



Berlin, 28 April 2017

Press release

Signed, sealed, but not quite delivered yet!

Zoo Berlin signs panda contract

It's now official: in June 2017, Berlin will welcome two giant pandas from the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding. Following months of negotiations between Germany and China, today Zoo Berlin was able to celebrate the final signing of the contract. Zoo Director Dr Andreas Knieriem placed his signature at the bottom of the important document in the presence of the Ambassador of China, his Excellency Shi Mingde, and an entire delegation from Beijing and Chengdu. Vice-President of the China Wildlife Conservation Association (CWCA), Li Qingwen, had already signed the contract in China.

Zoo Berlin will pay US\$1 million (around €920,000) each year for the two bears, and the contract will run for the next 15 years. The money will be made available to the Giant Panda Conservation Fund. Seventy percent will go directly towards protecting giant pandas in their natural habitat, while 20 percent will support the Chengdu Panda Base's research into improving breeding success. The remaining ten percent will cover administrative costs on the Chinese side. Thanks to sponsors and donors, Zoo Berlin will be able to bear the costs itself. It has received a firm commitment from the Berliner Volksbank, which has been supporting Zoo and Tierpark Berlin since 2007. "We are delighted to assist in bringing the two giant pandas to Berlin," says Dr Holger Hatje, the bank's chairman. "We are certain that these rare and extraordinary animals will be a real gain for the city of Berlin, for the Zoo, and for all its visitors."

Dr Knieriem explained the scope of the contract: "It is a loan and breeding agreement between Zoo Berlin AG and the CWCA. It not only contains clauses on the loan duration and the costs, but also on the scientific documentation of the research work, and on how these valuable animals should be looked after during their time in Berlin." The contract also governs the supervision of the pandas by experts from China. On their journey to Berlin and during the familiarisation period of several weeks at Zoo Berlin, the bears will be accompanied by two Chinese panda specialists.

The contract will be supplemented by an MoU (memorandum of understanding), which the Berlin state government and the Chinese forestry authority are expected to sign in May. That MoU will govern cooperation on giant panda conservation efforts. As soon as it has been signed, the names and the origins of Berlin's incoming pandas can be published.



The pandas' head keeper was chosen on 1 March 2017. The selection team found experienced zookeeper Christian Toll the most convincing candidate. Toll has worked at Zoo Berlin for 18 years, to date primarily with ungulates. He is now busy reading up on pandas and visiting other European zoos that already house the adorable black-and-white bears.