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## 'Home' for panda bears to be built in another three months

**PUTRAJAYA:** Work to build a "home" at the Wetland Park here for the panda bears loaned by China to Malaysia is expected to begin in three months, Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Douglas Uggah Embas said yesterday.

He said the 'home' for the bears, covering a 1.01 hectare, would be installed with infrastructure similar to their natural habitat.

"We hope this facility can be ready in 12 months. The cost is estimated at RM30 million with 50 per cent of it to be borne by Yayasan 1Malaysia Development

Berhad," he said after visiting the site for the bears at the Wetland Park here yesterday.

Malaysia is expected to receive the bears under an agreement signed last June 15 as a symbol to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Malaysia-China diplomatic ties, to be celebrated in 2014.

Uggah said several samples of bamboo species from Malaysia had been sent to China to ascertain their compatibility as food for the pandas.

"We have at least 26 species of bamboo. Five of the species are

known to be suitable. We are sending the species to China to determine whether they are compatible as a food for this panda.

"If more species of our bamboo are suitable for panda food, that will mean our planting program can be reduced.

**"However, the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia has been entrusted to plant the bamboo to ensure there is sufficient supply," he added.**

He also said that about 6.07 hectare site in the Wetland Park would be used to plant bamboo.