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**Letter to Editor**

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**Missing Bears**

Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) is both shocked and disappointed to hear about the mystery of a pair of missing bears from Tawau Hot Springs Recreational Park, Sabah.

News of their suffering only came to light when it was highlighted by Nature Alert and another Malaysian NGO sometime in October 2015.

Video shots of the bears were appalling as they were seen pacing back and forth in their barren metal prisons, a sign of severe psychotic behaviour. This went on for days on end, what's worst they were dehydrated with only water from a hose given by a warden. The situation was so bad that rescuers called for the bears to be moved to a conservation center.

Despite the torturous life of the bears being highlighted in the local media through letters to editor by NGOs, SAM is appalled at the lack of action and attention from both the Sabah Wildlife department and the Sabah's Tourism Minister. Such an irresponsible act is not to be condoned by a society like ours which shows Malaysia to be the 10th most generous country, but Malaysians are totally lacking in compassion for sentient beings. To have the bears incarcerated for such long period without any action or attention from the authorities and the public is sheer callousness.

Lately SAM learnt that the bears had been released into the wild by The Tawau Hot Springs (THS) management just to evade public and NGOs' criticism without any thought of its survival needs. THS should be held accountable for simply releasing the two animals without rehabilitation of the bears or seek the advice from Sabah Wildlife prior to release. The Sabah Wildlife should also be held accountable for not taking seriously the welfare of captive bears despite numerous complaints, and for allowing THS to take matters into their own hands.

THS is only interested in keeping the bears to draw in the crowd whilst neglecting the needs and welfare of the two animals in all respect. When it could not withstand criticisms anymore the best option is to release them to die at their own pace.

SAM is highly disappointed to learn that among the future plans for the park will be a mini zoo featuring exotic animals. Enough is enough. No resorts, hotels or places of public interests should be allowed to keep captive wildlife as a tourist draw.

SAM needs answers from the Sabah Wildlife department as to where and how the bears were released and any efforts made to contact the Tawau Hot Springs management.

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