

## Yahoo News

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### **RWS suspends FB comments over 'cyber-harassment'**

*By Fann Sim*

Resorts World Sentosa (RWS) temporarily suspended fan postings on its Facebook Page over the weekend after a flood of comments were posted on its wall calling for the release of the integrated resorts' 25 wild-caught dolphins.

The suspension was only lifted on Monday morning, with RWS posting a note on its page explaining that it had to "temporarily suspend fan postings on our Facebook wall due to a series of premeditated cyberharassment".

The posts started at 9am on Saturday and many Facebook users posted comments heavily critical of RWS' purchase of the dolphins for its upcoming Marine Life Park.

The flurry of comments are believed to be a result of the Animal Concerns Research and Education Society's (ACRES) call to its supporters to petition for the release of the dolphins on RWS' Facebook page.

"On 2 September 2011, we noted that ACRES posted a message on their Facebook page to urge its followers to repeatedly post messages relating to the Marine Life Park on the Resorts World Sentosa Facebook page over the weekend from 9am Saturday to 9pm Sunday," RWS told Yahoo! Singapore in a statement.

"We also noted that Acres directed its followers to create new Facebook IDs to flood our Facebook page," the organisation added, noting that the same message could be posted as many as 10 times.

"We took the decision to temporarily suspend fan postings on our Facebook wall, but they could still continue to post their views and comments on the Marine Life Park blog. This was never an ideal response but we cannot and will not tolerate any misuse of our Facebook page with spam, repetitive, or abusive messages," said RWS.

Between 2008 and 2009, RWS purchased 27 wild-caught Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins from the Solomon Islands. Two of them died last year in Langkawi. All the dolphins are now kept in the Philippines and will eventually be transferred to RWS over the next few months.

RWS has repeatedly said its marine park will focus on marine education, conservation and research.

Over the last five years, however, Acres has been running a campaign to call for the release of the dolphins. Most recently, it held a concert at Hong Lim park to promote the cause.

When contacted, Acres executive director Louis Ng said concerned members of the public were already posting on RWS' Facebook page before the event started and continued to do so after the event.

"All these comments were consistently ignored by RWS," he stated.

On RWS' complaint of cyber-harassment, Ng responded: "No. RWS is harrassing the dolphins and what ACRES is doing is raising our concerns, speaking up for the dolphins and urging RWS to respond to our concerns."

He stressed that Acres "never asked our supporters to post repeated comments as RWS stated" and the animal welfare group urged supports to post only "polite comments".

Ng added that the "vast majority" of comments were constructive but RWS has "chosen to ignore them or delete them".

"Any Facebook page contains both positive and negative feedback and we feel that any socially responsible company, not just RWS, should respond to public concerns rather than delete or ignore them for months," he said.

Many netizens have responded on RWS' Facebook note to say the incident is not cyber-harassment.

Tan Smith commented: "It's hardly cyber anything, just the truth and people who care about dolphins asking questions that you won't answer."

However, Dylan Tan said while activists are passionate about their cause, "the venomous name-callings of RWS and individuals who hold different views from you are unnecessary and uncalled for."