

TODAY

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ACRES accused of 'cyber attack'

by Tan Weizhen

SINGAPORE - The controversy over the capture and captivity of 25 wild dolphins for Resorts World Sentosa's (RWS) Marine Life Park attraction has taken a new twist, with the resort accusing animal welfare group Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (ACRES) of "cyber harassment" on its Facebook wall.

RWS has claimed that ACRES orchestrated an attack on its Facebook wall constituting of a "barrage of repetitive and abusive messages" - leading to the resort to temporarily suspending postings on its Facebook wall last Saturday evening, while ACRES said the IR had blocked ACRES' followers on the RWS Facebook page, and has been uncommunicative over the issue.

In a statement, RWS said that while it welcomed "constructive dialogue", this incident "contravened the true spirit of building a genuine Facebook community of (RWS) fans ... it also inconvenienced our fans".

RWS, which declared the incident "cyber-harassment", alleged ACRES had called on its followers to carry out the attack between 9am last Saturday and 9pm on Sunday, and that ACRES followers were creating new accounts to do this.

However, Mr Louis Ng, executive director of ACRES, told Today that the purpose of the messages was to put up photo petitions urging the resort to release the dolphins, among other similar messages, and followers had been urged to stay civil. "We are just people who are very passionate about this cause, and have urged them to respond, but they have not replied to a single message," he said.

Wall postings were allowed again yesterday morning. Today understands that the resort only blocked users who were abusive or sent repetitive messages. The controversy began when it emerged that dolphins were caught in the Solomon Islands last January for RWS, and two died in captivity while in a holding area in Malaysia.

Brand online intelligence company Brandtology said that most companies start an online fan page thinking that it is only for their fans. "But it is not something they can control once they open themselves to the world. Such blocking will only draw more negative attention," CEO Eddie Chau said. He said that Asian companies tend to be less receptive in managing stakeholders online compared to American or European companies, due to cultural differences. Tan Weizhen