

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF SENIOR OFFICIALS
OF NMNH HELD ON THE 10th -11th JANUARY 2012

A meeting of Senior Officials of the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) was held on the 10-11 January 2012 in the Conference Room of the NMNH under the chairmanship of Director, NMNH. The following Senior officials from the various Museums under the NMNH located at New Delhi, Mysore, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar and Sawai Madhopur, attended the meeting:

1. Dr. B. Venugopal, Director, NMNH
2. Dr. S. Sethuramalingam, Scientist E, RMNH, Bhopal
3. Mr. C. Rajasundaram, Scientist D, RMNH, Mysore
4. Smt. Naaz Rizvi, Scientist D, NMNH
5. Mr. G. N. Indresha, Scientist C, RMNH, Bhubaneswar
6. Mr. D.K. Gupta, F&AO, NMNH
7. Mr. Vinod Kumar, A.O., NMNH
8. Mr. R.S. Upadhyaya, Sr. A.V. Assistant, NMNH
9. Mr. Vipin Saxena, Publication Assistant, NMNH
10. Mr. A.N. Saha, Taxidermist, NMNH
11. Mr. Rakesh Kumar Pal, L.I.A., NMNH
12. Mr. R.P. Meena, Sr.Tech.Asstt., NMNH
13. Dr. Jaya Prasoon, S.E.A., NMNH
14. Mr. N.K. Bharati, Office Supdt., NMNH
15. Mr. K.N. Sathyanarayana, O.S., RG RMNH, Sawai Madhopur
16. Mr. Nand Lal, Sr. Exhibit Preparator, NMNH
17. Mr. R.C. Lal, Artist, NMNH
18. Mr. Jose Joseph, U.D.C., RMNH, Mysore
19. Mr. B.L. Kukreja, Tech. Asstt., NMNH
20. Mr. Hukam Chand, U.D.C., NMNH

The Meeting was coordinated by Mrs. Naaz Rizvi, Scientist D, NMNH New Delhi.

Day One: Morning and Afternoon Sessions: Annual action Plans:

Dr. B. Venugopal, Director NMNH welcomed all the participants. Then he requested the participants for self introduction. The Director clarified that it is the regular practice in the Ministry of Environment and Forests to arrange meetings of Senior Officials. With the super-annuation of many Officers in the NMNH during the recent past, meeting of only Scientists has become irrelevant. In addition, the presence of other Officials such as FAO and AO along with other Senior Officials, are found to be essential for the success of any meeting in the NMNH.

The Director, NMNH gave a brief summary of the activities of the NMNH during the current Financial year (FY) 2011-12. He also briefed about the CAG Report and informed that remedial actions were initiated. These included improvement of infra-structure, basic visitor amenities, reception, Taxidermy Unit, Reserve collection Units and selected exhibits in Gallery 1. The fourth Floor area is being restructured for carving out space for temporary exhibition. The

NMNH was also involved in a few major programmes on behalf of the MoEF: World launch of 2011, World Environment Day 2011, launch of U.N. Decade of Biodiversity, Tableau for Republic Day 2011 etc. Director then briefed about a few future programmes/ projects of importance such as acquisition of land for permanent Campus for NMNH and the “Science Express: Biodiversity” (a project of the MoEF as part of Conference of Parties 11).

After the Director’s introduction, he requested the Senior officials of the NMNH in New Delhi and its Regional Museums of Natural History (RMNH) in Mysore, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar and Sawai Madhopur to present the Annual Action Plans for the current FY (2011-12) and the next FY (2012-13). Mrs. Naaz Rizvi (Scientist D), Mr. C. Rajasundaram (Scientist D), Dr. S. Sethuramalingam (Scientist E), Mr. G. N. Indresha (Scientist C) and Mr. K,N. Sathyanarayana (OS) presented salient features of the NMNH New Delhi, RMNH Mysore, RMNH Bhopal, RMNH Bhubaneswar and RMNH Sawai Madhopur respectively.

There was general discussion on various aspects of the presentation as per details given below:

1. The FAO in his observations pointed out that the thumb rule for Budget Expenditure for the Financial Year 2012-13 would be performance, both physical and financial, from each of the Museums. The normal practice of spending less than average of the budget approved for the FY under a few ‘budget heads’ during the first 3 quarters and wishful assurance of spending the balance amount in the last quarter, is not appreciated by the Ministry. The example of zero expenditure under the budget head ‘Publications’ even at the end of quarter 3 (i.e. December 2011) from the Regional Museums has been pointed out by the MoEF recently. As a rule, the budget estimate (BE) for the next Financial Year (FY) must not go beyond the Revised Estimate (RE) proposed during the previous FY. Regarding financial management, it was pointed out by the FAO that after the completion of every programme, adjustment bills should be submitted within 15 days and the unspent money should be returned immediately.
2. The Scientists from the RMNH pointed out that one of the reasons for not spending budget periodically was the lack of monthly statements of expenditure. In order to solve such problems in future, they suggested having monthly expenditure statements. It was agreed upon by the FAO.
3. A suggestion from the Scientists of RMNH was the need for regular meeting of Officials annually. It was generally agreed by all that two meetings of Senior Officials of the NMNH may be arranged, one at the beginning of the FY in Quarter 1 (April- June) and the second at the time of mid-year review in Quarter 3 (October-December). The next meeting may however be arranged in October 2012.
4. It was pointed out that when the budget approved for one Museum is exhausted, often it was the general practice to re-appropriate fund from other Museums so that work in the former does not come to a halt. This is important especially under the budget-head “domestic travel”. However, it was felt by all the Scientists of the RMNH that such decisions may be deferred up to the time of mid-year Review.
5. Another point raised was the proposal of medical bills from Regional Museums and its processing at the NMNH New Delhi. It was suggested that proposals from Regional Museums in this regard be submitted only after scrutiny in all respects and at quarterly (i.e. 3 months) intervals only. Similarly, if there are lacunae/ lapses/ mistakes in the bills, the bills may be returned with all such lacunae/ lapses/ mistakes at one go.

6. It was also pointed out that the Senior Officials especially the Heads of Offices from each of the Museums under the NMNH need to prepare and submit Annual Action Plan for 2012-13 as per the one prepared by the NMNH New Delhi for the current FY (2011-12) as part of the remedial measure to the CAG observations. The same should be submitted to NMNH by the month end.

Day One: Evening Session: Roadmaps for new Regional Museums:

In the evening session on 10th January 2012, Director NMNH gave an introduction by explaining the various aspects of the establishment of new Regional offices for Western and North-Eastern Regions of India at Sawai Madhopur and Gangtok respectively and the need for preparing Roadmaps. The Director then invited Mrs. Naaz Rizvi Scientist D and RMNH Coordinator to brief the participants. She gave a presentation which was prepared by a team of Senior Officials at the NMNH New Delhi. She explained that the MoEF has instructed the NMNH to give priority to the Roadmaps and that all the resources of the NMNH including RMNH should be pooled for the same purpose. Mrs. Naaz invited observations/ suggestions from the Senior officials who have come from Regional Museums. A copy of the draft Roadmap was also circulated among them. She informed that the inputs received from the meeting would be useful for the draft to be discussed with the MoEF.

Day Two: Morning Session: Expert Committee Meeting for 12th Five Year Plan:

During the morning session on the 11th Jan 2012, the participants were joined by Mr. R. R. Bakde, who recently retired from the NMNH as Scientist D and who is an Expert on Sawai Madhopur as he has worked for many years at the RMNH Sawai Madhopur.

Mr. Bakde briefed the participants about the background history of the RMNH Sawai Madhopur (SM). He explained the rationale behind the selection of the site, progress related to the foundations stone and the expectations of the local people. He further emphasized the importance of landscaping of the outside area of the Museum at the earliest itself as the process will take time. Then he explained the layout plan of the Museum. He said that a lot of exhibition materials already available with the RMNH in other locations could be used to complete an Exhibition this year itself. He said that for quality work, time is required. Normally a Museum takes about five years after the staff is appointed. However, in Indian conditions, it is the usual practice to establish Regional Museums even without the appointment of regular staff. This practice often affects the normal functioning of other Museums under the umbrella of NMNH from which staff are shifted to the new office. Some collections available with other Museums under the NMNH (such as Mysore, Bhopal and Bhubaneswar) could be transferred to Sawai Madhopur. Some exhibits could be fabricated in these Museums and later transported to Sawai Madhopur (SM).

The technical team available at SM may be trained by the senior staff in New Delhi. A few of the experienced staff now available in RMNH could also be transferred to Sawai Madhopur.

During the discussion which ensued, the following points emerged:

1. Many of the initial work of establishment of the RMNH at Sawai Madhopur (SM) could be completed by a core group of staff led by a Nodal officer.
2. Dr S. Sethuramalingam, Scientist E and Mr. Rajasundaram, Scientist D suggested the use of digital/ computer models as a useful method for the preparation of the proposed Galleries. Dr S. Sethuramalingam also stressed the importance of demarcation of geographical range of all Regional Museums so as to help in development of Galleries with regional/ local themes. The Director informed that it is important to include the states of Rajasthan and Gujarat as the geographical range of the RMNH SM for the time; more states may be incorporated if needed later.
3. There was general discussion on the need for outsourcing for exhibit development. Since a new Gallery costs about Rs 50-75 Lakhs on an average, out-sourcing is suggested. However, on a practical note, such out-sourcing experiments in Mysore and Bhopal were failures on account of the problems of getting such a huge amount approved in any year. Another factor is the low financial power of the Director. Accordingly the method of petty contracts under the supervision of senior officers is a practical way out. Discussion in which all the participants took part led to the general conclusion that a sort of mixed strategy involving all the methods mentioned above could be useful.
4. Senior officials who worked for a few months in RMNH SM earlier, such as Mr. Meena, Mr. R C Lall, Mr. Saxena Mr. Rakesh, and Mr. Upadhyaya, highlighted the role of local case studies such as Bishnois, cattle fair in Pushkar, Mandna paintings etc. They also suggested that the local people could be involved in discussion while deciding the themes of Galleries. It was recommended that a type of Evaluation (Front-end) of stakeholders and potential visitors to the RMNH at Sawai Madhopur and Gangtok could be initiated before finalising the detailed themes of Galleries. The importance of local institutions in Rajasthan and Gujarat for the development of themes for the RMNH at SM was also pointed out. Mrs. Rizvi informed that such institutions (E.g. BSI, ZSIO, CADRI, AFRI, SDS, GUIDE, CEE, INTACH, and WWF) have already been contacted and a few meetings have been arranged in Baroda, Bhuj and Jodhpur.
5. The Director pointed out that while deciding the themes for future RMNH, the major/ prominent bio-geographic and natural heritage features could be incorporated. While deciding the theme of RMNH SM, highlight of Deserts must include not only the typical Indian desert (as exemplified by Jaisalmer) but also the white/ cold deserts of Gujarat (as exemplified by Rann of Kutch).
6. While discussing the Roadmap of RMNH Gangtok, the Director pointed out that it is important to include specific case studies from each of the States in the Region. An excellent networking among all the States in the North Eastern Region may be a thumb rule.
7. It was pointed out by Mrs. Naaz Rizvi that since Gangtok is unique in many ways, for practical purpose we need to have local institutional collaborations. She highlighted the role of the BSI (local office in Gangtok), State Forest Department, Sikkim Science City and Darjeeling Zoological Gardens (Darjeeling) in this regard. It was generally agreed

that the presence in North East of the various offices of the BSI, ZSI, SACON, CEE, WWF, ATREE, INTACH etc will be useful while planning for RMNH Gangtok

8. Mr. Indresha, Scientist C suggested that the experience learned at the time of the development of North East Gallery at the RMNH Bhubaneswar, could be useful while establishing the RMNH for NE at Gangtok.

Day Two: Afternoon Session

During the afternoon session on Day 2, the following Experts were invited to discuss about the 12th Five Year Plan proposals, a draft of which was put up in the NMNH website.

1. Dr M. V. Nair, Professor, National Museum Institute (a Deemed University under Ministry of Culture), Janpath, New Delhi-110011. Expert in Museology/ Museum Conservation. Former Director of NRLC.
2. Dr. Sudha Gopalakrishnan, Executive Director, “Sahapaedia” (Heritage Networking), PTI Building, Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001. Expert in Intangible Heritage. Founder Director of National Mission for Manuscripts under the Ministry of Culture.
3. Dr. H. B. Singh, Scientist G and Head, Raw Materials Museum and Herbarium, NISCAIR, Pusa Institute, New Delhi. Expert in Botany/ Herbarium techniques.

Director NMNH while welcoming the Experts informed that during the last meeting of the Advisory Committee of the NMNH (held on the 25th October 2011) in the NMNH it was recommended to have a separate meeting with Experts for discussion about the 12th Five Year Plan. Accordingly this meeting was arranged. The recent trends in International Museum Movement as well as the experience of the NMNH, such as exposure to the Indian Natural History collections in UK, change in the definition of Museums by International Council of Museums (incorporation of Intangible aspect of Museum functions), recommendations from CAG (new capacity building programmes in Museum guidance/ Education, Taxidermy etc) were also guiding principles in this regard.

1. Dr. M.V.Nair suggested that the NMNH may well launch the proposed Museology courses in collaboration with the National Museum Institute (NMI) linked to IGNOU and NRLC. He also suggested that the NMI could offer future internship programmes in the NMNH and assign NMNH staff as Research guidance as at present the NMNH Director is a PhD guide of the NMI. Dr Nair suggested having projects to be included in the 12th Five Year Plan of the NMNH such as PG courses in Museum Education and NH/ Biology Preparation techniques including Taxidermy in which the NMI can be associated.
2. Dr. Sudha Gopalakrishnan appreciated the pioneering role of the NMNH in initiating projects in Intangible Natural Heritage and suggested that the NMNH could become the national nodal agency for Intangible Natural Heritage (INH). She offered the platform of “Sahapaedia” in this regard. The Sahapaedia has MoUs with many agencies/ organizations in Intangible Heritage. Dr Sudha suggested having projects to be included

in the 12th Five Year Plan of the NMNH on INH in which “Sahapaedida” could be associated.

3. Dr. H.B.Singh, appreciated the efforts of the NMNH in organizing programmes related to Dr E. K. Janaki Ammal and *Hortus Malabaricus* and suggested that the NISCAIR (CSIR) could also help in this effort. Since the NISCAIR organizes annual course in Herbarium Techniques for South Asia, a few seats could be reserved to the NMNH for upgrading its capacity building programme. He suggested having projects to be included in the 12th Five Year Plan of the NMNH such as History of Indian Natural History, Traditional Knowledge Digital Library, Natural History Illustrations/ Paintings etc. in which the NISCAIR could be associated.
4. During the discussion that ensued, all the Senior officials of the NMNH participated.

The Meeting ended with vote of thanks to the Chairperson.