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# Zoo Negara gets ready for pandas

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The two pandas loaned from China will be placed at the Zoo Negara here when they arrive in May next year.

Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Douglas Uggah Embas said the decision to place the pandas at Zoo Negara was made by the cabinet on Dec 19.

He said the cost for the construction of the area where the pandas would be kept as well as their maintenance for 10 years would be shared among the government, 1Malaysia Development Bhd and Zoo Negara.

"The government and 1Malaysia Development Bhd will spend about RM25 million for the exhibit construction while Zoo Negara will be responsible for the 10-year maintenance of the giant pandas."

He the pandas would be fed with sufficient bamboo as the planting of the shoots would be handled by the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM). "FRIM is also taking part in this exhibit."

"They have started the bamboo planting at Paya Indah Wetlands, Dengkil and Taman Wetland, Perbadanan Putrajaya," he said, adding that the next area for bamboo planting would be at Zoo Negara itself.

Construction on the panda exhibit area, designed by Multi Spex Architects Sdn Bhd, would begin in June and is expected to be completed by April the following year.

Multi Spex Architects director Zulkhairi Md Zain said the design

was inspired by the pandas' natural habitat and revised by a zoo specialist from Singapore.

"The design was presented to the CWCA (China Wildlife Conservation Association) for approval."

Zoo Negara deputy director Dr Muhammad Danial Felix said, with the pandas and Visit Malaysia Year 2014, the zoo expected an additional one million visitors a year.

"For the 10 years (we will have) the pandas, we will spend RM1 million annually. This is excluding the pandas' maintenance and exhibits."

"We hope the additional charges for those who want to see the pandas will help to cover the maintenance costs."



Architect Ahmad Surasa Adi Omar showing pictures of what the Giant Pandas' enclosure will look like when completed. Pic by Effendy Rashid