

Twins: Cynosure of all eyes at Pinnawala

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Tourists visiting the Pinnawala elephant orphanage in future will be privy to witness a rare sight, a young mum, taking her four-month old twins to Ma Oya for some energetic water splashing.

The birth of the calves on August 31, 2021 created history at the Pinnawala orphanage as it was the first time twins were born there.

The first visit of the calves and the young mum, Surangi, to the Ma Oya took place on December 6 as the caretakers of the pachyderms at Pinnawala decided it was now safe for

them to undertake the short trek to the Ma Oya for a gratifying bath and learn the ordinary ways of life for the little pachyderms.

Bathing

The 'little ones' were escorted to the bathing area by their mother Surangi and wise old nanny Kumari who helped the young mum to watch over the calves and keep them disciplined.

Surangi was born in Trincomalee in captivity on November 21, 1996. She arrived at the Pinnawala orphanage as a one-year-old calf in Decem-

ber 1997 and grew into a graceful young cow, earning love, care and affection by the entire staff.

On May 24, 2009, Surangi gave birth to a male calf and the staff at the orphanage named it Kanaka. Kanaka, a little bundle of mischief, continues to live with other elephants at the orphanage. The years flew by and Surangi once again showed signs of pregnancy in late 2020.

The staff and the veterinarians at the elephant orphanage made special arrangements to care for Surangi. The gestation period for elephants are longer than any living mammal and Asian elephants can have pregnancy periods for 18-22 months.

The twins were a pleasant surprise to the orphanage. Surangi's second and third offspring made history as being the first twins to be born at the Pinnawala care centre.

The officials said the first of the twins was delivered at 4.30 am and while the staff tendered to Surangi and the first calf, the second one was delivered at 10 am.

The father of the duo Pandu, is a bull from Settikulam, Vavuniya. It was brought to Pinnawala on May 5, 2004.

Special care

The babies were born with a comparatively low birth weight of 55kg and also due to the Covid -19 pandemic, the twins were kept un-



der supervision 24/7. The duo received special care and attention until December 6, when they were finally permitted to accompany their mother to the Ma Oya.

This customary bath ritual for the elephant herd at Pinnawala is a star tourist attraction, hugely popular among natives as well as foreign tourists alike. The four-month-old calves,

who have since become the cynosure of all, are now ready to lead an ordinary life at the Orphanage and welcome the visitors with their playful behaviour.