



## Study begins on baby mammoth

WORK on the baby mammoth, discovered last summer in the Kolyma permafrost, in north eastern Siberia, is now under way. According to Professor N. Vereshchagin of the Historical Fauna Department of the Zoological Institute of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, there are two main lines of research.

The first is concerned with mammoth development. The Kolyma mammoth is the youngest so far discovered (7-8 months); previously, the youngest ever found was a 5-6 year old specimen discovered in Alaska. One team of investigators is therefore using the Kolyma find to study the "post-embryonic development (of mammoths), using X-ray photography to study dental development and the ossification of the pelvic bones and skull". To preserve the find for future studies of this type it is being mummified

by a paraffin-based substitution process.

The second main series of tests is designed to study protein evolution. Investigation of the mammoth proteins, it is hoped, will throw light on how protein structure has developed. Another interesting problem, according to Professor Vereshchagin, is how animal protein endures under conditions of permafrost.

Although Vereshchagin stresses the "unique" and "remarkable" nature of the find, which came to light last summer under the scoop of a bulldozer, and was saved only by the astuteness of the driver, he also points out that the Kolyma-Berezovka permafrost area is "as it were a natural reserve of ancient fauna". Other bulldozer drivers, it is implied, should keep a sharp look out.

Vera Rich

## Scientist to head Peking University

CHOU Pei-yuan, a distinguished Chinese physicist, has been appointed president of Peking University. The appointment is significant, because Chou was a prominent critic of Mao's educational policy. Even while Mao was in power, he argued strongly that science should be given a prominent role in university life and clearly distinguished from practical subjects like engineering. He suffered "criticism" for his ideas.

Chou, a general relativist and theoretical physicist, studied at the University of Chicago and elsewhere in the US in the 1930s. The Nobel prize-winner, Yang Chen-ning, was his student at Tsing-Hua University (then



Chou the teacher: significant appointment

National South-West Associated) from 1938-42. Chou returned to the US for a few years after the end of the Second World War but spent his career after the revolution in China. He joined the Communist Party in 1959.

## Bangladesh scientists strike for more pay

SCIENTISTS and technologists in Bangladesh are disappointed with the status and pay scales awarded them by the National Pay Commission at the end of last year. They feel that the pay commission has failed miserably to evaluate their importance in the development of the nation and that it has given undue importance and unjustifiable emoluments to civil servants.

For the first half of May, scientists went on strike, stopping work for two hours every morning. In the middle of the month, however, strike action was withdrawn when the Implementation Division of the Government began considering the scientists' demands for more pay.

In response to the Pay Commission, a group of Bangladesh scientists have formulated a new model of 'service structure' for scientists, engineers and medical and agricultural graduates working in government autonomous and semi-autonomous organisations.

A really capable scientist, says the group, even though he may be working in a laboratory, should be able to hold the highest position and status in public service without necessarily holding a high administrative position. Scientific administrators, who are scientists themselves, should also have their own pay scales, the scientists say, and act as public contacts. The rigidity of the structure of posts should not hinder the upgrading of a capable scientist: posts should be fitted to the person rather than the person to the post. The model proposed by the Bangladeshi scientists thus differs radically from the existing pyramid structure of the civil service.

M. Kabir

Professor Yang, who is now at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, has visited Chou many times in recent years but was surprised at his appointment. "There have been very few scientists appointed president of Chinese universities" Yang said. Chou was "an excellent choice. He is a greatly respected educator and scientist in China. His appointment underlines China's determination to forge ahead in science and education".

Chou, in an article in *Kuangming Daily* (6 October 1972), argued that it was not the physicists' job to produce direct solutions to practical problems, though there could be "spin-off"—like atomic energy. His new appointment seems to represent an endorsement by Chairman Hua's government of his views. □