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Every Life Matters

Media Release

Vantara Brings the World's Wildlife Community to Jamnagar for EARAZA Annual Conference 2026

98 institutions from 30 countries and 29 from India meet to align conservation programmes, share data and shape the future of wildlife care

Jamnagar, Gujarat — The Eurasian Regional Association of Zoos and Aquariums (EARAZA) Annual Conference 2026 is being hosted by Vantara from 26 to 29 October, bringing together leaders, veterinarians, scientists and conservationists from 98 institutions across 30 countries, along with 29 zoological institutions from India. Under the theme "Strengthening Global Partnerships for Wildlife Conservation", the conference is bringing shared knowledge into focus to support coordinated action across borders.

The inauguration featured a performance by three-time Grammy Award-winning composer and environmentalist Ricky Kej, followed by the traditional lighting of the lamp by Ms Svetlana Akulova, President, EARAZA; Prof. Raman Sukumar, Indian Institute of Science; and Dr V. Clement Ben, Member Secretary, Central Zoo Authority. Welcoming delegates as host, Mr Vivaan Karani, Chief Executive Officer of Vantara, announced that the ANTZ Software Platform will be offered free of cost to all EARAZA members for one year. ANTZ is a secure cloud platform for managing zoological institutions, with an Open Data Exchange that lets members share information.

"Vantara means the Star of the Forest. But a single star cannot illuminate the entire sky. It takes a constellation. We do not come here simply to share what we have built. We come to learn from you, collaborate with you and support your work, because when one institution advances, it should create opportunities for others to advance with it." — Vivaan Karani, CEO, Vantara

"Conservation today cannot stop at national borders. When institutions share data, expertise and responsibility, every programme becomes stronger. This conference is about turning our network into a true partnership." — Svetlana Akulova, President, EARAZA

"Elephants have taught me that conservation is a long journey, guided by patient science, the willingness to share what we learn and the flexibility to adapt our approach as contexts change. In India, home to most of the world's Asian elephants, it is heartening to see the global community gather to do exactly that." — Prof. Raman Sukumar, Asian elephant ecologist and Honorary Professor, Indian Institute of Science

"Zoological institutions have a vital role in conservation, research and public education. Gatherings like this help raise standards of animal welfare and strengthen cooperation across regions." — Dr V. Clement Ben, Member Secretary, Central Zoo Authority, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

What the conference is making happen

The programme reads like a map of modern conservation. From the forests of the Russian Far East to the Arctic ice, species coordinators are sharing cross-border programmes for the Amur tiger, Oriental stork, Blakiston's eagle-owl and great bustard, alongside lesser-known efforts for Boiga snakes and the reintroduction of the long-eared hedgehog. Ms Akulova has set out a vision for a global data infrastructure for biodiversity conservation, so that what one institution learns can inform decisions across many.

The conversation reaches well beyond species. Panels examine how welfare can be measured by outcomes for each animal, how to prepare for crises in care facilities and disasters in the wild, and how to build

veterinary capacity across regions. Padma Shri awardee Dr K. K. Sarma, known as the Elephant Doctor of Asia, shares field lessons on human–wildlife conflict; Moscow Zoo's chief veterinary officer recounts rescuing polar bears in subarctic conditions; and wildlife biologist and television presenter Forrest Galante explores how mass media can carry conservation to wider audiences. Sessions on urban biodiversity, citizen science, the 21st-century visitor experience, wildlife diagnostics and nutrition connect the laboratory, the field and the public. EARAZA members also convene for their voting session to shape the association's direction for the year ahead.

A space for honest conversation

Beyond the stage, interactive corners invite delegates to speak openly. At *The Elephant in the Room* video booth, professionals record answers to questions the sector rarely voices, from *"Will zoos exist in 50 years?"* to *"Would full transparency build or break trust?"*, building a living global library of perspectives. The *Solution Station* lets delegates submit a real care or conservation challenge, across areas from rescue and genetics to biosecurity and welfare, and receive expert guidance. *Innovation in Action* invites them to share solutions that have made a difference.

Exhibition area

Alongside the sessions, the exhibition area brings together thirteen exhibitors from seven countries under the banner "Explore. Connect. Discover." Delegates can see endoscopy and minimally invasive veterinary technologies from Karl Storz, diagnostics from IDEXX, genomics and molecular tools from Inventa Systems, AI-driven automated microscopy from SigTuple, assisted reproduction solutions for conservation breeding from IMV Imaging, avian incubation systems from Grumbach and remote drug-delivery systems from Daninject. Tribes India adds a cultural note with traditional tribal art, textiles and handicrafts.
The host pavilions present innovation, nutrition, architecture and technology in wildlife care, along with a virtual reality experience of life at Vantara. Highlights include new tools from the ANTZ platform: Vespr, an edge-AI bioacoustic monitor that identifies species on the device itself; Smart Egg Analysis, which lets teams measure, candle and check an egg's heartbeat on a single screen; and a belt-worn NFC (Near Field Communication) device that lets caregivers log animal-care rounds with a simple tap.

Honouring a lifetime of service

The conference also marks the release of the Indian Zoo Year Book, Volume 11, 2026. At the closing ceremony on 29 October, six leaders will receive Lifetime Achievement Awards presented by Vantara: Ms Svetlana Akulova, General Director of Moscow Zoo and President of EARAZA; Mr René Franěk, Founder and Director of Chleby Zoo, Czech Republic, whose breeding successes include the country's first red-shanked douc langurs and rhinoceros hornbills; Mr Azer Huseynov, Director of Baku Zoological Park and Vice-President of EARAZA; and, from India, Shri S. C. Sharma, Founding Member Secretary of the Central Zoo Authority, alongside former CZA Member Secretaries Dr D. N. Singh and Mr B. S. Bonal.
The evening will close with the handover of the EARAZA flag to the 2027 host, carrying the partnerships formed in Jamnagar into the next chapter of global cooperation for wildlife.

About EARAZA: The Eurasian Regional Association of Zoos and Aquariums is a regional network of 95 institutions across 24 countries, working together on conservation, animal welfare, research and education.

About Vantara: Based in Jamnagar, Gujarat, Vantara is the host of EARAZA 2026 and works in wildlife rescue, care and conservation across ex-situ and in-situ settings.