

PM Modi releases cheetahs in MP forest 70 years after they went extinct in India

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PM Modi, standing on a small tower along with chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, turned the wheel of a lever of the cages from where the cheetahs entered the enclosure constructed for their quarantine period. The 50x30 metre-long enclosure will be home to the cheetahs for the next one month.

Baby nilgai, four horned antelope and spotted deer were already present in the enclosure for the cheetahs. The herbivores will feed on grass and a few trees present in the enclosure. An artificial shed was also developed for cheetahs in every enclosure.

Eight cheetahs – five female between 2 and 5 and three males between 4.5 and 5.5 years of age – arrived at Gwalior at around 7am in Boeing 747-400 aircraft from Namibia's capital Windhoek. In the presence of experts, the crates have been shifted in an Indian Air Force (IAF) heavy-lift Chinook helicopter in Gwalior from where they reached KNP.

The complete health check up was done by veterinarians, who were accompanying the cheetah from Windhoek. The veterinarians will stay at KNP for the next one month to check the cheetahs' behaviour and health before shifting them into a soft release enclosure of six sq km.

The cheetah was completely wiped out from India due to excessive hunting and shrinking grasslands, its natural habitat. The last cheetah was killed in Korba district of Chhattisgarh in 1947 and it was declared extinct in 1952. Efforts to bring the animal – the smallest of the big cats and the fastest land mammal – have been decades in the making, beginning with Indira Gandhi in the 1970s but always running into international diplomatic or legal hurdles, until now.

A large number of people were present outside the Tikoli Gate of Kuno National Park to welcome the cheetahs.

Source: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/pm-modi-releases-cheetahs-in-mp-forest-70-years-after-they-went-extinct-in-india-101663399393250.html>