

ARISING STARS

The Mirpur Zoo

Animals Look Good in Cages but They Look Marvellous in the Wild

by Shahed Latif, Tarannum Laila, Photos by Enamul Haq

I visited the zoo at Mirpur when I was 7 years old. Since then, I didn't visit or get the chance to visit the Mirpur Zoo in Dhaka. So, I decided to take a day out with my friends and cousins to visit the Mirpur Zoo.

On a Saturday, my friends, cousins and I jumped in the micro-bus and began our journey for the zoo. The weather was hot but it seemed as if it would rain. Just to be on the safe side I carried my jacket along.

As soon as we stepped down from our micro-bus, we were greeted by pestering sellers. They were all cluttering around, trying their best to annoy us. Somehow, we managed to buy our tickets to get in. The first thing we noticed, once inside the zoo, was a huge stack of trash beside a bin which read 'Use Me' in Bengali. Well, so much for ignorance! I was looking around for guide maps or guiding signboards. But there was none. No guide maps or no arrows showing directions.

Anyway, we decided to walk along the main path. I noticed gladly that there were a lot of trees around. But the sign of bad maintenance was blatant. Even the path on which we were walking was muddy. Soon we reached a gigantic green cage filled with Rhesus Monkey. Their colour was orangish-grey and they seemed very playful and active. They were eating eggs, bread, pineapples and (as you have guessed) lots of bananas. There was a teeny-weeny baby monkey clinging to its mother. How cute! Well, soon enough the smell of old and expired monkey food drove us away to the crocodiles.

Then I came across crocodiles which were brought from the Sunderbans. There were about three of them there, and I was informed by a small boy, who acted as my unofficial guide there, that the crocodiles, each eat 10 big fishes with 10-20 kg of meat, but they did not look so well fed, instead they looked quite old and worn out, may be because they ate too much and were becoming fat, they could not even roam around in the artificial lake that was there home. After walking for some more steps I came across the Indian porcupine the beautiful birds. They each had beautiful names, like Lilford Crane, Spoonbill, Flamingo, Spotted Dove, Ring Dove, Sarus Crane, Ruddy Shelduck and many others, equally interesting and fascinating names. I wish I knew a bit more of their origin.

Deer, an elegant animals they were simply exotic; there were at least 17 spotted deer known as Maya deer. They were brought from the Hill Tracts, Sunderban, India and Sri Lanka. The male Maya deer is taller than their females. They usually eat ginger and other salty fruits, and may be this is the secret to their shapely figure, but suddenly I felt depressed when I saw that their life span was only 10-15 years; in these years they reach adult life and reproduce. In that same area I saw Sambar

deer, they were huge with enormous horns which look like branches in a tree, in spite of it, they were beautiful, their life span is also 10-15 years and they weighed nearly 200-250 kg each, they are capable of reproducing all the year round with 6-7 months as

males weigh 20-22 kg, while the females weigh 15-16 kg. They were brought from Africa, Zambia, Kango, Kenya. In a group of 10-12 mandrills there are (2-3) males. They reach adulthood by the fourth year and these monkey-like animals eat eggs, fruits among

cages. There were many kinds of them and all deadly, cobra, rattle, sand snake, python to name a few. All these snakes eat different amounts of food and their life span, also, varies

keeping a guide or giving necessary informations. I found out a little about the lions, that the males weigh 400 pounds, the females weighed 300 pounds. The male was 9 ft

extreme hunger. The restaurants are poorly managed. As this is the national 300 it should be clean. Moreover the music there, gives one a headache. Then after eating my lunch the first animal that came in front of me was the chimpanzee.

these huge animals were given to us from the Kingdom of Nepal. The male Rhino was named Kanchi and the female named Kanchi. These huge animals look quite good with its horns, but recently in Times I have read that some poachers in African countries are killing

poachers, other wise someday we would find that these animals are no longer, never to be found again. The poachers should be warned and if they do not listen to the warnings they should be jailed for at least 30 years with heavy fine. If these kinds of steps are taken against one or two poachers they would learn a lesson and bring a stop to it. Then after walking for 2-3 minutes I came across the heaviest animal walking on the face of the earth, my favourites the elephants. Elephants are found in many places of the world but the elephants of Africa are famous for strength and ferocity, elephants are also found in Asian countries like India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and others. The Indian elephants are also huge; the male is 9 feet tall while the females grow up to 8 feet. The males have two huge white teeth which make it ferocious and rigid. These huge elephants also could not escape from these miserable poachers who kill them for their own miserable selfish needs. If the people stop buying these animals' teeth or things made out of them, I am quite sure these poachers will be crippled and will stop this illegal business and stop playing with our animal kingdom and our environment and ecology.

We talk about protecting the environment but actually nothing is being done to stop them, no measures are taken against the poachers who are damaging the environment and threatening the very existence of mankind. The elephants usually roam together in a group, and in one group there are about 60 of them. These animals usually eat grass, leaves, banana leaves, banyan tree etc. The male bush elephants of Africa usually weighs more than 6 tons each, while the Asian elephants are smaller, and weigh nearly 3.50 tons, after they are matured.

We must protect our environment, our ecology or someday without these lovely animals we would find that the earth has lost her balance. So we must take care of the Rhino's, the elephants, the leopards, the tigers, the lions and many others. We do have a duty towards the animals also.

Lastly I would say that we have brought these animals for our entertainment so we must look after them properly and with care. They look good behind the bars or cages but they look marvellous in the wild.

Even though it is not possible to create a wilderness as natural as the forest or the places from where these animals originated but we must try to make them comfortable and free as much as possible. Filthy, dirty cages, nasty pungent smell of the waste and rotten food, lakes or water bodies that are green with algae, are not exactly a sight that entertains. Moreover this huge place is literally devoid of fast food shops or icecream parlours. Without, chips, pop corns or icecream cones and cold drinks, a visit to the zoo is not complete. The zoo is not only for the children but adults too it is a place that entertains and enriches the mind.



'How far it is from home,' thinks the mighty Royal Bengal Tiger.



Sleep my baby. A lioness putting her cubs to sleep.



Hey you look familiar.

from each other. But among all the snakes I was amused by the huge pythons, there were two of them, they were so huge that they just could not move, still then, I didn't dare try the Tarzan's act, with real snakes.

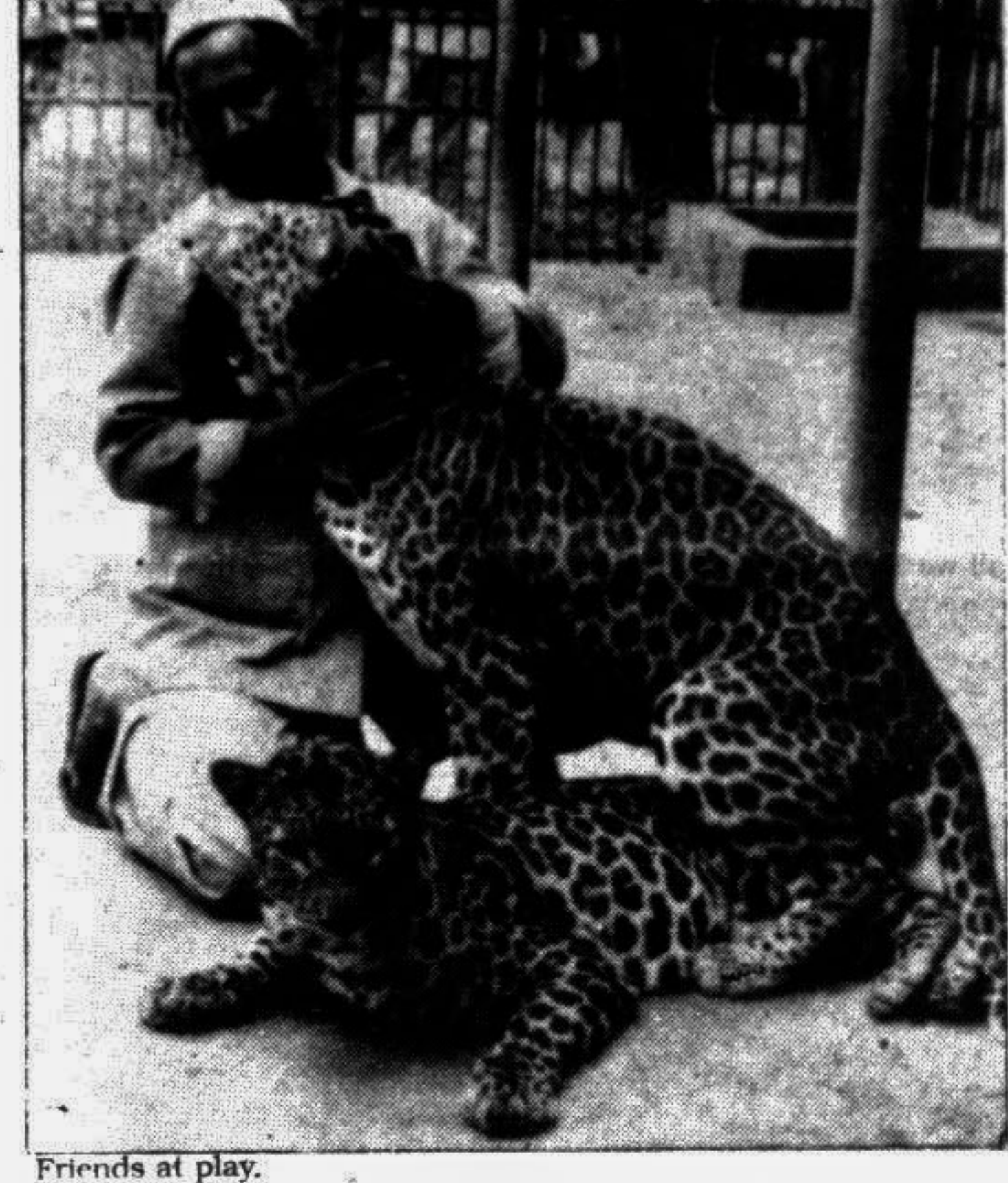
The hippos which were brought from Africa, were simply huge, at first I could not see them because they were underwater, maybe busy with their regular ablution I learned that at a time they could stay underwater for 3-4 minutes. After waiting a bit the gigantic hippos weighing nearly 2.5-4 tons, came up last at the ring side. I mean in their cage I also found out that in the wild, of these animals live together in a group, the hippos that we have, eat 25 kg of vegetables a day. I was informed by the small boy that the hippos have also reproduced in our zoo; the hippo's life span is between 40-45 years and they reach adulthood by the third year of their life.

Then I came across our very own Royal Bengal Tiger — for which I've been waiting, there were two of them, in one cage they looked very beautiful and mighty as ferocious. Their body is striped, it looked like as if some painter has painted it very thoughtfully. But that is quite impossible because no one would dare to go near them, except our dear pal Tarzan. But what disappointed me the most is the lack of management. The concerned people should take appropriate measures for the visitors by

while the female about 8 ft tall, they were brought from South Africa, they ate 8-10 kg of meat a day. Their life span is 15-16 years with 2-4 babies after every three and half months of pregnancy. I got little information about the lion but nothing about the Royal Bengal Tiger, it is a dreadful shame. Suddenly I saw a man sitting with a few books, I went to him for some informations. There were some facts about the Royal Bengal Tiger but that was not enough, there should be more information about our tigers.

Then I came across ostriches, there were two of them but in different cages I don't know why and I could not ask anyone because there were no guides. But as far as I know these huge birds are found in the African countries they weigh nearly 220-300 pounds. These birds cannot fly, but they can run at a speed of 80 km/h. (I would a never want to be in a race with them). Ostriches usually lay one to two eggs which are quite big. Then I came across another kind of animal known as common Otter, they are found in the hill tracts, Sylhet, Chittagong. Their height is a 2-2.50 feet weighing 8-12 kg, they can stay 60 feet underwater for 4-5 minutes. Their life span is 10-15 years and one baby is born a year.

After roaming for two whole hours I was hungry, I came across a restaurant where many kinds of foods were found, but these you just eat in



Friends at play.

There were two chimpanzees in that cage, these huge beasts reach adulthood by the 10th or the 12th year. The chimpanzee usually delivers one baby a year, with 7-10 babies in their lifetime, and their pregnancy usually lasts for 230 days. These chimpanzees usually eat small birds, ground nuts, breads etc.

these beasts for their horns, which are used for medicines or as decoration pieces. This is really brutal; I know man is brutal but this brutality has no ends, there are a handful of Rhino's left now, in handful of countries, so the governments and the wild life protection authorities should take appropriate measures to pressure these

THE frequent and the common use of wax is candles. But the Madame Tussaud Wax Museum will amaze you with the other things made of wax — like statues for example. This fascinating place is situated in Baker Street. Yes, you have heard the name. It is that Baker Street mentioned in the famous detective novel 'Sherlock Holmes'. Madame Tussaud was a French lady, born in 1761 in Strasbourg, France. Her love for wax modelling began from an early age. She carved her first wax model in 1778 at an age of seventeen. Gradually she exhibited her works all over France. In 1800, she married and moved to England because of the Napoleonic Wars. Finally, she decided to settle the exhibition permanently in Baker Street. The first exhibition took place in 1834. This remarkable lady died in 1850 at the age of eighty nine. From then on her descendants looked after it. The museum is mainly divided into three sections. The biggest section is the Grand Hall, where figures of prominent people stand, followed by the chamber of Horrors and a new section 'The spirits of London'.

The Wonder World of Wax

Just a few steps away is the figure of Guy Fawkes, a man who tried to blow the House of Parliament in London in 1605. A figure of Samuel Pepys, a famous mystery story writers Agatha Christie and Alfred Hitchcock stares at the visitors, — mysteriously, at Bill Cosby, Elizabeth Taylor, Telly Savalas known as 'Kojak' and among many famous film and television personalities exhibited there. Even you can see famous sports personalities like Martina Navratilova, Pele and Bjorn Borg. Among the political figures, the Royal family of Britain comes first. Prince Charles and Princess Diana of Wales stands side by side along with Queen Elizabeth II, Duke of Edinburgh and the Queen Mother. Princess Diana is beautifully attired in her bridal gown. The royal families of the past such as Henry VIII, Queen Victoria, Elizabeth I and Charles II are also on display. Figures of heads of states of past and present are exhibited. Leaders of past include Sir Winston Churchill, Abraham Lincoln, Indira Gandhi with her son Rajiv Gandhi while leaders of the present time include Bill Clinton, Saddam Hussein, King and Queen of Spain, Yasser Arafat, Pope John Paul II and others. Figures of famous painters and writers like Pablo Picasso and Hans Christian Anderson can also be seen. The chamber of Horrors is the next section, which anyone will be delighted to see. The

JOY AVIK THE MISSING MACHINE

By Sharier

Avik and Joy are two fresh-man students of Rukus University. Rukus is an island state in the Indian Ocean nearer to Antarctica than Bangladesh. The inhabitants had migrated mostly from Bengal during the early British period. Avik and Joy do a lot of odd jobs for a living. Each time their job turns out to be an adventure. Here is a real adventure of the two fellows as filmed by Sharier through a hidden camera. The original film was recorded in Bangla — the mother tongue of Rukus. It was later dubbed into English for Star readers.

DREAMS

by Shumon Momen

Dreams. You don't know where they come from. You don't know where they go to. As suddenly as they come. They go like a flash of light. You may remember your adventure in fantasy world. It is truly magical whatever you dream. All in your imagination & mind alone. When you awake Your dream slowly dies away.

20th August, 1991.