

SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

(In association with R.S.P.C.A. England) Patroness: LADY Y.P. McNEICE



20 January 2009

Straits Times
Forum

Dear Sir/Madam,

Pity the dolphins caught from the wild

I REFER to the article, 'Senator cites Mexico's sad experience with dolphins' (Jan 12), which reported that Mexican senator Jorge Legorreta Ordorica had written to National Development Minister Mah Bow Tan last month to relate Mexico's experience - 12 out of 28 dolphins Mexico had imported from the Solomon Islands in 2003 had died from illnesses, ranging from a muscle disorder to pneumonia.

Mr Ordorica urged Mr Mah to consider the disturbing mortality rate of the animals when evaluating import applications for such animals.

It had been reported previously that seven bottlenose dolphins, part of a group of 18 destined for Resorts World Sentosa, were taken from the wild in the Solomon Islands.

Although Singapore reportedly thanked Mr Ordorica for his letter, and has stated that the dolphins here will require Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (Cites) import and export permits, this in no way addresses or eliminates the stress, suffering and health risks these creatures have been subjected to and will endure in the whole process.

Marine Life Park has said its dolphin enclosure will more than meet the minimum space requirements for the dolphins, but in an era where corporate social responsibility is emphasised in relation to environmental concerns, it will not reflect well on Singapore's image and may also cause a dent in its reputation.

The act of taking these animals from the wild (endangered or not) is at odds with the letter and spirit of Singapore's Wild Animals & Birds Act, which prohibits the taking of an animal from the wild.

The list of injustices throughout the dolphins' ordeal is extensive and heart-rending to those in animal welfare:

- Removing them from their natural habitat involves loss of their freedom and natural behaviour;
- Being subjected to long holding periods before their arrival in Singapore;
- Having to endure a stressful journey involving handling and transport; and
- Forcing them to adapt to an alternative lifestyle in a man-made structure, to be tamed and trained for human benefit and enjoyment.

The SPCA wrote recently to Resorts World Sentosa to object to the import of these dolphins caught from the wild and asked for a review and reversal of its decision.

Kudos to cargo air services company UPS, which reportedly refused to ship the dolphins from the Philippines to Singapore because 'the practice violated its environmental principles'.

Yes, people must be educated to appreciate marine life, but not at the animals' expense.

Deirdre Moss (Ms)
Executive Officer
Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals