



Environment ministry sets up Cheetah Task Force

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NEW DELHI: The ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has constituted a task force to monitor cheetah introduction in Kuno National Park, Madhya Pradesh.

"The task force is constituted to review, progress and monitor the health of cheetah, upkeep of the quarantine and soft release enclosures, and protection status of entire area," the ministry said.

It will also ensure adherence to the defined protocols by forest and veterinary officials and advice on cheetah introduction in India to the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department and National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA).

NTCA will facilitate the working of the Cheetah Task Force and render all necessary help. The task force will be in force for a period of two years. "It may appoint a subcommittee to regularly visit the cheetah introduction area as and when decided by them," the ministry added.

The task force will also monitor hunting skills and adaptation of cheetahs, release from quarantine to soft release enclosures, and open cheetah habitat for eco-tourism and suggest regulations.

Members of the task force include Alok Kumar, Retd. Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) & Chief Wildlife Warden, Madhya Pradesh, Amit Mallick, Inspector General, NTCA, New Delhi, Vishnu Priya, Scientist, Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, Abhilash Khandekar, Member MP SBWL, Bhopal, and Subhoranjan Sen, APCCF- Wildlife – Member Convener.

Cheetah restoration is part of a prototype or model for restoration of original cheetah habitats and their biodiversity. "This will help to stem the degradation and rapid loss of biodiversity. Bringing back a top predator restores historic evolutionary balance resulting in cascading effects on various levels of the eco-system," the ministry said.

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