

ANNOTATIONS TO THE ARTICLE

«A Panda Is Coming Home, and Her Chinese Fans Say It's About Time»

After two decades on loan to the Memphis Zoo, Ya Ya, a female giant panda, is heading home to China. To some animal welfare activists and Chinese people, it's not a moment too soon.

They are alarmed by videos and photos of Ya Ya in which she has mangy fur and looks somewhat thin. Two animal rights groups, In Defense of Animals and Panda Voices, have been campaigning to send her back to China "before her health worsens." They have also blamed the zoo for the death of Ya Ya's mate, Le Le, in February.

The zoo strongly denies mistreating either panda, and it has issued a joint statement with Chinese officials explaining Ya Ya's health issues. But the campaign has resonated on Chinese social media. Outraged users have analyzed the zoo's "panda cam" videos in minute detail, looking for signs of abuse, and some have gone so far as to question China's decades-old practice of using pandas as a tool for diplomacy.

A Chinese student in New York, Hugo Zhang, said he became so concerned about Ya Ya's welfare that he flew to Memphis during his spring break to see her in person.

"She was in bad shape physically, and appeared to be seriously suffering from skin disease," Mr. Zhang said by telephone. He said the bamboo she was being fed didn't look fresh to him.

China has engaged in "panda diplomacy" since 1972, when its leader Mao Zedong promised two of the animals to President Richard M. Nixon. In 1984, China — the only country where pandas can be found in the wild — finalized an arrangement in which they would be sent to overseas zoos for 10 years at a time.

Eighteen countries now have pandas on loan from China; they arrive in pairs, inevitably with great fanfare. Analysts say China uses them to project a friendly image and to reward countries it's pleased with. (When President Emmanuel Macron of France visited China last week, a French zoo director was in his delegation; on Tuesday, French and Chinese media reported that two pandas at the ZooParc de Beauval, Huan Huan and Yuan Zai, would have their stay extended through 2027.)

Matthew Fraser, an associate professor at the American University of Paris specializing in soft power and geopolitics, said that Beijing uses pandas to leverage its interests with trading partners. While politics are rarely cited explicitly when pandas are returned, he added, such gestures are often full of symbolic meaning, since the species is native only to China and inevitably become star attractions — and main revenue drivers — at zoos.

"Almost always when China gives a panda to a zoo in another country, it is usually facilitating some kind of good will and very frequently a trade deal," he said in a phone interview. "When China takes back a panda, it's usually because the regime is very displeased for some reason."

Ya Ya, who will turn 23 in August, is at the end of her second 10-year stint at the zoo, having arrived in Memphis with Le Le in 2003. On Tuesday, Wang Wenbin, a spokesman for China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said a Chinese expert and two employees of the Beijing Zoo were working with the Memphis Zoo to prepare for Ya Ya's relocation. "The overall condition of the giant panda is relatively stable except for the fur condition caused by skin

disease,” Mr. Wang said. “The Chinese side has already made preparations to welcome Ya Ya home.”

Rebecca Winchester, a spokeswoman for the Memphis Zoo, said the zoo had regularly provided Chinese officials with data about Ya Ya’s health. She said the panda had a genetic condition that affected her immune system and made her fur look patchy. And at 190 pounds, she said, Ya Ya is naturally on the smaller side.

When Ya Ya paces in her enclosure — another detail that alarmed people on social media — she is likely exhibiting the hormonal influence of estrus, which female pandas undergo once a year, Ms. Winchester said.

“It is heartbreaking to have an entire narrative out there,” Ms. Winchester said when asked about the criticism. “First of all it is hard to control. You don’t speak the same language, and it is not easy to travel to Memphis and see her with their eyes.” Some of the zoo’s critics were apparently opposed to animal captivity in general. “CLOSE ALL ZOOS!” one wrote on the zoo’s Facebook page.

In a report last year, published in response to concerns on social media, the Chinese Association of Zoological Gardens said that when Ya Ya first arrived in Memphis, experts suspected that she had mites, from which her mother had also suffered, and for which Ya Ya had undergone treatments with mixed results. The report also said she had lost weight since experiencing a “phantom pregnancy” in 2021.

In December, the zoo and the Chinese association announced that Ya Ya and Le Le would return to China in the spring. But Le Le died two months later, at 24. Another joint statement said he had likely died from heart disease. (Wild pandas have a life expectancy of 15 to 20 years, while captive pandas typically live for about 30 years.) Chinese fans were glad she was coming home, and some said she should never have left. A video blogger who uses the nickname Yue Yue visited the panda enclosure. Calling out in the dialect of giant pandas’ native province, Sichuan, she told Ya Ya to eat more and that she’d be home soon. No exact date has been set for Ya Ya’s trip home, because a federal agency still needs to finalize a permit for her travel. But she was given a send-off at the zoo last week, featuring speeches and performances from local Chinese organizations. Earlier, the zoo had filmed a less formal farewell, marching a goat, a tortoise, an aardvark, a sloth, a porcupine and a penguin up to Ya Ya’s enclosure, where she nibbled on a stalk and presumably accepted their well wishes.

Annotations:

After two decades, the panda Ya Ya returns from the zoo to China. Conservationists, officials and simply concerned people are concerned about the appearance and physical condition of the panda. A skin disease was noted. China has had a "panda policy" since 1972. Because this is the only country and some pandas live in the wild. The country sells or donates the animal to the country for 10 years to maintain friendly relations. They arrive in pairs. And China takes advantage of this: it uses it to create a friendly image and reward countries with which it is satisfied. 18 countries already have pandas. And when the panda is returned, it means that the regime is dissatisfied with something. Ya Ya is already 23 years old, and her second 10 year at the zoo is about to end. The workers of the Beijing zoo decided to remove the panda because of spots on the fur caused by skin diseases. one

more detail that bothered LBDE and in social networks - Ya Ya walks in her enclosure, which probably demonstrates the hormonal influence of estrus, which female pandas are exposed to once a year. Last year's report, published in response to complaints on social media, said the panda had arrived at the zoo with suspected ticks and was treated with mixed results and lost weight after a "phantom pregnancy" in 2021. In December, two pandas were reported to have returned. Ya Ya and Le Le, but Le Le 2 months later at 24, probably from heart disease. Chinese fans are happy that the panda is coming home, but the exact date of the trip has not been specified, as the official agency needs to finalize the decision. But last week she was sent to the zoo with things.

Plan:

1. Who do the defenders want to free?
2. What are the reasons and prerequisites for public concern?
3. Is it all the bamboo's fault?
4. What is China's "panda diplomacy»?
5. How do other countries maintain "friendship" with China?
6. Is there a chance that everything is fine with the panda?
7. Should all zoos be closed?
8. What problems does a panda really have?
9. What happened to Ya Ya's partner?
10. Will the panda really move?

VOCABULARY

1. decades - десятиліття, noun
2. loan - кредит, noun
3. heading - заголовок, noun
4. welfare - добробут, noun
5. fur - хутро, noun
6. defense - захист, noun
7. campaigning - агітація, noun
8. worsens - погіршується, verb
9. blamed - звинувачений, adjective
10. denies - відмови, noun
11. mistreating - жорстоке поводження, noun
12. Outraged - Обурений, adjective
13. decades-old - десятки років, noun
14. suffering - страждання, noun
15. arrangement - аранжування, noun
16. overseas - за кордоном, adjective
17. inevitably - неминуче, adjective
18. fanfare - фанфари, noun
19. rarely - рідко, adverb
20. gestures - жести, noun

21. facilitating - полегшення, noun
22. frequently - часто, adverb
23. regime - режим, noun
24. displeased - незадоволений, adjective
25. spokesman - прес-секретар, noun
26. stable - стабільний, adjective
27. patchy - плямистий, adjective
28. enclosure - корпус, noun
29. captivity - полон, noun
30. estrus - тічка, noun
31. suspected - підозрюваний, adjective
32. apparently - мабуть, adverb
33. undergone - зазнав, verb
34. narrative - розповідь, noun
35. experiencing - переживання, noun
36. expectancy - очікування, noun
37. captive - полонений, noun
38. featuring - за участю, verb
39. farewell - прощання, noun
40. tortoise - черепаха, noun
41. aardvark - трубкозуб, noun
42. sloth - лінивець, noun
43. porcupin - дикобраз, noun
44. penguin - пінгвін, noun
45. nibbled - гризли, verb
46. presumably - імовірно, adverb