

South Korea to ban catching of dolphins for shows

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A baby bottlenose dolphin swims with its mother in Indonesia. South Korea will ban the catching of Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins for use in shows by designating them as protected mammals, the maritime affairs ministry said Tuesday.

South Korea will ban the catching of Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins for use in shows by designating them as protected mammals, the maritime affairs ministry said Tuesday.

An upcoming bill will also designate [sea turtles](#) and [sea horses](#) as protected species, the ministry said.

Currently it is legal to catch dolphins and whales for a show or for research if authorities give prior approval. Otherwise, it is punishable by

a jail term of up to two years or a fine of up to five million won (\$4,300).

The revised law would authorise seizures only for research. It would raise penalties to up to three years' imprisonment or a fine of up to 20 million won.

Dolphins are widely used for shows in South Korea. But Seoul's main zoo agreed in March to suspend its popular show over claims by activists that one of the dolphins was captured illegally.

In April, a court on the southern holiday island of Jeju ordered the release into the ocean of five dolphins which had been captured without permission and used in a show.

Some experts say dolphin shows have educational value and released mammals may not be able to adapt to the [open sea](#). But animal rights activists have called for a ban on dolphin shows and tough rules on seizures.

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