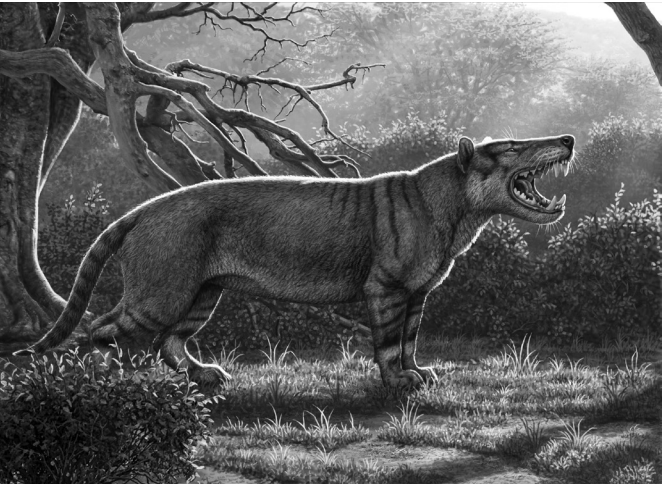


Researchers discover ancient giant ‘lion’



A handout reconstruction image by Ohio university in Athens, Ohio, shows a Simbakubwa kutokaafrika, a gigantic mammalian carnivore that lived 22 million years ago in Africa and was larger than a polar bear.

Paris, France

A giant lion with enormous fangs that roamed the Kenyan savannah more than 20 million years ago was one of the largest ever meat-eating mammals, researchers said yesterday.

A team unearthed the lower jaw, teeth and other bones of a new species, Simbakubwa kutokaafrika -- Swahili for “big African lion”.

They calculated it would have weighed up to 1,500 kilograms and could have preyed upon the elephant-like creatures that lived there at the time.

“Based on its massive teeth, Simbakubwa was a specialised hyper-carnivore that was significantly larger than the modern lion and possibly larger than a polar bear,” said Matthew Borths, from Duke University, who co-led the research with Ohio University.

An artist’s impression of the creature shows a giant big-cat-like hunter with stripey fur

The discovery could shed light on how supersized predators and prey evolved over millions of years around the end of the Paleogene epoch -- the period where mammals grew from tiny rodents into many diverse species.

and enormous fangs.

The team behind the study, published in the Journal of Vertebrate Paleontology, said Simbakubwa lived in what is modern-day Kenya around 23 million years ago, a key period in the evolution of carnivorous mammals.

Separatist gunmen kill 14 bus passengers in Pakistan

● The gunmen identified non-Baloch passengers by their identity cards and shot them

● The attack was claimed by a Baloch separatist group

● Balochistan, which borders Afghanistan and Iran, is Pakistan’s poorest province

AFP | Quetta, Pakistan

Gunmen killed at least 14 people after forcing them to disembark from buses in Pakistan’s Balochistan, officials said yesterday, in the latest attack claimed by separatists in the restive southwestern province.

The attackers, who numbered around two dozen, were wearing uniforms of the paramilitary Frontier Corps, provincial home secretary Haider Ali said.

They “stopped buses on the Makran Coastal Highway and gunned down 14 people”, he said, adding that the four vehicles were travelling to the port megacity of Karachi from the coastal town of Ormara.

The gunmen identified non-Baloch passengers by their identity cards and shot them, he said. All the victims are believed to be Pakistani, with a naval official and a coast guard member among the dead.

The attack was claimed by a



Pakistani soldiers walk from a site after an operation against suspected militants in Peshawar

Baloch separatist group. A militant spokesman denied that any civilian passengers had been killed and said the group had only targeted coast guard and navy service members.

Balochistan, which borders Afghanistan and Iran, is Pakistan’s poorest province and the largest by landmass, with Islamist as well as ethnic Baloch separatists active there.

Pakistani security forces have been targeting insurgents in the province since 2004, and have also been repeatedly accused by international rights groups of abuses there. The military denies the allegations.

Provincial home minister Mir Zia Langov told AFP a full-scale investigation had been launched into the attack, and authorities

are trying to track down the gunmen, who he said had fled the scene.

“Such incidents are intolerable and we will not spare the terrorists who carried out this dastardly attack,” he said.

Prime Minister Imran Khan also condemned the killings in a statement from his office.

Poorest province

The attack came less than a week after a suicide blast claimed by the Islamic State group in provincial capital Quetta killed 20 people.

Balochistan is also host to a number of major projects under the multi-billion dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The massive infrastructure

project seeks to connect the western Chinese province of Xinjiang with the Arabian Sea port of Gwadar in Balochistan.

But it has also drawn its share of attacks, particularly by separatists who have long complained that residents do not receive a fair share of profits from the province’s resources.

Violence in Pakistan has dropped significantly since the country’s deadliest-ever militant attack, an assault on a school in the northwestern city of Peshawar in 2014 that killed more than 150 people -- most of them children.

But militants still retain the ability to carry out attacks, and analysts have long warned that Pakistan is yet to tackle the root causes of extremism.

Indonesia warns against protests as Widodo rival rejects results

Jakarta, Indonesia

Indonesian authorities warned yesterday against mass protests as a firebrand ex-general rejected unofficial election results that appeared to hand President Joko Widodo a second term as leader of the world’s third-biggest democracy.

National Police Chief Tito Karnavian said Wednesday’s “smooth and safe” polls would not be disrupted by demonstrations, and warned of arrests.

“If there are any illegal or unconstitutional actions that threaten public stability and security, (authorities) will take firm action,” he said.

“We won’t tolerate it.

“I urge everyone against mass demonstrations, whether it’s to celebrate or to express dissatisfaction” at the results, Karnavian added.

The streets of the capital Jakarta were quiet Thursday after as many as 190 million voters in the Muslim-majority country cast their ballots in the one day poll, which featured a record 245,000 candidates, to elect a new president, parliamentarians and local legislators.

While official results are not due until next month, a series of so-called “quick counts” by pollsters showed Widodo between 9-11 percentage points ahead on Thursday.



Indonesian President Joko Widodo (C) greets supporters after the country’s general election



Indonesian presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto gestures after a press conference



Indonesian mahouts ride elephants transporting election materials to a polling station during the presidential election in Trumon, Southern Aceh province

Quick counts have been reliable indicators in past elec-

tions, but Widodo held off declaring victory -- while his rival Prabowo Subianto insisted he was the Southeast Asian archipelago’s next leader.

The former general -- who has close ties to the Suharto dictatorship, which collapsed in 1998 -- earlier warned he would challenge the results in court if he lost and stage street protest over allegations of voter fraud.

“We will not use illegal tactics because we have won,” Subianto said Wednesday.

“For those who defended (my rivals), I’m still going to defend you. I’m the president of all Indonesians.”

The 67-year-old, who has long had his eye on the country’s top job, lost to Widodo in 2014 and then mounted an unsuccessful legal challenge to that election.

Online, the retired military man was pilloried by netizens who poked fun at his repudiation of the unofficial results and for kissing the ground as he declared himself president.

National newspapers called for reconciliation, with top-selling Kompas saying “Let’s Unite” while Tempo declared it “One More Time” for Widodo.

Financial markets cheered the preliminary results, with the Jakarta composite stock index and rupiah currency both higher in the morning.