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Animal expo sans permit shut down

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Chennai: An illegal animal exhibition — Zaha Live Exotic Pets Paradise — that was held at Island Grounds, featuring exotic birds, cats, iguanas, and other smaller animals was shut down by the police based on a complaint from almighty animal care trust, an NGO. Sai Vignesh, founder of the organization said upon visiting the place, he saw animals panting due to dehydration and heat.

The shed lacked ventilation and had a tin roof with no fan. Cockatiels, budgies, rabbits, sugar gliders, cats, hamsters, pigeons, guinea fowls and hedgehogs were kept in cramped, unhygienic enclosures, he said. No vaccination records or health files were available for any of the animals. Visitors were handling animals and taking photos for 200 per picture, causing visible distress to animals. "Expo organizer had no approval from animal welfare board of India (AWBI) either. When I returned the next day, a husky puppy that I had seen the previous day was missing. Those at the stalls casually said it had died of dehydration. I notified police about the expo on Thursday," Vignesh said.

When the police arrived, the owner locked up the facility with the animals inside, and absconded. "For two days, we could not access the animals. Meanwhile, they snuck in at night through the back entrance and smuggled out some animals," he added.

Vignesh filed a complaint at Triplicane police station on Friday but the shed door was opened only on Sunday, in the presence of police, a veterinary officer of GCC, and other officials. By then, some animals had died and a few others collapsed , he further said.

Police shifted all the animals to Besant memorial animal dispensary. When contacted, deputy commissioner of police Jayachandran, Triplicane, said legal opinion is being sought on the nature of offenses committed. "Based on that, we will convert the complaint into an FIR."