

# Pandas get new names

**XING XING AND LIANG LIANG:** This is to reflect their Malaysian identity, says Najib

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AND TEH PEI YING**

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**T**HE giant pandas from China known as Fu Wa and Feng Yi will now be known as Xing Xing and Liang Liang to reflect their new Malaysian identity, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said yesterday.

Najib said the pandas were given new names as part of their 10-year stay in Malaysia, a loan from the Chinese government to mark the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two nations.

"I am pleased to announce that the male panda has been named Xing Xing, which means prosperity, while the female panda has been named Liang Liang, which means pretty.

"Let's hope the pair will not be confused as they now have two names — a Chinese and a Malaysian name," he said jokingly while opening the Giant Panda Conservation Complex and launching Zoo Negara's 50th anniversary celebration here.

Najib said bilateral trade between the two countries had risen from RM200 million in 1974 to RM106 billion last year, making Malaysia an important destination for Chinese tourists and China's largest trading partner in Asean.

As such, he said, the panda conservation project was an important reflection of the close ties between

the two countries, as well as an opportunity to boost the number of visitors to the zoo.

The project will allow Malaysian researchers to study giant pandas and train local experts in the field.

The construction of the RM25 million complex, Najib said, was partly funded by the government, with RM15 million granted by the 1MDB Foundation.

Najib said entry to the complex would be free for children, orphans from welfare homes, senior citizens and the disabled for the first 30 days starting Saturday.

To encourage animal conservation, he said, RM45 million had been allocated under the 10th Malaysian Plan for the redevelopment of Zoo Negara, of which RM8 million was spent under the first phase.

He announced a RM5 million allocation to support conservation efforts at the Bukit Merah Orang Utan Island in Perak.

"We are always prepared to do more to protect endangered species in our country, including tigers, rhinos and elephants."

While visiting the complex, Najib and his wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, fed the pandas.

The pandas' new names were selected via a nationwide competition organised by the Natural Resources and Environment Ministry in 2012.

Soon Choon Yen, a 54-year-old teacher from Kedah who gave Feng



Prime Minister **Datuk Seri Najib Razak** and his wife, **Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor**, visiting the **pandas** at the Giant Panda Conservation Complex at Zoo Negara yesterday. Pic by Mohamad Shahril Badri Saali

Yi the new name, said she never expected to win the contest after entering it via Facebook two years ago.

She said the female panda was named Liang Liang as pandas were cute and brought laughter.

"Besides, the pronunciation of 'Liang' is the same as 'riang' in Malay, which means joyful."

Present were Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri G. Palanivel, Home Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, China State Forestry Administration vice-administrator Li Dong Sheng, Chinese ambassador to Malaysia Dr Huang Huikang and Malaysian Zoological Society president Datuk Zaharin Md Arif.

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