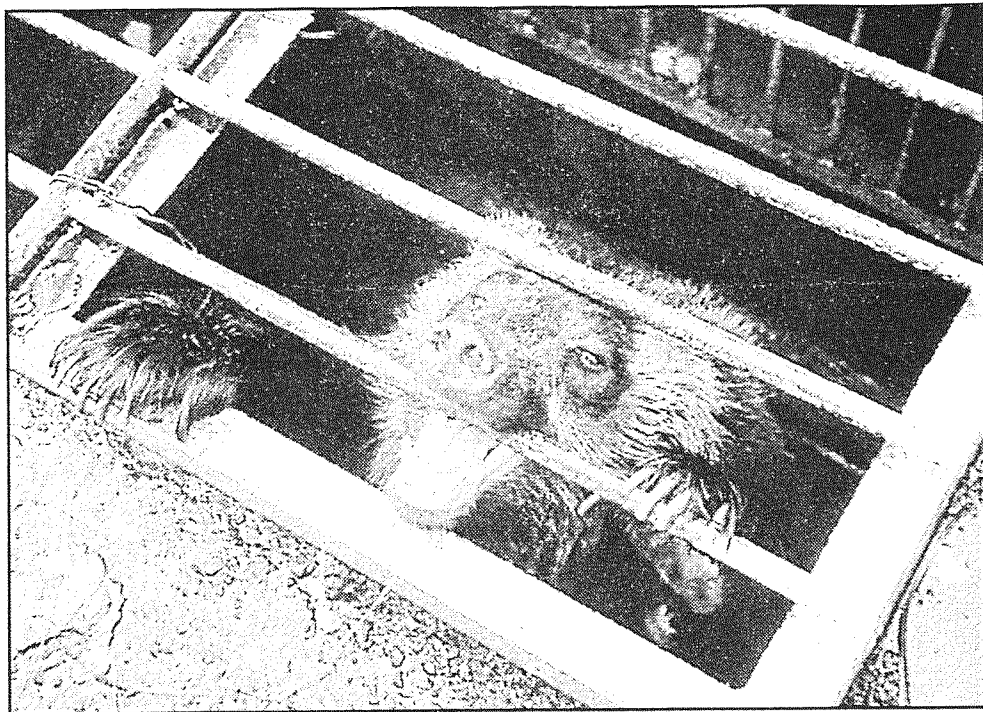




PIT PRISONER: Caged bears are forced to fight for tourists' entertainment

Action over bears' plight

by Alexandra Freen

THE JAPANESE government has launched an investigation into the barbaric treatment of thousands of endangered bears following revelations in the Sunday Express last year.

Yasuo Nozaka, a director at the Japanese Embassy in London, has told wildlife campaigners that conditions in six of Japan's eight bear parks are being reviewed and "measures to deal with the situation are being considered". Hundreds of

Agony of bears in Japan's barbaric zoos

THOUSANDS of endangered bears are being kept in barbaric conditions in Japan, according to a study

by Conagh Blackman

and four hours to kill the bear. Surviving bears are not allowed to mate and many are forced to

How we broke the news in December last year

readers protested about the bears' plight after we told last December how they are crammed into concrete pits, fed on scraps and encouraged to fight for the entertainment of tourists.

Badly-injured bears are then slaughtered for the lucrative trade in meat, fur and traditional medicine, according to a study from the London-based World Society for the Protection of Animals.

Mr Nozaka said the study had been translated into Japanese and distributed to

all the country's zoos and animal welfare organisations.

WSPA spokesman Jonathan Pearce welcomed the moves, saying: "Hundreds of Sunday Express readers wrote to the Japanese Embassy to protest. It seems that the authorities are finally beginning to take seriously the international concern for animal welfare."

"We hope this will lead to the closure of these parks, which represent one of the worst examples of animal exploitation we have ever investigated."