

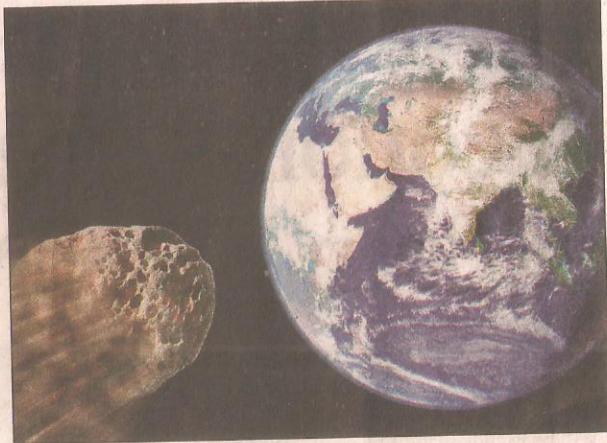
Huge asteroid to fly closest ever to Earth

Half The Size Of A Football Field, It Will Whiz Past Our Planet On Feb 15 '2 space rocks led to dino extinction'

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Washington: In a close shave, an asteroid about half the size of a football field will miss Earth by 27,680 kilometres on February 15, the closest asteroid in recorded history to buzz past our planet, Nasa scientists say. "This is a record-setting close approach," said Don Yeomans of Nasa's near earth object programme at jet propulsion laboratory.

"Since regular sky surveys began in the 1990s, we've never seen an object this big get so close to Earth," Yeomans said. The asteroid dubbed 2012 DA14 is a fairly typical near-Earth



TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT

asteroid. It measures some 50 metres wide, neither very large nor very small, and is probably made of stone, as opposed to metal or ice.

Yeomans estimated that an asteroid like 2012 DA14 flies past Earth, on average, every 40 years, yet actually strikes our planet only every 1,200 years or so. The impact of a 50m asteroid is not cataclysmic unless you happen to be underneath it, he said. He pointed out that a similar-sized object formed the mile wide Meteor Crater in Arizona when it struck about 50,000 years ago.

"That asteroid was made

of iron which made it an especially potent impactor," he said. Also, in 1908, something about the size of 2012 DA14 exploded in the atmosphere above Siberia, leveling hundreds of square miles of forest. "2012 DA14 will definitely not hit Earth. The orbit of the asteroid is known well enough to rule out an impact," he said.

Nasa radars will be monitoring the space rock as it approaches Earth closer than many man-made satellites. Yeomans said the asteroid will thread the gap between low-Earth orbit, where the ISS is located. PTI

The space rock that slammed into Earth and wiped it clean of dinosaurs, around 65.5 million years ago, may have been a binary – two asteroids orbiting each other, according to a new study. The dino-killing asteroid is usually thought of as a single rock with a diameter of 7 to 10 kilometres, but it may really have been two widely separated rocks with that combined diameter, researchers said. The conclusion comes from a re-evaluation of the proportion of asteroid craters on Earth that were formed from binary impacts, New Scientist reported. PTI