

A Strategic Paper for the Future of the South East Asian Zoo Association SEAZA --> ZOOSAsia



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Background

SEAZA commenced life as the Conference of South East Asian Zoos with its inaugural meeting held at Zoo Negara, Malaysia during 28-30 July 1988. This conference was the result of extensive discussions between Tan Sri Vic Hudson, Chairman of Zoo Negara, Malaysia and Bernard Harrison, Executive Director of Singapore Zoological Gardens. SEAZA was officially formed two years later at the meeting held in Bogor in 1990. The Association was officially registered on 29 November 1991. Its first President was General D Ashari, Chairman PKBSI and Vice President, Mohd Khan bin Momin Khan, Director General of Wildlife, Malaysia.

Presently SEAZA is a loose regional association of zoos structured around ASEAN - but representing more than ASEAN: For historical reasons SEAZA's full voting membership includes the territories and regions of Hong Kong and Taiwan. Time has moved on: Hong Kong is now a Special Autonomous Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Taiwan still considered a SAR by the PRC.

Japan has been strongly represented (though associate membership) at SEAZA conferences for many years, as has South Korea more recently. Australia has forged a close working relationship with SEAZA, two joint conferences having been held with ARAZPA (in Singapore 2002 and Melbourne 2005). China and India has been represented at many recent conferences and WAZA, CBSG and ISIS have all been represented at most conferences.

Thus SEAZA's interest to the Asian region has been a magnetic force. Like the historical trading ports of Malacca, Batavia and Hoi Ann - capitalizing on their strategic location between Europe, India, Japan and China. So too can SEAZA capitalize on its location to the awakening giants of China and India, acting as a middleman and voice to help and ease them into the world zoo area.

SEAZA, because of its membership composition of the fairly low income countries of South East Asia has never had the luxury of a fulltime secretariat. It has always relied on the generosity of its Presidents and the institution they have represented to administer SEAZA:

1. General Ashari, PKBSI, Indonesia
2. Bernard Harrison, Wildlife Reserves Singapore (WRS)
3. Pisit Nah Patalong, Zoo Parks of Thailand (ZPOT)
4. Pak Jansen with Taman Safari, Indonesia (TSI)

Strategic Development

As this year's SEAZA conference is being held in Seoul, South Korea, it seems timely to review SEAZA's development. As I see it there are three paths we can follow:

1. Develop to embrace the climate of change and establish a zoo association that includes all the zoo associations and countries of Asia: Association of Asian Zoos and Aquariums - AAZA or better still **ZoosAsia**
2. Consolidate around the principle of being a purely ASEAN zoo association and seek funding from the ASEAN secretariat. Thus exclude Hong Kong and Taiwan as full voting members. (However they could be retained in some advisors capacity).
3. Stay as we are, a hodge potch of small SEA countries with limited finances to really make a difference

The logical development of SEAZA is to expand its scope to become a more functional, integrated regional association, very similar to EAZA, the European Association of Zoos and Aquariums. This will then give the new association:

- a. Represent and present a united Asian voice on zoological matters
- b. A stronger financial base, which will enable it to set up and operate a fulltime secretariat
- c. A greater representation and voice at WAZA
- d. Offer more advice to membership which is lacking from WAZA and more European centric zoo associations
- e. Offer more clout in both international and regional affairs such as CITES, Convention of Biological Diversity Climate Change Convention, etc
- f. Will help countries like Japan, China and India enter the world zoo scene and be treated on par with western zoos that presently dominate the scene

We can have some meaningful thoughts and discussion, review the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and constraints of the proposal, how each country can contribute to the development of Zoos Asia. We will then have each possible path suggested above and make some concrete decisions as to the future direction SEAZA should take by the end of this conference. Thank you.

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Editor's Note : Discussion on this topic was conducted by Bernard Harrison and G. Agooramoorthy and it was decided to establish ZoosAsia. Zoo Outreach Organisation, ZOO, in the name of the South Asian Zoo Association for Regional Cooperation, SAZARC, was in attendance and contributed to the discussion and became the first founder member of ZoosAsia, pledging \$1000 US which was paid by wire transfer shortly after the conference. ZOO encourages other zoos to assist SEAZA in this dynamic initiative to increase the cooperation of effectiveness of Asian Zoos. **Sally Walker**

