

Lanka 'donating rare animals to S Korea park'

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Sri Lanka is donating 153 rare or endangered animals to South Korea to thank a non-governmental organisation that helps Sri Lankan labourers, a report said today.

Kim Hae-sung, founder of an NGO called the Global Love Sharing Centre, said Seoul Grand Park had asked Sri Lanka to donate 14 species close to extinction and was surprised by the country's reaction, according to Jonng Ang daily. The rare species include a pair of elephants, golden snub-nosed monkeys, jaguars and alligators. "Sri Lanka's government said it was able to provide 40 species, including jaguars and alligators," Kim said in remarks published in the report. "After mediation, a total of 153 animals were chosen to be given to Korea." These animals are literally priceless because trading in endangered species, especially elephants, is prohibited. "For the last 20 years, the number of animals in national zoos declined from 4,000 to 3,000," Kim said, "but it's hard to purchase animals because of international law". Therefore, Sri Lanka's gift of so many animals is not only generous, but also a sign of good diplomatic ties. According to Kim, an official from Seoul Grand Park said: "I was going to bring in those animals even if I had to go to jail. I'm so glad I don't have to." "As a gesture of gratitude to our organization, President Mahinda Rajapaksa decided to donate these rare animals to Korea," said Kim. Seoul Grand Park is preparing for the big arrivals. "Seoul Grand Park is planning a project called 'Noah's ark,' in which they are spending 87 million won [\$73,428] to rent a huge cargo plane from Korean Air," Kim said in the report. "The Sri Lankan government also plans to formally donate the animals by sending its high-ranking officials." Courtesy: Sunday Times Online