

Good Morning-

- Most Honorable Chief Guest - Mr. D.C. Rana, the Sub-Divisional Magistrate of Dharamsala.
- Guest of Honour, Mrs. K.Y. Dhagpo the Secretary of the Dept of Health under the Central Tibetan Administration.
- The Chairman, Mr. Sonam Topgyal la, and other governing body members of Tibet Charity India.
- The Deputy Director of Animal Husbandry Department and Senior Veterinarian of Dharamsala.
- The General Secretary and other distinguished guests from TCV.
- Volunteer vets, nurses and attendants from Denmark, our volunteer teachers, other guests and my dear colleagues.

It is my great pleasure and honor to welcome you to the inauguration of **Tibet Charity Animal Care Centre** in its new building here in TCV campus.

To introduce Tibet Charity briefly.. - Tibet Charity as an organization was first set up in Denmark in 1997 by Venerable Lakha Rinpoche to help the poor and needy Tibetans in Tibet, Nepal and India. With the expansion of its activities a need was felt to start an office in India to co-ordinate and oversee its operations here. So, Tibet Charity India was started in January 2005. The activities of Tibet Charity India can be broadly divided into 5 different sections;

1. The Social Development Program, in which we provide help and financial assistance to the poor, needy and aged Tibetans. Under this program we have more than 350 beneficiaries as of now. We have also provided necessary assistance to some Tibetan settlements and families in improving the basic amenities.

2. Education Development Program. Under this program we run free English and Computer classes to those who have not had the opportunity to either go to regular schools or who couldn't complete their formal education for one reason or another. Though most of these students are new arrivals from Tibet, we also have students from places such as the Lahaul and Spiti regions in India, from various settlements in the South and North East of India and from countries such as Vietnam, Burma, Thailand and Mongolia. During one academic session we get approximately 200 students attending our classes.

Besides running these classes under our Education Development Program, we have also helped some of the schools with materials such as books, beddings, clothes and building renovation works. We have also organized workshops for all the science teachers in the Tibetan schools in India and Nepal.

Since 2007 we have also started scholarship program to selected students who desire to pursue professional courses yet don't have the financial backing at home. So far more than 50 students have received funding from this program.

3. Our Healthcare Program. Under this program we run a small healthcare centre at Tibet Charity House where anybody, irrespective of their nationality or caste, can come for health advice or free homeopathic treatment. We have also trained few young Tibetan

girls and one local Indian as home nurses. These girls visit old and sick people, who have no one looking after them. They not only take them to the hospitals, but they also administer treatments at home as per the doctor's prescription. They also help them in cleaning their houses, washing their clothes etc.

The Indian boy is employed by Tibet Charity to work alongside Tong-Len helping the slum children of the region.

Under this program we have also rented a few rooms in Chandigarh where people coming to the city for treatments can stay for free or a minimal charge.

We also run various public awareness programs on health related issues as part of our Health care Program.

4. Self Sustainable Business Development program. Under this program we try to help the business community to run their business as per the laws of the nation. We have organized various workshops in places such as Dharamsala, Dalhousie, Bir and Chamunda. During such workshops we have invited local Excise and Taxation Officers and chartered accountants to talk and advise on various rules related to business and taxation.

We have also, in collaboration with the District Industrial Society, organized business awareness programs in many Tibetan Settlements to encourage the Tibetans to take up more permanent, self-sustainable businesses.

Now we come to the most important part, for which we are all gathered here:

The Animal Care Program.

The original inspiration to start an Animal Care Program occurred during a meeting between His Holiness the Dalai Lama and our founder Lakha Rinpoche which took place during the Kalachakra Initiation at Mundgod. His Holiness expressed the need to do something to help the local dog population. Because there was no Tibet Charity India Animal Care Centre at this time, Tibet Charity Denmark stepped in to set up a dog camp in Mundgod. And so the idea was born.

Here in McLeod Ganj there was a large population of stray dogs whose numbers needed to be kept under control. Packs of stray dogs running wild pose a danger to the local population. Not only did they bite, and spread diseases like rabies, they also live by scavenging rubbish on the streets.

Nowadays the Animal Care Program operates in a number of ways:

Under the **Animal Birth-Control Program** we systematically sterilize the local population of stray dogs, an option preferable to extermination. This takes place both at Tibet Charity and in temporary clinics in the surrounding settlements, schools and villages including Norbulingka, Sarah, Bir, Rakkar, Rewalsar, Dalhousie and also here at TCV. These dogs also get a full check up, medical treatment and vaccination.

Under the **Animal Vaccination Program** we vaccinate as many stray and domestic dogs as possible. A team of vets and helpers visit settlements, villages and schools vaccinating the dogs in that area. The team also keeps the general public informed about the dangers of rabies and how to stay safe. These vaccinations are repeated every year.

Every year in September we celebrate World Rabies Day, which this year falls on the 28th September. To coincide with this day, we carry out massive vaccination and awareness program by organizing talks, distributing leaflets and information to the local population. During last year's drive we vaccinated more than 700 dogs around McLeod Ganj, Naddi, Bhagsu and Dharamkot.

Since 2005 we have sterilized around 3000 dogs and vaccinated an even greater number both here and in our camps. We have also treated many dogs with other ailments and those that get hit by vehicles.

Our staff have caught at least seven Rabid dogs from various places and euthanized them. Besides dogs we have also helped quite a number of cats as well.

Due to lack of space we are not able to provide these benefits to the larger animals.

So far we have always had problems with space, as there has only been one overcrowded room to use at Tibet Charity House. And some of the animals who are kept overnight at the Center howls and barks the whole night making us quite unpopular in the neighborhood.

Can I then offer our extreme gratitude to TCV for coming forward and so kindly offering their whole ground floor to this valuable project? With this new building I am sure we can carry out our activities with much more efficiency.

I would also like to offer my gratitude to the local administration including the deputy commissioner, sub-divisional magistrate, the director and deputy director of the state animal husbandry department and the local senior veterinarian for their constant guidance and cooperation.

I also wish to thank Dr. Arvind Sharma who was initially the veterinary surgical specialist at Veterinary Polyclinic Shahpur and who is now an assistant professor at the Department of Veterinary Surgery and Radiology at College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences at HP Agricultural University Palampur for kindly agreeing to be our honorary consultant and for visiting our clinic twice a month.

On this occasion, I wish to remember the hard work put in by Dr. Gunver Juul, the person in charge of Tibet Charity Animal Care Center for keeping the activities of Animal Care Center running. Without her we may not have Animal Care Center.

We are also grateful to our sponsors such as Brigitte Bardot Fondation and Animal SOS Denmark for their constant support.

I am also very grateful to all our volunteers without whom we could not have achieved what we have achieved so far. Here with us we have 20 vets, nurses and helpers who will help us in our work during the next few weeks. I thank you for being here and wish you all the best during your stay here.

Thank you very much.