

Smooth arrival of giant pandas "Le Le" and "Ying Ying" in Hong Kong

The pair of giant pandas given by the Central People's Government (CPG) in celebration of the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) arrived safely in Hong Kong today (April 26) from Wolong, Sichuan.

At the handover ceremony this afternoon the results of the "Name the Giant Pandas" activity were also announced. The young male (No. 606) was officially named "Le Le" and the female (No. 610) "Ying Ying".

The giant pandas left the China Conservation and Research Centre for the Giant Panda in Wolong at 7.30am. They left Chengdu on a chartered flight at noon and arrived at the Hong Kong International Airport at 3.52pm.

The Home Affairs Bureau then held a handover ceremony at Terminal 2, in celebration of their arrival. The Secretary for Home Affairs, Dr Patrick Ho, and leader of the State Forestry Administration, Mr Zhao Xuemin, signed a handover certificate, marking the official transfer of the giant pandas to the Hong Kong SAR.

Speaking at the ceremony, Dr Ho expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the CPG in giving a pair of young giant pandas to Hong Kong, after giving "An An" and "Jia Jia" in 1999.

"This fully demonstrates the love and support of the CPG for Hong Kong. I wish to express sincere thanks to the CPG on behalf of the Hong Kong SAR Government and all the people of Hong Kong.

"I am also very grateful to the State Forestry Administration, Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council, experts from different giant panda bases, Wolong Nature Reserve Administration in Sichuan as well as the Sichuan Provincial Government, for selecting and sending a pair of young, lovely, vivacious and healthy giant pandas to Hong Kong within a short period of three months."

Dr Ho thanked Mr Zhao for leading a delegation to attend the handover

ceremony. Technical experts of his delegation also worked on the final preparations for the arrival of the giant pandas.

Dr Ho was highly appreciative of the efforts of the relevant government departments and Ocean Park in ensuring the success of the entire transportation arrangements for the giant pandas, adding that they had worked closely throughout the whole process.

After arriving at Hong Kong, the giant pandas were immediately transported to Ocean Park, where they would be quarantined. Dr Ho explained that the cubs would need time to get used to their new environment.

"Subject to experts' advice on their conditions, the giant pandas will meet the public starting from July 1. Everyone is then welcome to visit this pair of national treasures," Dr Ho said.

The Home Affairs Bureau will maintain close liaison with Ocean Park during the giant pandas' two-month quarantine and adaptation period and suitably provide the public with updates on their latest situation.

Dr Ho and Mr Zhao also announced the results of the "Name the Giant Pandas" activity at the ceremony. "Le Le" and "Ying Ying" was the winning entry, chosen from among 13,000 entries with 6,700 different pairs of names. Dr Ho is glad to note the overwhelming response from the public and thanked members of the judging panel for their efforts.

He said that the names were very meaningful, signifying a prosperous and joyful Hong Kong, with a thriving economy. The judging panel comprised Dr Louis Cha; Director of Wolong Nature Reserve Administration, Mr Zhang Hemin; Chairlady of the Ocean Park Conservation Fund, Hong Kong, Ms Judy Chen; Chairman of the Tsuen Wan District Council, Mr Chau How-chen and the Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs, Mrs Carrie Lam.

A total of 19 participants put forward "Le Le" and "Ying Ying" and in accordance with the stipulated rule, lots were drawn in the presence of the adjudicating panel to decide the winner who will be invited to join an "Eco-tour to Wolong" to visit giant pandas with two relatives or friends sponsored by Ocean Park Conservation Foundation Hong Kong, and receive three Smartfun Annual Passes

sponsored by Ocean Park, a set of 10th anniversary figurines and a trophy.

To show our appreciation to the other 18 participants who suggested the same pair of names, the organizer has decided to award them with two Smartfun annual passes sponsored by Ocean Park and a set of 10th anniversary figurines.

The eight merit entries were "Le Le" and "Rou Rou", "Le Le" and "Xin Xin", "Le Le" and "Qing Qing", "He He" and "Mei Mei", "Ji Xiang" and "Ru Yi", "Dong Dong" and "Zhu Zhu", "Chuan Chuan" and "Gang Gang", as well as "Yuan Yuan" and "Man Man".

Except for "Chuan Chuan" and "Gang Gang", the other seven pairs were suggested by more than one participant. Lots were drawn and the winners will be notified individually. They will be awarded a breakfast with the giant pandas in Ocean Park (each winner may bring along one relative or friend), a set of 10th anniversary figurines and a trophy.

An information sheet on why "Le Le" and "Ying Ying" are chosen is attached.

Ends/Thursday, April 26, 2007

NNNN