

ZOO NEGARA – A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME

THE HUMBLE BEGINNING ~ MR V.M. HUTSON'S 5-ACRE GARDEN

Zoos are found in almost every country and a year after its independence in 1957, Malaya too needed a National Zoo. During the annual exhibition of the Malayan Agri-Horticultural Association (MAHA), the people of Malaya have shown great interest in caged animals on show at the exhibition. Mr. V.M. Hutson (later Tan Sri) Committee Member of MAHA, was responsible for the miniature zoo set-up at the exhibition. There was no doubt that Malaysians enjoyed the miniature zoos and through the local press, they voiced their wish for a more permanent showcase of animals. Many of the animals that were exhibited at the annual MAHA exhibition were kept temporary at Mr. V.M. Hutson's 5-acre garden at the Bangsar Estate (now Damansara). In the collection was an Indo-Chinese Tiger named Nikky, three Orang Utans called Jacko, Suzan and Jane together with six Estuarine Crocodiles and many others. Who would have thought that these animals would be the nucleus collection for Malaya's National Zoo?

"BIRTH" OF NATIONAL ZOO ~ (ZOO NEGARA)

In September 1958, on the initiative of the Ministry of Natural Resources, a number of representatives of Government departments, relevant societies and interested individuals along with Mr. V.M. Hutson met and held preliminary discussions. A working party under the chairmanship of the Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Natural Resources was set up to examine the proposal to establish a National Zoo for the Federation of Malaya and to recommend a detailed and practical development plan to the Minister of Natural Resources. The discussions and investigations were based on the assumption that the Government would be unable to support the project with a substantial sum of money; but it was hoped that it would assist and support the zoo in other ways; by the exemption of taxes and entertainment duties, for instance, and possibly with a small annual subvention. Subsequently all these were granted by the State and Federal Governments. The working party eventually recommended that a Zoological Society should be set-up to finance and administer the zoo which, in early stages, was to be a small area with animals in conventional cages. If enough capital accrued from this and possible gifts, the Society would embark on a more ambitious scheme on a permanent site with 'Whipsnade' type enclosures.

INITIAL CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

The working party carefully considered the expense of showing a small number of animals such as bears, deer, gibbons, monkeys and reptiles in a four-acre site and concluded that two installments of \$50,000 would be sufficient as initial capital.

THE FIRST CHAIRMAN / FIRST PRESIDENT

Early in 1961, the recommendations resulting from these discussions were sent to the Minister for Rural Development, who was now the responsible Minister; and on 29 April 1961, a public meeting was held in the Tunku Abdul Rahman Hall to form the Malayan Zoological Society. At the meeting Mr. V.M. Hutson introduced the Deputy Minister of Rural Development **Tuan Haji Abdul Khalid b. Awang Osman** as the Chairman, and gave a brief resume of the events which led to the convening of the meeting. The Malayan Zoological Society with its primary objectives, the founding and management of the National Zoo was officially registered on 2 January 1962. The Deputy Minister of Rural Development was then the first President of the Malayan Zoological Society.

WHERE TO LOCATE THE NATIONAL ZOO?

By this time MAHA has included zoological exhibits in three annual shows and the gate had continued to rise, being 60,000 in 1958 and 93,500 in 1960. Yet even with such gate money the zoo would require other firm financial backing. At the time sites in Templers Park were being examined and it was estimated that their development would require at \$200,000. This was already twice the originally estimated cost and as it eventually happened very much more has been necessary for the permanent building on the site finally chosen.

Malayan Zoological Society had discovered no suitable site for the National Zoo. This was a problem which had vexed the Society from the earliest days and continued to do so for another six months or more. Areas in the Lake Gardens, Pantai and Templer Park had all been examined but all for one reason or another had proved unsuitable.

BIRTH OF THE MALAYAN ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

A second working party was elected at the inaugural meeting of the Society and during the next three months it worked hard to prepare for the first public meeting of the Society. The first Council was elected in this meeting and the Rules of the Society were adopted. So the Malayan Zoological Society was truly born but certainly not with a silver spoon in its mouth.

At this time Major A.N. Weinman who was then the Director of the Dehiwala Zoo in Colombo was invited to visit Kuala Lumpur as he had offered his services in helping the infant zoo to its feet. He spent a month here during which he inspected both Templer Park and the present site at Ulu Klang and submitted a report to the Council recommending the Ulu Klang site. He also submitted the general layout plan of the proposed zoo and detailed his recommendations for staffing, development and a list of exhibits.

FULL SUPPORT FROM THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The Society now had the full support of the Federal Government with great assistance from our first Prime Minister Y.T.M. Tunku Abdul Rahman who visited and approved the Ulu Klang site. The site was a small kampong (village) with only about a dozen of wooden houses. The country surrounding was all jungle and rubber estates. Negotiations with the Selangor State Government started immediately to acquire the selected 42 acres with further 100 acre embarked for future expansion.

But we were getting ahead of the finances! Where did all the money come from to construct these fine buildings? The project had grown far from the original humble concept of a 4 acre \$50,000 zoo of the early days. Thankfully with the interest and enthusiasm of the members of the Government and the increased in wealth of the country made possible a grant from the Federal funds of RM 1.25 million over a period of three years to be spend on capital development.

MAJOR A.N. WEINMEN

In addition to advising the Society in the selection of the site and its basic planning Major Weinman then offered to come and supervise the development of the National Zoological Park on the spot. The Planning Committee under the vigorous chairmanship of Mr. W.R. Taylor was entrusted with the task of drawing up the programmed plan of development to fit in with the Government grant. Mr. Kington Loo was appointed the Society's architect. Frequent and intensive meetings enthusiastically contributed their specialized knowledge of various aspects of planning.

Soon the perimeter fencing was erected and contracts awarded for the construction of the carnivore and monkey houses, deer enclosures and many other buildings. The railway strike cause delays as vital materials were diverted to other places, but by July 1963 the majority of the buildings was structurally completed and only required the finishing touches. Now you can see the animals happily installed in their new houses which have been designed to please the eye and show off the animals as naturally as possible. New buildings will continue to appear and improvements will be made for many years to come as the zoo should never remain static and growth and expansion are themes which ensure varied interests over the years.

OFFICIALLY OPENED ON 14TH NOVEMBER, 1963

The National Zoological Park was officially opened by Y.T.M. Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj on 14 November 1963. One year ahead of the Tunku's plan to declare the Federation of Malaya as Malaysia portraying its many races, culture and ethnicity. The entrance rate at that time was 50 cents for

adult and 20 cents for children. The zoo was operating on 6 days a week and was closed on Monday for maintenance.

The zoo received a vast number of important visits since its opening which include H.R.H. The Sultan of Selangor who visited us the very first time on 6 April 1964 only five months after its official opening. On this occasion, The Tengku Ampuan officially declared open the zoo souvenir shop.

ZOO NEGARA ~ ZOO IN THE JUNGLE

Although the zoo was officially named 'Zoo Negara' (National Zoo), it was known as the 'Zoo in the Jungle' due to its forested surrounding. Many people criticized the establishment of the zoo at the beginning due to the fact that it was 8 miles from the city centre and said to be much too far away.

1,000,000TH VISITOR

These critics were to be proved wrong and the zoo received its one millionth visitors on 14 November 1966 just three years after its grand opening. Miss Juliana Chan, a 19 year old student was the millionth person to walk through the turnstiles of the zoo and was duly presented with a commemorative plaque, a free pass for one year and some cartons of cigarettes presented by Messrs. Rothmans of Pall Mall (M) Ltd.

The zoo was a regular stopping point on the itinerary for visitors to the Federal Capital and it is not unusual to see chartered busses from all over Malaysia parked outside the entrance. More and more animals were brought to the zoo gaining even more popularity especially when the first two Giraffes arrived from Kenya. So popular were they that the Messrs. Malayan Tobacco Ltd. had made a full colour film depicting the capture, sea journey from Africa and the delivery of the Giraffes to the zoo. The film is understood to have cost over \$120,000 in the making and had a world-wide distribution in cinemas and on television.

EDUCATION LABELS

In late 1965, a start was made to further materialize the education aspect of the zoo's existence. The production of educational labels in both Bahasa Kebangsaan and English was incorporated with the distribution map, descriptive matter including the habitat, breeding data and feeding habits of the exhibit. Volunteers were taken in to help produce these labels. A comprehensive library of scientific and other zoological references was also set up at the zoo's administrative building. It is hoped that the collection will be enlarged considerably by donations of books by philanthropic organizations in the near future.

Development has been rampant since the zoo's opening in 1963. Just after three years, the zoo installed the Reptile House, Lizard Pool, Small Mammal House, Aviaries, Nylghai Enclosures, Kangaroos, Camels, Zebras, Dwarf Cattle and Pygmy Donkeys and Giraffe Enclosures.

A FREE DAY IN THE ZOO

Malaysia had a difficult year due to the repercussions of the May riots in 1969 and the zoo also suffered with the visitor rate dropping to an alarming rate. Then in September, Malayan Tobacco Co. agreed to give a free day to all comers and on Sunday, 21 September following and extremely good publicity campaign, more that 40,000 people flocked to Ulu Klang in the biggest demonstration of goodwill send throughout the whole sad period. For these efforts, the zoo and MTC were publicly complimented by the National Operation Council.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENT

The National Zoo had its major development in 1970. An approach was made to the Federal Government for financial assistance. The Federal Government has agreed to give the Society \$4.00 for every \$1.00 raised and up to a maximum on \$ 1million. The Society managed to successfully raised \$ 250,000 and obtained the full grant of \$ 1million from the Government. The Society opened up an additional 22 acres of land to built Aquarium Negara.

AKUARIUM NEGARA

On 14 November 1972, the second Prime Minister of Malaysia Y.A.B. Tun Haji Abdul Razak inaugurated Aquarium Negara at a colourful ceremony accompanied by his wife, Toh Puan Hajjah Rahah, Cabinet Ministers and many others. Our Society President and Education Minister, Y.B. Encik Khir Johari announced that the Prime Minister has also accepted the invitation to be the Patron of our Society.

H.R.H. PRINCE PHILIP, DUKE OF EDINBURG

Early that year the zoo was also honoured by a visit from H.R.H. Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburg who declared open the new Orang Utan Enclosure in his capacity as a Trustee of the World Wide Life Fund and President of the British National Appeal Fund.

WORLDWIDE INFLATION

Throughout the coming five years, the zoo's attendance was consistently dropping due to the inflationary condition around the world. The zoo had to take drastic measures to increase its popularity with endless promotions. Being the one and only attraction close by to the City Centre, the zoo had the support from various companies, organizations and individuals. Y.B. Tan Sri Yaacob bin Abdul Latiff, our then Vice President had successfully persuaded Cathay Organization to screen colour slides publicizing the zoo in five of their major cinemas in Kuala Lumpur. This had managed to pull the younger crowd to the zoo which before were mainly families and school – goers.

SAD TIME AT ZOO NEGARA

The Society and the zoo had a great loss in 1975; our beloved Patron Y.A.B. Tun Haji Abdul Razak had passed away. We were thankful that H.R.H The Sultan Selangor had agreed to the invitation to continue as the Patron-In-Chief of the Malaysian Zoological Society.

JOINT TICKETING SYSTEM

In 1978, the Society had made a bold decision to combine both Zoo Negara and Aquarium Negara by a joint ticketing system. Aquarium Negara was located 100 yards from the zoo entrance and visitors were reluctant to walk to the aquarium once they have spent their time at the zoo. With a joint ticketing system which allowed a reduced price to enter the aquarium and a wooden bridge connecting the zoo and the aquarium was completed, the popularity of Aquarium Negara shot up drastically. For the first time in history of the Society, they managed to obtain the total annual income exceeding the million dollar mark.

WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL DAY

The zoo celebrated World Environmental Day on 5 June 1979 and did its part by providing free entrance to children and a 50% discount for adults to both Zoo / Aquarium Negara. The Society has always taken a sincere interest towards the underprivileged. Ever since its opening 16 years back, the zoo was and will always be a free place for them to visit. The zoo has also been a popular outdoor classroom for schools in the country, and it was decided this year that the zoo will be giving concession rates to kindergartens, primary and secondary schools.

ZOO EDUCATION SERVICE

In order to extend the educational potential of Zoo Negara, the Society obtained services of a full-time Education Consultant, Mr Ken Rubeli. A forester by training, Mr Rubeli gained an intimate knowledge of Malaysia's wildlife during four years work in Peninsular Malaysia's National Park where he set up a Nature Study Centre for student groups. Zoo Education Service has been accepted as the title under which the Zoo Negara education programmes will operate. The service aims to establish through all its programmes a connecting theme of environmental conservation. Malaysia has a rich native fauna, but in the jungle, wildlife observation is very difficult indeed. Meanwhile habitat destruction is proceeding at an alarming rate. By placing a clear display of a wide variety of native and exotic fauna, and by setting of an Education Service to draw attention to these animals and their plight in nature, the Society has moved the zoo towards achieving its optimum value to the community.

Since wildlife education does not only cover fauna, the Society then embarked putting a priority towards the flora aspect in the zoo. The Education team was put to task at labeling all the trees around the zoo. Visitors now may not only learn about our animals but our trees too. But due to rapid urbanization in the vicinity of the zoo, the environment has been affected considerably, particularly, the booming of the near by Taman Melawati, a large housing estate. A stretch of lush greenery of secondary forest which acts as a boundary demarcation of the zoo has been excised for residential housing. Viewed from the zoo, houses currently under construction, are plain visible. It is most unfortunate that the 'Green Belt' has been lost. The zoo had then built a ten-foot high brick wall as a permanent demarcation of Zoo Negara's boundary. Upon completion of the brick wall, a selection of wild fruit trees and edible foliage plants were planted along the boundary. These plants also serve as a good source food for our herbivores.

ANIMAL SPONSORSHIP SCHEME

Many outside the Society have long assumed that the zoo, the country's National Zoo is a government institution or is heavily subsidized by the Government. This we all know is not true. Besides a year-to-year grant from the Federal Government for development and a \$10,000 annual grant from the Selangor State Government the zoo has been holding its own from the very beginning. On 14 May 1981, a decision was made to activate the Sponsorship Scheme on a large scale as it was the quickest way of obtaining funds and provided for a long term commitment by the sponsors. Response was excellent and the zoo received an increase of sponsors by 300 percent.

AKUARIUM TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN

In the late 1983, the Society was approached by the Ministry of Agriculture with a proposal to rename Akuarium Negara as Akuarium Tunku Abdul Rahman in honour of our first Prime Minister. The Akuarium Tunku Abdul Rahman in Penang had to be closed down when their building was found structurally unsafe for occupation. The proposal was accepted unanimously and Y.T.M. Tunku paid another memorable visit to Zoo Negara on 7 March 1984 to officially rename Akuarium Negara as Akuarium Tunku Abdul Rahman.

21st ANIVERSARY

Zoo Negara celebrated its coming of age on 14 November 1984 with a month long programme of entertainment for the public. Officially opened 21 years ago, the zoo has developed from a small 42-acre zoo with only 89 species of exhibits to a 110-acre zoological park with 326 species of mammals, birds, reptiles and fish. The zoo has also had many proud achievements especially in the development of the animal clinic and kitchen. Old enclosures have also been changed to new modern exhibit areas accommodating a high number of animals. Y.T.M. Tunku Abdul Rahman made his last visit to the zoo on this memorable day and blew the candles during our 21st Anniversary Celebration. Has it actually been 21 years?

OVER ONE MILLION VISITORS

The zoo carried on with its objective in catering to as many visits as possible. But how can we manage a huge number of visitors in one day without a proper car park. The country's vast development has enabled many to obtain their own cars and parking space is now a problem at the zoo. In 1985, the zoo embarked in developing a car park by the newly completed zoo entrance. The car park with a 100% increased in capacity was completed in April 1986. As an added attraction, the zoo also constructed a new sea lion show amphitheatre with a 600 seating capacity. The amphitheatre was built along with enclosures to fit six sea lion. The stage area was also meant for other animal shows as well. The amphitheatre was completed in October 1986 and the long awaited California Sea Lions from San Diego were flown in by MAS Airlines in December.

With the new zoo entrance, a car park, a Kentucky Fried Chicken Restaurant and a variety of new attractions, the zoo had the highest annual attendance in history in 1986, over 1 million visitors! We believe the numbers will remain at this rate as the upcoming sea lion show will be the first in Malaysia.

BIRD HOUSE

Zoo Negara's Bird House or then Bird Park was completed in 1987. It was completed with incubation, brooder and kitchen facilities which paved the way for a more effective role in research and conservation. The Milky Stork Project mooted a year before, would be the nucleus of the new Bird Park. Utilizing a cable-stay system not unlike the principle of a tent, this exhibit soaring 12.8 metres at its highest point provides space for flight over a central pool which was the previous sea lion pool modified to suit. Visitors will view the birds by entering the exhibit from a corner onto an elevated platform within the aviary and exit through the adjacent corner. The Milky Stork Project started off with less than 10 highly endangered birds obtain in an exchange programme with Singapore's Jurong Bird Park. These birds are known for their rarity due to habitat destruction. This project was the most notable conservation effort by the zoo after breeding over 100 storks up to date.

REPTILE HOUSE

The zoo had also developed a Reptile House which was also called the Reptile Park situated on an area of around 22-acres in the heart of the zoo. The first phase consisting of the crocodile pools were completed in late 1985 following the demolition of the old snake house and land reclamation on the banks of Sungai (River) Kemensah. In December 1987, work on phase II, the commenced. Shaped like a two-storey tent, the steel frame structure provides for air-conditioned work behind the scenes on two levels. The first door display area is air-conditioned for comfort. Here there are four fixed exhibits and 14 mobile ones. Included were information graphics on the walls between the exhibits which complemented the back-lit information boxes in front of the displays. The Reptile House was officially opened by H.R.H. Sultan of Selangor on 28 July 1988.

TOURISM GOLD AWARD IN 1988

Zoo Negara's development throughout the years and its highly rated attendance was honoured as the premier recreational amenity in Malaysia and voted best tourist attraction which earned it the 'Tourism Gold Award' for 1988. Well known for its breeding successes and conservation programmes, Zoo Negara is held in high esteem by zoos worldwide. During our Silver Anniversary this year, we hosted the inaugural conference of the South East Asian Zoos when delegates from zoos in Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia resolved to meet annually to discuss matters of common interest and to promote greater inter-zoo co-operation.

RM1.625 MILLION GRANT FOR DEVELOPMENT

Year 1989 started with the visit of the Minister of Science, Technology and Environment, Y.B. Datuk Amar Stephen Yong who presented the year's grant of M\$1.625 million for the zoo's development purposes. This was then followed by the official opening of the Milky Stork Aviary by the Chairman of the Malaysian Wildlife Conservation Foundation, Y.A.M. Tunku Naquiyuddin ibni Tuanku Ja'afar. The aviary was named after the Malaysian Zoological Society's late Vice President Y.A.B. Tun Tan Siew Sin. Orang utans were heading towards popularity amongst Malaysian especially when the Minister of Culture and Tourism, Y.B. Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik announced the Orang Utans would be Malaysia National Mascot during this year. We took the initiative to continue our work on the construction of new display facilities for the Orang Utans and Chimpanzees which was to be completed in 1990.

FRIENDS OF THE MALAYSIAN NATIONAL ZOO (FOMNZ)

Towards the end of 1989, the Society initiated a formation of a voluntary body called 'Friends of the Malaysian National Zoo' or FOMNZ to bring together a growing group of young volunteers who were eager to participate and assist in the daily operations of the zoo.

NEW MODERN KITCHEN

Due to an astounding number of animals, we had to upgrade the old zoo kitchen. The new modern kitchen had a dry storage area, two cold rooms, 2 freezer rooms, an office and new fixtures comprising of stainless steel bench tops, defrosting trough, exhaust hoods and soaking trough and many more. As part of the continuing efforts to upgrade the Reptile Park, Phase III of the development included upgrading all the existing ponds for displays of pythons, iguana, komodo dragons, tortoises and more crocodiles. Although the existing enclosures for tigers and lions were completed in 1980, they were considered inadequate as display areas at present standards. The upgrading of this area involved lowering the high walls to enable visitors to view the animals at eye level. The completion of an open concept viewing exhibits for tigers and lions were completed in April 1991.

OUR BELOVED PATRON H.R.H. THE SULTAN OF SELANGOR

The highlight on 1991 was the visit by our beloved Patron H.R.H. the Sultan of Selangor on September 12. H.R.H. spend closed to two hours touring the zoo and was pleased with the progress made by the zoo to improved and upgrade the exhibits. In conjunction to his visit, he declared opened the zoo's newly upgraded clinic and presented a personal cheque of M\$5,000 to the Society.

ADDITIONAL CAR PARK

The zoo has been receiving over one million visitors each year and to cater to the increased in numbers, the Society had upgraded the aquarium car park which now may accommodate over 200 cars. This is more adequate on weekends and Public Holidays and lessens the traffic of cars parking along the Ulu Klang road.

FAMILY DAYS

Zoo Negara is not just a place for families on a recreational day out. Many corporate companies and organizations have used the zoo as a location for their family day celebrations. The zoo with its strategically located picnic field was just the place to have an open-aired event. In 1992, we attended to no less than 25 family days, largest of which was held by the Hong Leong Group with over 8,000 people.

APE CENTRE

In year 1993, the zoo presented its largest display – the Ape Centre. It was officially open on 23 May by the Minister of Culture, Arts and Tourism, Y.B. Dato' Sabbaruddin Chik. The Orang Utan being the mascot of 'Visit Malaysia Year', it is only fitting that we play a part in breeding this endangered species. The new centre consisting of separate sections for the orang utan and chimpanzees, provides them with a more acceptable surrounding albeit in the form of a man mad concrete jungle. This occasion was followed by a personal visit by our Patron-In-Chief H.R.H The Sultan of Selangor. The year saw a slight reduction in the numbers of visitors but a visit to the zoo is still considered good value for money by most people. In 1994, the zoo finally opened its much awaited Mixed African Exhibit. A variety of African animals such as the zebra, giraffes, antelopes and white rhinoceroses were in plain view. Besides the progress on development, the zoo has achieved many notable animal births throughout the years. Our flamingos are laying eggs for the first time since they took residence here. The first clutch of eggs is a good sign that the birds have established and adjusted themselves.

COMPETITION HEAD ON

The phenomenal and rapid development and economic growth in 1995 saw the people of Klang Valley fully engaged in various economic activities which were also the case throughout Malaysia. The economic situation in the country enabled people to go for holidays of their dreams. Those who could afford went overseas and the rest went for local destinations such as the island resorts or places such as Fraser's Hill and Cameron Highlands. The traditional practice of visiting zoos, museums and lake gardens are waning. The present trend also includes visiting places like space centres, theme parks and the like which are mushrooming throughout the country. Naturally,

visitors to the zoo have reduced but we still maintain the million mark in attendance.

RESEARCH CENTRE

The zoo clinic which has been operating over the years towards the care of our animals has gain popularity amongst the local universities operating courses in veterinary, biology and zoology. Many of these universities send over their students on their practical courses or to conduct research. Our qualified vets and curators also conduct talks and classes to university students in the country.

THREATS

The area around the zoo vicinity was flourishing into a sub-urban city. Being so close by to the City Centre, the zoo land was beginning to be much more valuable than it first started of in 1963. Rumour of the zoo being moved to a further location was one of our biggest worry. In the last quarter of the year, we were honoured by the visit of our Patron H.R.H The Sultan Selangor and his consort Cik Puan Besar Datur Amar Siti Aishah. The following day, Y.A.B. Menteri Besar Selangor publically announced that the zoo will not be relocated.

Malaysia's overall development was moving is such a quick pace that we find it quite hard to catch up. In 1996, the government built a new express highway which runs directly in front of the zoo. Visitors had to tolerate enough dust and traffic in order to get to the zoo. Not surprisingly, the zoo attendance declined slightly this year. It is feared that such inconveniences may continue until the highway was completed. A small price to pay for an overall development and the Society was optimistic that the new highway could result in a bigger flow of visitors to the zoo in the years to come.

NEW ATTRACTIONS ~ THE STRATEGY

To attract visitors, the zoo constantly includes new attractions as a pull. We were proud to introduce the new Humbolt Penguin Exhibit in 1979. Humbolt Penguins are not from the Antartic but can be found at the tip of South America. As it was not necessary to be negative zero degrees in the display area, all 20 penguins had an air-conditioned exhibit area along with a swimming pool. The Humbolt Penguin was adjacent to the huge Arapaima Pool and both attracted many people to spend more time here than any other spot in the zoo. The elephant show also being a popular attraction throughout the many years had a bit of renovation to include new semicircular seating area to accommodate more visitors.

WHEN THE GOING GETS THOUGH, THE TOUGH GETS GOING

There was an economic downturn in the region in 1998. We have, however managed to weather the effects of this without causing any disruption in our planned programmes and activities. Nevertheless, a serious belt tightening exercise had to be undertaken to curtail expenses to the extent possible by strictly controlling recurrent expenses. The zoo continued with its development, and major projects included the Mammal Kingdom, upgrading the SEA Hoofstock Display area and the renovation of the Balai Sang Kancil (Hall) to re-house the Education Service. The zoo did still receive a mass number of visitors on Public Holidays. Our great concern was that our parking space is not able to accommodate over thousands of cars which has to park along sides as far as half a mile from the zoo, in house compounds, at junctions causing endless road jams. We received endless telephone calls from irate neighbors about the chaotic situation created by motorist.

LOST ITS FOUNDING CHAIRMAN

The year 1999 was a sadden year for the zoo. The Society lost its founding Chairman, Tan Sri V.M. Hutson. Vic, as is affectionately known to his friends was Chairman Emeritus of our Society. Although he had not been well for some months prior to his passing, not of us expected him to leave so suddenly. It came somewhat of a shock to us and we have been missing him tremendously. The very fact that we have a National Zoo which is wholly owned and operated by the Society is because Vic's involvement in the Malayan Agri-Horticultural Association, MAHA. Now 37 years later, Vic's legacy has survived him and birth of the Society and the zoo in fulfilling its intended purposes, has fully justified its founding and existence. Vic's name has become synonymous with the zoo and all this is due to the amount of time and energy that he had devoted to this institution.

CONTROVERSIAL MILLENIUM

It was year of 2000. The future of the zoo at its present site has yet again been question and it has only been three years since the Cabinet mention that the zoo will remain at the Ulu Klang site and five years since the Selangor State Government apparently put to rest this undying topic. The Society has refrained from making any comment for the pass two years and this reticence puzzled the public and they reacted by expressing their views through the media. The Society has always enjoyed a close and cordial relationship and understanding with the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment as well as the Wildlife Department. This close relationship along with many other governmental agencies and departments has enabled the zoo to develop up to now. This was especially so during the crucial formative years, when capital grants helped to a large extent in meeting the cost of new installations. In addition to this was of course the assistance in obtaining

the many permits required to capture and keep animals at the zoo, as well as for the import and insitu quarantine of animals.

Therefore, taking into account the above points, the Society decided that it would be prudent not to confront the Ministry or otherwise the government by turning the issue into a public debate. Instead of this, and only by gleaning statements reported in the mainstream media, steps were taken to engage the Ministry in informal consultations. Being informal in nature, the information obtained was thus unofficial. As a result of the informal contacts, the Society understood that the government had intentions of building a new zoo that will be very much larger than the National Zoo with many more features. And as already mentioned in the media, this would be on site remote from Hulu Kelang, somewhere near Putrajaya. However, the site has still to be selected. Over the years, sites at the Bukit Cahaya Sri Alam, Sepang and Hulu Langat were among a few that were rumoured to be chosen. And now since the situation is still uncertain, the Society took a proactive position by offering an Outline Plan (The Hornbill Report) for the Ministry's consideration. We also offered our services to assist in the evaluation of potential; new sites as well as to participate in formulating the brief for the concept plan of the new zoo.

Resulting from this proactive action and continuing contacts with the Ministry, the Society has been invited officially to join two separate study visit to South Africa and USA. The first was led by the Deputy Minister and the second by the Minister himself. The Society was then better equipped to help the government formulate ways and means by which we may be able to collaborate with and assist in the establishment of the new zoo. In the meantime, the Society continued with its own ongoing development projects. Based on the assessment of public feedback as well as the Society's assessment of the various available options, we are inclined to hold the view that there is no reason why, given the availability of funds and a suitable site, there could not be two zoos to serve the public. Both zoos could co-exist and the public will then have the benefit of choice. By collaborating with the government, we will be fulfilling the second part of the first objective of our Constitution, *"To foster and stimulate an interest in the fauna of the world in particular that of Malaysia and for this purpose to found and maintain a National Zoo in or near the Federal Capital and to assist States of Malaysia in the formation and operation of zoological parks."*

ANOTHER GREAT LOSS FOR THE ZOO

Zoo Negara yet again suffered a great loss with the passing of our Patron-In-Chief, H.R.H Sultan of Selangor who was Malaysia's King in 2001. His Majesty Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah was devoted to the zoo since the very beginning. During the occasions when we were threatened by incompatible development upstream that would damage the environment essential for the zoo's existence or when there was pressure to relocate us, our late Royal

Patron rendered us essential support to stem the threats. Apart from this, the late Sultan Salahuddin greatly encouraged us with his warm and outgoing personality when he graces the zoo together with his consort. After a suitable period of time, we have to take steps to invite the reigning H.R.H Sultan of Selangor to honour us with his royal patronage, so as to continue the tradition started by his late father.

NEW FOOD COURT COMPLEX

The zoo moved on and we developed a new food court complex to cater to our hungry visitors. Marrybrown Restaurant had taken over the Kentucky Fried Chicken reign at the zoo in this new safari-like food court. The zoo has reached its peak achievement not only in the development of the zoo but with its animal collection. The zoo currently has a collection of 3,947 animals from over 400 species of mammals, birds, reptiles and fish.

BIGGEST RENOVATION WORKS

After opening as Aquarium Negara in 1972 and then renamed to Aquarium Tunku Abdul Rahman, the aquarium closed its doors temporarily in February 2002 for public safety reasons. The Society had a task of renovating the aquarium into a modern freshwater display which concentrated on the riverine ecosystem from the upper, middle and estuarine regions of a river. Works on the aquarium was somehow delayed due to financial difficulties but work started in 2005 and was estimated to be re-opened in the first quarter on 2006.

40 YEARS ANNIVERSARY

14 November 2003 marks Zoo Negara's 40 years anniversary since it open its gates to visitors for the first time in 1963. This milestone was marked with a programme of celebratory events in November and December. The zoo had its first night opening of 4 November and the declaration of Zoo Negara by Night on weekends was done by the Minister of Culture, Arts and Tourism Datuk Paduka Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir. A Charity Zoo Run was held on the first Sunday in December and proved to be very popular with some fastest runners completing four rounds of the 2km course in just 25 minutes. Held early in the coolest part of the day, the event was followed by the NGO (non-governmental organization) Carnival which took place at the picnic area. The following weekend our Corporate Carnival was held at the same location with games, stalls and artist performances. And a week before we had Christmas, the zoo organized a fishing competition and later in the week the announcement of winners for our very own Art Competition.

Y.BHG. TAN SRI MOHAMAD KHIR JOHARI RETIRED

After many years of service, Y.Bhg. Tan Sri Mohamed Khir Johari retired as President of the Society after holding the position since 1961. Y.Bhg. Dato' Ismail Hutson, son of the late Tan Sri V.M. Hutson took over his position in 2004. Y.Bhg Dato' Ismail also had the task of holding Chairmanship of the Society and the role as acting director before the current Dr. Mohamad Ngah was appointed to the position in the January 2005.

THE YEAR 2004 & 2005

Year 2004 for a delightful year as we welcome our Patron, H.R.H Sultan Sharafuddin Aziz Shah Al-Haj the Sultan of Selangor to the zoo on 9 February when he flagged off the fourth stage of the international cycle race; Le Tour de Langkawi from the zoo car park in front of the zoo's main entrance. Le Tour de Langkawi attracted a huge amount of international publicity and a number of our animals appeared on the live telecast from the zoo. Zoo Negara also took part in the first Malaysian Zoos Conference held in the Putra World Trade Centre in December. The Conference featured a number of very interesting papers on wildlife and education, including one from our very own staff.

Reemerging of the subject on the relocation of the zoo was on the rise for the pass year and in late November, Y.B. Datuk Sazmi Mial, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment made a statement that the government had no intention of relocating the zoo as there was nothing wrong with the current location. He said it was more feasible to redevelop the zoo at its current strategic location since the zoo currently only uses 96 out of 110 acres of its land. These statements confirmed the comments made by Datuk Paduka Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir (Minister of Tourism) during his visit to the zoo. He recounted the decision of a cabinet meeting chaired by the Prime Minister to leave the zoo at its present location in Hulu Kelang. These unequivocal statements firmly bring to an end the long running debate on any relocation of Zoo Negara.

The Society was then invited to submit a development plan to PERHILITAN (the Wildlife Department and National Parks) and this was passed to the Federal Government for the funding consideration under the 9th Malaysia Plan. In order to obtain world-class status, we have also taken steps to gain ISO 9001/2002 certification. The international reference for quality management will ensure that the zoo operates using good working practices at every level of the organization. In addition to increasing our efficiency, such an achievement will also provide potential and existing donors and sponsors extra confidence in their involvement with us.

Year 2005, has seen major improvements especially in the day-to-day running of the zoo. A more bold approach in promoting the zoo as a healthy recreational attraction was conducted throughout the year. The zoo was

constantly in the media and the public was more aware of the zoo with its monthly events such as Earth Day, Environmental Day, Universal Children's Day and many others. The zoo also received its highest ever amount from sponsors in history which came to a total of over half a million Ringgit.

MANY YEARS AHEAD

The zoo and the Society are currently working hard to sustain the zoo as one of a best local attraction in the country.