

Preparatory work to receive new pair of giant pandas already under way

In response to media enquiries about the State Forestry Administration's announcement today (January 10) that the Central People's Government (CPG) would give another pair of giant pandas as a gift to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) during the first half of this year, a Home Affairs Bureau spokesman confirmed that preparatory work to receive the giant pandas was already under way.

"We are extremely grateful to the CPG for giving another pair of giant pandas to Hong Kong, in celebration of the 10th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Hong Kong SAR. We also deeply appreciate efforts made by the State Forestry Administration and its support," the spokesman said.

The Government has been actively pursuing preparatory work to receive the new pair of giant pandas. This includes accommodation, transportation and quarantine arrangements. Following the arrangements in 1999 when the CPG gave giant pandas An An and Jia Jia to Hong Kong, the Government will entrust the care of the new pair of giant pandas to Ocean Park. Ocean Park has already begun preparations, including the renovation of the existing facilities to provide temporary accommodation for the giant pandas. The new Giant Panda Habitat will be completed in end-2008.

"We are confident that the preparatory work will be completed in time to receive the new pair of giant pandas within the first half of this year," the spokesman said.

Ends/Wednesday, January 10, 2007

NNNN