



# The Export of Rhino

**The capture of rhino from the wild in Peninsular Malaysia and Sumatra now means that Indonesia, Malaysia and England hold a pair each which can form the basis for a captive breeding programme.**

*Con't from Malayan Naturalist 39 (1 & 2) 11-22.*

## **Symbolic Gift for Thai Ruler**

Three Malaysian selumbu (a natural cross between the wild seladang and the domestic cow, lembu) and four deer were presented to King Bhumipol of Thailand by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and Raja Permaisuri Agong as a symbol of close relations between the two countries.

*The Star, 21 December 1985*

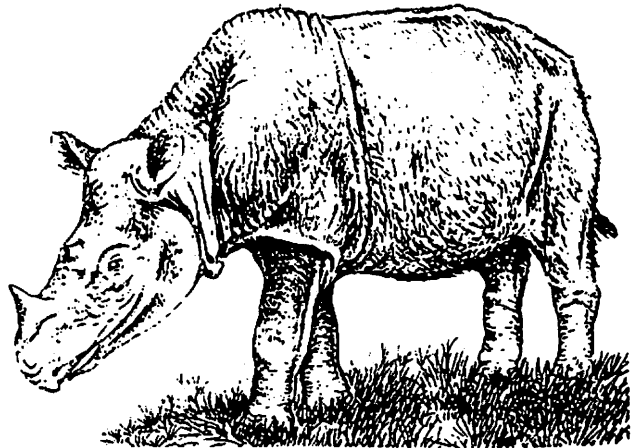
## **Sumatran Rhino Gift for Thai Monarch**

Melintang, one of the two female Sumatran rhino in the Malacca Zoo, will be sent to Bangkok in a special RMAF flight on Thursday (26 December 1985).

Malacca Zoo director, Khadijah Othman said Melintang, one of the only two Sumatran rhino in captivity in the world, would be presented to the King of Thailand as a gift from the Federal Government. The other rhino in the zoo is Jeram.

Puan Khadijah denied a newspaper report that Melintang and Jeram were mates. "Both are females," she said. The report said that zoo workers are unhappy that the authorities planned to separate the pair. It also said that the workers feared that Jeram would go berserk if it lost its mate, just like Zoo Negara's African rhino, Farouk. (Farouk, a male rhino, killed a zoo keeper in October). In August, Melintang bit off a finger of her keeper, Encik Marid Hassan.

*The Star, December 1985*



*Only two female Sumatran rhino, Jeram and Melintang, were in captivity in December 1985 at the Malacca Zoo, which the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (PERHILITAN) intends to develop into a captive breeding centre for the Sumatran rhino. These two rhino were captured when they strayed out of the forest into oil palm estates. Unfortunately a juvenile male rhino died in captivity. (Another female was added to the collection in February 1986 - see below). It is not known how the gift of one captive females will affect PERHILITAN'S plans for their captive rhino breeding programme, nor is it known whether Melintang will form part of a rhino breeding programme in Thailand. Ed.*

In the meantime, the capture of rhino from Sumatra for captive breeding in Britain (see *The Rhino Export Deal* *Malayan Naturalist* 39 (No 1 & 2): 11-22) is underway:

"This Sumatran rhino was captured in Sumatra on 25 November 1985 and was named TORGANBY. It is a male rhino weighing about 950 kg and is estimated to be about 6 years old. It arrived in Singapore by boat and was sent by air to England accompanied by a veterinary surgeon."

*Lian He Zao Bao, 5 April 1986*

## IS ZOO'S SUMATRAN RHINO PREGNANT?

Is she or is she not? This is the question being asked by keepers of Tenggaroh, one of the two Sumatran

rhinos at the Malacca Zoo, and one of the only three female rhinos in captivity.

Tenggaroh, caught in Johore in February, has been behaving strangely and keepers think she may be pregnant. Tenggaroh has put on weight over the past month, a rare development for animals in captivity, and has become aggressive with keepers.

Wildlife Department vets have not been able to confirm the pregnancy and excited zoo officials sent the animal's urine samples to the General Hospital for a pregnancy test. The tests have been negative but State Wildlife director Puan Khadijah Othman said the tests may not have been designed for rhinos.

"We will just have to wait and see," she said. "We think she was already pregnant when she was caught." The wait may be long — the gestation period for rhinos is uncertain, between 10 to 15 months.

*The Star, 9 July 1986*

## THE RHINO CONNECTION

It's on at last — the endangered Sumatran rhino captive-breeding project is underway. A breeding pair each will soon be at Malacca Zoo and at the Jakarta Zoo as well as at a private zoo in England. All the rhinos needed are already in captivity. Malacca is exchanging one of its two females for the Indonesians' most recently captured male.

Mr John Apinall's private Howlett's-Port Lympne Zoo Park in southern England is largely responsible for getting this long-awaited project on the road. It is thanks to co-operation among the three zoos, and between the Malaysian Department of Wildlife and National Parks, and the Indonesian Ministry of Forest Protection and Nature Conservation that three breeding pairs can be made up.

This total world stock of seven zoo-held Sumatran rhinos represents the only such animals in captivity since 1972. The breeding pairs in Malacca, Jakarta and England offer the first promise of success in a joint Howlett's-Indonesian capture operation launched in August 1985 in the Torgamba region of Sumatra.

It was on 25 November 1985, that the first of the Howlett's Sumatran rhinos was caught, a young male now called Torgamba. He has since been transported to Howlett's in England, where he is reportedly doing well in a heated building with a swimming pool.

Then on 23 January, a full-grown female Sumatran rhino blundered into a Howlett's trap. Tragically, she died of cerebral haemorrhage apparently incurred

when she ran in blind panic around her corral, banging her head on the posts.

On 25 March, a second male, about two years old, was trapped. Named Jalu, he is now at Jakarta Zoo, where Howlett's staff are training Indonesians to manage and breed the rhinos for themselves.

Only within the last three weeks have another precious female, Subur, and a third male, Napangga, been obtained from the estimated remaining stock of about ten doomed rhinos in the Torgamba area — "doomed" because forest clearance for logging and oil-palm plantations is sure to obliterate their forest habitat. Just 20,000 hectares of the rhinos' forest are now left in a bottle-neck area between the villages of Bakambu and Tanjungmedan, soon to be cut off by new roads from a larger connecting forest hinterland.

There are other threats to the animals too. "Both the last two rhinos we caught had hunting snares biting deeply into their legs," said one of their captors. "They would have died of gangrene for certain, within days."

Howlett's programme emphasises natural "romance" between the two animals. "We don't want to manipulate, to change wild animals' natural behaviour because in the final analysis our goal is to reintroduce these animals into their natural forest habitat," explains Francesco Nardelli, curator of Howlett's Zoo.

Natural breeding could take quite a while, since Sumatran rhinos calve only once every three or four years, and have pregnancies lasting about a year. In the world of rhinos, things must move slowly. Man

has to adapt to their pace. We must be patient in the long wait for news of a captive Sumatran rhino birth.

Ilsa Sharp  
The Sunday Star, 20 July 1986

## CAPTIVE BREEDING OF THE SUMATRAN RHINO

The establishment of a breeding pair of Sumatran rhino at both the Malacca Zoo and the Jakarta Zoo from animals captured in Peninsular Malaysia and Sumatra is a good start to a captive breeding programme. The animals are kept in their home climate and, if the captive conditions and nutrition are right, we can expect some success in the future.

The subspecies of Sumatran rhino in Sumatra and Peninsular Malaysia is the same. The use of animals from Sumatra, where the population is estimated at over 400 animals, is a wise move. Supplementing the Sumatran source of rhino with Peninsular Malaysian animals trapped in small pockets of forest is only sensible.

The Bornean subspecies is distinct from the Sumatran and Peninsular Malaysian subspecies in being smaller and it is extremely rare. With its low number, conservation measures should concentrate its

existing population (estimated at 20 rhinos widely scattered over Sabah) into protected areas to enhance their chances of breeding. The proposed project of the Sabah Government to do this should be applauded. In contrast, the suggestion of reducing the wild population in Sabah from 20 to 4 animals by exporting eight breeding pairs to zoos in the USA would almost certainly bring this subspecies to the brink of extinction in Sabah.

The approach of Howlett's-Port Lymphne Zoo Park to the captive breeding of the rhino is a sensible one. To provide the best possible "natural conditions" to induce the rhino to breed is a low-risk approach most likely to succeed. The proposed use of high technology with artificial insemination, embryo transplant and surrogate mothers are less likely to succeed owing to various technological and inherent biological problems.

The Malaysian Nature Society would be happy to see the existing three captive breeding setups in Malaysia, Indonesia and England strengthened by the addition of more animals rescued from areas doomed by development to further enhance the chances of success.

Kiew Bong Heang,  
Conservation Member

