

**SCIENTISTS TRYING TO DETERMINE CAUSE OF DEATH**

# Dead sperm whale was adult female: Museum

**SINGAPORE** – The sperm whale that washed up near Jurong Island on Friday is an adult female believed to have died a few days before it was discovered, said the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum yesterday.

Museum staff, who have been cutting up the carcass and taking samples for genetic work, are trying to see what is in the whale's gut and determine what killed it, said the museum in an update on its website.

The whale, which is being processed at Tuas Marine Transfer Station, is 10.6m long and estimated to weigh 8,000 to 10,000kg.

It is the first sperm whale recorded in Singapore, and the third recorded



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**Lee Kong Chian  
Natural History  
Museum**

in South-east Asia — sperm whales were earlier recorded near Sarawak in 1995 and Phang Nga in western Thailand in 2012.

“It will be slowly defleshed so its skeleton can be recovered for the museum. Because we are also examining it carefully as a research specimen and due to its immense size, this will be a slow and massive (not to mention very smelly) exercise,” the museum said.

The skeleton, once processed, will be displayed at the museum.

Sperm whales, classified as a vulnerable species, are the largest carnivores on earth and deep-diving squid eaters. Previous records of large whale carcasses in Singapore have been baleen whale species, but scientists have never had a chance to examine them in detail, the museum said.

Museum staff have been racing against time to salvage parts of the sperm whale for research since the carcass was pulled to shore last Friday night. In a Facebook post on Sunday, the museum said taxidermists have peeled blubber off the carcass' back.

It added that so far, plastic food containers and wrappers had been found in the whale's gut, which serve as a “grim reminder” to reduce and properly dispose of plastic waste.

Another museum here, the National Museum of Singapore, used to house a baleen whale skeleton up until the 1970s. That whale was 13m long and had been stranded in Malacca in 1892. It was put on display from 1907 and later given to Malaysia's Muzium Negara. The skeleton is now with the Maritime Museum in Labuan, near Sabah. **NEO CHAI CHIN**