

# Forest dept to implement QR ticketing to curb corruption

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CHENNAI: The forest department is installing QR ticketing system in all forest sites starting with Arignar Anna Zoological Park (AAZP) in Vandalur and Guindy Children's Park, after a ticketing scam surfaced at Kovai Coutrallam in Coimbatore district where a forester swindled 35 lakh and a ranger 23 lakh of ticket money. Srinivas Reddy, AAZP director said QR code is just the beginning of the entire digitisation process. "We plan to integrate all wildlife sites, ecotourism sites and other forest department related billing under one website and portal to digitise the entire process. This will ensure that even bookings are done online as packages and payments are made online," he said. Now, each district has its own website for booking. This portal will ensure all sites come under

one umbrella.

Vandalur zoo will be the first to get QR payment and online payment modes. Later it will be extended to all districts across Tamil Nadu.

The process began after forester Rajeshkumar and ranger Saravanan swindled money by providing fake tickets to tourists at Kovai Coutrallam. They were placed under suspension. At the Chinnar Checkpost, visitors continue to pay in cash but are provided tickets with QR codes that are scanned to record the visitor and footfall. However, the payment has to be made online to avoid corruption in ticketing systems.

The forest department is planning to create four more ecotourism sites and also to improve existing sanctuaries and lakes such as Vedanthanagal bird sanctuary.

At AAZP, UPI payments are now accepted and 70% of the payments are made through apps. This will be expanded to all forest and wildlife related services and utilities. The digitisation process will ensure a person can book tickets for sites under different forest divisions at the same time.