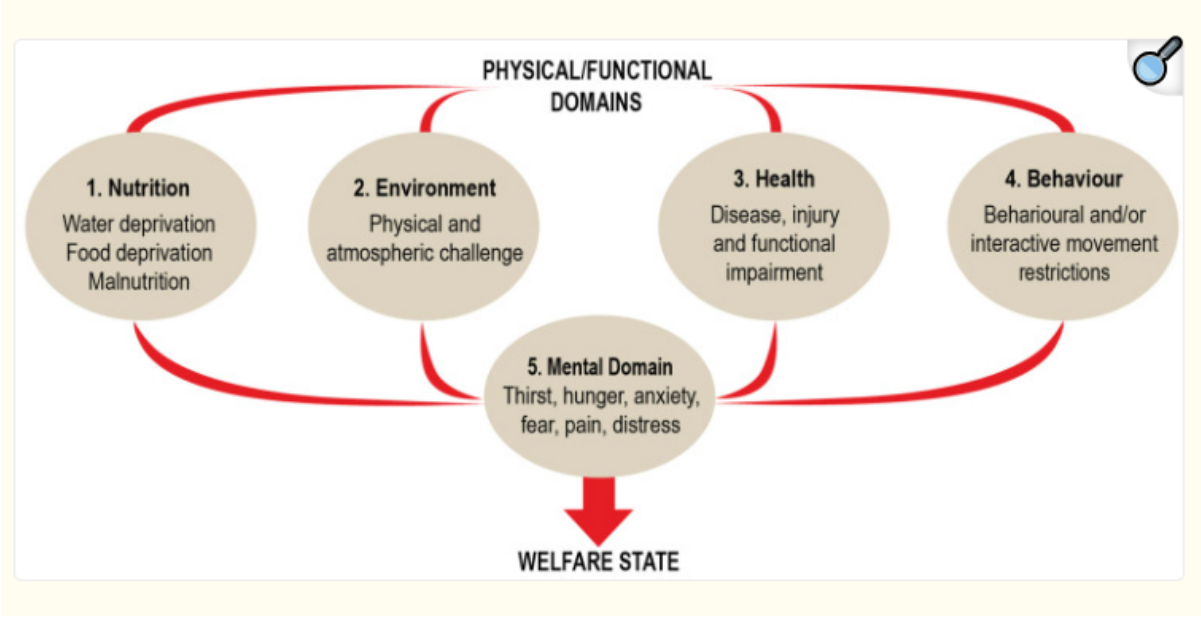
Animal welfare framework in India

Why in News?

Recently, The World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) has suspended the membership of Delhi Zoo for six months, citing concerns over the mistreatment of an African elephant at the facility.

What is WAZA's Animal Welfare Strategy?

- **WAZA** - The World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) is the global alliance of regional associations, national federations, zoos and aquariums, dedicated to the care and conservation of animals and their habitats around the world.
- **Function** - Guiding zoos and aquariums across the world and ensuring animal welfare and conservation.
- Science-based knowledge in animal care and welfare, environmental education and global conservation
- **Five Domains Animal Welfare Model** – is a framework designed to assess and improve the welfare of animals.
    - **Nutrition** - Ensuring animals have access to a balanced diet and clean water.
    - **Environment** - Providing a suitable living environment that allows animals to express natural behaviors.
    - **Health** - Preventing and treating diseases and injuries.
    - **Behavior** - Allowing animals to engage in positive social interactions and express natural behaviors.
    - **Mental State** - Considering the emotional experiences of animals, including positive experiences like anticipation and satisfaction.



What is the role of Central Zoo Authority (CZA)?

- **CZA** - Central Zoo Authority (CZA) is a statutory body constituted in 1992 under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- **Objective** - To bring Indian zoos up to international standards.
- To complement the national effort in conservation of wild life as per National Zoo Policy, 1998.
- **Functions** - Enforce minimum standards and norms for upkeep and healthcare of animals in Indian zoos.
- Control mushrooming of unplanned and ill-conceived zoos.
- Specify the minimum standards, in line with global standards for housing, upkeep and the veterinary care of animals at Indian zoos.
- Cancel the recognition granted to a zoo if it is found to be failing to meet or maintain those standards.

What are the issues in zoo management in India?

- **Infrastructure deficiency** – Inadequate safety and recreational facilities for different types of animals with different requirements.
- **Poor living conditions** - Many zoo facilities suffer from neglect and poor maintenance, resulting in unsafe and unsanitary conditions for both animals and visitors.
- **Understaffing** - Many zoos in India are understaffed, with a severe shortage of veterinarians, biologists, and educators.
- This makes it difficult to provide adequate care and maintain the health of the animals suitable environment to keep these majestic animals.
- **Negligence of regulations** – The conservation provisions of Wild life protection act , 1972 has been neglected by zoos and CZA.
- **Complacency of CZA** - Shortcomings in framing and enforcement of up-to-date guidelines–in line with the global norms–regarding animal welfare applicable to zoos across India.
- **Lack of accountability** - The law does not prescribe any consequences for CZA in cases where the CZA wilfully neglects to discharge its statutory duties.

What are the issues with animal diplomacy?

- **Animal diplomacy** - It involves giving or lending animals as a sign of friendship or goodwill between countries.
- **Soft Power** – Animal diplomacy has long been encouraged as a tool for extending a country's soft power to other parts of the world.
- **Issues with animal diplomacy**
    - **Lack of concern for animal welfare** – Glorification of the practice without taking into consideration the welfare of the animals involved in these transactions.
    - **Change in habitat** - When a wild animal like an elephant is "gifted" to another country, it involves being forcefully separated from their herds, familiar habitats and native surroundings.

- **Adaptation challenges** - Settling in requires them to get used to unfamiliar weather, captive conditions, and new caretakers in the receiving countries.
- **Psychological challenges** - Immense physical and mental trauma to these animals, who often display aggressive behaviours, resulting in further mistreatment, cruelty, or neglect.
- **Language barriers** - Often, the language that these animals are trained in is different from the language used by their handlers in the receiving country.

What are the animal welfare measures available in India?

- **Constitutional duty of animal protection** - Directive Principle of State Policy under Article 48A directs the state to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country.
- **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960** - To prevent the infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering on animals.
- **Animal Welfare Board of India** – It is a statutory advisory body on for animal Welfare Laws established in 1962 under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.
- **Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972** – To protect plants and animal species.
- **Indian Penal Code (IPC) 1860** - Section 428 and 429 of the IPC provides for punishment of all acts of cruelty such as killing, poisoning, maiming or rendering useless of animals.

What lies ahead?

- Ensure the compliance with all the conditions which have been set out by the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums.
- Maybe the CZA should look at and draw inspiration from the work of Indian rescue centres such as 'Wildlife SOS', which is dedicated to the care of abused, diseased, wounded and malnourished elephants.
- Introduces checks and balances in the law with respect to the CZA and even for errant zoos that do not follow prescribed standards of animal care.
- Enact an international convention to protect diplomatic animals that mandates a set of internationally accepted minimum conditions which must be fulfilled by both countries.

References

1. The Hindu | Animal welfare framework at zoos
2. The Indian Express | Animal Diplomacy

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