



almost in a competition!

There were also bouts of some board games – ludo, and cards. You would never know the purpose of the whole tour looking at any of us, seeing how much we lazed around just chatting the time away. It was like an endless festival of eating to our heart's content, sleeping, talking to friends, and simply floating about on the river stream, singing our joys.

But, what is a Sundarbans tour without an actual effort to meet the Bengal tiger? So we left our unexpected bode of luxury in the ship, and set out to look for the famed resident of the Sundarbans.

Along the coast,  
and sometimes  
inside the

narrow pathways in the forest, we met a lot of deer, monkeys, snakes and other little creatures.

We did see the paw prints of the tiger, and some even claimed to smell the distinct smell of the large predator. After walking about for two hours, we were back in the ship by noon.

While standing on the decks, we saw a large group of kites fly in, snatching fish out of the waters around - what a wonderful sight it was! During the cruise we also saw river dolphins, and many a deer running about while crossing the water near Kotka, coming to the shores

for a drink of water. They seemed quite used to people and ships, going about their business without any concern for us.

Every evening, we would get on those little boats tied behind the ship, and explore the canals inside the Sundarbans, to see nature in her intimate solitude. Then we would have tea and snacks on the boat, and float about till the sun went down on a canvas of shades of red and gold, to give way to the moon's silver rays, emanating from a metal plate hanging in the sky. I do not think any of us had ever seen something so beautiful before.

Four days passed in a jiffy, surrounded in mirth and enjoyment. No topics escaped discussion on these four days - politics, society, the media, entertainment, food, travelling, environment and all things personal.

Our train back to Dhaka was supposed to leave at 8pm on the last of the four days, but in the evening we discovered we were still two and a half hours away from the port.

And that is how we missed out train, without seeming to care too much though!

And it was not a few tickets either, but 27 in all! Because of a little confusion with the guide, we were all now in a bit of trouble since there were no tickets available for anything - buses, planes and certainly no trains, at least until the next morning. Moreover, we could not even unload the frustration as the guide ran the minute we reached the station.

Then began the frantic search for a means of transport to good old Dhaka! We were stranded till 12am, after finally getting in on a run down and barely held together bus to go to Dhaka. Yet, being in a group the whole delay or trouble seemed like another source of fun, really.

We got back to the city in the morning. We did not get to meet the Bengal tiger, but what we did see and experience was worth it all.

**By Ranjana Huda**  
**Translated by Sania Aiman**  
**Photo: Naser Ahmed**

