

China to airlift pandas from quake-hit areas

China will airlift eight pandas from the quake-hit Sichuan province to a zoo in Beijing, a panda protection research centre official said Thursday.

The Southern Airlines (CSA) is scheduled to airlift the pandas to the national capital Saturday in a bid to provide a better breeding and recovery environment to the endangered animals, Liu Shaoyong, the manager of panda protection research centre, said.

Currently, the pandas live in a centre in Wolong, 30 km from the epicentre of the killer earthquake that hit the southwestern Sichuan province May 12.

Liu did not say when the pandas would be returned to the Wolong centre, which was home to 53 giant pandas.

The quake had killed five personnel at the centre. Two pandas were injured and six went missing, four of whom were subsequently traced.

There are about 1,590 pandas living in the wild in China, mostly in Sichuan and the northwestern provinces of Shaanxi and Gansu. Another 180 have been bred in captivity.

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