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The dinosaurs are coming!

Straits Times 7 Sep 11;

Singapore will be home to three dinosaur skeletons, thanks to an anonymous donor who stepped in with a multimillion-dollar donation over the weekend that helped secure the fossils from their American sellers. The trio, including 24m-long Apollo (photo), will get star billing at the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum when it opens in 2014.



THE DINOSAURS ARE COMING – ST PHOTO: DINOSAURIA INTERNATIONAL

Mystery donor clinches dinosaur deal

Prominent Singaporean tops up donations to buy 3 skeletons from US Tan Dawn Wei Straits Times 7 Sep 11;

THE dinosaurs are really coming, thanks to a last-minute multimillion-dollar donation from a mysterious donor.

After racing to raise \$8 million to buy three near-complete dinosaur skeletons dug up from Wyoming in the United States, the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research sealed the deal on Monday.

It almost did not happen, after the museum missed the July 31 deadline set by the sellers, Wyoming-based fossil company Dinosauria International.

The museum had managed to raise close to only \$2 million of the amount needed to secure the fossils.

It pleaded for an extension - something Dinosauria's owners, Mr Henry Galiano and Mr Raimund Albersdoerfer, acceded to despite having other offers.

They wanted to sell the bones to an academic institution or museum that would use them for education and research.

Last weekend, Mr Galiano and Mr Albersdoerfer flew into Singapore at the invitation of a prominent Singaporean.

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For several hours, they met the Singaporean and at the end of it an agreement was reached: The Singaporean would donate an amount which, together with the earlier donations, was agreeable to the sellers.

An agreement was inked the next morning.

Professor Peter Ng, director of the Raffles Museum, was coy about just how much the major donor gave, and would only say they managed to work out 'a financial structure' during the meeting.

'We have crossed the first hurdle. The dinosaurs are coming to Singapore,' he said, relieved.

The bones will be the star attraction at the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum, which will open in 2014.

The 7,500 sq m museum - the new name of the Raffles Museum - will be built at the National University of Singapore at a cost of \$46 million. The family of the late banker and philanthropist Lee Kong Chian donated \$25 million.

It will showcase the Raffles Museum's collection of 500,000 specimens of South-east Asian animals, which have been housed at the university's biological sciences department since 1988.

The three dinosaur skeletons were found between 2007 and last year in a quarry in the small town of Ten Sleep.

Discovered together, the two adults and one baby are diplodocid sauropod dinosaurs, among the biggest animals to walk on this planet some 150 million years ago.

Two of them - nicknamed Apollo and Prince - measure 24m in length, while the baby dinosaur, Twinky, is 12m long.

Each is about 80 per cent complete, a rarity in sauropod dinosaur discoveries where finds do not come more than 30 per cent complete. They could be part of a herd or even a family.

Mr Albersdoerfer said he had turned down offers by auction house Sotheby's and another private buyer.

'We didn't want the dinosaurs to be sitting in a warehouse somewhere. And they were also interested before anyone else,' said Mr Albersdoerfer of Raffles Museum, which had heard about the archaeological finds earlier this year from a researcher.

The skeletons are the largest and most complete ones the company has sold, which have numbered about 10, including these three.

The museum has not decided when it will ship the fossils to Singapore. It needs to find a suitable space for it, but the public may get to see it even before the new museum opens, Prof Ng said.

The fund-raising work for the team is not over. They now have to raise at least another \$2 million to mount the dinosaur exhibition.

Professor Leo Tan, chairman of the fund-raising committee, said he is grateful to the private and public donors, but put in a plea: 'Continue to give because our museum will grow stronger for your benefit.'

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A very generous mystery donor has made it possible for the dinosaurs to come to Singapore.

A plan by the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research to acquire three near-complete dinosaur skeletons found in Wyoming in the United States almost did not happen, because the museum only managed to raise close to \$2 million by the July 31 deadline set by the sellers.

The three skeletons, two adults and a baby, belonged to the diplodocid sauropod dinosaurs. Two of them, measuring 24m long, have been nicknamed Prince and Apollo, while the baby, at 12m long, is christened Twinky.

But the sellers, Mr Henry Galiano and Mr Raimund Albersdoerfer of fossil-company Dinosauria International, agreed to extend the deadline even though they had other offers, including ones from a private buyer and auction house Sotheby's, reported The Straits Times.

They wanted the bones to end up with an academic institution or museum which would use the fossils for research.

The bones finally went to the museum early this week after Mr Galiano and Mr Albersdoerfer flew into Singapore at the invitation of a prominent Singaporean for a discussion on their sale.

However, director of Raffles Museum did not reveal what was the agreed-on sale amount, or how much the mystery donor gave.

The skeletons will be on display at the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum, which will open in 2014. It is the new name of the Raffles Museum, and built at a cost of \$46 million.

But the museum continues to ask for donations, as another \$2 million will be needed to mount the dinosaur exhibition.

More about the dinosaur donation drive: <http://mbr.nus.edu.sg/dino/dino-online.html>

See also [How I was smitten by dinosaurs](#)

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