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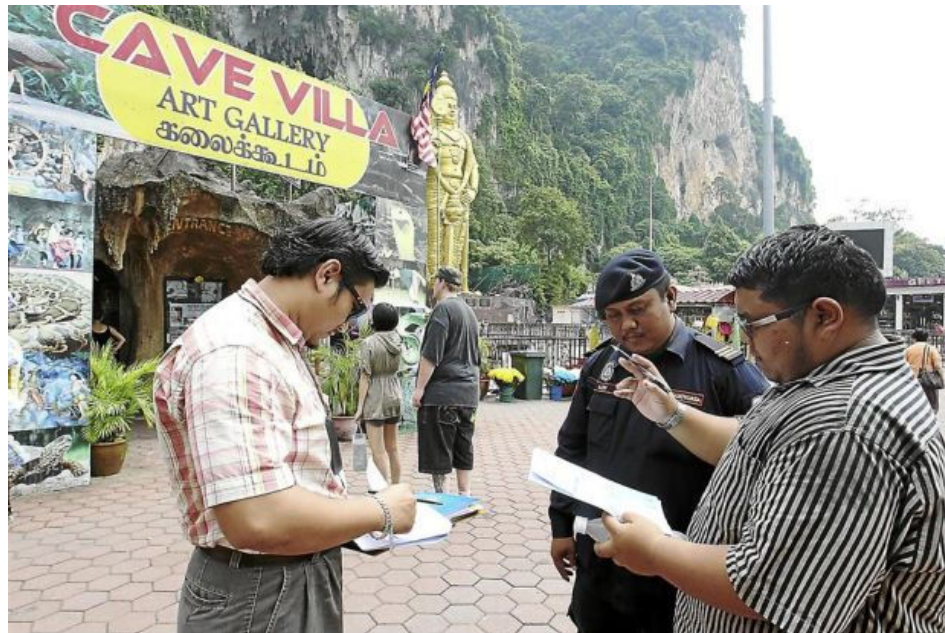
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Bats forced from caves

BY STEVEN DANIEL



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No licence: Officers from the Selayang Municipal Council visiting the Cave Villa in Batu Caves for an inspection. The operator was slapped with a RM1,000 compound for not having an entertainment licence.

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THE company managing Cave Villa, a tourist attraction in Batu Caves, has hired a pest control company to get rid of the bats in two of the caves.

The move has caused an uproar among environmentalists.

According to a source, the management had hired the pest control company several months ago to get rid of the bats.

He said this was because the bats were carriers of various diseases and the operators did not want to endanger visitors' health.

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However, he could not say if there had been complaints of people falling ill due to contact with the bat droppings.

“The bat droppings are an eyesore and tourists are often put off by the sight,” said the source.

He said the pest controllers had sprayed chemicals at the nests to get rid of the bats.

He admitted that no experts or environmental groups had been consulted prior to hiring the pest control company.

He said, however, that the bat population had decreased.

The source said the pigeon population in Batu Caves was also being kept under control by trapping about 50 pigeons every two weeks.

“There are just too many here,” he said.

Meanwhile, Friends of Batu Caves coalition spokesman Lim Teck Wyn said they were appalled by the operator’s actions.

He said under the Wildlife Conservation Act 2010, it was an offence to harm indigenous wildlife in any location, adding that at least 10 species of bats were living in some of the 20 caves in Batu Caves.

“The area where Cave Villa is located was gazetted in 1930 for public use and should not have been converted for commercial use in the first place.”

“The Batu Caves temple committee has abused its powers,” he said when contacted.

He urged the Wildlife Department (Perhilitian) to take stern action over the matter.

Selayang Municipal Council (MPS) officers, led by licensing director Affendei Samingan, also visited Cave Villa yesterday morning following a recent *StarMetro* report on Tuesday titled “National icon in shambles”.

It was reported that many visitors were unhappy over the deplorable condition of the Cave Villa and questioned its relevance in a place of worship as well as its effects on the environment.

MPS found the operators of Cave Villa guilty under the Entertainment and Entertainment Premises regulations (Selangor, 1996), for failing to apply for an entertainment licence and fined them RM1,000.

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venirs.

Affendei said the operators were cooperative and had claimed they were unaware of the need to apply for an entertainment licence.

He said they would be applying for one soon.

Later, MPS also inspected 21 business premises in Batu Caves and issued three compounds of RM1,000 each to three premises for not having valid licences.

On reports of alleged abuse of animals kept in Cave Villa and bats, Affendei said they

would notify Perhilitan to investigate the claims.

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