



**PRODIGIOUS PANDA PRESERVE.** A panda rests at the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding in Chengdu, in southwestern China's Sichuan province, in this file photo. China is planning to create a preserve for the giant panda that will be three times the size of Yellowstone National Park in the western U.S. The Xinhua News Agency says the panda preserve will incorporate parts of three western provinces to provide an unbroken range for the endangered animals in which they can meet and mate in the interests of enriching their gene pool. (Chinatopix via AP, File)

## China plans panda preserve three times the size of Yellowstone park

BEIJING (AP) — China is planning to create a preserve for the giant panda that will be three times the size of Yellowstone National Park in the western United States.

The panda preserve will link parts of three western provinces to provide an unbroken range for the endangered animals in which they can meet and mate in the interests of enriching their gene pool, the Xinhua News Agency reported.

Xinhua said about 170,000 people will have to be moved elsewhere to make way for the 10,476-square-mile preserve.

Giant pandas are China's unofficial national mascot and live mainly in the mountains of Sichuan, with some in neighboring Gansu and Shaanxi provinces. An estimated 1,864 live in the wild, where they are threatened chiefly with habitat loss, and another 200 in captivity.

Residents of the future park area will be offered homes and jobs, some as guides. Although they had lived in the area for generations, they were disrupting the lives of the pandas with their bamboo

harvesting and livestock grazing, Xinhua said.

Preservation of the species is further hindered by provincial borders between Sichuan, Gansu, and Shaanxi that enforced different standards on protected land.

The new preserve will merge 67 smaller reserves for pandas and protect another 8,000 endangered animals and plants, Xinhua said.

"Unlike nature reserves, the park does not stand alone. China will formulate an overall plan for the national park system. It will be a haven for biodiversity and provide protection for the whole ecological system," Hou Rong, director of the Chengdu Research Base for Giant Panda Breeding in Sichuan province, was quoted as saying.

The giant panda preserve will join eight other existing national parks aimed at protecting endangered species and the ecology of land lying at the headwaters of major rivers such as the Yellow and Yangtze.

## Malaysia seizes 18 rhino horns from Mozambique

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Malaysian authorities say they have seized 18 rhino horns believed to have been smuggled into the country from Mozambique.

Airport customs director Hamzah Sundang said the horns were flown from Mozambique and transited in Doha before arriving at the Kuala Lumpur airport. He said the horns, which weighed 51.4 kilograms (113 pounds) and were

worth 13.6 million ringgit (\$3.1 million), had been declared as art objects in a forged air bill with a fake final destination.

Hamzah said custom officials made the seizure at the airport cargo warehouse based on a tip and that no arrests were made. He said the case is being investigated for smuggling of prohibited goods.

Rhino horns are believed to have medicinal properties and are in high demand in Asia.

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