

Japan to give Taiwan rare cranes

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A red-crowned crane and its offspring feed at a zoo in Nuremberg in 2007. Japan will give a pair of red-crowned cranes to Taiwan this week in its first ever export of the endangered bird. The red-crowned crane, which is also known as the Japanese Crane is the second rarest crane in the world. In East Asia, it is known as a symbol of luck and fidelity.

Japan will give a pair of red-crowned cranes to Taiwan this week in its first ever export of the endangered bird, Taipei zoo officials said Monday.

The birds, called "Big" and "Kika", will be shipped to Taiwan Wednesday from Kushiro in northern Japan.

"Diversifying the birds in captivity will be helpful to the protection and breeding of the endangered species," Chao Ming-chieh, spokesman for the Taipei Zoo, told AFP.

The male bird, "Big", will have to be quarantined for 21 days before it is introduced to the public on October 30, he said.

"As the female bird Kika was raised by her bird parents, it is not familiar with contact with human beings and therefore it may take more time to get her adjusting to the new environment," Chao said.

Currently there are about 1,000 of the birds -- one of the world's largest cranes -- in Japan.

Biologists estimate that 1,600 others live in the wild or in captivity in Siberia, China, Mongolia and Korea.

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