

Park puts up shutters as pandas look like mating

With female giant panda Ying Ying and male giant panda Le Le thought to be about to mate, Hong Kong Ocean Park has closed its Giant Panda Adventure section until further notice.

Park spokeswoman Suzanne Gendron said both pandas had shown signs of being ready to mate, such as water play and vocalizations by Ying Ying and Le Le's increased interest in sniffing of Ying Ying's scent.

In terms of physical and hormonal changes, the park's veterinary team and experts from the China Conservation and Research Center for the Giant Panda in Wolong confirmed that the two giant pandas are entering this year's breeding season, which, Gendron said, is considered an appropriate timing for experts to prepare for Ying Ying's and Le Le's breeding season and temporarily close the section.

This year, the closure period of the area where Ying Ying and Le Le live will be longer than previous years so that expert teams from Ocean Park and Wolong will be able to closely manage and monitor the pair's breeding behavior from the moment they exhibit early signs of breeding to the time they hit the peak of their breeding cycle.

The gestation period for giant pandas can last from 72 to 324 days and pregnancy confirmation can only be detected by an ultrasound scan some 14 days before birth at the earliest.

Ying Ying and Le Le, who experienced their first mating season in 2011, will be turning 12 years old this August.

The Giant Panda Adventure section will be reopened to the public after Ying Ying successfully gives birth to a panda cub, or after it is confirmed she is not pregnant, the park said.

Ocean Park, which was founded in 1977, has gained widespread recognition for its animal husbandry, research and its relationship with the community.



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Nicola Sturgeon has conceded that her plans for independence would drive barriers between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

In an interview on the Robert Peston programme today, the First Minister admitted that, after Brexit,, “divergences” would soon be “opening up between the rules of the UK and the EU.”

The First Minister has said she wants an independent Scotland to become a member of the EU, or abide by its rules

According to Nicola Sturgeon, this would mean Scotland would be on the wrong side of a trade barrier to our biggest market in the rest of the UK.

This was also the conclusion of the Scottish Conservatives' own Brexit group, which said that barriers to trade and freedom of movement would open up if Scotland left the UK.

Scottish Conservative spokesman for the constitution, Adam Tomkins MSP, said:

"The First Minister has some explaining to do.

"The rest of the UK is our biggest market, and is four times as important to Scotland as the EU. Yet by her own admission, an independent Scotland abiding by EU rules would soon 'diverge' the UK.

"The question for the First Minister is – why is it in Scotland's self-interest to weaken our links with our biggest market – the rest of the UK.

"The best deal for Scotland is to stay part of the United Kingdom – and to do all we can to support a new free trade agreement with the EU, so we can protect our place in our own integrated domestic market will full access to the EU single market.

"The SNP is prepared to damage Scotland's economy purely to win the prize it has been working for all its life – separating our country in two."

"The logic behind Nicola Sturgeon's separation proposals is falling apart."

President of India addresses The Closing Ceremony of International Conference on "Buddhism in The 21st Century – Perspectives and Responses to Global Challenges and Crises"

The President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee addressed the closing ceremony of an International Conference on "Buddhism in the 21st Century

Clarification by the Central Vigilance

Commission (CVC) regarding media reports stating crash of hard disc of CVC portal and loss of data stored online

The Central Vigilance Commission has noticed that certain sections of the media have reported that “the hard disc of the CVC portal has crashed and all data stored online till that date has been lost

This unprecedented warning from trusts is a new low for this Government’s mishandling of our NHS – Jonathan Ashworth MP

Commenting on the warning from NHS Providers that frontline NHS services face “mission impossible” in meeting next year’s targets, Jonathan Ashworth MP, Labour’s Shadow Health Secretary, said:

“This unprecedented warning from trusts is a new low for this Government’s disgraceful mishandling of our NHS.

“Theresa May has downplayed the worst winter crisis on record, in which nine out of ten hospitals were dangerously overcrowded, and ducked her responsibility to patients by failing to provide significant funding in the Spring Budget.

“Years of damaging Tory neglect have left the NHS unable to deliver on its constitution and yet ministers remain in denial of the crisis they have created.

“The public now expects urgent and immediate action to provide patients with the world-class, 21st Century health and social care system they truly deserve.”