

Rare Bengal tiger dies in zoo

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The death of a Bengal tiger was a disappointment to the staff at the Himeji Municipal Zoo and its fans.

The 7-year-old female tiger died of internal disease earlier this month, despite the staff's desperate efforts to cure it.

Life expectancy of a tiger is about 25 years.

The tiger, which came to the zoo in 1989, was among its rare attractions, along with another one, a 15-year-old Bengal tiger, which are on the list of the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

The zoo, which keeps more than 20 rare species, has seen a series of deaths in recent months.

Yumeo, a hippo, died of bloated liver in December. Himeko, an Indian elephant, expired of senility in January. And Gonta, a lowland gorilla, died of pneumonia in February.

"It is regrettable that the zoo is now left with no elephants or gorillas," said Chiaki Shimoyama, the manager of the zoo.

He said that the zoo has been working on a plan to bring in substitutes, but that some species are difficult and expensive to obtain, costing as much as ¥100 million an animal.