

**Press Release**

**Incident of outbreak of COVID-19 in Asiatic Lions at Arignar Anna Zoological Park, Vandalur**

A COVID-19 outbreak was reported in the Asiatic lions at Arignar Anna Zoological Park, Vandalur on 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> June. Similar incidents were reported earlier at Hyderabad zoo, and the lion enclosures at Jaipur zoo and Etawah lion safari. 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. Swab 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 being sent for testing.

. On the request of the Government, TANUVAS has rushed a team of experts to assist vets at AAZP for the diagnostics and treatments of the animals at AAZP. They would also be working with the vets at AAZP in ensuring that the animals in other zoos and in the wild are safeguarded from the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The AAZP officials have been instructed to immediately get the RT-PCR tests done for all its animal handlers and other concerned staff as preventive measure. The situation is being monitored round the clock at all levels. As a precautionary measure, Government had closed all the zoos to visitors in the State since April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021. As a safety measure a vaccination drive is being conducted by the AAZP officials and 61% of the large cat animal handlers have been vaccinated by 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2021. Hyderabad based Centre for cellular and Molecular Biology that is an approved animal SARS-CoV-2 virus sequencing centre by the Central Zoo Authority has extended support to sequence this strain of virus for better understanding of this zoonotic transmission that would help in preventive measures and appropriate treatments. A nationwide consultation process has also been started by the senior officials involving domain experts and scientists.