

11 Pasir Ris Farmway 2
Singapore 519326

Tel : +65 6581 2488

Fax: +65 6581 6318

www.acres.org.sg

info@acres.org.sg

PRESS RELEASE

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CONFISCATED PET PRIMATE JOURNEYS TO SANCTUARY IN INDIA

SINGAPORE 19 May– Today marks the first time a primate confiscated from the illegal pet trade in Singapore is being repatriated to India.

Asha, a female rhesus macaque (*Macaca mulatta*), cut a lone, desperate figure when she was found by the Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (Acres) being kept as a "pet" at a warehouse in Singapore. A chain around her neck restricting her movement and deprived of companionship of her own kind- the suffering and mental anguish for such a naturally sociable animal must have been great. A non-native species, Asha was probably smuggled into Singapore by ruthless animal traders.

Through a tip-off, Asha was rescued from her plight in 2004 by Acres. As Singapore has no rescue centre for confiscated animals, Acres had to find a new safe home for her so that she would not be euthanised. Singapore Zoo, which houses the world's largest collection of primate species, agreed to take care of her until a new home has been found by Acres. It also helped to arrange the logistics for Asha's repatriation.

Dr Chris Furley, Director of Zoology and Veterinary Services, Singapore Zoo says, "From August 2004, we have kept her in our Small Animal Quarantine division. For the last twenty months, we have provided food, lodging, regular medical checks and treatment for her. As we do not have rhesus macaque in our collection, we are glad that she will be moving to a rehabilitation centre in New Delhi."

"Asha serves as a living testimony to remind everyone that it is illegal and dangerous to keep primates as pets. Southeast Asia is a major hub for wildlife trade. Keeping of exotic pets is one of the factors that has prompted illegal collection and smuggling of endangered animals," continues Dr Furley.

As the Rhesus macaque is of Indian origin, Acres secured Asha a home at the Wildlife SOS Rescue & rehabilitation Centre in New Delhi, India in 2004. Wildlife SOS agreed to care for this monkey for the rest of her life. However, that was just the start and it took months and months of letter writing, email correspondence and phone calls to get all the permits necessary to send her to her new home.

"Asha is finally set to start her new life in India, after over twenty months of hard work, frustration and invaluable help from Mr. Ramachandra, Maneka Gandhi, Marie Gupta, Jose Louies, Geeta, Jaswant and Kartick. At last, Asha will have a permanent home in a sanctuary and be reunited with her own kind; in short, her name (an Indian name meaning Hope) will be fulfilled" said Amy Corrigan, Acres' Director of Zoology, who will be accompanying Asha on board the same flight.

"We are relieved that Asha is being repatriated finally back to India - her country of origin and hope she will start a new life here" said Kartick Satyanarayan, Co-Founder of Wildlife SOS.

This repatriation was made possible with funding from Ananda Bhavan Veg. Restaurant, Sri Sreenivasa Perummal Temple, Acres and other well-wishers. "I am very pleased to have been able to help give this monkey a second chance at life after her terrible ordeal" said Mr. Ramachandra, Director of Ananda Bhavan Veg. Restaurant.

The Singapore Zoo also kindly assisted in housing the macaque and the logistics required for the repatriation. Acres also expresses our sincere appreciation to the Indian Wildlife Authority and the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority, Singapore.

This is the second primate repatriation organised by Acres. In 2004, Acres repatriated a vervet monkey, illegally kept as a pet in Singapore, back to Africa.

Acres understands that Asha's owner was fined as it is illegal to keep primates as pets in Singapore.

About Acres

The Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (Acres) is a local animal welfare charity, founded by Singaporeans, with a main aim of fostering respect and compassion for all animals. The approach used by Acres to raise awareness of animal welfare issues is to focus on education and back up their advocacy with scientific clarity accrued through research. Using their findings, Acres educates the public and works towards synergistic partnerships with the authorities and related parties to improve animal welfare.

To date, the work of the Acres Wildlife Rescue Team has led to the rescue of more than 170 animals, including 165 animals from the illegal wildlife trade. The 24-hour Acres Wildlife Crime Hotline (9783 7782) provides an avenue for those who know of anyone who buys, owns or trades in exotic animals, to blow the whistle on these wildlife traders and buyers.

About Singapore Zoo

Set in a rainforest environment, Singapore Zoo's world famous "Open Concept" offers the opportunity to experience and be inspired by the wonders of nature. Home to over 3,000 specimens from 290 species, 21% of which are threatened, the Zoo has attained a strong reputation internationally for its conservation initiatives and breeding programmes. To better meet the healthcare needs of its animals and working towards its aspiration to become a leading global centre of excellence for veterinary healthcare and research, a purpose-built Wildlife Healthcare and Research Centre was set up in March, 2006. In 2005, 1.3 million visitors enjoyed the experiential learning experience at the 28-hectares award-winning Zoo. Singapore Zoo is part of Wildlife Reserves Singapore.

About Wildlife SOS

Wildlife SOS was created by a group of committed individuals who believe that it is not too late to help and save wildlife. Wildlife SOS believes that rapid action needs to be taken by every individual in this lifetime to make a change which will conserve and protect the environment and wildlife. Wildlife SOS runs several wild animal rescue projects and wildlife sanctuaries in India.

Wildlife SOS is the only organisation in India working to put an end to the dancing bear trade by freeing the bears from a life of misery and pain, so they can live on their spacious sanctuary, with freedom and good care for the first time in their lives.

Contact:

Acres
Louis Ng (Executive Director)
Email: louis@acres.org.sg
Tel: 65 97968592

Singapore Zoo
Ms Pauline Tan
Email: Pauline@zoo.com.sg
Tel: 65 6360 8659

Singapore Zoo
Betsy Tan
Email: betsy.tan@citigatedrimage.com
Tel: 65 65345122; 65 97813518

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