



**SATURDAY D6-7**

## GETTING DINO READY FOR OPENING DAY

Ms Chen Mingshi, 25, a specialist associate, showing the cleaning of the toe bones of a dinosaur fossil at the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum, ahead of the museum's highly anticipated opening.

The museum features 2,000 specimens in a spacious, light-infused setting. The exhibits include a human skeleton, a king cobra killed on a golf course here, and a killer crab lurking around Singapore's shores.

Visitors can come within an arm's length of Prince, Apollonia and Twinky, the 150 million-year-old dinosaur fossils which are the stars of the show.

The museum is being officially opened today by President Tony Tan Keng Yam and will open its doors to the public on April 28. Tickets can be purchased from ticketing agent Sistic and will not be sold at the door. This is to help with crowd control, as only up to 300 guests are allowed in for each of the six daily sessions at the museum.

Tickets cost up to \$20 for adults and \$12 for children aged three to 12. For Singaporeans and permanent residents, tickets cost \$15 for adults and \$8 for children. The museum is located next to the University Cultural Centre at the National University of Singapore. PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI FOR THE STRAITS TIMES



(Above) Museum officer Hwang Wei Song, 33, and project manager Tan Swee Hee, 43, in the Arthropod Zone, where crabs (right) are also on display. The specimens can be found in South-east Asia and were selected from the museum's collection.



The Reptile Zone houses a collection of crocodiles, snakes and lizards (left) as well as turtles, tortoises and the Malayan Giant Terrapin (right). PHOTOS: LIM YAOHUI FOR THE STRAITS TIMES



Workers installing a mount for one of the sauropod skeletons last August.

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A large showcase (above) in the Mammal Zone. The museum's mammal collection has 315 species and some 15,000 specimens. Of these, primates are the best represented, with 867 catalogued specimens. It also has a large collection of rats, squirrels and bats.

Curator Lua Hui Kheng (right), 64, packing specimens of molluscs at the old Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research last December in preparation for the move.

PHOTOS: LIM YAOHUI FOR THE STRAITS TIMES



## A house for creatures great and small

A peek into the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum

By LIM YAOHUI FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

DINOSAURS are here to stay at the new 8,500 sq m, \$46 million Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum, which opens its doors to the public on April 28.

Prince, Apollonia and Twinky, three 150-million-year-old diplodocid sauropod dinosaur skeletons, are the stars of the museum's main gallery that traces the history of life on earth.

The museum is Singapore's first and only natural history museum and is home to over a million plant and animal specimens.

Visitors can expect to see more than 2,000 specimens, divided into 15 zones, in the exhibition gallery which covers some 2,500 sq m. The rest will be kept for research and education purposes.

The main floor showcases the history and biodiversity of plants and animals on our planet, focusing on plants and animals from South-east Asia.

The mezzanine floor consists of two main areas - the heritage gallery, consisting of specimens from the original Raffles Museum, and the Singapore Today area which introduces the geology of Singapore and conservation efforts here.

The move from the old to new museum started in August last year and ends today.

It was a delicate journey that required a team of seven museum

curators, 10 professional art movers and five student assistants and museum specialists.

Before the move, the specimens were placed in waterproof boxes to prevent condensation, then frozen at -21 deg C for two weeks in a big refrigerated container outside the museum as part of the decontamination process.

They were then thawed before being stored or displayed in the new building.

The museum has a long history, starting in 1878 as the Raffles Library and Museum. It was Sir Stamford Raffles' idea to build a depository for specimens of the region's flora and fauna.

It underwent several changes before the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research (RMBR), comprising the zoological collection and herbarium, was formed in 1998.

There, visitors could see a small part of the museum's collection in the public gallery, which was opened in 2000 on the third floor of Block S6 at the National University of Singapore's (NUS) Kent Ridge Campus.

But the RMBR collection was so large, only 0.1 per cent of it could be on show at any one time, leading to a quest for a bigger home.

The opening of the new museum, next to the University Cultural Centre at the NUS, will likely renew public interest in Singapore's biodiversity and natural heritage.

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"Dinosaur builder" Brock Sisson (right), 31, demonstrating the assembling of the foot of one of the diplodocid sauropod skeletons with teammate Dane Casper in August last year. Mr Sisson's job involves excavating fossils from the ground, restoring them, moulding them, designing their "poses" and thereby bringing them back to life. ST PHOTO: JAMIE KOH



The dramatic exterior facade (left) of the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum is a geological allegory of a rock, giving a sense of the natural world. The museum is east but has no windows as it needs minimal exposure to daylight in order to store and exhibit the specimens safely.

A member of the US team (above) assembling one of the three sauropod skeletons in August last year. The team was brought in specially for this task. ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN