

Lonely no more: Kaavan the elephant gets a new home, makes a new friend

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Image 1. Kaavan explores his new living space at the Kulen Prom Tep Wildlife Sanctuary in Cambodia. Photo: Tang Chhin Sothy / AFP via Getty Images

Kaavan the elephant reached out with his trunk. He was greeting another elephant he had just met at a sanctuary in Cambodia, a country in Southeast Asia. A sanctuary is a place where animals can live safely.

Kaavan is beginning a new life at the sanctuary. He was rescued from a zoo in Pakistan. Conditions at the zoo were not safe for Kaavan or the other animals there. In May, a judge ruled that all the zoo's animals should be moved to new homes.

At 36 years old, Kaavan was called the "world's loneliest elephant" by animal rights groups. These groups work to protect animals from abuse. They have been fighting for a long time to get Kaavan released from the zoo in Pakistan. Elephants are very social animals. In the wild they live in big family groups, but in the zoo in Pakistan Kaavan was all alone.

Kaavan's Journey

Kaavan arrived in Cambodia on November 30. He flew to his new home on a jumbo cargo plane. A cargo plane usually carries supplies and products, not people. There was much celebration when the plane landed.

Transporting an adult elephant by plane is no small task. It has only been done a handful of times.

Kaavan was put in a very large crate for his seven-hour flight. Helpers sent 450 pounds of food for Kaavan to snack on during the journey.

A New Home

On December 1, Kaavan settled into his home at Kulen Prom Tep Wildlife Sanctuary. He was seen touching trunks with another elephant. The sanctuary shared pictures of the two elephants.

Martin Bauer said it was Kaavan's first contact with another elephant in eight years. Bauer is a spokesman for a global animal protection group called Four Paws International. The group worked for months to get Kaavan ready for the flight. "This is a huge moment for Kaavan," he said.

Kaavan will finally have the chance to live with other elephants and have a peaceful life, Bauer said. He added that the entire team was very moved to witness the two animals touching trunks.

"He has a very bright future ahead of him," he said.

More Friends To Meet

Kaavan has been exploring his new surroundings. He sniffs around curiously and plays with sand, mud and water.

"He likes it here," said Darrick Thomson. He oversees animal care at the sanctuary.

Once Kaavan is comfortable, he will be released into the wider sanctuary. There are three female elephants there for Kaavan to meet, a government official said.

