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# Zoo Negara to host pandas

Preparations being made for their arrival in May next year

By R. PAVITHIRAA  
and K. GAYATHRI  
mmnews@mmail.com.my

THE cabinet has decided to allow a pair of giant pandas from China to be showcased in Zoo Negara instead of Putrajaya as initially planned.

Expected to arrive by May next year, the yet-to-be-named pandas are expected to attract an additional one million visitors to the national zoo.

This follows an agreement between the government and China Wildlife Conservation Association (CWCA) on June 15 last year, in commemoration of the countries' 40th anniversary of diplomatic relationship.

Natural Resources and Energy Minister Datuk Seri Douglas Uggah Embas said the cabinet decided to move the exhibit to



COMING ATTRACTION: Douglas Uggah being briefed on the exhibit for the giant pandas at Zoo Negara yesterday — Pic: FIRDAUS LATIF

Zoo Negara from the originally planned Taman Wetlands in Putrajaya after examining the requirements needed.

"The pandas will be placed in a special 1.6ha enclosure to be built in Zoo Negara. It will replicate the pandas' original habitat and the temperature will be maintained no less

than 24° Celcius,"

"The cost is estimated at RM25 million, with RM15 million coming from 1Malaysia Development Berhad and the rest from the federal government," he said, after a working visit to the zoo yesterday.

He said to ensure that ev-

erything runs smoothly, Zoo Negara management would work closely with CWCA.

"The staff training will also be conducted in stages. A group has been sent to China with another one set to go in March," he said.

Malaysian Zoological Society (MZS) president Datuk Zaharin Md Arif said training is important because Zoo Negara has to adhere to strict guidelines set by CWCA on the care and maintenance of the giant pandas.

He said the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) too was preparing for the arrival of the giant pandas.

"Since one panda eats 20kg of bamboo shoots a day on average, we have started planting the bamboo in Dengkil and nearby areas," said MZS deputy director Dr Muhammad Danial Felix.