

Enhancing Zoo Negara's reputation via 'panda diplomacy'

Malaysiakini

12 May 2024

Bernama

China is known for sending giant pandas to countries around the world as a form of diplomacy and wildlife conservation.

Zoo Negara deputy president Rosly@Rahmat Ahmat Lana expressed gratitude for the pandas and said they have made the national zoo more popular and boosted ticket sales.

Giant pandas Fu Wa and Feng Yi were born on August 23, 2006, at the Wolong Panda Centre in Sichuan, China.

They were lent to Malaysia on May 21, 2014, in celebration of the 40th anniversary of Malaysia-China diplomatic relations, and were renamed Xing Xing and Liang Liang.

The pair subsequently gave birth to three cubs: Nuan Nuan on August 18, 2015, Yi Yi (above) on January 14, 2018, and Sheng Yi on May 30, 2021.

Rosly said, in a recent meeting with Bernama, that the birth of the three panda cubs in the country set a world record.

“Panda cubs born here bring a good reputation to Zoo Negara because within a short period, just one year, Nuan Nuan was born at the Giant Panda Conservation Centre (GPCC) of Zoo Negara.

“We are proud not only for being the fastest in the world but also for having three in 10 years, which is a world record,” he said.

Looking at these successes and the dedication of the GPCC team, the Chinese government recognised Zoo Negara as one of the best giant panda conservators in the world, he added.

“GPCC, worth RM25 million, was completed in nine months to ensure that the pandas were placed in a location almost identical to their country of origin.

“The Chinese government also praised the facilities at GPCC and the expertise of the staff as among the best in the world,” Rosly said, adding that visitors from China were also amazed by the facilities at the location.

Asked about the secret of giant pandas successfully giving birth in Malaysia despite the differences in location and weather compared to China, he said the

mammals are comfortable at GPCC.

“Liang Liang had also given birth before, so the mammal is indeed fertile. Moreover, both pandas at GPCC appear very comfortable and happy in that location,” he said.

Loaning pandas on contract

Reflecting on the approval process to loan both pandas, Rosly said it was obtained in a very short period of only two months.

“To obtain approval requires not less than six to eight years, for example, the United States needs 30 years, Thailand six to seven years, and Indonesia needs to wait eight years.

“However, because of Malaysia’s close relationship, our application was approved within two months,” he said.

“Before 2014, Malaysians who wanted to see pandas up close had to spend a lot either by going to Singapore or China.

“So when Xing Xing and Liang Liang arrived, many came to Zoo Negara to see pandas up close. This continued for two to three years until we had to limit the

time and number of visitors at GPCC,” Rosly said.

Asked about the contract for the giant pandas, which will expire at the end of this month, he said Zoo Negara has not been informed whether the agreement will be extended.

However, he said with nearly 10 years of experience, the GPCC Zoo Negara team is always prepared if the contract is extended.

“But the contract cannot be extended for too long because Xing Xing and Liang Liang are already 18 years old.

“Usually, the lifespan of pandas living freely in the wild is under 20 years, while pandas exhibited can reach the age of 25,” he said.

- Bernama

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd

Source: <https://www.malysiakini.com/news/705310>