

PALEONTOLOGY

Temple, Tourism May Sink Chinese Museum

NANJING, CHINA—City officials have asked one of the country's most decorated research institutions to relocate a science museum already under construction. The surprising request has pitted scientists at the Nanjing Institute of Geology and Palaeontology (NIGP) against community leaders and triggered a heated debate over urban redevelopment.

NIGP, created in 1951 at the dawn of the modern Chinese state, has never had a public outlet to showcase its fossils and other discoveries. So, scientists were elated last June when city authorities, after a 4-year review, approved plans for a \$3.6 million, three-story museum on land near NIGP's offices, research labs, library, and collections. Ground was broken in December 2001, and NIGP officials say the project is about 40% complete.

But their joy turned to sorrow on 22 February when a vice mayor of Nanjing told them to suspend construction. The official said the museum would obstruct the view of the Cock Crowing Temple, a 1400-year-old Buddhist nunnery and tourist attraction that sits on a nearby hill. Last month, city officials

other academicians fired off a letter asking city officials to reconsider the renovation. Moving the museum, they claimed, "will affect not only scientific research and popular science, but also international exchange." The letter has gone unanswered. But another missive—this one from a grade-school student to the local newspaper—has become a rallying cry for those who feel the museum should be moved.

Indeed, things are not looking good for NIGP. The minutes of a town meeting on 18 April, called to discuss the issue, noted that the museum "will certainly affect the visual effect of the landscape and make the space look more crowded. People from all walks of life have responded strongly to this. It is thereby proposed that the museum should move to a new site and that the construction be stopped." NIGP officials have raised objections to the minutes, which stand as the only public record of the controversy.

Nunnery officials say that they are watching the debate from the sidelines because the land belongs to the state, although they support the city's proposal. "It's not our idea. It's the government who wants to do it," says Abbot Lian Hua. At the same time, a nun in the abbot's office notes that moving the museum would provide the temple with "more green land, a pool to set free captive fish, and more room for citizens to worship and rest."

That's not how the local scientific leadership sees it. Yan Shouning, head of the Nanjing Branch of CAS, says that the nunnery shares blame with the media. "The municipal government supports the museum," he insists. "But [it must accommodate] the different opinions from the local religious circle and the press." Zhou Xuebai, vice mayor in charge of city construction, declined to comment on Yan's analysis of the dispute; he says that he is merely "coordinating the matter" by acting as a mediator.

Prominent researchers hope to break the deadlock by appealing directly to the central government. The day after the 18 April meeting, 33 academicians of CAS and the Chinese Academy of Engineering in Nanjing signed a letter to top Chinese leaders urging the government "to care more about scientists and the future of the country's research institutes than tourism or local development." That letter has so far gone unanswered, however, leaving institute officials wondering about the museum's fate.

—XIONG LEI AND MA GUIHUA

Xiong Lei and Ma Guihua write for *China Features* in Beijing.

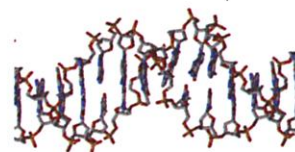
ScienceScope

Genetic Outlaws Misuse of someone's genetic data should be a criminal offense, according to a British government advisory panel. The Human Genetics Commission this week issued a report on the use and storage of genetic data in research, law enforcement, and medicine. The government-appointed panel strongly endorsed national DNA data banks for use in law enforcement and biomedical research but called for independent oversight panels to prevent misuse—or any crossover between the two uses. The report also called for a law imposing criminal penalties on anyone who tests someone's DNA or looks at another's genetic data without permission.

Genetic theft "constitutes a fairly major intrusion of privacy" and should be specifically outlawed, says commission member Alexander McCall Smith, a professor of medical law at the University of Edinburgh. The government is expected to issue its own genetics report this fall before proposing any legislation.

Problem Child The streak of bad news for Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory continued this week with the release of a report showing wage gaps for its minority employees that are generally greater than those at two sister weapons labs in New Mexico. The California weapons lab has been in managerial limbo since the Department of Energy (DOE) last month put on hold plans to name a new director (*Science*, 3 May, p. 821). Now, a General Accounting Office report says that male Asian professional staff members at Livermore earn an average of 5% less than their white colleagues, and female Asian professionals earn 8% less; wages for female Hispanic workers are 10% lower. Male Hispanic professionals also got merit pay increases that averaged 51% less than those of their white colleagues.

"Livermore certainly looks like it has the potential of being the problem child of the three major weapons labs," says Representative David Wu (D-OR), who helped push for the study. DOE officials have agreed to look into the discrepancies, he says, and he hopes the next Livermore director will be aware of the issues. Some Livermore employees have already sued the lab for discrimination. The House Science Committee, meanwhile, plans summer hearings on race issues at the labs.



Craning their necks. Buddhist leaders at the Cock Crowing Temple in Nanjing worry that construction of a paleontological museum (top left) could detract from the historic site.

unveiled three designs intended to boost tourism by enhancing the temple vista. One would convert NIGP's two oldest buildings into a park, and another would tear down the library and specimen buildings to create more open space. All would uproot the museum and splinter the institute's lush campus.

"We were very much surprised to hear this," says NIGP Professor Jin Yugan. "It's not right for the government to make the decision [to halt construction] without first consulting the Chinese Academy of Sciences [CAS, which operates NIGP] or the institute. After all, the project has gone through all legal formalities." He and five