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# MODERN ENCLOSURE FOR LEOPARDS IN SRI VENKATESWARA ZOOLOGICAL PARK, TIRUPATI

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## Introduction

Tirupati Zoological Park was established in the year 1987 with a view to educate the vast number of pilgrims who visit the holy town, about the importance of nature, environment and wildlife. This Zoological Park has a vast area of about 2212 hectares and when fully developed, it may be one of the biggest Zoological Parks in Asia. This Zoological Park was opened to visitors in 1993. So far 21 enclosures have been developed consisting of the exhilarating 'Kishkindha' the kingdom of primates, 'Mayurvani' consisting of the peafowls and demoiselle cranes, 'Mrugavani' for herbivores like chital, black buck, sambar, neelgai etc., 'Vrukavihar' for smaller carnivores like wild dogs, hyenas, jackals etc. and bird enclosures for parakeets, pheasants, munias and a variety of water birds.

## The Panther Enclosure

The construction of a panther enclosure was started in 1994-95 and was completed in 1995-96 with the funds from the Andhra Pradesh State Government and Central Zoo Authority of India. One female panther of about two years old brought from Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad and one male panther of about eight years old brought from the Indira Gandhi Zoological Park, Visakhapatnam have been housed in this enclosure since February, 1996.

## Enclosure Dimensions:

The enclosure has a floor area of 45 m. x 25 m. It is a closed enclosure with huge parabola shaped iron pipes of 2" diameter planted on either side in R.C.C. beds. A series of horizontal iron pipes of 1.5" diameter have been welded to these iron pipes forming the skeleton of the enclosure. Over this skeleton, chain link mesh of 4" size and 8 gauge has been spread and firmly rivetted to the structure. On the visitors side a 2" chain link mesh has been spread to a height of 2.5 m. The height between the top of the parabola and the ground is about 11 m. Towards the visitor's side, a foot-path with granite slabs and a stand-off-barrier with iron railings have been provided. Hedge plants have been planted between the enclosure and railing to act as a natural stand-off barrier.

## Housing Facilities

The enclosure has adequate naturalistic features as the area selected is located in "Tirupati extension Reserve Forest". The enclosure has an undulating ground with boulders and rock of various dimensions and a natural scrub forest vegetation consisting of species like *Zyzyphus*, *Acacia*, *Dolichondron* and other thorny species. To add to the greenery, plants of species like Bamboos, Red sanders etc., have been planted.

Natural perches have been provided by planting the tree trunks of 3 big trees. Two mounds have been prepared with boulders and soil below the trees for animals to rest. An artificial

cave has been constructed with cement concrete where the animals can have an 'afternoon siesta' in its shade. The night house is camouflaged with cement concrete Rockery work. All these were created to meet the biological and behavioral needs of the panthers.

## The Night House

The size of the night house is 12.5 m. x 5.65 m. Night cages have 3 m. x 1.50 m. x 2.75 m. of space for easy movement of the animals. The facility also has - In Built squeeze cage of 1.50 m. x 1 m. x 1.20 m. dimensions to easily restrain and treat the sick animals. A drainage channel has been provided to drain out the water after daily cleaning of the night house.

## Safety sign boards

Safety sign boards warning the visitors about the carnivores, advising them to keep a safe distance and not to feed or tease them are under preparation and they will be displayed at the appropriate places.

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