

# China customs in mammoth ivory tusk bust

Customs authorities in northeast China's Heilongjiang Province said Wednesday that they had seized more than 1 tonne of mammoth ivory smuggled from Russia.



The seized mammoth ivory is fossils of extinct species.  
[Photo/Chinanews.com]

Luobei customs found 107 mammoth tusks, along with 37 woolly rhino horn parts and 1.11 tonnes of jade in secret compartments in a truck attempting to enter China through Luobei port in mid-February.

The driver of the truck fled after being informed that the truck, which claimed to carry soybeans, needed further examination. He and the owner of the goods were caught in a hotel later that month.

The owner, surnamed Han, had bought the truck and built secret compartments for smuggling. He was accused of smuggling goods under the country's criminal law.

Russia's Siberia region is a major source of mammoth tusks, a raw material for ivory-carving, which are usually uncovered by hunters when the tundra snow melts.

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## Who are the rich?

If we are going to develop a better approach to taxing the better off, we first have to decide who is better off. One of the most difficult issues which tax policy has to face is the relationship between capital assets and income. How do we feel about people who are asset rich but income poor, or people who are income rich but capital poor?

Let us look at some difficult examples.

Mrs Hardup is a widow living in a one bedroom flat in what is now Chelsea – it used to be Fulham. She lives on a state pension, with no savings or private pensions to top up what the state provides. She and her husband bought the flat in the 1960s when it was much cheaper, and paid off the mortgage. Doing that got in the way of other savings. The flat is worth £1.2 million today.

Mrs Lucky lives in a Council bungalow on her state pension, but has recently won £1.2 million on the lottery. She has so far put it into cautious investments. She might live for another 20 years, so she could draw down and spend more than £60,000 a year depending on how well she invests the money. Alternatively she could buy herself a property, remove the rent bill and pay herself a bit less.

Mrs Hardup decides to sell her Chelsea flat, move and buy a small detached property near her daughter in Bolton for £200,000, leaving her £1 million to invest to provide her with an income well above the national average.

Mr Feckless retires early, sells his £1.5m southern counties executive house, buys a £500,000 smaller property, and spends three years on expensive cruises, buying luxury cars and other consumption, using up much of his spare £1m.

Mr Prudent retires with a good pension of £35,000 a year, and continues living in his £1.5m southern executive home. He is surprised by the choices of his former neighbour, Mr Feckless.

Mr Whirlwind is in the prime of life and earns £150,000 a year. His income has risen quickly recently, and he has been too busy to get round to buying a home of his own. He pays a lot out in rent for the smart new property he has recently taken on, eats out most days and takes expensive holidays. He has few assets.

Do we have views on which of these, if any, is rich? Do people have moral preferences over who should pay more? Should we tax income more, because it is available to be paid to the government as it comes in? Should we tax assets more, to make people reorganise their assets?

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## [China mulls security control on exporting key data](#)

Chinese citizens' personal information and the country's important data collected by Internet service providers may need evaluation and permission before being shared with non-domestic entities.

Such information should stay within China and be subject to security assessment before being provided to anyone outside China, according to a draft guideline released Tuesday for public opinion by the Cyberspace Administration of China.

To export personal information the collector must get consent from the individual, the draft says.

For data related to national security, the economy or public interest, such as information on nuclear facilities, armed forces or public health, the collector should coordinate a security evaluation with the authorities.

The evaluation will ensure online data is managed legally, the guideline said.

To make suggestions on the draft, the public can email [security@cac.gov.cn](mailto:security@cac.gov.cn) before May 11.

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## [Tibet's airport able to accommodate large planes](#)

Konggar Airport in Tibet, one of the highest-altitude airports in China, was able to accommodate a Tibet Airlines wide-body Airbus 330 aircraft overnight for the first time, the airline announced Wednesday.

The 3,600-meter-high airport in Lhasa was able to accommodate the plane after the airline's technicians solved the problem of re-starting the aircraft's engine in a low air pressure environment after an overnight stay.

A new oxygen diffusion device has been designed to increase air supply during the engine ignition process, the airline said.

High-altitude airports (over 2,438 meters above sea levels) pose safety issues for pilots as low air pressure affects flight performance. All five

airports in Tibet are classified as such.

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## Chinese scientists build soft robotic fish

Chinese scientists from eastern China's Zhejiang Province have created a soft robotic fish with no motor and a fast speed.

"The robot is expected to be used underwater to record the temperature and salinity of the sea and detect pollutants," said Li Tiefeng, an associate professor at Zhejiang University.

The 9.3-centimeter-long fish weighs 90 grams and has an electric controller at the core, fins made of silicone, and a silicone body and tail. All components are transparent except for a small battery pack and two electromagnets.

"The soft and transparent body will make it easy for the robot to sneak through narrow reefs without being damaged or detected by other sea creatures," he said.

Instead of being powered by traditional rigid motors, the fish is built with artificial muscle, stimuli-responsive polymers that can bend or stretch under a cyclic voltage provided by the embedded lithium battery.

"Soft artificial muscle can respond quickly to electricity, meaning faster fin flapping and greater speed," Li said.

At top speed, the robot can swim six centimeters per second, beating the previous record for soft untethered underwater robots by three centimeters per second.

With a tethered exterior power supply, the fish can swim up to 14 centimeters per second, about the same speed as similar-sized fish.

"The materials used in the robot are common, cheap and environment friendly, with the potential to be produced on a large scale in China," Li said. "Our next step is to improve the efficiency of the artificial muscle and develop key techniques for mass production."

The findings were published in the academic journal *Scientific Advances* earlier this month.