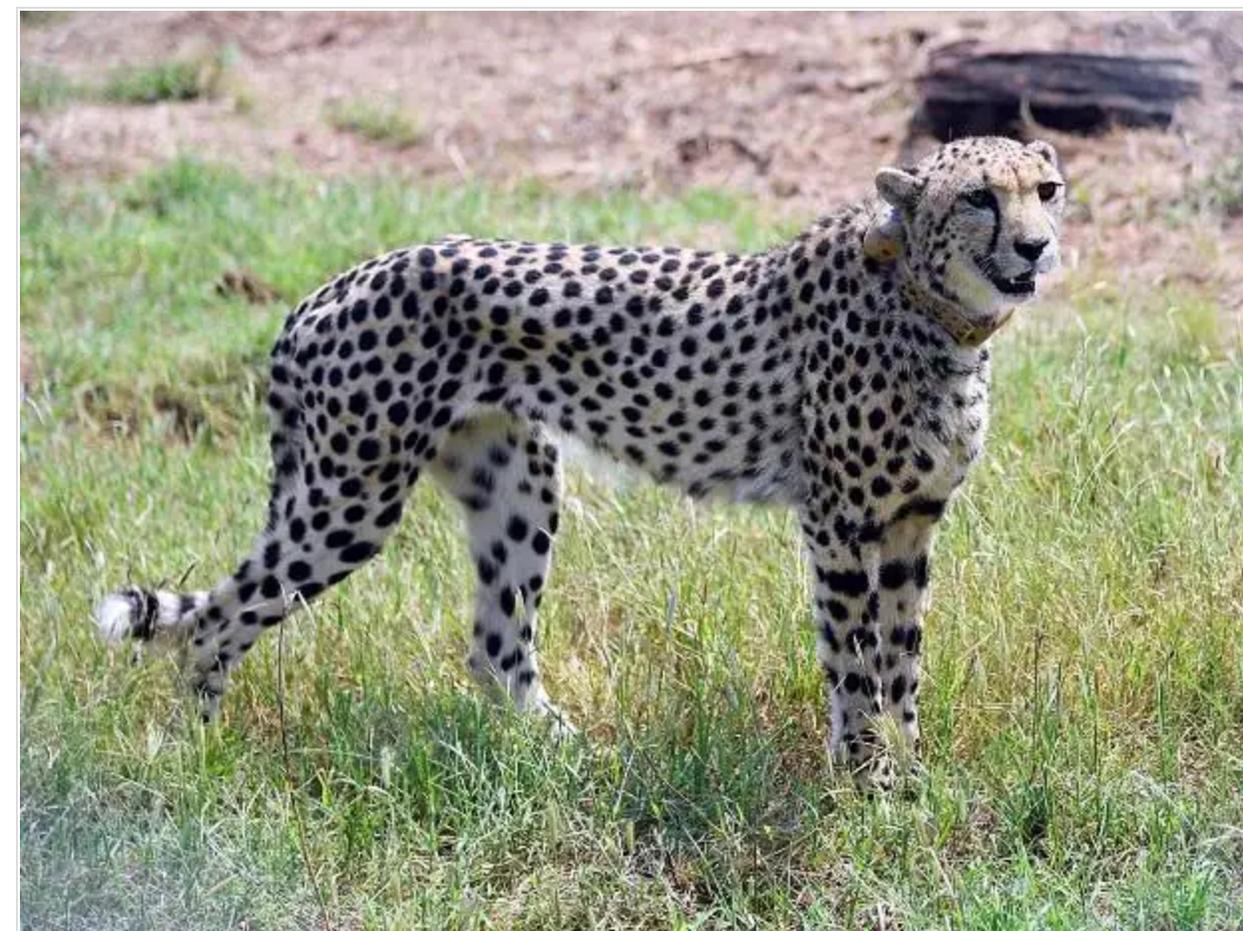


Twelve cheetahs to be translocated from South Africa to India on Feb 18

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A cheetah is seen in Kuno National Park, Madhya Pradesh (Photo via Reuters)

expansion of the cheetah within its historic range thereby contributing to its global conservation efforts, he added.

Minister Yadav also thanked the Defence Ministry and the Indian Air Force for extending full support for the translocation. Yadav also mentioned about the various initiatives taken up by the ministry in the areas of wildlife conservation, including Project Cheetah, LIFE concept and its sustainability, Green growth namely Green Credit, Mishti - for mangrove conservation and Gaj Utsav among others.

The last cheetahs in the Indian wilderness were recorded in 1947 where three cheetahs were shot in the Sal (*Shorea robusta*) forests of Koriya in Chhattisgarh. The main reasons for the decline of cheetah in India were large scale capture of animals from the wild for coursing, bounty and sport hunting, extensive habitat conversion along with consequent decline in prey base and in 1952, they were declared as extinct.

The major objectives of the introduction project include to establish breeding cheetah populations in safe habitats across its historic range and manage them as a metapopulation and to use the cheetah as a charismatic flagship and umbrella species to

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The big cats will be translocated to Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh.

Bringing the cheetahs back to India will help in restoring the nation's natural heritage, the minister said.

The goal of the Cheetah introduction project in India is to establish viable cheetah metapopulation in India that allows the cheetah to perform its functional role as a top predator and provide space for the

gamer resources for restoring open forest and savanna systems that will benefit biodiversity and ecosystem services from these ecosystems.

In this context, the Government of India initiated G2G consultative meetings with Republic of Namibia which culminated in the signing of MoU between the two countries on 20th July 2022 for cheetah conservation. Following the signing of MoU, in a historic first wild to wild intercontinental translocation, eight cheetahs were transported from Namibia to India on September 17, 2022 and were released into the quarantine bomas by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

As per the Action Plan for Cheetah Introduction in India, annually 10-12 cheetahs are required to be imported from African countries for the next 5 years at least. In this context, the Government of India initiated bilateral negotiations with Republic of South Africa since 2021 for cooperation in the field of Cheetah conservation. The negotiations were successfully concluded with the signing of MoU with the Republic of South Africa in January 2023.

Under the provisions of the MoU, a first batch of 12 cheetahs (7 males, 5 females) will be translocated from South Africa to India on February 18. The translocation of 12 cheetahs from South Africa to Gwalior and onwards to Kuno National Park through Helicopters is being done by the Indian Air Force. A delegation of cheetah experts, veterinarians and senior officials will be accompanying the cheetahs during the transcontinental translocation exercise.

Officials said that post arrival in India, all 12 cheetahs will be housed in specially created enclosures at Kuno National Park for completing the mandatory quarantine period and the animals will be intensively monitored.

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