

The Central Zoo Authority, Ministry of Environment, Government of India is unique in the zoo world. It is the only completely centralised zoo organisation with a large number of zoos, which is fully funded and operated by a national government. The Central Zoo Authority was set up by a Zoo Act in 1991, the same Act which provided for inspection and recognition or de-recognition of zoos, funding of a variety of zoo requirements and activities, the formulation of norms and standards, etc. The Indian Zoo Act, complimented by the Recognition of Zoos Rules, Norms and Standards, a National Zoo Policy and regular Amendments is one of the most current for its country and strongest in the world.

This year another set of Amendments were passed and are being published in this issue. Along with this we are publishing some significant achievements of CZA, recent animal exchanges, Minimum sizes for indoor and outdoor enclosures, etc. For any flaws or lacunae one might find in CZA, nobody can claim that it is easy to look after over 400 zoos while, at the same time, monitor rescue centres, circuses and deer parks. The Indian conservation community can justly be proud of Central Zoo Authority.

SOME IMPORTANT ACHIEVEMENTS OF CENTRAL ZOO AUTHORITY FROM 1999-2003

- ◆ Central Zoo Authority has evaluated 418 zoos in the country and granted recognition to 164 zoos. Since its inception in 1992 till date, 91 zoos have been closed down and their animals rehabilitated appropriately. Cases of 91 zoos, which were derecognized, are currently being reviewed for their possible re-recognition.
- ◆ Fourteen zoos, which were having inappropriate housing and existing in very small areas have extended at their existing site or have moved to alternative larger naturalistic areas.
- ◆ In order to upgrade the technical skills of zoo personnel, 47 Zoo Directors/ Veterinarians, 47 Zoo Supervisors and 426 Animal Keepers have been imparted training in management and health care of zoo animals. An inventory of animals kept in the zoos including their births and deaths is being brought out since 1999-2000.
- ◆ Five Rescue Centres for rehabilitating 300 lions and tigers received from circuses have been established at the following zoos : Vandalur (Tamil Nadu), Bannerghatta (Karnataka), Nahargarh (Rajasthan), Visakhapatnam & Tirupati (Andhra Pradesh). A total of 292 animals rescued from circuses have been rehabilitated at these Centres.
- ◆ With a view to provide specialized disease diagnostic support to the zoos in the country, Central Zoo Authority has provided financial assistance for strengthening the existing facility at the Indian Veterinary Research Institute, Bareilly, Orissa Veterinary College, Bhubaneswar, Madras Veterinary College, Chennai, Sher-e-Kashmir University, Jammu and Assam Veterinary College, Guwahati.
- ◆ In order to infuse new technology in the field of assisted reproduction of endangered species, a laboratory for conservation of endangered species (LaCONES) is being constructed in collaboration with the Centre for Cellular & Molecular Biology (CCMB), Dept. of Biotechnology, GOI and State Government of Andhra Pradesh, at Hyderabad.
- ◆ To facilitate coordination among zoos in *ex situ* conservation, a website of the authority was designed with suitable important features.
- ◆ With a view to compliment and strengthen the national efforts in conservation of wildlife, planned breeding programmes for Red Panda and Lion-tailed Macaque have been taken up by Central Zoo Authority. As part of this programme, a soft release of captive bred Red Panda from Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park, Darjeeling to Singalila National Park has also been carried out.
- ◆ The Central Zoo Authority took initiative and coordinated with the CITES authorities in Singapore and their Indian counterparts in the Ministry of Environment & Forests, the Wildlife Institute of India and Andhra Pradesh Forest Department, to bring back 1830 Star Tortoises which were seized by the Singapore Authorities back into the country. At present these tortoises have been rehabilitated at Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad. A strategy for their final rehabilitation in the wild has also been drawn up as per the IUCN protocol. A soft release programme of the Star tortoises has already been carried out at Srisailem on 15.11.2003.