

19th October 2006

Forum Editor, Straits Times

Dear Sir,

We refer to the report, 'Showtime for Genting and Kerzner' (S.T 17th October) which highlighted the features promised in the contest for the Sentosa Integrated Resort.

The news is ominous for animal welfare to say the least. It also sends what we think is the wrong message about the conservation of our increasingly threatened marine heritage. The implications are far reaching, not only from the point of view of trapping, catching and confining aquatic wildlife, but also that of the employment of it for human amusement and financial gain.

We object strongly to such proposals which we believe, would mean a giant step backwards for animal welfare and nature awareness in Singapore.

Genting's proposed 'Quest Marine Life Park which boasts of housing 700,000 marine creatures is indeed 'staggering'. The concept of 'Diving with whale sharks' and 'hand-feeding of tiger sharks' displays a lack of respect for these magnificent creatures in having to adapt and cater to such whims. The reference to this oceanarium becoming a regional center for marine education and conservation by no means justifies its existence, when it involves confining limitless animals to attract and entertain the public.

The whale sharks, just to cite one example, will be wild-caught and will thus deplete already-vulnerable populations of these marine giants; moreover to keep the exhibits going, more and more wild animals will have to be caught. There are a number of laudable whale shark conservation research efforts on-going; we should be made more aware of and support such scientific efforts to understand these animals and look after their habitats. Our priorities should be on celebrating and preserving wild animals and wild places, endeavours to which Singapore has been making an increasing commitment.

Singapore has shown itself to be proactive in animal welfare through its ban on performing wild animals in circuses since 2002. In view of this, we sincerely hope that the relevant authorities would not approve of coming attractions, which compromise animal welfare and conservation through exploitation, whilst mistakenly portraying and subjecting animals to an unnatural environment and circumstances.

Yours sincerely,

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