

Thai zoo's 1st baby panda goes on display

July 4 2009



A 6-week-old unnamed female panda cub is seen at the Chiang Mai zoo in the northern city of Chiang Mai, Thailand, Saturday, July 4, 2009. (AP Photo/Wichai Taprieu)

(AP) -- Thousands of excited visitors flocked Saturday to a zoo in northern Thailand for the first public viewing of a baby panda, which has been featured on Thai front pages almost every day since her birth six weeks ago.

The coming-out party at the Chiang Mai [Zoo](#) included a parade led by an orangutan. Zoo officials stood beside the cub's incubator and tried to position her head so visitors streaming past could get a good look.

The baby panda is tiny enough to be held in the hands of a zoo staffer.

Thais have been captivated by the cub since her birth May 27. For six

years, the zoo had tried to mate its two adult [pandas](#), both on loan from China. They held a mock wedding for the pair, showed the male, Chuang Chuang, "porn" videos of pandas mating, and finally turned to artificial insemination.

Newspapers have reported the baby panda's milestones and the public's reaction, including a giant cake measuring 4 feet by 5 feet (1.2 meters by 1.6 meters) donated by a Chiang Mai bakery to celebrate her one-month birthday. Some Chiang Mai hotels are offering special "meet the panda" rates for the next few months.

A public competition to name the cub drew more than a half-million entries, which have been whittled down to four finalists. The name will be chosen next month.

Thailand has joined a select list of countries that have bred the rare mammals in captivity, along with China, Japan and the U.S.

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