

# Spot the Real Culprit

ANIKA HOSSAIN

The recent tiger attack at the National Zoological Park in Delhi brings back gruesome memories of a similar attack that occurred at Dhaka Zoo on 18, November 1997, when a 9-year-old boy was dragged into a cage and brutally killed by a Royal Bengal tiger. It also brings to mind, concerns about the changes that have been made over the years to prevent another such incident.

Upon entering the Dhaka Zoo, several changes can be observed at a glance. The cages that had once sported iron bars about 2 inches apart, now have metal nets within these bars to prevent either animals or unsuspecting visitors from sticking their limbs in (or out). Despite this however, crowds seem to have found a way to get as close to the animals as possible. This reporter observed people freely crossing the barriers put in place to keep them at least 4ft away from the cages, ignoring the large blaring signs warning them not to do so.

Both adults and children alike, are seen climbing over bars and barriers that lead into open enclosures that house animals such as crocodiles and the hippopotamus, with no security personnel in sight to prevent them from doing so. Many brave souls are also crossing the barriers of the lion and tiger enclosures, leaning against the cages and poking their fingers in, with little thought to the consequences.

The Dhaka Zoo authorities however, have ensured that safety measures are indeed in place. "All the animals in our zoo are kept in strong cages and safe enclosures," says Dr Enayet Hossain, Curator of Dhaka Zoo. "When it comes to safety I think the people most at risk are our ACTs (animal care takers). We give these individuals training on how to interact with the animals,



clean their cages, feed them and how to assess whether an animal is in need of medical attention," he elaborates. "These trainings are not routine, but we have regular meetings with staff and security officers about these issues."

When asked how many guards are assigned to monitor visitors, Hossain says, to guard their 237 animal chambers, there are merely 50 guards (including Ansars), who do their job in shifts. It is no wonder, therefore that visitors seem to be doing as they please once they are in through the front gates. "We believe that since we have a huge area to take care of we need more guards to help us do so."

One will shudder to think what happens when these guards go on leave. "We have given requisitions for more staff as a large number of our posts

are currently vacant. If we could fill these, then we would be able to provide better security," he says. "In order to do so we have to get permission from the appropriate ministry, we need a budget for salary and one to advertise these posts, which we currently do not have. We also believe that some new positions should be created for better safety measures."

Hossain adds that each cage is monitored by staff at all times. "Our cages are well protected and visitors have no opportunity to enter them. We do not have staff assigned to every cage, but we assign three or four cages to each ACT," he explains. "When their work hours are over at 3pm, we assign guards, Ansars or other staff members to monitor these cages. We are currently short-staffed so it is not possible to assign one person to each

cage." The shortage of staff is not only dangerous for the visitors, but for the animals as well. While some raucous visitors sometimes harass the animals by throwing things at them, poking them with sharp objects and feeding them (which is against the rules), others take it a step further. "In a recent incident, some have broken into cages and stolen a number of exotic birds," Hossain tells us. "Certain areas of the zoo have not been walled up yet, which is risky," says Hossain, "We plan to start working on that this year."

Although no deaths or injuries have been reported recently, with the lack of order and security, the atmosphere in the Dhaka Zoo is a volatile one. Authorities are urged to take more measures to ensure the safety of visitors and animals alike.

## A Fresh Take

SAAD ADNAN KHAN

Shuchi Karim talks about change and aspirations. She explores through her academic research work, teaching and activism. Karim has recently completed her PhD from International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam in The Hague, The Netherlands. She currently works as a researcher and advisor at Institute of Educational Development (IED), BRAC University. At IED, she has developed a low cost secondary school model, where aspects of gender, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and psychosocial counseling are combined as integral parts of development of adolescents' lives. She also teaches Feminist Theory at BRAC University. As a researcher, she writes about how gender and sexuality is practiced in different spaces such as urban landscapes, cyberspaces, how LGB (lesbian, gay, bisexual) support groups work and on issues and politics around gender and disability.

Karim juggles and enjoys both academic and activist work. Through teaching, she loves seeing any kind of change among her students. "Teaching Gender is like being an optician. You get to fix people's lenses and way of seeing life," she says. She finds her work at IED grounded as she gets to have a direct impact in lives of adoles-

cents. She believes in applying and using scholarly knowledge in contextual ways. "I also believe movements and activists need an academic backing, because one can create more buzz and circulate and conceptualize issues more through a merging of the two areas."

Karim, through



her work, questions norms and wants to ensure environments where members in society can thrive. "Everyone's existence matters, and everyone is significant, and one's identity should not be written off that oppressive customs in society often do," she says. Karim wants to travel more and see the world, believes in dreaming and says, "It is not important to go very far, but as far as one wants to go."

## Living the Alternative Way

ELITA KARIM

Ever wonder why our grandparents lived longer, stronger and healthier? Researchers talk about the abundance of organic food, the fresh air and also the outdoor activities that had become a part of daily lives and so much more. "Being healthy used to be a lifestyle," says Rafi Hossain. "It wasn't a choice that one would make. Eating well, resting, meditating, exercising -- they were all taken for granted."

A huge supporter of alternative methods of healing, Rafi Hossain is a regular teacher of the Art of Living programme. The Art of Living is a combination of a breathing course, followed by yoga, meditation, asanas,

etc. "In a nutshell, the art of living teaches one a proper lifestyle," says Hossain. "Meditation is a part of all cultures, and so is self contemplation," adds Hossain. "But with time, people in this part of the work began to forget it. Today, the art of living has become a trend in many parts of the west. Maybe that's why many in the subcontinent are beginning to take up this lifestyle, like their ancestors did."

The Art of Living was founded by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. He has millions of followers all over the world. "More than a decade ago, I was going through a very bad phase in life," says Hossain. "I felt lost and didn't know how to share my problems with friends or family members. In fact, I

could not sleep for days. I could not understand what to do." Hossain began to look for alternative healing methods to fix his sleep problem. He started off with Reiki, a touch healing programme. "While doing it, a friend in India told me about the Art of Living. I was desperate and signed up for the 6-day course only because I could not sleep. On day 2, I was sleeping like a log! I didn't have to use any medication." Rafi Hossain then met the guru himself and started practicing this alternative method of healing physical and mental aches and weaknesses regularly. He also frequently give updates on [artofliving.org](http://artofliving.org), the website portal of Art of Living.

Eventually, Hossain finished all the courses and steps and became the first certified faculty of Art of Living in Bangladesh. "I have been teaching this course in Bangladesh for the last 12 years," he says. "Of course, there are many good teachers now and I am very happy to see the lifestyle programme spreading amongst the people here."

Rafi Hossain is currently the editor of Star Showbiz, a weekly publication of the Daily Star. The next batch of classes for Art of Living will start at Inspire, a creative space in Baridhara DOHS. For more information on the course visit the [facebook.com/InspireKnowledgeIsPower](http://facebook.com/InspireKnowledgeIsPower).

