

Zoo News from South Asia

BANGLADESH : Baby boom at Dhaka Zoo

The Dhaka zoo has had a number of births this year so far — dingo, hanuman langur, hoolock hibbon, nilgai, waterbuck and lion. These are attracting crowds to the largest zoo in the country. Some of the births were a surprise, such as the dingo pups. One of the two dingos, which arrived at Dhaka Zoo from Kuwait Zoo on December 9th last year gave birth to the two pups on January 8, 2007. This was under an animal exchange programme between the two zoos, Kuwait Zoo did not know the animal was pregnant. The Dhaka Zoo staff remained in the dark till they sighted the pups. Dingos are a threatened species of wild dog and very attractive with a white coat and long furry tails.

Two species of hanuman langurs at the zoo gave birth to offspring as well in December 2006. Four other species, lion, nilgai, ulluk (Hoolock Gibbon) and waterbuck produced young in the last few months. A lion gave birth in October 2006; now there are 22 hybrid lions in Dhaka Zoo.

Nilgai are among the largest of the Asian antelopes and common in India but rare in Bangladesh. Hanuman langur and Hoolock Gibbon are of South Asia origin. The Hoolock Gibbon birth was the second to be born in Dhaka Zoo. *Source: The Daily Star 21 January 2007 by Wahida Mitu*

PAKISTAN : Zoo guides to educate children on wildlife in Islamabad

The authorities at Marghazar Zoo have hired the services of two guides to create awareness among school children about the significance of wildlife. Zoo and Wildlife Director Raja Muhammad Javed told Daily Times on Thursday that the main objective of having the guides was to educate children about animals, in addition to highlighting the importance of wildlife conservation generally. The zoo, nearby the beautiful Margalla Hills, had over 663 visits by various schools last year, a total of 34,311 students and 5,541 teachers. "We have schoolchildren on field trips coming in not only from Islamabad and Rawalpindi but also from places as far off as Kashmir," Javed said.

The guides will also visit schools to deliver lectures to children in a bid to create awareness on the importance of protecting wildlife. "Guides are of key importance for any zoo" he said. The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has also decided to bring in volunteers for similar purposes, who would be given certificates on successful completion of three months work. Javed said that such steps would help children learn about the habits and lifestyle of each animal at the zoo. With plans to relocate the zoo from its serene setting having been dropped, authorities are preparing to extend the existing area, work on which is likely to begin soon. Services of international consultants are being sought for upgrading and extending the

facility from the current 25 acres to approximately 50 acres. Meanwhile, contouring and survey of a steep road that used to deter motorists at the Lohi Bhair Wildlife Park has been completed and work on it will begin shortly. The extension of the park that boasts a unique Lion Safari is currently under construction and there are plans to build houses for chimpanzees, tigers and bears as well as a diagnostic laboratory and an inspection hut.

Source: Daily Times 26th January By Imran Naeem Ahmad

INDIA : VARODA, GUJARAT — VMC will shift zoo to Ajwa bolstered by Rs 26 lakh

Plans to relocate the Sayaji Baugh zoo have received a fresh grant release of Rs 26 lakh from the Central Zoo Authority (CZA). The zoo, presently located at Sayaji Baugh right in the heart of Vadodara, is to be shifted to Ajwa, where work has been in progress since the last few years. This is the second grant that the Vadodara Municipal Corporation (VMC) has received for developing the zoo at the new site as per the latest set of CZA norms.

VMC had earlier received a grant of Rs 56 lakh from CZA, which is currently financing the construction of special enclosures for the wild cats. The municipal corporation had organised a fund-raising event a few years ago, netting about Rs 75 lakh, with most of the amount being spent on construction of a boundary wall for the area spread around 110 acres. Senior VMC officials said that the fresh grants will help them to expedite the construction work in the zoo wherein, in addition to civic construction, saplings and trees are being planted to replicate the natural environment, especially for the wild cats. The ongoing work at the Ajwa site is now focussing more on developing a green cover, with more than 10,000-odd trees to be planted. In addition to this, there will also be a special "Kevda" baugh on the premises, which already exists at the spot. *Source: Ahmedabad Newsline 13 January 2007*

INDIA: ASSAM – Assam State Zoo to teach jungle laws

There are reasons for authorities of the Assam state zoo to feel proud. The Zoo Society has been recognised as an institution by the Ministry of Environment and Forests and will organise refresher courses for Indian Forest Service officials next month at the Indian Institute of Bank Management in Khanapara. About 40 officers from across the country are expected to join the training.

Led by the divisional forest officer, the employees set up the society a few years back with their own contribution for development of the zoo and wildlife conservation. Contributions from all, including the casual staff, are collected for the development of

the zoo. All the permanent employees contribute Rs 10 as monthly donation while the casual staff pays Rs 5. Besides development works, the fund is used for wildlife conservation and organising awareness campaigns. The society is registered under the Societies and Registration Act. The state has also formed a health advisory committee to look into every possible aspect of the animals' health. Health camps are regularly held at the zoo to check on the animals as well as their keepers.

SOURCE : The Telegraph, Friday, January 12, 2007

INDIA : MEGHALAYA — More than a home for animals

A rainforest with climate-control and animals of almost every conceivable species. That's the kind of zoological garden the Meghalaya forest department has in mind for a proposed project in Ri Bhoi district. It will have an in-house research centre for observing wildlife behaviour and a breeding centre for endangered species.

To be set up on a 72.4-hectare plot at Umtru in Ri Bhoi, the zoo has been designed on the lines of some top international parks. No vehicle will be allowed to ply inside this eco-balanced park, except for compressed natural gas cars. Sanctioned by the 12th Finance Commission, the project is being executed by the wildlife division of Khasi Hills. The commission has sanctioned Rs 30 crore and the Zoological Survey of India another Rs 5 crore for the ambitious project. A high-level committee, constituted under state Chief Secretary S.K. Tiwari, has already given its nod to the finance commission for release of funds.

Preliminary work has already begun. Now it's only time before Meghalaya makes it to the "best zoological parks" list of the world. **SOURCE : The Telegraph, Friday, January 12, 2007**
Correspondent : Swathi Diwakar

INDIA : NEW DELHI — Tsunami's sibling

"Tsunami" of the Capital is likely to be blessed by a sibling within a fortnight. Tsunami was born to Anita and Ankit, the African giraffe couple at the National Zoological Park, on December 26, 2004, the day when Tsunami hit the Asian countries. After two years, the zoo officials are now excited to see a new addition to the giraffe family for whom special arrangements have been made by the authorities this winter. The female giraffe, Anita, is being provided with rich diet like regular dose of vitamins and other tonic.

The two African Giraffe were brought to the Delhi Zoo in 2001, and have been amongst the most visited animals in the zoo since then. Children can always be seen flocking around the boundaries of their living space and trying to have a glimpse of the tallest animal on earth. The giraffes are mainly found in the grasslands of Africa. **SOURCE : The**

Pioneer, Thursday, January 11, 2007
Correspondent : Durgesh Nandan Jha

INDIA : MUMBAI — Rs 100-cr project to help transform city's Byculla Zoo

New animals from various parts of the world, spacious moated enclosures, a theme park, an aquarium—all of these and more are on the cards to transform the Veermata Jijamata Prani Sangrahalaya Udyan at Byculla into a world-class zoo as part of a Rs 100-crore project. "Work on the plan should begin soon, then we will discuss and finalise it with the project consultants," said Assistant Municipal Commissioner.

HKS Designer and Consultant International, a Malaysian company based in Bangkok, and the Portico Group from the US were chosen from among eight other bidders to prepare a master plan in the next four months. The others included Bernard Harrison and Friends based in Singapore, the Zoological Society of London and STUP Consultancy-Ayers Saint Gross, New York.

The plan that the chosen consultants prepare will first have to be approved by the Central Zoo Authority (CZA) and is to be implemented over the next two years. "There are also plans to modernise the veterinary facilities, train staff and carry out other improvements," said the spokesperson for the Byculla zoo.

The 53-acre zoo has 212 mammals of 21 species, 401 birds of 41 species and 54 reptiles of 10 species. The zoo authorities came under a lot of criticism after 16 antelopes died last February when a stray dog entered their enclosure. The CZA had then refused to renew the zoo's recognition and allow it to bring in any more animals till it carried out sufficient improvements.

Now, once the facilities are modernised, exchange of animals from other parts of the world will also be on the cards. HKS, which has seven years of experience in such projects, is carrying out an exchange programme between the Zoological Park Organization (ZPO) of Thailand and the Assam Zoo in Guwahati, arranging for orang utans and chimpanzees to be brought to the Assam Zoo and a male rhino to be shifted to ZPO. Among 12 zoological projects HKS has worked on in five countries are a master plan for the Ubonratchathani Zoo, orangutan and chimpanzee exhibits for Khao Kheow Open Zoo in Thailand and establishment of a Wild West Cowboy Show with 2,000-seating capacity at Taman Safari in Indonesia. The Portico group has helped prepare master plans for 37 zoos across the world.

SOURCE: Mumbai Newsline 8th January 2007