

SAZARC -- 8th Annual Meeting -- Ahmedabad

The South Asian Zoo Association for Regional Cooperation SAZARC began in the year 2000 as the First South Asian Zoo Directors' Meeting, organised by Zoo Outreach Organisation, India and hosted by the KMTNC Central Zoo, Kathmandu, Nepal. This meeting was linked to a regional CBSG meeting where CBSG, India became CBSG, South Asia for real, not just in name. The meeting was followed by a training in Zoo Education. It was a moving event with zoo directors from these regions, and in some cases, from the same country meeting one another for the very first time. It took attendees a very short time to agree to form a regional association. It took a little longer to select a name, but when Dr. Sahu said South Asian Zoo Association *for Regional Cooperation*, and we practiced the acronym SAZARK ! there was just no more to be said. Zoo personnel attending the first meeting were:

Mr. Mansoor Qazi, Director, Karachi Zoo, Pakistan
Ms. Uzma Khan (PK), Ed-Off, Lahore Zoo, Pakistan
Mr. Mazhar Hussain, Env Directorate, CDA, Islamabad
Dr. Arshad H. Toosy, Director, Lahore Zoo, Pakistan
Dr. Mohammad Islam, Curator, Dhaka Zoo, Bangladesh
Dr. MD. Shahidullah, Dy. Cur. Dhaka Zoo, Bangladesh
Mr. Senarath Gunasena, Director, Natl Zoo, Sri Lanka
Dr. Jayanthi Alahakoon, Vety Off, Natl Zoo, Sri Lanka
Dr. V. Kalaiarasan, Dir Chennai Snake Park Trust, India
Dr. GK Dubey, Vety. Officer, Matri Baag Zoo, India
Mr. R.K. Sahu, Zoo Supt, Kamla Nehru Zoo, India
Mr. R. K. Shreshta, Dir, Central Zoo, Kathmandu, Nepal
Mr. Ang Phuri Sherpa, Ed. Off. Cent. Zoo, Kathmandu, Nepal
Dr. Madhav Ghimire, Vety Officer, Central Zoo, Nepal
Ms Sally R. Walker, Founder, Zoo Outreach Organisation
Mr. Sanjay Molur, Dy Dir., Zoo Outreach Organisation



Dr. Ulie Seal, now sadly deceased, graced all these events, sometimes leading or monitoring events and other times working at his computer with one eye and ear cocked. We salute him at this 8th conference as he gave many of us confidence as well as knowledge and direction.

Mr. Gunasena offered Sri Lanka as the next venue for the following year but an airport incident in Colombo put paid to that. Undaunted, a few SAZARC people attended the 10th Annual SEAZA meeting in Malaysia, drawing advice and inspiration from the lively crowd. Bangladesh hosted the third meeting where SAZARC supported the local zoo personnel as they resolved to suggest zoo legislation to their own government and created a Draft from the Indian documents. Sri Lanka hosted in 2003, then Pakistan 2004, Coimbatore 2005, a visit to Vietnam for the 10th SEAZA meeting in 2006, and now Ahmedabad 2008, postponed from 2007 due to elections.

Every year we have had a theme for our training but always zoo standards have been at the core of every training, and this year our training theme IS zoo standards, zoo legislation, zoo inspection -- all in a bundle as all are necessary to good zoo practice. SAZARC is the only zoo association in the world which combines an intensive training with their association meeting. SAZARC is the only association in the world which has to raise all the funds for members to attend due to administrative policy in all the South Asian countries. We hope that will change one day and national governments will be willing and even enthusiastic about sending their zoo personnel to SAZARC.

Because we have to raise all the funds for SAZARC, and all our donations come from other zoos, we are constrained to be much more strict about how we use our time. Today well-off zoos prefer to invest funds in field conservation rather than zoo activities but they have made an exception for SAZARC. We at the meeting owe it to the zoo conservation community to make their generosity worthwhile.

This is a special conference in many ways but primarily because we hope to give a very big push to the South Asian countries' zoos for creating zoo legislation which includes standards, inspection, recognition. India is the only Asian country with zoo legislation and India's zoo legislation includes all components -- standards, inspection, recognition as well as a zoo policy. The Central Zoo Authority of India is represented at this conference and they, along with Indian zoo directors, will be our teachers. We hope by next year, some more countries will be farther along with their methodology to improve zoo standards as a result.