



Asiatic Lions

Why in News

Recently, eight **Asiatic lions** at Hyderabad's **Nehru Zoological Park** have tested positive for the deadly [coronavirus](#).

- It is the **first known** case of the human infecting the felines and making them sick in India.
- Earlier in 2020, [Tiger being infected with Covid-19](#) was reported in New York (Bronx Zoo).

Key Points

▪ About:

- The Asiatic Lion (also known as the Persian Lion or Indian Lion) is a member of the ***Panthera Leo Leo*** subspecies that is restricted to India.
 - Its previous habitats consisted of **West Asia and the Middle East before it became extinct in these regions.**
- Asiatic lions are **slightly smaller than African lions.**
- The most striking morphological character, which is always seen in Asiatic lions, and rarely in African lions, is a **longitudinal fold of skin running along its belly.**

▪ Distribution:

- Asiatic lions **were once distributed to the state of West Bengal in east and Rewa in Madhya Pradesh, in central India.**
- At present [Gir National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary](#) is the only abode of the Asiatic lion.
 - In 2020, the Gujarat Forest Department announced an [increase in the population of Asiatic lions](#) in the Gir forest region.

▪ Threats:

- Its **vulnerability to unpredictable events** such as a plague or a natural disaster, **poaching** and **locals near the Gir National Park killing the lions** in retaliation for attacks on livestock.

▪ Protection Status:

- [IUCN Red List](#): Endangered
- [CITES](#): Appendix I
- [Wildlife \(Protection\) Act 1972](#): Schedule I

▪ Conservation Efforts:

- The ["Asiatic Lion Conservation Project"](#) has been launched by the **Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC).**
- It has been **approved for three financial years from 2018 to 2021.**
- It envisages **scientific management with the involvement of communities** in coordination with multi-sectoral agencies for **disease control and veterinary care** for overall conservation of Asiatic lions.

Nehru Zoological Park

- It is **one of the largest zoos of India** and one of the top sightseeing places to visit in Hyderabad, Telangana. **Run by the Forest department, Government of Telangana**, the zoo has been named after Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of the country.
- It was **opened to the public in the year of 1963**.
- It is situated near the historically important **Mir Alam Tank, which is 200 year old and is the first multi-arch masonry dam in the world**.

[Source:TH](#)

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