

## [Hong Kong's pandas say goodbye to public in mating season](#)

In anticipation of the upcoming mating season of female giant panda Ying Ying and male giant panda Le Le, Giant Panda Adventure (GPA) of the Hong Kong Ocean Park is temporarily closed from Saturday until further notice, the park announced.

Suzanne Gendron, Executive Director of Zoological Operations and Education of the park, said both pandas have recently displayed oestrus behaviors such as water play and vocalizations by Ying Ying, whilst Le Le has shown increased sniffing of Ying Ying's scent.

In terms of physical and hormonal changes, the park's veterinary team and giant panda experts from the China Conservation and Research Center for the Giant Panda in Wolong confirmed that the two giant pandas are entering this year's breeding season, which, Gendron said, is considered an appropriate timing for the experts to prepare for Ying Ying's and Le Le's breeding season this year and temporarily close GPA.

This year, the closure period of GPA where Ying Ying and Le Le reside will be longer than previous years so that expert teams from Ocean Park and Wolong will be able to closely manage and monitor the pair's breeding behaviour from the moment they exhibit early signs of breeding to the time they hit the peak of their breeding cycle.

The gestation period for giant pandas can last from 72 to 324 days and pregnancy confirmation can only be detected by ultrasound scan earliest 14 days before birth.

Ying Ying and Le Le, who experienced their first mating season in 2011, are turning 12 years old this August.

GPA will be reopened to the public after Ying Ying successfully gives birth to a panda cub, or after she is confirmed non-pregnant, according to the park.

The Ocean Park, founded in 1977, is Hong Kong's unique home grown theme park and has gained recognition for its animal husbandry, research and relationship with the community.

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## [Press release: One Year as Secretary](#)

# of State for Wales

Exactly one year ago today (19 March), Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns took his seat at the Cabinet table and outlined his ambitions to create a nation which is more ambitious, confident and more outward looking than ever before.

Since then, the Welsh Secretary has overseen a number of key achievements, including:

## **Wales Act 2017**

The Wales Bill received Royal Assent in January 2017, setting in stone a strong package of powers for Assembly members with stability and accountability at its heart.

## **Fiscal Framework**

A new fiscal framework setting out how the Welsh Government will be funded following the devolution of some taxes represents a significant milestone for Wales. The deal provides secure long-term funding for the Welsh Government and gives Cardiff Bay greater visibility when looking at spending decisions.

## **Severn Tolls**

We have announced proposals to see the prices paid at the Severn Tolls for all vehicles halved following the return to public ownership in 2018.

## **Mobile coverage**

Tackling mobile not-spots was an issue highlighted as a priority when Mr Cairns took office with the message that Wales couldn't be left behind the rest of the UK. In January the UK Government and Ofcom hosted a summit to find a solution and commitments were made to improve the situation.

## **Business support**

Over 80 companies joined the Welsh Secretary in Cardiff at the inaugural Wales Business Export Summit in March this year. The event connected firms starting out on exporting journeys with the expertise and support of the UK Government.

## **Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:**

Over the last 12 months I have had the privilege of experiencing the very best of this country – connecting with every corner of Wales, its culture, its history and its people.

The goals we have achieved take us one step closer to achieving

this Government's mission to build a country that works for everyone.

But there is still work to be done. As we prepare to live through one of the most important moments in our country's history, I will not waste a second in getting on with the job. I will provide the leadership to make sure that Wales is in the strongest possible position to prosper when we leave the European Union, to support jobs and growth and to make sure that the UK Government continues to deliver for the people of Wales.

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## **Shri Ram Vilas Paswan inaugurates National Consultation meeting of the State Secretaries and Controllers of Legal Metrology in New Delhi**

Right measurement is a powerful instrument for a sustainable growth of the industry and trade: Shri Paswan

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## **Minister of State for Minority Affairs (IC) Chairs General Body Meeting of Maulana Azad Education Foundation**

The Minister of State for Minority Affairs (Independent Charge) & Parliamentary Affairs Shri Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi has said that the Central Government has been working on priority basis to provide better education as well as job-oriented skill training to the Minority Communities.

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# News story: UK troops arrive in Estonia for major NATO deployment

Soldiers from the 5th Battalion The Rifles Battlegroup (5 RIFLES), including members of an Armoured Engineer Squadron, Military Police Detachment, Artillery Group and Port Task Group, arrived at Amari airbase last night.

They were welcomed by Estonia's Defence Minister Margus Tsahkna, having flown from RAF Brize Norton by Voyager aircraft.

The 120 soldiers are fundamental to setting up a UK headquarters in the country before the rest of the UK deployment arrives next month, increasing the total number of troops in Estonia to around 800.

Soldiers from the 5th Battalion The Rifles Battlegroup arrive at Amari airbase, Estonia.

The UK is taking a leading role in NATO's enhanced Forward Presence, alongside several other contributing nations. The deployments are designed to assure NATO allies of the mutual commitment to collective European security.

Working alongside the UK forces this year will be French personnel, and from next year, Danish partners. All are there at the request of the Estonian Government. The Battlegroup will provide a proportionate, defensive, and combat capable force to defend our NATO ally and deter any form of hostile activity against the Alliance.

An AS90 and a Challenger 2 tank being loaded onto cargo ship in the port of Emden, Germany, before deployment to Estonia.

The UK-led Estonia Battlegroup is one of four NATO multinational deployments to the eastern part of the Alliance. Other nations are deploying to Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, the last of which will include 150 UK personnel, on a persistent, rotational basis.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

In the face of an increasingly assertive Russia, NATO is stepping up its commitment to collective defence. British troops will play a leading role in Estonia and support our US allies in Poland, as part of wider efforts to defend NATO.

Our rising defence budget means we can support those deployments in the long-term and strengthen our commitment to European security.

Commanding Officer of 5 Rifles Lieutenant Colonel Mark Wilson added:

The UK and Estonia have a long and proud history of serving together, including in Afghanistan, so it is an honour to lead 5 RIFLES on this deployment as part of NATO's enhanced Forward Presence. My soldiers are looking forward to again be working, training and exercising alongside their Estonian counterparts.

This week, around 300 UK vehicles have also departed to Estonia, including Warrior infantry fighting vehicles, Challenger 2 tanks and AS90 self-propelled artillery pieces. These vehicles, loaded onto a Roll-On-Roll-Off ferry, are currently on their way and set to arrive towards the middle of next week. French armoured vehicles, including tanks, are also due to arrive in Estonia via train after being loaded yesterday.

Personnel from the 5th Battalion The Rifles depart from RAF Brize Norton for Estonia.