

KERATAN AKHBAR

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MALE CUBS

BABY CHEETAHS IN PINK OF HEALTH

Zookeeper says their mild demeanour is attributed to the fact that they were raised around humans

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BORN on June 6 in Zoo Negara, cheetah cubs Flash and Dash are in good health.

When the *New Straits Times* (NST) paid them a visit yesterday, both of them were playing hide-and-seek and avoiding human interaction.

They would sit still only for a few seconds, albeit warily, and

seemed overwhelmed by the extra attention they were getting.

Then, one of them gave a gesture common in any feline language, a signal to answer the call of nature.

Once in a while they would make noises similar to chirping birds, a technique normally used by baby cheetahs to avoid potential predators when they are away from their mother.

Zookeeper Umar Arshad 32, said their mild demeanour was attributed to the fact that they were raised around humans at an early age.

"It is different from tiger cubs that were raised by their mother. They are more aggressive and don't like it when humans get close to them. And yes, cheetah chirps. They do not roar like tigers and lions, even the adults," Zoo Negara deputy president

Rosly @ Rahmat Ahmat Lana said the offspring of Tianna and Tyson which were transferred from Hoedspruit Endangered Species Centre in South Africa, and were in good health.

"The two males were the surviving cubs of six.

"We were alarmed when Tianna started eating her offspring one after another. It is a natural animal instinct where the adults eliminate the weakest ones.

"We didn't separate them immediately as we feared that it would be detrimental to the cubs' health as they were feeding on their mother's milk. However, we decided to take a risk and rescue Flash and Dash. Fortunately, they are doing well and did not show signs of illnesses," he told NST. He said Tianna and Tyson, aged 5 and 6, respectively, were



Cheetah cubs Flash and Dash resting at Zoo Negara in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. PIC BY MUHD ZAABA ZAKERIA

doing well on their own in the enclosure.

"Male and female adult cheetahs can do well together. It is a different story with pandas. For example, a female and male pandas can only be placed together a few days in a year during their mating period. Other times, they could get aggressive and attack each other."

Tianna and Tyson were the first two cheetahs brought to Malaysia in February last year as part of an animal exchange programme with the (Pan) African Sanctuary (Alliance), where Zoo Negara gifted a chimpanzee to the organisation.

"Animal exchange must fulfil certain requirements, including DNA-checking by the Wildlife and National Parks Department.

"This is to ensure that the animals were not the ones caught in the wild, as they are prohibited from being included in the programme."

The adult pair has another male offspring, a subadult named Bolt, with rare fur pattern of larger, linear merged spots on its back, a condition where the common cheetah sports mutated fur, called King Cheetah.

"The ratio between male and female cheetah is four to one in Zoo Negara," he said.