

Zoos - Instrument for Conservation

-- Conference on the National Zoo Policy 1998

The Central Zoo Authority in collaboration with the Kanpur Zoological Park has organised a Conference on the National Zoo Policy 1998 held in Kanpur 4-6 April 1999. This prestigious conference was held at the suggestion of Minister for Environment and Forests, Sri Suresh Prabhu who wished that a workshop be organised to highlight the confirmation of the strategy by the Cabinet and to chalk out practical and actual steps to be taken in the implementation of the policy.

Invitees to the conference included Zoo Directors both retired and serving, forest officers, scientists, and NGO's.

The Conference was inaugurated on Sunday, 4 April 1999, by the Hon'ble Shri Raghubar Dayal Varma, Forest Minister of Uttar Pradesh who appreciated the achievements of the Kanpur Zoo and the zoo community in India, both governmental and non-governmental. Shri H. C. Gupta, Principal Secretary, Forests also addressed the Group. Also present on the dais was Sri S. C. Sharma, Addl. I.G., Wildlife, MOEF, Shri K. N. Singh, PCCF, UP, Sri P. R. Sinha, Member Secretary, Central Zoo Authority, and Sri R. L. Singh, CCF Wildlife, Uttar Pradesh.

After the Inaugural, different zoo directors and ngo's were called upon to speak on the policy and what it meant to them and to the future of zoos in India. Mr. S. C. Sharma, Member Secretary, opened the discussion by stating that the National Zoo Policy marks the first time that zoo management at been confirmed at such a high level that zoo management is a separate and important subject. It confirms the inclusion of scientific input, finance, technical input, etc. by stating that no zoo should come up without the necessary items to make it work. He also commented on the changing trends of zoos over the years and how any zoo remaining static will be left behind. He also pointed out how in a few short years animal welfare groups had taken on immense importance in the zoo scenario. Whereas they had been almost exclusively antagonists of zoos, now - at least in India - many welfare groups are friends of zoos.

Mr. S. C. Dey said the national policy now should get into the state policy as nothing can be achieved without state and local support. Education should address all sectors. He commented that zoos will lose their relevance unless treated as genuine conservation centres.

Mr. R. S. Bhadauria, Retired PCCF and Director of Kanpur Zoo commented on the need for veterinary colleges for wildlife and zoo subjects in each state. He also mentioned that although the zoo is beset by day to day problems, zooresearch works were not so far addressing those problems.

Other persons such as Pushp Kumar, Retired Director of A. P. Zoos; J. H. Desai, Retired Director of National Zoo; B. C. Choudhury, Wildlife Institute of India; Mohammed Ahsan,

former Director of Kanpur Zoo, Iqbal Malick a welfare advocate and behavioural scientist, Dr. B.M. Arora, IVRI; Sally Walker, Zoo Outreach Organisation and Directors of Zoos (P. C Bhattacharya of Guwahati Zoo, A. K. Das of Calcutta Zoo, M. S. Jain of Tata Zoo, R. K. Sahu of Ahmedabad Zoo, Biswas of Darjeeling Zoo, B. C. Prusty of Nandankanan Zoo and Jagdish Chandra of Bhopal Zoo.

After hearing from individuals, and as the main purpose of the workshop was to chalk out practical ways and means of implementing the Policy on the ground, subject area working groups were formed around the major sectors of the policy, e.g. conservation breeding, education and awareness, welfare (which included veterinary medicine and animal housing) and administration. Scientific research is also an objective but an instruction was given that scientific research should be represented in all the working groups.

An excellent document containing the National Zoo Policy and Statutes and Guidelines related with Zoo Management was brought out by Central Zoo Authority. The document contains the Zoo Act, Zoo Rules, Guidelines for Safari Parks, Deer Parks, Rescue Centres, disposition of carcass, Article 9 of the Biodiversity convention, IUCN guidelines on state gift of animals and Reintroduction and a List of Important zoos.

The groups suggested many ways to implement the zoo policy and these will appear in proceedings to be brought out later. As the deliberations were to be presented to the central Minister the output was summarised and compacted into a few succinct statements. The output follows this brief Report.

Hon. Environment Minister could not attend but he sent a very a stirring message to the group which was read out by Mr. P. R. Sinha, Member Secretary, CZA. Mr. S. C. Sharma commented on the meeting and closed the deliberations. The Message of Minister Suresh Prabhu follows this short Report.