

Chimpanzee naming ceremony as an approach to create awareness

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Zoos are meant for Conservation, Research, Education, and Recreation. Thus modern zoos have an important role to play in conservation. Lahore Zoo is the one of the oldest zoos of the world and the first Zoo in Pakistan. It is rich with natural fauna and flora, exhibiting wildlife since 1872. Lahore Zoo management is very well aware of the fact that conservation management could be a very effective education and public awareness tool.

Lahore Zoo has successfully bred many endangered animals, such as Urial, Lion, Tiger and Chimpanzee. The management is also well aware of the fact that zoo education and public awareness are one of the very important aspects of conservation. Zoo animals are good ambassadors for their wildlife counterparts. Zoos individualize animals by giving them names which help visitors to relate better to them and raise their concern for them. Therefore, the zoo has feeding programmes, talk time, touch table, adoption, and naming ceremonies. These activities are meant to entertain but there is also ample opportunity to integrate conservation messages, and these messages are likely to have greater impact.

Keeping all this in view, the Lahore Zoo had arranged a naming ceremony of our new born Chimpanzee in association with The Lord International School Systems through its educational programme. A pair of chimpanzees was brought to Lahore Zoo on 28 August 1994 named Romeo and Juliet. They produced a male chimp on 08.04.2000 named "Tinko", the first Chimpanzee born in any Pakistan Zoo, and subsequently a female "Pinky" on 03 August 2001. On 09 March 2005 the pair gave birth to a third baby. It was one of the bright, cool days when spring was in its full gear. A naming ceremony was planned to involve educational institutions and accordingly The Lord International School participated in the programme. The school students, teachers and zoo staff decorated the chimpanzee's enclosure with pelmet, ribbons, balloons, and flowers. They also placed many banners having different messages showing their love for animals especially for the chimp. Some of the messages were "Animals are our friends", "Protect wildlife for coming generation", "Hello Dear Friend", "we welcome you in this colorful world", "We are hand in hand for wildlife care and protection" and "we need green and clean planet earth" etc.

They had also prepared many cards of different colours, sizes and shapes with a welcome note for their new friends at Zoo. Students were very happy. It sounded that they were celebrating a day very meaningful for them. They used animal costumes to reflect their internal happiness. The school management also painted the wall of chimp's cage with a beautiful scene as if they were in its natural habitat with lots of colorful butterflies flying around. It enhanced the beauty of the cage and created love for these creatures. The formal ceremony started with recitation from Holy Quran at 11:00 am. The Director Lahore Zoo gave a brief history of Chimpanzee and shed light on *ex-situ* conservation of endangered species in Zoo. He further briefed that holding

such kind of celebration aims to create love for animals in our young generation. Then Mrs. Shazia Khurram, Director of The Lord International School and Dr. Raja Muhammad Javed, Director of Lahore Zoo unveiled the nameplate. The Zoo Education Officer placed the name board at chimp's cage and announced the name of the new-born "Honey", a sweet name for our sweet newcomer!. The children presented food, many toys and a feeder for Honey. Bilingual printed educational information about chimps was distributed among students and teachers to enhance the feeling of affection for animals. In the end school children sang a song for **Honey** that reflected their affection and joy which goes :

"Dekho Dekho Honey Ko, Paktro Na Zor Se

(Look Look Look at Honey! Do not touch with force)

Bholi Bbhali Honey Hai, Darti Hai Sshoor Se

(As she is innocent frightened of noise)

Dhondo Tu Sitaray Bikharay Hain Kahain

(Search where the stars are scattered?)

Apni Yeh Zemeen Hai Apna Hai Asman

(This is our own land and sky)

Dekho Dekho Honey Ko, Paktro Na Zor Se

(Look Look Look at Honey! Do not touch with force)

Aye Hum Hain Sarey Kehnay Yeh Yahan Mil Kar Dost Tumharey

(All of your friends are hand in hand to tell you that)

We Love You Dear Honey, We Love You Dear Honey

Dekho Dekho Honey Ko, Paktro Na Zor Se

(Look Look Look at Honey! Do not touch with force")

Sweets were also distributed among visitors on this cheerful celebration. The press media were also invited to cover the function. Participation certificate was also distributed to the school children.

Lahore Zoo is trying to promote wildlife conservation and welfare by educating people as Zoos are living tool for education. The most memorable aspect of the event was that on the following day, many schools, children and general public visited the zoo just to see Honey and to be part of such activities. It is a beginning and he have been successful in targeting the people's thoughts by changing their attitudes. The day will come when thoughts for nature and animal conservation will be foremost in their mind.

Note : For photographs of Honey and the event, please see the web version of ZOOS' PRINT Magazine at <www.zoosprint.org>.

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