

**Minutes of the 4th Meeting of the Advisory Committee of the
National Museum of Natural History (NMNH), New Delhi
Held of 25th October, 2011 in the Conference Room of the NMNH**

The 4th meeting of the Advisory Committee of the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH), New Delhi was held on 25th October 2011 at 11.00 A.M. in the Conference Room of the NMNH. The following Members were present:

1. Prof. (Dr.) C.V. Babu, Emeritus Professor, University of Delhi, Delhi (Chairman)
2. Dr. G.V. Subrahmanyam, Scientist 'G' Ministry of Environment & Forests (represents Additional Secretary, Ministry of Environment & Forest).
3. Shri B.N. Malhotra, Chief Engineer, Civil Construction Unit, MoEF
4. Dr. Abduraheem K., Chairman, Department of Museology, Aligarh Museum University.
5. Dr. B. Venugopal, Director, National Museum of Natural History.

The following members could not attend the meeting:

1. Dr. P.A. Easa. Wildlife Trust of India, New Delhi.
2. Mrs. Amita Shaw, Director, Bal Bhavan, New Delhi.
3. Mr. Anurag Kumar, National Scientist Centre, New Delhi.

The following participated in the meeting as Special invitees.

1. Dr. D.P. Singh, Scientist E, NMNH
2. Shri R.R. Bakde, Scientist D, NMNH
3. Smt. Naaz Rizvi , Scientist D, NMNH
4. Dr. Reena Dey, Scientist C, NMNH
5. Shri D.K.Gupta, Finance & Accounts Officer, NMNH
6. Smt. Anupriya Singh, O.S.D. (PR), NMNH

Dr. B Venugopal, Director, NMNH welcomed all the participants. Dr. C R. Babu, Chairman of the Committee, after a brief introduction, requested the participants for self-introduction. The Chairman then requested Dr. G.V. Subrahmanyam, Scientist G, who looks after the work of the NMNH in the MoEF, to say a few words. Dr. G.V. Subrahmanyam informed the member that the NMNH has been playing an important role in spreading environmental awareness in a non-formal way. In order to promote this activity at the national level, the NMNH has established Regional Museum of Natural History (RMNH) at Mysore, Bhopal and Bhubaneswar. Work on the fourth RMNH at Sawai Madhopur has been initiated. Land for setting up a RMNH at Gangtok has been acquired. Unlike NMNH at New Delhi, all the RMNHs have their own campuses and buildings. Due to lack of adequate space in the rented building, where presently the NMNH is functioning, many nature education programme could be initiated.

The Chairman and Dr Subrahmanyam expressed that the NMNH requires major changes in its functioning as well in its structure, keeping in view of the role of museums in promoting education and public awareness on biodiversity values and conservation and also to fulfill the vision of Late Shrimati Indira Gandhi, the Hon'ble former Prime Minister of India, at whose initiative the NMNH was established. Accordingly, it was suggested by the Committee that Director NMNH may take up with MoEF to: (i) review the functioning of NMNH (Delhi) and its all Regional Museum, (ii) to examine present structure including cadres among the staff and find solutions to make the structure more effective and responsive to the needs, and (iii) to find out the ways and means by which the NMNHs become a world class Museum.

The Chairman took up the items for discussion as per the Agenda and requested the Director of NMNH to highlight salient aspects of each listed in the Agenda.

Agenda Item No. 1: Progress Report during 2008-2011.

The Director presented briefly the significant achievement made by the NMNH during 2008-11. He mentioned that a programme on Biodiversity/ Intangible Natural Heritage has started for the first time in India. The accessibility to Museum London visited NMNH in March 2009 and the team showed interest in collaboration with NMNH.

The Director also informed the members that the Natural History Museum London invited him to participate in the International Conference on "Wallich and Indian Natural History" scheduled at London in December 2011. The members brought to the notice of the Director that exhibits are deteriorating and some of them are technically incorrect and suggested to the Director to prepare an Action plan for their restoration by engaging experts as Consultants.

Agenda Item No. 2: Review by C & AG.

CAG's objections/ issues and clarifications required were presented to the members. The Director informed the members that in consultations with the MoEF, the NMNH has been trying to provide the necessary inputs to the points raised by CAG.

Agenda Item No. 3: Budget

The summary of the Budgets of the NMNH (New Delhi) and Regional Museum of Natural History (Mysore, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar and Sawai Madhopur) for the years 2008-2009, 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 as well as the details of the budgets and revised estimates for 2011-2012 were presented.

The members suggested to the Director that he should take up the financial matters with MoEF.

Agenda Item No. 4: Action plan 2011-12

The Annual Action plans (AAP) for the current financial year (2011-12) of the NMNH (New Delhi) and its Regional Museum of Natural History (RMNH) at Mysore, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar and Sawai Madhopur were presented. The Director pointed out that CAG's observations were taken into account while formulating Annual Action plans for 2011-12. There was discussion on some items and Committee opined that the observations of C&AG are of quite significant and need special attention by Director NMNH. The Annual Action plan of the NMNH and RMNH for 2011-12 was recommended by the Committee.

Agenda Item No. 5: 12th year plan

The proposals for the 12th Five Year plan was also presented and discussed. It was estimated that the requirement for ongoing schemes and new schemes during 12th Five Year plan will be about Rs. 256.65/- crores. The new schemes include: (i) establishment of a new RMNH at Gangtok, and (ii) acquisition of land construction of building and other infrastructure for NMNH (Delhi). New proposals for generating revenue include Training programmes, National Programmes on thrust areas, International professional programmes, Outreach/ extension programmes on environmental education through Travelling Exhibitions.

Agenda Item No. 6: New Proposals

- (i) The Director explained that there is a need to commemorate 333rd year of publication of *Hortus Malabaricus*. The Committee recommended that the NMNH may participate in the functions that will be organized to commemorate 333rd year of publication of *Hortus Malabaricus* in Kerala in 2012 by various organizations and the NMNH may organize relevant Exhibitions.
- (ii) Training programme: The proposal for launching a few training programmes in National History museology as a response to the observation made by CAG was mentioned by the Director. There is an acute shortage of specialists in areas such as Taxidermy, and the NMNH has necessary expertise to train manpower in such areas. The Committee, in principle agreed to the proposal and recommended initiation of training programmes in areas such as Taxidermy, and Museum Education/ Guidance either by NMNH itself and/ or in close collaboration with AMU (Aligarh Muslim University) or other Indian/ Foreign Museums/institutions.

- (iii) The Director brought to the notice of the Committee the following three administrative issues for its consideration:
- (a) Implementation of 5- days week schedule for the staff of NMNH.
 - (b) Enhancement of financial powers of the Director of NMNH, and
 - (c) Change in the designation and cadre for the staff of NMNH.

The Committee suggested that all the three issues may be referred to the Ministry.

Other matters:

The Chairman, requested the members to raise any other points if they have:

- (i) It was brought to the notice that there is acute shortage of staff in NMNH (Delhi) and two senior experienced Scientists are shortly going to be retiring. The Committee suggested that the Director may take up the matter with the MoEF to engage Consultants as per MoEF's norms and depending upon the requirement till the vacancies of the Scientists are filled up by MoEF.
- (ii) The member expressed that NMNH should foster linkages with Universities, BSL, ZSI and other organizations to improve the quality of programmes and innovation. Professor Abduraheem expressed difficulties in enriching museum collections due to stringent wildlife laws and he suggested that Director NMNH may take up the matter with the MoEF this regard.
- (iii) The member suggested that NMNH should restore all galleries in a phased manner and may engage experts or even outsource specific works if necessary.
- (iv) The members suggested to introduce guidophones system to provide better communicated system to the visitors.
- (v) The members suggested that NMNH should concentrate on the enrichment of collections and promote research on Museology/ Museography. This research may involve collection of baseline data from different sources, conversion into useful information which may be communicated through educational and exhibition programmes, visitor evaluation, exhibit evaluation etc. The scientific contribution of NMNH should be evaluated with respect to the number of exhibitions, educational programmes, conferences/ seminars/ workshops, professional capacity-building programmes etc.

The meeting ended with vote of thanks to the Chair.