAS, CDC

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