



The recent updates from the Karachi Zoo do not bode well for Noor Jehan. Despite the best efforts of the team of experts attending to the ailing elephant, Noor Jehan's condition is still critical.

We are extremely concerned about Noor Jehan's situation. Elephants are usually acquired from the wild, caught as young animals, illegally traded through a network of dealers, and suffer tremendously in captivity. We do not support the practice of keeping elephants in zoos and circuses.

Zoos in Pakistan treat endangered wildlife species as 'tender items' and we have an unfortunate history of elephants' losses due to health problems which are rooted in poor management; inappropriate diet, and limb and foot complications arising from insufficient exercise, shackling and inappropriate husbandry. Elephants have complex ecological and social needs, particularly the females who form lifelong bonds within matriarchal herds. Recognising that zoos cannot meet these complex requirements of elephants, which leads to both physiological and psychological (abnormal behaviours) issues thus reducing their lifespan and compromising their well-being, zoos across the globe have closed down their elephant facilities (e.g London Zoo). Those that keep them (e.g Twycross Zoo, Whipsnade Zoo) house them in large enclosures with correct social groups. Edinburgh zoo has an elephant statue along with a sign that states, '*This is the only elephant you would see in the zoo*'.

Noor Jehan's suffering at the Karachi Zoo is a repetition of the story of Kavaan (translocated in 2022), Suzi at Lahore Zoo (died 2017), Saheli at Islamabad Zoo (died 2012), and Anarkali at Karachi zoo (died 2006). We need rules and regulations to be implemented, in letter and spirit, to stop acquiring elephants, while bringing in laws and standards for zoos and strictly adhering to them. We appreciate that experienced veterinary support was made available. However, we do urge that we build capacity in this field in Pakistan and equip our zoos with appropriate infrastructure and good husbandry practices to improve the well-being of the animals.

WWF strongly believes that animals held in zoos should be cared for according to the highest husbandry standards- in compliance with national, regional and local legislation and adhering to the provisions of the Code of Ethics and Animal Welfare of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums. For that reason, administrations and zoo management committees must ensure proper and adequate enclosures mimicking the natural habitat of the species.

WWF also urges the Government of Sindh and the administration of Karachi Metropolitan Corporation to carefully evaluate the dismal conditions at the zoos in Sindh and make well-informed decisions about their future viability. Some immediate steps should include setting up an independent zoo management committee with appropriate civil society representation, an independent bank account for the zoo where all the gate and contract income is set aside, and a capacity building plan.