

Dwarf buffalo fossil, Philippines

The Field Museum in Chicago will soon return fossils belonging to a new buffalo species to the National Museum of the Philippines.

Discovered by Michael Armas, a mining engineer, while excavating in a tunnel in Cebu about 50 years ago, the fossils were donated to the American museum.

Scientists have identified the find as a new species of dwarf water buffalo, now known as *Bubalus cebuensis*.

Compared to the domestic buffaloes, which stand 1.8m at the shoulder, and can weigh up to 900kg, the *Bubalus cebuensis* would have stood at 80cm and weighed 160kg.

The size and features of the creature were determined by studies of its partial skeleton of two teeth, two vertebrae, two upper arm bones, a foot bone and two hoop bones.

Art i facts, the newsletter of the National Museum of the Philippines, reported that the buffalo is believed to have lived between 10,000 and 100,000 years ago during the Pleistocene (ice age).

New carnivorous dinosaurs found

Fossils of two previously unknown types of flesh-eating dinosaur have been discovered in the Sahara desert.

The carnivores are believed to have hunted in the rich forests of Africa about 110 million

years ago. Fossilized remains of the dinosaurs were unearthed in the Tenere Desert in Niger.

One of the creatures, named *Kryptops palaios* (old hidden face), had a short armoured snout, and was about 7.5 metres long.



Baring horny like blades, the *Eocarcharia dinops*



Sporting a horny cover on top of its snout, the *kryptops palaios*

The other is a heavy-browed predator with strong claws and teeth suited to attacking live prey and severing body parts. Its swollen bony eyebrow ridge gave it a menacing appearance, and may have been used as a battering ram against rivals. The 12 metre-long meat-eater is called *Eocarcharia dinops* (fierce-eyed dawn shark).

Indonesian ‘boom’ in art hampering development

The most sensational event in the Indonesian fine arts scene in 2007 did not even take place in Indonesia. A painting by a Balinese artist was sold for almost US\$60,000 at a Sotheby’s auction in Singapore, according to a report in the *Jakarta Post*.

Titled ‘Looking for Wings’, the artwork by Putu Sutawijaya was bought at a value ten times the estimate price fixed in the auction catalog.

Another Balinese artist, Nyoman Masriadi, and other painters from Indonesia also saw their works sold at high prices in Singapore.

The sales have shaken up the market in Indonesia, including the critics, collectors and artists themselves. Emerging young painters’ works are now valued at prices that surpassed those for the ‘Old Masters’, such as Affandi, S. Sudjojono and Hendra Gunawan.

Suddenly, collectors and brokers have descended on fine art centres of Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta and Bali, triggering a “boom” for Indonesian art. As a result, works similar to that of Sutawijaya and Masriadi have been produced by young artists hoping to exploit the lucrative market.

Critics lamented that the growth of the local art market has not been accompanied by esthetic development of art. The ‘boom’ was caused by an opportunistic movement which treats art work as commodities, rather than an increased quality of art or a heightened appreciation of Indonesian painters.

As dealers and galleries compete to capitalize on the market trends, local artists are without support and taken advantage of. They opted to make a living by serving the demands of the market, and are increasingly abandoning creative exploration and the search for unique expressions.

Paintings stolen from museum in Brazil recovered

Police in Brazil have recovered two paintings that had been stolen from a Sao Paulo museum.

They arrested two suspects for theft of the works valued at million of dollars.

The undamaged paintings, by Picasso and Brazilian painter Candido Portinari, were found in a house outside Sao Paulo.

Officials at the Museum of Art, Brazil’s premier modern art museum, had been embarrassed by the theft as it emerged that the stolen art pieces, as well as 8,000 other works, were not insured. The museum closed after the theft, in which three thieves are believed to have used only a crowbar and a hydraulic car jack to enter the building, and left with the pictures in a few minutes.

HOPSEA picks Philippines’ Tabon Cave

The Tabon Caves of Palawan, where the first archaeological proof of human existence in the Philippines was found, was selected as a field school for the Human Origins Patrimony in Southeast Asia (HOPSEA) project.

Filipino and French archaeologists conducted fieldwork in Lipuun Point, in late 2006, to reassess the site as well as identify and map the areas excavated during the 1960s. Past reports and field records were also studied before potential sites were chosen for the 2007 field school.

HOPSEA is initiated by the National Museum of Natural History in France, within the frame of the European Commission's ASIA-LINK programme. Major activities of the project include development of cultural heritage; skills training for students and teaching staff; and preparation of the 'Hominid Environment and Lifestyle in Southeast Asia' virtual platform.

Museum of laziness

A museum dedicated to laziness has opened in Colombia.

Located in Bogota, the museum has been attracting visitors, including those hoping to evade traffic, pollution and the pressures of city life in the South American traffic.

The museum features sofas and televisions, hammocks, beds, and other exhibits encouraging people to think about laziness, extreme work, and reach their own conclusion.

It may be expected that the museum may have shorter opening hours.

Gigantic rat fossil found

Scientists have described the fossilized skull of the biggest rodent ever documented.

Discovered in Uruguay, the remains indicate that the beast would have been as huge as a bull, weighing a tonne.

It is believed to be a 3-m long herbivore which lived 2-4 million years ago.

An amateur palaeontologist unearthed the half-metre-long fossil skull on the Rio de la Plata coast.



Comparisons between the giant rat and normal rat today

There have been other oversized finds in South America, such as giant ground sloths and terror birds, including armadillos which were the size of a car.

Biologists believe that South America was part of a land mass that had been separated for several million years, and the flora and fauna there developed in isolation from those of the rest of the world.

Ayutthaya faces delisting as a World Heritage Site

Authorities in Thailand have begun to act against settlers encroaching on the land of an ancient and deserted temple in the World Heritage site of Ayutthaya.

Among the different types of settlers are a group of monks who claimed to possess

supernatural power. They have been charged with damaging an archaeological site by illegally building structures and occupying the area.

In the middle of January this year, it was reported that Unesco planned to send experts to evaluate world heritage sites in the country, and there were speculations that the world heritage site status of the historic city of Ayutthaya might be withdrawn.

Lack of maintenance and inadequate city planning have raised concern among many that the standards set for the renowned city to maintain its status as a World Heritage Site are not met.

An ancient capital of Siam, Ayutthaya was added to the list of World Heritage Sites in 1991.

Ancient ruins in Peru discovered

The ruins of the oldest known structures in Peru have been found by archaeologists.



Ruins of a circular plaza in Casma, Peru

Built 5,500 years ago, the ruins consist of a sunken and circular plaza. The find is situated in the coast of Casma, constructed around 3,500 BC, with another structure added about 2,000 years later, according to 25 carbon-dating tests.

Dpa reports that scientists believe the original plaza was used for meeting and social gatherings.

Peter Fuchs, director of the Sechin Bajo archaeological project, says that the discovery may verify the first societies in Peru, according to the Lima daily, *El Comercio*.

Da Vinci linked to chess illustrations

Leonardo da Vinci might have made the illustrations in an ancient manuscript that features chess puzzles.

The Italian manuscript, written by mathematician and Franciscan friar Luca Pacioli, had been lost for a long time until its discovery last year at a private library in Gorizia, northeast Italy.

Pacioli produced the book 'De ludo scacchorum' around the year 1500, which is a collection of puzzles showing exquisite drawings in the colours of black and red. Researchers describe the representations of the King, Queen, Bishop and Knight chess pieces as elegant and distinctive, and are confident that they are the work of Da Vinci.

Leonardo and Pacioli were close friends, and assisted each other in their work. Experts say that Leonardo understood chess and perhaps

even played it. He made a reference to a technical chess term in one of his manuscripts.

If the *De ludo scacchorum* is verified to contain to collaboration of Leonardo, it will be priceless.

Biggest sea reptile known

Norwegian scientists have declared the fossilized “sea monster” found on an Arctic island as the biggest reptile of its kind known to science.

Unearthed on Spitspergen, in the Arctic island chain of Svalbard, in 2006, the specimen is 150 million years old. It is a Jurassic-era leviathan and one of 40 sea reptiles discovered on the island’s treasure trove of fossils.



A sea monster fossil

The colossal creature would have measured 15 metres, and is classified as a pliosaur nicknamed “The Monster”.

Another pliosaur’s remains were also excavated during the last field expedition, and it is thought that it might have been equally massive.

Pliosaurus were a short-necked type of plesiosaur, a group of extinct reptiles living in the oceans at the time dinosaurs were roaming on the earth.



Long-necked plesiosaurs were also excavated

The Monster was unearthed in 2007 and is now kept in the Natural History Museum in Oslo. Members of the excavation team removed hundreds of tons of rock by hand while enduring high winds, rain, fog, freezing temperatures and the threat of polar bear attacks.

The fossils were lodged in a sedimentary rock known as black shale. When the creatures deceased, they sank to the bottom of a shallow sea, and were covered by mud, whose oxygen-free,

alkaline chemistry might have contributed to the excellent preservation of the specimen.



Artist's impression of the monster chasing a pterosaur

South Korea's national treasure destroyed

The Namdaemun Gate, South Korea's greatest cultural treasure, was ravaged by fire, police say.

A blaze destroyed the 600-year-old wooden pagoda with only its stone base remaining intact after over 100 firefighters struggled to extinguish it.

Police in Seoul have arrested a 69-year-old man who has a record of arson, and say he committed the crime as a result of a land dispute.

Namdaemun was constructed in 1398 as the major entrance in the south leading into the walled city of Seoul.

The two-storey structure was the oldest wooden monument in the country, and a national heritage and tourist attraction which contained part of the original 14th century structure.

Preliminary estimate for reconstruction of the landmark symbol is set at US\$21m.

Spectacular art theft at Zurich museum

Police in Switzerland have recovered two of the four oil paintings stolen from a Zurich museum this month.

The two paintings by van Gogh and Monet were retrieved from a stationary car outside a psychiatric hospital about 500 metres away from the museum.

In one of Europe's biggest art thefts early this month, three armed men made off with four art works by Cezzanne, Degas, Monet and van Gogh.

The historic Namdaemun Gate after a fire



Police described it as a “spectacular art robbery” after the masked robbers in dark clothing broke into the museum, and forced museum staff to the ground while two of the thieves seized the paintings.

They placed the masterpieces in a white vehicle parked in front of the museum, and sped off. Estimates put the paintings at over US\$91m.

Giant ‘frog from hell’ fossil found

The fossil of a giant frog has been discovered in Madagascar, and is recorded to be 70 million years old.

Nicknamed *Beelzebufo* (frog from hell), it would have weighed around 4kg, and measured up to a “squashed beach ball” in size. It would have been 40cm long, and was one of the biggest of its kind.

Researchers say that the discovery supported the theory that Madagascar could have been linked to the Indian and South American land



The ‘frog from hell’ found in Madagascar

masses until the late Cretaceous Period some 75 million years ago.

Penis painter aims for top award

Australian artist Tim Patch paints with his penis, and often exhibits his artistry at international sex product fairs.

The artist uses his penis as a brush to apply paint to the canvas.

He calls himself Pricasso, and has recently announced that he has submitted an exotic self-portrait in Australia’s top art competition, the Archibald Prize.

The self-portrait entry shows the artist wearing only a hat and holding a blank canvas to hide his ‘brush’.

New primate fossils discovered

Geologists unearthed the fossils of a previously unknown primate in a coal mine in the north of Thailand.

The fossils of the small primate, which has been extinct for a long time, were discovered four years ago in a coal bed of the mine in Lampang (Mae Moh district).

Four years of verification have established that the 13-million-year-old primate is a new species. Named *Siamoadapis maemohensis*, the specimen was only 15cm long, and weighed about 500gm.

The find enhances the Mae Moh coal mine as an important fossil site, which is considered to be the richest known freshwater snail fossil deposit in the world.

Ancient frescoes on show in Rome

Frescoes commissioned by Rome's first emperor, Augustus, were put on public display in March for the first time since they were created around 30 BC.

Restoration of the ancient frescoes had been carried out for decades after they were uncovered about 50 years ago. At that time, archaeologists discovered a single fragment of paint plaster buried in rubble accumulated over 2000 years while they were searching for the ruined house of Augustus in Rome. The tiny find led to the discovery of the series of exquisite frescoes.

BBC News reported that experts believe the frescoes are among the most splendid examples of Roman wall paintings to have survived, and that they may have been the work of an Egyptian.

Archaeologist discovered pre-Inca temple in Peru

Ancient temple ruins in Peru that could predate the Inca empire have been found by archaeologists.

Located on the edge of the Sacsayhuaman fortress, the temple overlooks Cuzco, the Incan capital.

The discovery includes ancient roads, irrigation systems and rooms believed to contain mummies and idols.

Carbon dating tests are still being carried out to determine the age of the ruins.

A part of the temple was destroyed by dynamite explosions at a rock quarry close by, almost a century ago. Researchers said that they had been fortunate to discover the ruins, and excavations would continue for another five years.

Wat Pho inscriptions recognized

The ancient inscriptions at the Wat Pho temple in Bangkok have been included in Unesco's Memory of the World (MOW) list.

Together with the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Archive (Cambodia) and the Nagara Kertagama (Indonesia), the inscriptions have been endorsed as international documentary heritage.

Made in the 1830s, the ancient Thai language inscriptions were set on marbles. The temple and the Fine Arts Department have been involved in efforts to restore damaged parts of the inscriptions.

Earlier, in 2003, the inscription of King Ramkhamhaeng the Great was registered on the MOW list.

Fossil feathers in amber found

Fossils more than a hundred million years old may provide clues to how birds evolved from dinosaurs.

Scientists reported the discovery of seven feathers preserved in amber in Western France which could indicate a vital point in feather evolution.

They said that the specimens contain features of feather-like fibres known to have been found on two-legged dinosaurs as well as that of modern birds.

The research, published in the journal, *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*, did not conclude that the fossils belonged to a bird or a dinosaur.

Eight years ago, palaeontologists at the University of Rennes discovered the tiny feathers lodged in a lump of amber in a Poitou-Charentes quarry (West of France). The fossilized tree resin was scanned at the European Synchrotron of Grenoble when the fine structures of the feathers were revealed.

It is believed that primitive feathers evolved in dinosaurs that benefited from the insulation provided as they generated heat internally. Feathers were gradually used for flight, theory suggests, but the debate continues with regard to whether the descendants of birds were the tree-dwelling, gliding dinosaurs or terrestrial dinosaurs which ran at high speed to gradually lift off the ground.

Remains of ancient human in Europe uncovered

The oldest human remains in western Europe have been unearthed in Spain.

Dated between 1.1 and 1.2 million years old, the remains consist of a jawbone and teeth found at the archaeological site of Sima del Elefante, north of Spain. Stone tools and animal bones were also discovered.

The site is located in the hilly Sierra de Atapuerca region close to Burgos where a series of ancient Unesco World Heritage Site limestone caves have already yielded a great amount of well-preserved evidence of ancient human settlement.

Three different dating techniques were used on the recently discovered fossils: palaeomagnetism, cosmogenic nuclide dating and biostratigraphy.

Spanish researchers involved reported that the fossils represented the earliest reliably-dated evidence of human inhabitation in Europe, perhaps the European descendants of the first migration out of Africa.

Dig a dig for a holiday?

Should you happen to be in Argentina, stressed-out, and needing a vacation as a relief therapy, consider the dinosaur graveyard as a tourist destination – contact Jorge Calvo.

An Argentine geologist and palaeontologist, Calvo runs the Calvo's Dino Project. He will take you to a vast graveyard, and dig for dinosaur fossils.

The project, some 88km north of the Neuquen city, consists of a few trailers and a makeshift museum where fossils excavated are displayed. Attracting 10,000 participants annually, the excavation vacation drew tourists from around the world.

Patagonia, where Calvo operates his growing project, has joined the Gobi Desert of China and Western America as some of the most explored areas for dinosaur remains.

Fossils from the Cretaceous period (145-155 million years ago), are prevalent around Neuquen, where the country's first dinosaur fossils were found in 1882.

The latest sensational find in the area eight years ago on the banks of Lake Barreales is a new species of giant plant-eating dinosaur, *Futalognkosaurus dukei*.

Measuring no less than 32m in length, it is one of the largest dinosaurs ever discovered.

Believed to have lived about 80 million years ago, this particular creature is thought to have perished and washed into a river, forming a barrier which accumulated the remains of other animals, fish and foliage fossilised at the site.

Almost whole dinosaur discovered

The fossil of a nearly complete dinosaur is being carefully uncovered in Dakota's state museum.

An international team has been working on a rare mummified dinosaur encased in a 65-million-year-old rock tomb unearthed in 2004.

Discovered in 1999 in southwestern North Dakota, USA, the Edmontosaurus – named Dakota – is a duckbilled dinosaur whose bones, including flesh, have been preserved in an environment which allowed fossilisation to overtake the process of decay.

Staff at the North Dakota Heritage Centre are preparing part of the discovery for display in the coming summer.

Prehistoric fossils have been frequently found in the western North Dakota Badlands, a region which has been heavily eroded by the climate.

Oldest gold artefact in the Americas

A necklace discovered in southern Peru is, according to archaeologists, the oldest known gold object created in the Americas.



A reconstruction of the necklace of gold and beads

Radio-carbon dating puts the origin of the necklace, found near Lake Titicaca, at approximately 4,000 years ago, when the region was inhabited by hunter gatherers.

The artefact appears to be made of gold nuggets, and its existence suggests that the use of gold jewellery to signify status started before the emergence of more complex societies in the Andes, researchers reported.

It was found together with the jawbone of an adult skull in a burial site at Jiskairumoko, a hamlet occupied between 3,300 and 1,500 BC.

Super scanner Synchrotron

The European Synchrotron Radiation Facility (ESRF) in Grenoble, France, produces an intense, high energy light that can penetrate almost any material.

A monumental X-ray machine which can reveal the internal structure of amber, the ESRF has been used by palaeontologists to find ancient organisms.

Many of the fossil specimens discovered by the ESRF have been unseen by the human eye. Trapped insects in amber, for example, have been revealed in great detail. Three-dimensional processes, after spinning a virtual insect on the computer screen, can produce fine anatomical details in resolution on the micron scale (millionths of a metre).

The accumulated electronic data can be sent to a 3D plastic printer to create a physical model.

An insect no more than a millimetre long, which is encased in a resin block, can become a 30cm-long facsimile one can hold in one's hand.

It is proposed that the techniques used with the synchrotron can form the basis of an alternative means of cataloguing new species found in amber.

Ear Chipper fined for damaging statue

A Finnish tourist who made off with the ear of a famous stature in Easter Island has been caught and fined US\$17,000. He could have been imprisoned for seven years.

Marko Kulju, 26, was also ordered to stay away from the island for three years, as well as write an apology for damaging the statue.

There are about 900 such statues, known as moai, on the Pacific island, an overseas territory of Chile. These statues of Polynesian ancestors, said to be nearly a thousand years old, can be over 10m tall and weigh more than 80 tons.

The moai are located in the Rapa Nui National Park, which was declared a World Heritage Site in 1995.

Record sale for Islamic art

A key to Islam's holiest shrine has been auctioned in London for US\$18.1m.

The 12th Century key to the ancient cube-shaped shrine in Mecca, known as the Kaaba,

was sold to an anonymous buyer at Sotheby's, who said that the price set a record for the sale of an Islamic work of art.



The ancient key fetched a record price

It was the highlight of Sotheby's Islamic auction which brought a total amount of US\$40m, further underlining the growing international demand for Islamic art.

Measuring 37cm in length, the key is made of iron and engraved with the words, 'This was made for the Holy House of God'.

It is the only key known in private ownership; the other 58 keys are held in museums.

Elephant ancestor lived in water

The fossil of an ancient ancestor of the elephant indicates that it lived in a way similar to that of a hippo.



Ancient ancestor of the elephant

Said to have lived in water 37 million years ago, the creature appeared to resemble a tapir, a hoofed animal that looks both like a horse as well as a rhino.

Researchers at Oxford University and Stony Brook University, New York, analysed chemical signatures preserved in fossil teeth, and found the isotopic pattern is close to that of living aquatic mammals, suggesting that the mammal might have grazed on plants in rivers or swamps.

Why and how the ancestor of elephants evolved on land are yet to be determined, and the current theory is that a climate change at the end of the Eocene dried up rivers and swamps, compelling the marine creatures to survive on land.

Dinosaur fossil for sale

Christie's has held an auction in Paris of a rare fossil of a dinosaur, a huge three-horned triceratops, *Horridus*, that inhabited the Earth about 65 million years ago.

The sale came after an auction of natural history objects at Christie's last year which has been criticized for encouraging private ownership of artefacts.

There were many bidders for the four-legged 7.5 metre-long Triceratops, among whom the Dinosaur Museum of England.

The triceratops skeleton is 70% complete, and its auction was the first time that such a

dinosaur specimen was put up for public sale since October 1997 when a T-Rex named 'Sue' was sold.

Oldest primate in North America found

Recently discovered fossils of a 55-million-year-old creature on the Gulf Coastal Plain of the Mississippi belonged to a newly found species of primate.

Named *Teilhardina magnoliana*, the animal was tiny enough to have been carried in the palm of a hand.

It is the oldest known primate found in North America, and is linked to fossils of similar age, from China, Europe and Wyoming's Big Horn Basin.

Researchers say that the find suggests that *Teilhardina* primates migrated to North America from Asia, and onward to Europe across the Atlantic land bridge which was formed thousands of years later.

A previous theory has it that such primates arrived in the Americas from Asia through Europe.

Oil painting originated outside Europe

Oil paintings were produced in Afghanistan centuries before Europeans took up the technique, scientists say.



The Teilhardina primate was small enough to be placed in the palm of one's hand

Researchers based in France have been studying cave paintings at Bamiyan, an ancient site where two massive 6th-Century Buddha statues were destroyed by the Taleban in 2001.

A network of caves, where the monks lived, contains 7th-Century murals made with oil paint that possibly came from walnuts or the poppies grown in the region.

The oil paintings which may be the oldest in the world, were devoted to Buddhism, depicting the Buddha in colourful robes.

It is believed that the art work was created by travelling artists who plied the Silk Road, and that painting with oil only took place in Europe about six centuries later.

Archaeologists have discovered a sarcophagus which they believe hold the remains of St Paul the Apostle. The tomb has been dated to at least AD390, and was found in a crypt under a basilica in **Rome**.

Japan recently opened its biggest art museum, a high-tech complex that combines elements of Japanese traditions with a futuristic all-glass façade. The National Art Centre (Tokyo), with no collection of its own, holds exhibitions by famous foreign artists as well as emerging artists who are less known.

A new **exhibition** at the American Museum of Natural History is displaying over 200 fossils and artefacts as well as DNA evidence and a range of technology and interactive features to illustrate the origins and evolution of the human species. Both fossil record and genomic science are combined to reinforce the story of how humans evolved.

In **Peru**, a 4,000-year-old temple with murals has been discovered. The Ventarron site on the northern coast is situated in the Lambayeque valley, near the ancient Sipan complex, about 760 km from Lima.

A new amusement park in the **Netherlands** takes visitors on a voyage through the human body. Known as Corpus, the attraction is both entertainment centre and science museum. Containing holograms of cartoon sperm, a gigantic nose rubber tongue and many other aspects of the human body, the building presents a 35m-tall human figure, inside which one can go on a fantastic journey of experience, knowledge and health education.



*Corpus amusement park
in the Netherlands*

Archaeology, a popular magazine of the Archaeological Institute of **America**, reports concerns that archaeologists are excavating but neglect to publish their discoveries. It says that the practice may be the cause of grants and digging licences not being given by relevant authorities.

Toronto's Royal Ontario Museum recently found a dinosaur skeleton buried in its own collection. The 24-metre-long Barosaurus had been forgotten since 1962; it was divided among collections as the

museum did not have the space to display the assembled creature. An employee searching for the rare dinosaur found through research that the museum has had it all along.

Soldiers of the Sri Lankan armed forces helped to evacuate tourists from the famous **Sigiriya** rock fortress when wasps swarmed the area, and stung many visitors. Police say that approximately 100 individuals have been taken to hospital. The authorities have been unwilling to fumigate the 200-metre-high World Heritage Site due to concerns that the ancient frescoes in the rock may be damaged.

The Starbucks café in Beijing's **Forbidden City** has been replaced by a traditional Chinese coffee shop. Accused of tarnishing the historical site, the Starbucks' outlet was forced to close by an on-line campaign that attracted 500,000 signatures.

Government sniffer dogs in **South Korea** have been trained to seek out termites from many wooden heritage sites. The practice can save time and money previously spent by pest controllers on setting traps which took between three and six months to achieve results.

A masterpiece painting by **JMW Turner**, which had not been seen in public for 150 years, has been sold for nearly US\$5.9m. The 'Bamborough Castle' dates from the 1830s, and depicts a castle, on the very edge of the North Sea, which had a reputation as a refuge for sailors during storms.

A 1729 **Stradivari** violin also exceeded its estimated worth by fetching US\$2.7m at a Christie's auction in New York. Last year, Christie's sold another Stradivarius for over US\$3.5m.

Anthropologist Srisakara Vallibhotana of **Thailand** has been named a recipient of the 2007 Fukuoka Asian Culture prizes, in recognition of his research on Thai history study. Mr. Srisakara drew on anthropology, archaeology, history, folk tradition and beliefs to interpret Thai history, challenging the traditional approach based on national events and those associated with royal dynasties. He has established his local history focus as an alternative to the chronological order of past events.

The tusks and fossilized remains of a 3-million-year-old extinct elephant, mastodon, have been unearthed in northern **Greece** by Greek paleontologists. According to a report, the tusks weigh a tonne each, and measure 5 metres long.

An amateur paleontologist in **Switzerland** may have discovered the biggest dinosaur mass grave in Europe. He excavated the remains of two Plateosaurus in a village near the German border.

Meanwhile in **Australia**, a raid on illegal fossil trade has led to the return of a dinosaur egg to Argentina, where it belongs. It was handed back to the South American country together with another 122kg of seized fossils.

A Dutch artist has induced an image depicting **the events of 11 September 2001** in a stained glass window of a cathedral. A section of the 20-pane window he designed shows an aeroplane crashing into one of the World Trade Center towers.

AFP recently reported that **Asian pop** fans are listening to the music of local artists more than Western music. A survey indicated that worldwide music tastes are changing, with Korean, Chinese and Thai pop gaining popularity in Asia over Western pop, rock and rap. Taiwan's Jay Chou, Singapore's JJ Lin and Hong Kong's Andy Lau are favourite across the region.

The National Museum of **Thailand** has initiated a project to assist the blind to better enjoy their visits to the museum by offering spaces where they can touch artefacts. According to the museum, the touch tours will help the visually impaired to increase their appreciation of their cultural heritage, and opportunities for work in tourism will also become available to them.

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