

'Cuter in real life': South Korea names its twin panda 'treasures'

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Panda cubs Rui Bao (L) and Hui Bao, were born 97 days ago at South Korea's Everland theme park.

South Korea got its first up-close look at its new pair of baby giant pandas Thursday at a name-revealing ceremony that doubled as an early

celebration of the 100 days since their birth.

The female cubs—named Rui Bao, or "wise treasure", and Hui Bao, "shining treasure"—were born at the Everland theme park near the capital Seoul on July 7, and have since been showered with an outpouring of excitement and affection.

Some half a million panda lovers helped choose their names via online voting, the zoo said, with a handful of lucky fans invited to Thursday's ceremony.

Lee Da-young, a 20-year-old university student in attendance, said it was her third visit to the zoo in two months to see the pandas.

"I've always liked pandas, so I came to Everland last week and also a month ago," Lee told AFP. "But I'm honored to have come again on such a great opportunity.

"They are even cuter in real life than they appear on screen," she said.

Since their birth 97 days ago, the zoo has posted videos documenting the pandas' growth on its YouTube channel that have garnered millions of views.

"I feel healed whenever I watch their videos," said 31-year-old office worker Jung Hyun-ye, who regularly watches the twice-weekly clips.



The names Rui Bao and Hui Bao mean 'wise treasure' and 'shining treasure', respectively.

"I think I'm healed by their harmless expressions and relaxed manner," she added.

The cubs, which have just begun teething and crawling, are very healthy, zookeeper Kang Chul-won told reporters.

"We've never raised twins before, so we were very nervous, but I was happy seeing them grow up and I think the people watching them via [social media](#) were also happy," he said.

They will likely be revealed to the public early next year, the zoo said in a statement.

Ai Bao and Le Bao, the twins' parents, arrived in South Korea in 2016 as a state gift from Chinese President Xi Jinping.

In July 2020, the pair gave birth to a daughter, Fu Bao, the first giant panda born in South Korea via natural breeding.

China has long deployed "panda diplomacy", gifting the animals to various countries, often to further its foreign policy aims.

Beijing only loans pandas to foreign zoos, which must usually return any offspring within a few years of their [birth](#) to join the country's breeding program.

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