

Effect of Modernization on Animals of Gandhi Zoological Park, Gwalior

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Introduction

Gandhi zoo is one of the older zoos of Central India, previously known as King George Zoo. It was established by the late Maharaja Madhav Rao Schindia (first) in his historical city of Gwalior. Until 1972, this zoo was famous for live demonstration of hunt by tiger and lion. Visitors sat in the periphery of the enclosure and live prey was supplied by a giant pulley. The tiger or lion awaited the prey there, caught, killed and consumed it. This bloody game was prohibited by the strict actions of Hindu Maha Sabha of Gwalior in 1972. After this practice was banned zoo personnel then treated visitors to displays of chimpanzees, eating and drinking tea like human beings ! All such practices have been stopped today.

In those days the concept of zoo keeping was primarily for the entertainment of visitors. At that time, conditions of the zoo was very poor and most of the animals were kept in small and uncomfortable cages. Almost every animal in the zoo showed some form of stereotype behavior. The zoo environment was very unnatural as well as unhygienic and the mortality rate of zoo animals was exceptionally high. One of the main causes of death and fatal injuries was fighting within enclosures due to lack of space and dominance. A few times cannibalism was also reported. Among other main causes were negligence of untrained staff and non-technical officers.

On the instructions of Central Zoo Authority, New Delhi in 1995, the Mayor and other officials of the Municipal Corporation made a commitment to modernize Gandhi Zoological Park.

New enclosures were built based on modern architectural concepts as illustrated in the master plan sanctioned by CZA. In the first phase of renovation a veterinary hospital was constructed with all modern facilities.

In addition, other steps were taken to improve the zoo which are as follows :

1. Upkeep of administrative management :

- (a) One full time postgraduate Veterinary officer was posted by M.P. Govt. on deputation.
- (b) One full time qualified Zoo officer was posted by the Municipal Corporation Gwalior.
- (c) Selection and training of efficient individuals.

Training achieved by zoo personnel :

- Zoo officer - Director level training.
- Veterinary officer - Elephant Management Training.
- Assistant zoo-keeper - Zookeeper training
- 2-LDC - Zoo supervisors training
- 8-Employees - Animal keepers training
- Gaurav Parihar - Teacher for tiger training programme

Other employees have been given regular training at our zoo and their performance has improved steadily.

2. Construction of naturalistic open enclosures :

New enclosures of the major endangered animals of the Zoo is upgraded with the funds of Central Zoo Authority :

Animals kept in open-moated naturalistic enclosures are Panthers, Bonnet Macaque, Rhesus, Lion, Tiger, Crocodile, Gharial, Himalayan Bear, Sloth Bear, Hyena, and Wolf. New enclosures are under construction for Jackal, Chinkara, Black Buck, and Hanuman Langur. For all other animals existing enclosures will be upgraded as per the master plan and availability of funds. Surplus animals are exchanged with Zoos of India as per our collection plan.

3. Cleanliness and hygiene :

Cleanliness and hygiene of animal enclosures and premises is given utmost importance around the year. The efficiency in this work has increased by deputing contract labour with trained staff.

4. Upgradation of health care facilities :

- (i) Veterinary Hospital has been constructed with following modern indoor facilities.
 - (a) Large carnivore ward with inbuilt squeeze cage,
 - (b) Small carnivore ward with inbuilt squeeze cage,
 - (c) Primate ward, (d) Avian ward, (e) Elephant Ward,
 - (f) Operation theatre, (g) Treatment room/laboratory.

(ii) Vaccination of all carnivores has been done regularly.

(iii) Separate quarantine facilities are not developed and hospital wards are being used for it. Care is being taken to avoid intermixing of animals to prevent spread of any infection.

(iv) For disease surveillance, samples of blood, urine, faeces etc. are sent to Divisional Disease Investigation Laboratory of State Veterinary Department at Gwalior as well as private pathological laboratories for necessary investigations. Development of facilities for pathological examinations at the Zoo hospital is in progress.

(v) In the last two years necessary tests have been conducted for blood borne diseases in most of carnivores but none of them were found positive for any infections

(vi) Expert advice and consultation in the field of management and treatment has been taken by the doctors of Divisional Veterinary Hospital Gwalior as well as by Dr. A. B. Shrivastava Wildlife Health Co-ordinator (Central Region), College of Veterinary Science, Jabalpur and other experts of the country.

5. Zoo security :

Adequate security guards has been provided in the zoo premises. At entrance and other points, security checks have been made to prevent the public from carrying polythene bags, firearms, music system and sharp

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weapons inside the zoo. Appropriate security measures of tiger, lion and leopards round the clock has been taken by deputing 3-4 ex-service military personnel and 2 chowkidars in each shift of eight hours.

6. Educational activities :

The zoo is playing its role with full responsibility as a platform and medium for public awareness towards animals . All the enclosures are provided with the signboards having sufficient scientific information about the zoo animals. Trained volunteers are deputed to provide full information about animals during zoo visits organized by schools and other educational bodies.

Wildlife Week is being regularly celebrated by the Zoo for the last 5 years. On this occasion various competitions, educational shows and workshops are organized for school children, teachers and public.

Some results of modernization :

1. Mortality rate of zoo animals is drastically reduced.

2. Maintenance and useless expenditure are very much reduced thus we can invest more on animal welfare

3. Due to modern facilities proper care and natural surroundings, the birth rate of animals has also shown considerable growth. Gandhi Zoo is known for its Chinkara, and is proud to have the highest population and birth rate of this species in India. In the new Chinkara enclosure small crawl cages were constructed to keep fertile males separate from each other thus avoiding fighting with good results.

4. A high quality of diet is provided to the zoo inmates according to their nutritional requirement.

5. Modernization has increased public awareness and created a positive attitude in the public towards our zoo. Number of visitors have considerably increased thereby increasing the revenue of the Zoological Park, according to available data. The annual income of the Zoo has shown a growth of upto four times in the previous five years. Thus we can serve more efficiently to the zoo animals and spend more on the zoo development.
