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FINISHING TOUCHES TO PANDAS' PLAYPEN

PRIME PAGE 4

Pic by Effendy Rashid

Zoo all ready for two giant pandas

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia is now ready to play host to two giant pandas from China beginning mid-April.

The construction of their new home at Zoo Negara is almost completed.

The two pandas, Fu Wan and Feng Yi, will be on loan for 10 years following an agreement between the Malaysia and China Wildlife Conservation Association in June last year.

Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri G. Palanivel said the RM25 million enclosure, built on a 1.6ha site within Zoo Negara, includes three main exhibits equipped with climate control to imitate the pandas' natural habitat.

"Temperature in the facility will always remain below 24° Celcius. The place comes with a designated

exercise area, holding den, food storing and feeding separator, laboratory and other facilities needed to ensure the pandas' wellbeing," he said when visiting the pandas' facility yesterday.

Palanivel also said the pandas will need at least 20 to 25kg of bamboo as their primary food for their daily consumption, apart from eating bamboo cakes as supplement.

"The Forest Research Institute Malaysia (Frim) has identified several species of bamboo that they found suitable for the pandas' consumption," he said, adding that a 2.4ha bamboo plantation area at Wetlands in Putrajaya had been earmarked for the planting of the bamboo species.

He said Malaysia would have the opportunity to run a conservation research on the two giant pandas, apart from developing and enhanc-

ing local skills on the animal.

"We need to improvise on our facilities and work hard in order to have a world-class zoo like the one in Singapore."

Palanivel added that the arrival of the two pandas this April was in line with Visit Malaysia Year 2014 as the animals would be a major attraction to boost the tourism industry.

He said China agreed to loan the pandas for a decade as a symbol of the people's republic's healthy relationship with Malaysia and to mark 40 years of diplomatic ties.

Page 1 pic: A Zoo Negara employee moving panda exhibits into place at the RM25 million enclosure at the zoo built for the two giant pandas that will arrive from China in mid-April. The facility is equipped with climate control to imitate the pandas' natural habitat.