

The Indian Express

Masol finds catch attention of Hollande and PM Modi

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Fossils found from Foothills of Shivalik hills by Indian and French Scientists displayed at Govt Museum Art Gallery Sector 10 Chandigarh during visit of Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi and French President François Hollande in Chandigarh on Sunday, January 24 2016. Express Photo by Kamleshwar Sin

Human activity dating back to 2.6 million years ago in the form of scavenging cut marks and fossils of animals excavated by a team of Indo-French scientists from Masol village here caught the attention of Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) and French President [Francois Hollande](#) during their visit to the Government Museum and Art Gallery in Sector 10 on Sunday afternoon.

Mukesh Singh president of the Society of Archaeological and Anthropological Research, along with Dr Anne Dambricourt Malassé, from France, explained to the guests how these were found in a seven-year research by the team.

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The fossils were of elephants, giraffe, crocodiles, turtles, hippopotamus. Scavenging cut marks depicted the activity of early man. Some of the fossils were earlier found in Ethiopia but those found in Masol are said to be the oldest ones now. The archaeological discovery comprises about 1,500 fossil finds, including 200 quartzite tools collected from several locations spread over 50 acres of area in Masol region near Chandigarh. The research work relating to this archaeological discovery is being published in the form of articles in the Palevol Review.

“We explained to the guests how we determined the age of these cut marks and fossils in a laboratory in France. These caught the attention of both the PM and the French President. They spent around 15 minutes seeing the exhibition,” said Singh.

This significant discovery is the result of seven years of extensive research and collaboration between the Prehistory Department of the National Museum of Natural History of France and the Society of Archaeological and Anthropological Research of Chandigarh undertaken under the auspices of an “Agreement of Collaboration between Society for Archaeological & Anthropological Research, India and French National Museum of Natural History”.

Modi and Hollande congratulated the Indo-French team on their joint research work leading to this discovery. They underlined that this example of successful bilateral collaboration illustrated the long-standing cultural ties and enduring collaboration between India and France in rediscovering, preserving and promoting shared cultural heritage.

Both Modi and Hollande were welcomed by Bhangra dancers called especially from Patiala. Modi told Hollande that Bhangra depicted the culture of Punjab. Modi and Hollande even got a picture clicked with the group. Visitors were allowed at the museum only till 1.30 pm.