

No recreational activities in forest area: HC

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Bengaluru: The high court on Tuesday disposed of a PIL plea on shifting Atal Bihari Vajpayee Zoological Park from Ballari to Bilikallu reserve forest, Kamalapura, Hosapete, observing that no recreational activities should be allowed in the forest area and minimal construction should be carried out.

A division bench headed by chief justice Ritu Raj Awasthi also said clearance from the authorities is mandatory for shifting the zoo. Santosh Martin and Rajesh M Kurpad, two Ballari-based petitioners interested in wildlife preservation, contended that the authorities had not obtained permission from the apex court and there was also no environment impact assessment as per the Biological Diversity Act, 2002.

They said the construction of a zoo close to the wildlife sanctuary with sloth bears would have an adverse impact on the eco-sensitive zone and could also increase the chance of conflict among animals, apart from reducing the sanctuary area.

The authorities, however, said that zoo shifting is not a “non-forest activity” and hence no permission is required. They added that no recreational activity would be taken up at Atal Bihari Vajpayee Park in the forest area and minimum construction would be required.