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Fate of Coimbatore Corpn. Zoo uncertain

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Identification of land continues to remain a challenge

With the licence issued by the Central Zoological Authority (CZA) for the Corporation's mini zoo at VOC Park all set to expire in July 2013, identification of land for shifting the zoo continues to be a problem for the official machinery.

The authorities are now hard pressed for time to identify the land, prepare a master plan, appoint a consultant, design the zoological park and begin the construction even before the licence period comes to an end.

Inadequate

The present zoo functioning on 4.61 acres of land came into existence in 1965. In 2004, the CZA during an inspection found the space inadequate for providing an ideal habitat for the wildlife in captivity and expressed concern over breeding.

It suggested shifting the zoo to a spacious place.

The Corporation Zoo at present has 85 mammals, 219 birds, 11 deer, 26 bonnet macaques, six foxes, six large crocodiles, eight smaller ones, three camels and 11 reptiles.

The CZA found the zoo space being inadequate for holding so many mammals and not providing an ideal habitat for the animals in captive breeding.

As per the directions of the CZA in December 2003, some of the lonely animals Lion Raja (22 in 2003), Tigress Rani (21), Himalayan Black Bear – Pandian (26) and the macaque (16) were shifted from Coimbatore to Aringar Anna Zoological Park at Vandalur in Chennai.

The administration embarked on a land hunt in 2004. A total of 36 acres of land at Kavundampalayam (the erstwhile compost yard of the civic body), 26 acres of land at Vellanaipatti in Kalapatti village belonging to the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (HR&CE) Department, 68.4 acres of land at Ettimadai belonging to the Revenue Department were considered.

Earlier, the officials even thought of short listing two more places i.e., Anaikatti and another land of the HR&CE Department at Othakkal Mandapam on Pollachi Road. The land hunt continues even after eight years.

With regard to the nearly 60 acre land identified at Ettimadai beyond Madukkarai on the outskirts of the city, the Central Zoological Authority, the licensing body for zoological parks, should be first convinced about the land for locating the zoo.

Elephants

With regard to the Ettimadai land, its location at the foothills of Western Ghats though found ideal for captive conservation,

movement of pachyderms raised a question on its suitability for the zoo.

Then came the question of a railway line that separated the land from the National Highway.

Now, inquiries reveal that the said land being assigned for zoological park would not materialise, as it was originally assigned for tribal people.

Now, the licence issued by CZA is valid till July 2013 and the authorities will have to step up their hunt for land and prepare a master plan as the CZA had already given Rs. 80,000 towards the same.

Minimum

As per CZA norms, a mini zoo required a minimum of 25 acres of land. The existing zoo was only in 4.61 acres of land. The official machinery on one side was trying to explore the

possibility of getting land adjacent to the zoo measuring a little over four acres so that the space constraints could be overcome.

Even then, the 25 acre norm of the Central Zoological Authority could not be complied with.

With not much time left, the fate of corporation zoo remains uncertain. When contacted, Corporation Commissioner T.K. Ponnusamy said that the civic body was aware of the problem on hand.

Efforts are on to get a substantial share of the land adjacent to the prison premises.

Of the 44 acres, efforts are on to get more than 15 to 20 acres for shifting the zoo there.

Meanwhile, works relating to preparation of master plan, appointment of consultants and preparation of design would

begin and the CZA would be approached for getting some more time to just complete the construction and shift the zoo.

Since the earlier efforts for identifying a land had gone in vain, the official machinery was expediting the land identification process so as to get the project going before the licence expires, Mr.Ponnusamy said.

Licence issued by Central Zoological Authority for zoo at VOC Park will expire in July 2013