

Today

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RWS urged to make 'moral decision'

Wildlife-rescue group ACRES wants resort to abort plans to house dolphins

SINGAPORE - Wildlife-rescue group Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (ACRES) is urging Resorts World Sentosa (RWS) to "make a moral decision rather than a business-minded, profit-making one" - by aborting its plans to house dolphins as entertainers following the death of two bottlenose dolphins which were bound for RWS' Marine Life Park.

Last Saturday, MediaCorp reported that the dolphins - out of seven that were caught in the Solomon Islands and kept at a holding area in Langkawi - had died from an acute bacterial infection of Melioidosis in October.

ACRES executive director Louis Ng said in a letter to this newspaper that the non-profit group was "disappointed" that RWS are proceeding with its plans.

RWS had noted, in response to MediaCorp's queries, that the Marine Life Park was "part of the bid" when RWS was awarded the integrated resort licence. An RWS spokesman added that it was "committed to delivering the bid and the Marine Life Park that will not only boost tourism but research, conservation and education in marine mammals in this part of the region".

But Mr Ng described these reasons as "appalling". Mr Ng reiterated:

"Our economy and tourism sector must grow, but it is time for us to ask, 'At what cost?'. We must remember that the two dolphins who died were sentient individuals who only a year ago swam freely in the vast open oceans. They died despite the team of marine experts and best care that RWS promised."

Citing the example of dolphin trader Chris Porter - who decided to give up his business of capturing dolphins in the Solomon Islands and selling them to aquariums - Mr Ng said RWS "must rethink their decision urgently".

According to Mr Ng, Mr Porter was inspired by the film *The Cove* and the recent death of a trainer caused by a captive orca.

Said Mr Ng: "If Mr Chris Porter, a dolphin trader, can have a change of heart, then surely

RWS can as well."

Mr Ng added: "What can RWS really teach its visitors about dolphin protection? Would it not be an irony and contradiction for RWS to ask their visitors to protect dolphins when they themselves obtained 25 individual dolphins from the wild and two have now passed away."