

Three pandas return from Japan to China



Giant pandas Yang Bang and Hai Bang at the Adventure World amusement park in Shirahama, Wakayama prefecture, Japan, June 4, 2017. [Photo/Xinhua]

Three giant pandas born and raised in Japan arrived in Chengdu in southwest China on Monday night, where they will begin a new life, and, hopefully, have offspring.

The panda twins and their younger sister had been living at Adventure World in Shirahama, Wakayama Prefecture.

The male-female twins, called Hai Bang and Yang Bang, were born on August 11, 2010, while their younger sister You Bang was born on August 10, 2012. The names are translated from Japanese names to Chinese, said Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding, their new home.

The three pandas will return to the base on Tuesday. They will undergo a month-long quarantine and orientation period before meeting the public.

“They are expected to adapt to changes in food, environment, language, and even the taste of bamboo. We will perform health checks on the pandas,” said Yang Zhi, a disease prevention expert with the base.

In 1994, the Chengdu base and the Japanese park started a panda breeding research program. Over the years, 15 pandas have been bred. Among them, eight have returned to China.

Cubs born to pandas that are “on loan” from China must be returned to China after they reach sexual maturity or when the cooperative agreement ends

1 dead, 6 injured in petrochemical plant explosion

One person has been confirmed dead, six are injured and another seven missing after an explosion at a petrochemical company in east China’s Shandong Province Monday morning, according to local authorities.

A liquefied gas tanker exploded at around 1 a.m. Monday, triggering a fire in the loading area of Linyi Jinyu Petrochemical Co. Ltd., which is located in the Lingang Economic Development Zone in the city of Linyi.

According to a press release given by the economic zone, the owner of the company is in police custody.

Firefighters are currently fighting the fire.

Rescue teams have evacuated workers, except for the seven still missing, and continue to monitor poisonous and combustible chemicals stored at the plant.

Chinese experiment heading for ISS



The photo made available by U.S. space firm SpaceX on June 3, 2017 shows the company's Falcon 9 rocket launching at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida, the United States. [Photo/Xinhua]

When the SpaceX Dragon capsule docks with the International Space Station tomorrow, it will be carrying equipment for the first experiment to have been independently designed by China.

A research project by the Beijing Institute of Technology aims to investigate how the space environment affects DNA, said Deng Yulin, a life sciences professor with the institute.

It will study gene mutation, one of the biggest risks to astronauts working in space, as they are exposed to 10 times the radiation than on earth, he said.

Previously, equipment for space experiments was sent via China's 2011 launch of the Shenzhou-8 spacecraft, its 2016 lift by a Long March-7 rocket and via China's cargo spacecraft Tianzhou-1 this year.

"The research team caught evidence of the gene mutation after the first experiment via Shenzhou-8, which proves the space environment can cause DNA mutation and biomolecular changes," Deng said.

The project on the ISS will continue to study whether gene mutation follows any rules in a space radiation and microgravity environment, he said.

The Chinese payload was first reported in 2015, when an agreement was reached with NanoRacks, a Houston-based company that offers services for the commercial utilization of the space station.

Under the agreement, NanoRacks will deliver the device to the U.S. side of the space station and astronauts there will conduct studies using the device, data from which will be sent back to the Chinese researchers.

There is a U.S. law, known as the Wolf amendment, banning cooperation between U.S. space agency NASA and Chinese government entities, but this deal is purely commercial and therefore considered legal.

NASA spokeswoman Kathryn Hambleton said, "NASA complied with all legal requirements to notify the Congress of this activity, and all of the ISS partners approved the inclusion of the experiment.

Professor Deng said, "This is a new model of cooperation that we can follow in the future."

Leroy Chiao, a former Chinese-American NASA astronaut and ISS commander, highlighted the significance of the Chinese project.

"I think this is a good step forward," Chiao said. "I have always believed that cooperation is the best way forward for both the U.S. and China, particularly using civil space exploration as an avenue."

Joan Johnson-Freese, a space policy analyst at the U.S. Naval War College, said that it evidences the growing importance of commercial space.

"Space is no longer just the purview of government activity," Johnson-Freese said. "Space is developing as an area of commercial activity, much like cars and computers, which is a big change from the past."

The SpaceX mission is the 11th of up to 20 trips to the space station the California-based company will fly for NASA.

The Dragon spacecraft lifted off on SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida at 5:07pm on Saturday.

About 10 minutes later, SpaceX successfully landed the rocket's first stage at the company's Landing Zone 1, just south of the launch site at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, as part of its effort to develop fully reusable rockets.

[China's efforts to strengthen implementation of reform](#)

The Chinese leadership has stressed the role of supervision in implementing reform on various occasions, especially at meetings of the Central Leading Group for Deepening Overall Reform.

In the public reports of all 35 meetings of the group, the word “implement” has appeared 219 times, and the word “supervision” showed up 69 times.

All departments and localities should attach greater importance to delivering reforms and devote more efforts to examining reform effects, President Xi Jinping said on April 18, 2017 during the 34th meeting of the leading group, which he heads.

“We need to gather enough people to strengthen the supervision force in order to supervise the implementation of major reform programs. Supervision goes wherever reform goes,” said Xi on the fifth meeting of the Central Leading Group for Deepening Overall Reform on Sept. 29, 2014.

Over the past three years, the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee has regarded supervision as a key part of work that should constantly be improved.

– During the group’s 21st meeting on Feb. 23, 2016, the leadership highlighted improved supervision and evaluation of reform, stressing that all departments should ensure plans are well documented, and any mistakes or deadline breaches are dealt with accordingly.

It noted that only truly effective reform will boost social and economic development and give people real benefits.

– On July 22, 2016, a report on supervision of reform efforts in all departments was approved at the 26th meeting of the leading group.

Supervision should target major reform tasks, progress and effectiveness. It should also supervise officials’ awareness of reform, their division of duties and work styles, said a statement issued after the meeting.

– On March 24, 2017, the leadership emphasized the importance of implementation, urging leading officials to keep in mind the overall situation while pushing forward with reform at the group’s 33rd meeting.

At the meeting, senior officials reported on the progress made in reforms in environmental protection, the judicial system, poverty relief, rural affairs, the Shanghai FTZ, state-owned enterprises and others.

Leading officials must refine the implementation process to ensure results, improve coordination between various reforms and focus on the most important and difficult issues, according to the meeting.

– At the group’s 34th meeting, the leadership stressed the role of supervision in implementing reform, demanding such work be carried out with a wider and deeper scope to detect and solve problems.

Authorities should review the results regarding major reforms and “intricate matters,” according to a statement issued after the meeting.

The group called for timely corrections to problems uncovered during supervision, and those found to be making insufficient efforts should be

called to account.

Leading departments and local authorities were also ordered to regularly track reform implementation and report the effects.

[Chinese submersible Jiaolong dives in Yap Trench](#)



Manned submersible Jiaolong is put into the sea to conduct its first dive in Yap Trench, June 4, 2017. [Photo/Xinhua]

On Sunday, China's manned submersible Jiaolong conducted its first dive in the Yap Trench of the year.

Jiaolong began diving at 8:43 a.m. local time on a rainy day, reaching a depth of 4,177 meters.

Jiaolong was not afraid of the bad weather, but the rain did make it a bit more difficult for the dive, said Wang Xiangxin, a staff member on board.

"We cannot hear each other clearly due to the rain, so we have to be extra careful during the operation," Wang said.

There will be five dives for Jiaolong in the Yap Trench, and the last dive is planned for June 12.

The dives will focus on research in deep-sea biotic communities and gene resources, according to scientists on the ship.

Jiaolong completed a series of dives in the Mariana Trench on June 1 and was transferred aboard Xiangyanghong to the Yap Trench afterward.

The Mariana and Yap trenches are located in the west Pacific Ocean. The Yap Trench has a depth of 8,527 meters, and the Mariana Trench, the deepest known point of Earth's oceans, has a depth of 11,034 meters.

This is the third and final stage of China's 38th oceanic scientific expedition, which started Feb. 6 and is scheduled to finish on June 18. The two previous stages were successfully completed in the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea.

Sunday's operation was Jiaolong's 148th dive.

Named after a mythical dragon, Jiaolong reached its deepest point of 7,062 meters in the Mariana Trench in June 2012.