

2nd of 3 dinosaurs for museum arrives

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THE second of three dinosaurs that will be the crown jewel of the upcoming Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum has arrived.

The 24m-long Apollo, or Apollonia, was packed into 14 crates and shipped from a laboratory in Utah. After a month-long voyage, it arrived last Friday.

"We are relieved," said Professor Leo Tan, 67, director of special projects at the Faculty of Science dean's office. "At least two of the three are here. Mother and child are reunited."

The first, baby dinosaur Twinky, arrived in April this year and has been stored in a secret high-security location.

The Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research at the National University of Singapore had just finished raising funds to build a 7,500 sq m purpose-built museum on campus when it heard last year of the discovery – made between 2007 and 2010 –

of three diplodocid sauropod dinosaurs that were buried together in a quarry in Wyoming.

Its successful \$8 million bid to buy the trio followed an intense two-month fund-raising drive.

The three sets of dinosaur bones will form the centrepiece of the new museum when it opens in 2014.

The third dinosaur, Prince, is being prepped in the Utah lab and will arrive by the end of next year.

Professor Peter Ng, 52, director of the Raffles Museum, said that while Apollo is twice the size of Twinky, the process of shipping it here was easier this time as there was a precedent.

Foreign paleontologists will authenticate Apollo's bones and put them through CT scans.

The museum has now embarked on its third phase of fundraising.

It needs to raise \$10 million in endowment for professorships, fellowships and staff costs.

"This is the last hurdle," said Prof Ng.

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