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Cites rules allow sale of wild pink dolphins

I REFER to Mr Jagdish Ramakrishan and Mr Leong Sze Hian's letters ('Confiscate pink dolphins'; ST, Feb 10).

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (Cites) allows wild-caught specimens of Appendix I species, such as the pink dolphin, to be imported and exported, and kept in a zoological facility for captive breeding and educational purposes.

This is subject to the approval of the authorities of both importing and exporting countries. The importing-country authority will assess whether there are suitably equipped facilities to house and care for the animals.

The exporting-country authority will assess if such exports are detrimental to the species' survival. When the Underwater World Singapore (UWS) applied for a permit from the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) to import six pink dolphins from Thailand, it did not claim that all the dolphins were captive-bred.

In assessing the application, AVA was informed that UWS intended to bring in a mix of wild-caught and captive-bred dolphins for captive breeding and educational purposes. As UWS, a zoological facility, was assessed to be suitably equipped, AVA approved the import of the six pink dolphins.

The Thai authorities had also approved their export. As UWS had obtained all the necessary approvals from AVA and the Thai authorities to acquire the dolphins, in accordance with Cites requirements, AVA will not confiscate them.

We thank the writers for the opportunity to clarify the matter.