

## World News Roundup



Hobby archaeologist Rene Schoen digs out a silver necklace in Schaprode, northern Germany on April 13. A 13-year-old boy and a hobby archaeologist have unearthed a 'significant' trove in Germany which may have belonged to the legendary Danish king Harald Bluetooth who brought Christianity to Denmark. (Inset top): An archaeologist holds Denmark's first independent type of coin after its excavation in Schaprode. (Inset above): Parts of the silver treasure are pictured on a table in Schaprode. (AFP)

## Archaeology

## Boy finds Bluetooth treasures

## 'Trove' of Danish king unearthed in Germany

BERLIN, Germany, April 16, (AFP): A 13-year-old boy and an amateur archaeologist have unearthed a "significant" treasure trove in Germany which may have belonged to the legendary Danish king Harald Bluetooth who brought Christianity to Denmark.

Rene Schoen and his student Luca Malaschnitschenko were looking for treasure using metal detectors in January on northern Ruegen island when they chanced upon what they initially thought was a worthless piece of aluminium.

But upon closer inspection, they realised that it was a shimmering piece of silver, German media reported.

A dig covering 400 square metres (4,300 square feet) that finally started over the weekend by the regional archaeology service has since uncovered a trove believed linked to the Danish king who reigned from around 958 to 986.

Braided necklaces, pearls, brooches, a Thor's hammer, rings and up to 600 chipped coins were found, including more than 100 that date back to Bluetooth's era.

"This trove is the biggest single discovery of Bluetooth coins in the southern Baltic sea region and is therefore of great significance," lead archaeologist Michael Schirren told national news agency DPA.

The oldest coin found in the trove is a Damascus dirham dating to 714 while the most recent is a penny dating to 983.

The find suggests that the treasure may have been buried in the late 980s — also the period when Bluetooth was known to have fled to Pomerania where he died in 987.



Luca

## Discovery

**Pelicans back to kingdom:** With feathers on its head that make it look like it is wearing a wig, it does not go unnoticed — the Dalmatian pelican is back with a flourish in the Divjaka Lagoon in western Albania.

The expansive site is one of the most important wetlands in the Adriatic basin, key for migratory wildlife and as a breeding area for the large elegant pelican.

But like other spots in Europe, the picturesque lagoon has suffered extensive damage at the hands of man and the Dalmatian pelican came close to deserting it.

Now a return in force of the bird, whose wingspan reaches up to three metres (10 feet), is down to a proactive policy by Albanian authorities, often criticised for being passive on environmental issues.

"The king has returned this winter," said Fatos Jolla happily, a 67-year-old fisherman on the lagoon.

Since the 1980s, Europe's bird population has declined by several tens of millions, according to ornithologists.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has included the Dalmatian pelican (*Pelecanus crispus*) on its red list as it believes that 80 percent of its breeding sites in Europe have disappeared.

At the Divjaka Lagoon, the pelicans had almost completely abandoned their nests, although previously "the Divjaka-Karavasta National Park was considered its kingdom," said its head, Adrian Koci.

"From 250 breeding pairs in the 1960s, we arrived at 17 in 2000-2001. "We returned to 52 pairs and 57 births in 2017," he told AFP.

A small island of 22 sq kms (eight square miles), in the middle of the lagoon, has been crucial to helping lure back the birds.

The nesting sites were raised so as not to be threatened by the rising water, barbed wire has been placed to prevent tourists from accessing and hunting was banned in 2016.

A pelican was shot in mid-February, but the hunters were identified and face two to four years in prison.

The recovery is fragile and saw a setback recently, Koci said.

"The trend was promising until February. But bad weather, snow and wind disturbed the colony.

"Some pelicans have even abandoned their nests and eggs," said Koci, who hopes to see the birds return in April. (AFP)

**2 dinos fetch \$1.7m each:** Two dinosaur skeletons marketed as hip design objects — one of a diplodocus, the other of an allosaurus — sold for more than 1.4 million euros (\$1.7 million) apiece at auction in Paris on Wednesday.

"The same foreign buyer acquired the two dinosaurs," the Drouot auction house said, hailing "exceptional" prices for dinosaurs, though neither was a record.

The diplodocus — a herbivorous giant measuring 12 metres long from nose to tail — fetched 1.44 million euros, compared with 1.41 million for the carnivorous allosaurus, a minnow in dinosaur terms at just 3.8 metres (12.5 feet) long.

The two dinosaurs roamed the Earth during the late Jurassic period, around 150 million years ago.

Only about five dinosaur skeletons are put up for auction around the world every year, mostly snapped up by ultra-rich collectors or museums in Europe or the US.

But auctioneers have noted a surge in interest in China.

"Dinosaurs have become cool,

trendy — real objects of decoration, like paintings," fossil sales expert Iacopo Briano told AFP ahead of the auction, citing Hollywood actors Leonardo DiCaprio and Nicolas Cage as fans of such outsize prehistoric ornaments.

The nationality of Wednesday's buyer was not revealed.

In 1997, McDonald's and Walt Disney were among donors stumping up \$8.36 million to buy Sue — the most complete and best preserved Tyrannosaurus rex ever found — for the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. (AFP)

**'Not a force to be ignored':** Aru Shinee-Ajay first became genuinely worried about climate change when

she visited family members in India, and found the streams and grass where she had played as a child had shriveled as a result of drought.

"Someplace that I knew really well turned into something unrecognisable," said Shinee-Ajay, now 20 and a student at Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania.

So she turned to the Sunrise Movement, a US-based youth network that aims to "build an army of young people to stop climate change and create millions of good jobs in the process."

"When I think of climate change, I am driven by fear and anger," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in a telephone interview.

But her activism — including occupying the office of Republican

House Representative Patrick Meehan of Pennsylvania last December with other Sunrise Movement members — has given her a feeling she can make a difference.

The sit-in, she said, was an attempt to stop Meehan from voting on a tax bill that would provide tax cuts to fossil fuel billionaires, among others. Meehan voted for the bill anyway, which passed last December — but Shinee-Ajay now knows how to take a stand.

Her generation is ready to act on climate change, which is a "preventable crisis", she said. That's particularly true because younger people — who will live to see the more severe impacts of climate change — have more at stake. (RTRS)



This undated photo made available by NASA shows technicians with the Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS). Scheduled for an April 2018 launch, the spacecraft will prowls for planets around the closest, brightest stars. These newfound worlds eventually will become prime targets for future telescopes looking to tease out any signs of life. (AP)

## Space

## NASA to launch \$337m craft

## 'Planet hunter' to seek closer, Earth-like worlds

TAMPA, April 16, (AFP): NASA is poised to launch a \$337 million washing machine-sized spacecraft that aims to vastly expand mankind's search for planets beyond our solar system, particularly closer.

Earth-sized ones that might harbor life.

The Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite, or TESS, is scheduled to launch Monday at 6:32 pm (2232 GMT) atop a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from Cape Canaveral, Florida.

Its main goal over the next two years is to scan more than 200,000 of the brightest stars for signs of planets circling them and causing a dip in brightness known as a transit.

NASA predicts that TESS will discover 20,000 exoplanets — or planets outside the solar system — including more than 50 Earth-sized planets and up to 500 planets less than twice the size of Earth.

"They are going to be orbiting the nearest, brightest stars," Elisa Quintana, TESS scientist at NASA's Goddard Spaceflight Center, told reporters on Sunday.

"We might even find planets that orbit stars that we can even see with the naked eye," she added.

"So in the next few years we might even be able to walk outside and point at a star and know that it has a planet. This is the future."

Just a couple of decades ago, the notion of finding habitable planets — or any planets at all — was a mere fantasy, said Paul Hertz, astrophysics division di-

rector at NASA.

"Humans have wondered forever whether we were alone in the universe, and until 25 years ago the only planets we knew about were the eight in our own solar system," he told reporters on the eve of the TESS launch.

"But since then, we have found thousands of planets orbiting other stars and we think all the stars in our galaxy must have their own family of planets."

TESS is designed as a follow-on to the US space agency's Kepler spacecraft, which was the first of its kind and launched in 2009. The aging spacecraft is currently low on fuel and near the end of its life.

Kepler found a massive trove of exoplanets by focusing on one patch of sky, which contained about 150,000 stars like the Sun.

The Kepler mission found 2,300 confirmed exoplanets, and thousands more candidate planets. But many were too distant and dim to study further.

TESS, with its four advanced cameras, will scan an area that is 350 times larger, comprising 85 percent of the sky in the first two years alone.

"By looking at such a large section of the sky — this kind of stellar real estate — we open up the ability to cherry-pick the best stars to do follow-up science," said Jenn Burt, a postdoctoral fellow at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

"On average the stars that TESS observes are 30-100 times brighter and 10 times closer than the stars that Kepler focused on."

TESS uses the same method as Kepler for finding potential planets, by tracking the dimming of light when a celestial body passes in front of a star.

The next step is for ground-based and space telescopes to peer even closer.



Burt



DiCaprio

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