

PRESS RELEASE

Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu Thiru. M.K. Stalin made a spot visit at Arignar Anna Zoological Park, Vandalur to take stock of the incidence of COVID-19 infection among Asiatic Lions at the Zoo.

Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, who is also the Chairperson of Zoo Authority of Tamil Nadu visited the Arignar Anna Zoological Park on 06th June 2021 and reviewed the treatment being given to infected Lions as well as took stock of the medical intervention being administered by the inhouse vets under the expert guidance of the TANUVAS team of doctors. The Hon'ble Chief Minister instructed senior officials of the Department of Environment & Forest and the Zoo to take all measures to provide the best treatment to infected Lions as per the Protocols.

He also instructed the authorities to ensure that proper vaccination is administered to all animal Handlers and zoo officials.

The Hon'ble Chief Minister was taken around the enclosures through the eco-friendly battery operated vehicle, where first instances of Covid-19 was found in Lions. While taking the Chief Minister through the Lion and Tiger enclosures and Lion Safari areas, the officials explained about the measures taken to identify the causes of such infections.

The Zoo authorities informed that 7 samples (3 Lions and 4 Tigers) were sent to Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), Bareilly for detailed analysis. The samples of all Lions are also being analysed through genetic sequencing in the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad which is an approved animal SARS-CoV-2 virus sequencing centre by the Central Zoo Authority (CZA) to find the strain of the virus that has infected the Lions.

This analysis is expected to throw better insights into the reasons and possibilities of Covid-19 contraction by Animals.

The Director of the Zoo Thiru. Debasis Jana explained to the Hon'ble CM about the measures taken on ground at the Zoo to monitor all animals and meticulously follow all SOPs and treatment protocols as advised by CZA and TANUVAS.

The AAZP veterinarians team led by Dr. Sridhar explained to Hon'ble CM the course of the treatment being given to the infected Lions in AAZP and also monitoring the health of other animals of the Zoo.

It may be noted that an incident of COVID-19 outbreak was reported in the Asiatic lions at Arignar Anna Zoological Park, Vandalur (AAZP) on 3rd of June, 2021. Few of the lions were found symptomatic and one of them- a 9 year old lioness, Neela succumbed to the disease on the evening of 3rd June. Similar Incidents were reported earlier at the lion

enclosures at Hyderabad & Jaipur zoo and Etawah (UP) lion safari. As a precautionary measure, Government had closed all the zoos to visitors in the State since April 20th, 2021.

The zoo officials have immediately quarantined all the Asiatic lions and with the help of the vets and under the supervision of the seniors vets of Tamil Nadu Veterinary University treatments have been started with the antibiotics and other prophylactic drugs. Samples from the 11 Asiatic lions were sent to iCAR-NIHSAD lab (ICMR approved), Bhopal for tests and further samples of tigers and other large mammals are also being sent for testing.

Hon'ble Chief Minister was accompanied by Hon'ble Minister for Rural Industries, Thiru.T.M. Anbarasan, Thiru.G.Selvam, MP, Tmt.Varalakshmi Madhusudanan, MLA, Environment, Forests and Climate Change Principal Secretary Tmt. Supriya Sahu , Thiru Yuvaraj, PCCF and HOD, PCCF and Chief Wildlife Warden Thiru. S.M. Abbas, Special Secretary Dr Shekhar Kumar Neeraj, Deputy Director Thiru. Naga Sathish.

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