

Asiatic Lions housed in Hyderabad zoo infected with SARS-COV2 recovering well.

Analysis of samples reveals infection not caused by any variant of concern.

No factual evidence that animals can transmit the disease to humans any further.

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On the 24th April 2021 with an abundance of caution, Nehru Zoological Park (NZP), Hyderabad shared samples (as collected from nose, throat and respiratory tract under anaesthesia) with CCMB-LaCONES for eight Asiatic lions housed in the Zoo that had showed signs of respiratory distress. Based on detailed diagnostic tests and report as shared by CCMB-LaCONES on 4th May 2021, it has now been confirmed that eight Asiatic lions housed in Nehru Zoological Park (NZP), Hyderabad have tested positive for SARS-CoV2 virus.

Further analyses of the samples have revealed that the infection was not caused by any variant of concern. The eight lions have been isolated and due care and necessary treatment has been provided. **All the eight lions have responded well to the treatment and recovering. They are behaving normally and eating well.** Preventive measures are already in place for all zoo staff and the zoo has been closed to visitors to avoid minimal external contact.

Central Zoo Authority has taken several pre-emptive measures including issuance of guidelines and advisories to the zoos towards precautions to be undertaken by zoos in the light of increasing number of cases of SARS CoV-2 .

The monitoring and guidelines for prevention, sample collection, detection in suspected cases, and safety protocols for animal keepers etc have been suggested to zoos in consultation with scientific agencies and experts Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI) Uttar Pradesh and Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology – Laboratory for Conservation of Endangered Species (CCMB-LaCONES) Hyderabad. Such advisories are readily available in public domain <http://cza.nic.in/news/en> .

As part of next steps new guidelines for COVID precautions are being further developed in consultation with experts. Additional information shall be issued as warranted.

Based on experience with zoo animals elsewhere in the world that have experienced SARS-COV2 positive last year, there is no factual evidence that animals can transmit the disease to humans any further. **Media is therefore requested to exercise extreme caution while reporting and provide a responsible coverage for the same.**

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