

\$1.3m raised for sperm whale exhibit

Lee Kong Chian museum will use display to educate public on need to keep oceans healthy

Audrey Tan

Around \$1.3 million has been raised for scientific and educational efforts related to the sperm whale carcass found in Singapore waters last July.

The Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum had initially planned to raise \$1 million to mount and maintain the exhibit and support related education and research efforts.

The exhibition will be unveiled at the museum next month.

The money has come from organi-

sations and individuals, some of whom attended a fund-raising dinner at the Singapore Zoo last night.

Professor Peter Ng, head of the museum, said he was pleasantly surprised by the amount raised, given that the initial \$1 million target was an ambitious one.

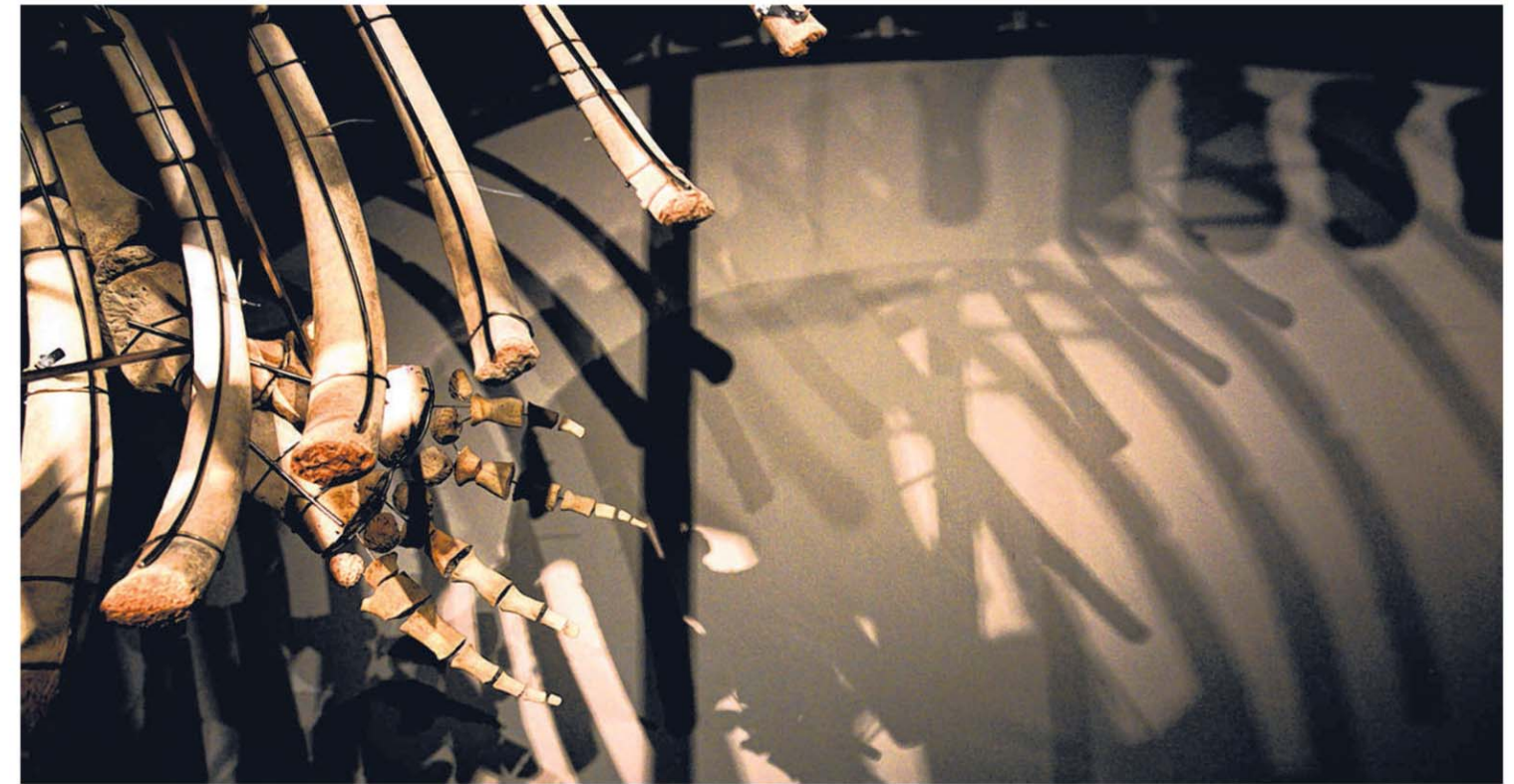
“We know it will take half that amount to get the whale skeleton ready in record time and set up a world-class display,” Prof Ng told *The Sunday Times* yesterday at the Jubilee Whale Charity Gala Dinner. “We had hoped to have the same

amount set aside for marine education and research programmes.”

The museum intends to use the whale to highlight the importance of keeping the oceans healthy.

Sperm whales feed mainly on squid, which have beaks that cannot be digested. Mr Marcus Chua, the museum’s curator of mammals and birds, said: “But on top of the squid beaks, we also found plastic trash in the whale’s gut. This find will be used in our outreach efforts to highlight how oceans are connected, and the dangers of marine trash to the environment.”

Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong was guest of honour at the event, which was also attended by Ambassador-at-large Tommy



Part of the sperm whale – dubbed Jubi Lee by museum staff – that will be put on display. The 10.6m-long carcass of an adult female sperm whale was found floating off Jurong Island last July. PHOTO: LEE KONG CHIAN NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

Koh and some 200 other guests.

The carcass of the 10.6m-long adult female sperm whale was discovered floating off Jurong Island on July 10 last year – the first time that the marine mammal has been

spotted in Singapore waters. It was later dubbed Jubi Lee by staff at the museum, in a reference to the fact that it was found during the nation’s Golden Jubilee year.

Since its discovery, museum staff

have worked around the clock for months to preserve the skeleton and collect as much data as possible from the carcass.

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