

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:35
ANSWERED ON:24.07.2000
DETERIORATING CONDITIONS OF ZOOS
P.C. THOMAS

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

- (a) Whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the news-item captioned `12 tigers died in deathtrap` appearing in `The Asian Age` dated July 8, 2000 in which Union Minister has condemned Indian Zoos as `SLAUGHTER HOUSES`.
- (b) If so, the response of the Government in this regard;
- (c) whether the condition of various zoos in the country is pathetic due to lack of proper facilities for animals;
- (d) if so, whether the Government has made any study in this regard; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof ?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI)

(a) Yes Sir.

(b)&(c) The factual position with regard to different points raised in the news-item captioned `12 tigers died in Nandankanan death trap` in the Asian Age dated 8.7.2000 is as follows:

- i. Condition of Zoos is not congenial to zoo animals - The zoos are under the administrative control of State Forest Department, Municipal Corporation, Public Sector Undertakings and Industrial Houses. Ownership pattern being quite varied enforcement of uniform standards for housing upkeep and healthcare is not an easy task. However, Central Zoo Authority has given substantial grants and technical assistance to improve the standards of animal upkeep and animal health care.
- ii. The request for calling a doctor for treatment of animals from Born Free Foundation - Trypanosomiasis disease of Tropical region and very little expertise is available with U.K. Zoos. Born Free Foundation is not an organisation involved in upkeep and healthcare of animals. It is an organisation opposed to zoos. The expert consultation held at Chennai on 19 and 20th July, 2000 have confirmed that the line of treatment adopted by Nandankanan veterinarians was correct.
- iii. Mortality in Indian Zoos is too high and by and large India has failed in Zoo Management - The mortality in Indian Zoos is comparable to any zoos in the developed world. 6-7% of animals are bound to die due to old age only. The mortality rate in western zoos including infant mortality ranges 15-20 %.
- iv. Dead Zoo animals are replaced by animals from wild - No permission to capture the wild animals for the purposes of display in Zoos has been granted. On the contrary zoos are overburdened by the cattle lifters, man eaters and abandoned animals from the wild. Sometimes the number goes beyond carrying capacity of zoos because of such animals.
- v. Veterinarian are not trained in wildlife and are trained for treating livestock only - It is a fact that there are no specialised degree programme for zoo veterinarian but a nine month diploma course is run by Indian Veterinary Research Institute, Izatnagar for wildlife and zoo veterinarians. A MVSc. Course in wildlife has also been started at Chennai. In service training is also provided to zoo veterinarians at Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust, U.K.
- vi&vii Central Zoo Authority is only funding and Advisory body and funds allocated to Central Zoo Authority are returned to Ministry of Environment & Forests - Central Zoo Authority is empowered to put mandatory condition to be complied by the zoos and it has been done so in the past. Persuasive methods to get such condition complied are used because litigation with State Government will have larger centre state repercussion.
- viii. Creation for specialised cadre for zoo management - Separate cadre for zoo management would need concurrence of State Governments. The present financial condition of State Government is not congenial for accepting any increase in the salary component of Government employees.
- ix. Shifting of Sangai deer to Zoos for captive breeding and its reintroduction in wild - Not more than six Sangai deer were brought to zoos for purpose of breeding. From this limited breeding stock, the number of Sangai deer in Indian zoos has gone to around 200 animals. Reintroduction of zoo bred animals in nature can be done only subject to IUCN guidelines and a rigorous protocol. But the

main requirement is of the habitat which can support the additional population. Habitat of Sangai deer being limited to Lok Tak Lake the possibility, for release of zoo bred animals in wild is not there.

x. Central Zoo Authority has not taken steps for treatment of Sangai Deer for Tuberculosis - Tuberculosis is a common disease in zoo animals and has affected even some Sangai deer but most of the Sangai deers are free from Tuberculosis. Treatment of Tuberculosis has to be intensive and long term based. Carrying out such treatment in herd animals is not only expensive but futile also because the treated animal will again catch the infection. Stress of capturing and restraining the animal for day to day treatment can also be fatal. The world over the protocol requires euthanasia of Tuberculosis affected zoo animals. This is an ample proof that effective treatment of Tuberculosis in zoo animals is not possible.

(d)&(e) Periodic inspections are carried by Central Zoo Authority and following main problems inflicting the zoos have been found.

- a. Over crowding of common species.
- b. Dingy and small enclosures.
- c. Lack of effective health monitoring and diagnostic facilities.
- d. Inadequate technical staff.

Most of the zoos in the country are under the control of State Governments and face paucity of funds. The Government of India established Central Zoo Authority as an autonomous body during 1992, to oversee and monitor the management of zoos in the country. The Central Zoo Authority provides financial assistance to zoos for developmental works, arrange training workshops for Zoo Directors and Zoo Keepers. During 1999-2000, the Central Zoo Authority provided financial assistance to the tune of Rs. 10.74 crore to 22 zoos. No grant released to Central Zoo Authority has been returned to Ministry of Environment & Forests. The mortality rate of animals in Indian zoos is about 7% against 10-20 per cent as reported in the said News Item.

As a result of tigers death in the Nandankanan Zoo, Bhubaneshwar, Government of India constituted an expert committee under the Chairmanship of Sh. P.R. Sinha, Member Secretary, Central Zoo Authority to enquire into the matter. The Committee has submitted its report. A meeting of experts has also been convened at Chennai from 19.7.2000 to 20.7.2000 to discuss various related issues.

ANNEXURE I

ANNEXURE IN RESPECT OF PART (a) OF LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 42 FOR 24.7.2000 REGARDING DEPLETION OF WILD ANIMALS