# China to Send New Pair of Pandas to Adelaide Zoo in 'Panda Diplomacy' Move



China has announced a new pair of giant pandas will be sent to Adelaide Zoo in Australia. The announcement was made by Chinese Premier Li Qiang on June 16, 2024, during a visit that marked the first trip by a Chinese premier to Australia in seven years. This visit coincided with the easing of trade tensions between the two nations and follows recent removals of trade barriers on Australian goods like wine, barley, timber, and coal.

The current pandas, Wang Wang and Fu Ni, have been residing at Adelaide Zoo since 2009 and have become popular attractions, although they have not produced any offspring. They are scheduled to return to China by the end of 2024. The replacement pair of pandas will continue the zoo's involvement in the international breeding program, which aims to improve the conservation status of giant pandas from "endangered" to "vulnerable."

The announcement was made in front of the panda enclosure at Adelaide Zoo, where Li was joined by foreign minister Penny Wong and South Australian Premier Peter Malinauskas. The decision to send new pandas is seen as a continuation of "panda diplomacy," a practice where China loans pandas to other countries to strengthen diplomatic ties.

However, the event witnessed mixed reactions. Human rights protesters, including Ted Hui from Hong Kong and Ramila Chanisheff of the Australian Uyghur Tangritagh Women's Association, voiced concerns that panda diplomacy should not overshadow China's human rights record. The pro-democracy and human rights groups attended alongside supporters of the Chinese Communist Party, highlighting the enduring complexities in Australia-China relations.