

INTER-GOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT TO RE-INTRODUCE CHEETAH TO INDIA FROM SOUTH AFRICA CONCLUDED

Posted On: 27 JAN 2023 2:09PM by PIB Delhi

The Republic of South Africa and the Republic of India have signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Re-introduction of Cheetah to the Asian country. In terms of the agreement, an initial batch of 12 cheetahs are to be flown from South Africa to India during February 2023. The cats will join eight cheetah introduced to India from Namibia during 2022.

Restoring cheetah populations is considered to be a priority for India and will have vital and far-reaching conservation consequences, which would aim to achieve a number of ecological objectives, including re-establishing the function role of cheetah within their historical range in India and improving the enhancing the livelihood options and economies of the local communities. Following the import of the 12 cheetah in February, the plan is to translocate a further 12 annually for the next eight to 10 years.

The initiative to reintroduce cheetah to a former range state following the local extinction of this iconic species due to over hunting and loss of habitat in the last century is being carried out following the request received from the government of the Republic of India. This multi-disciplinary international programme is being coordinated by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) in collaboration with the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), South African National Parks (SANParks), the Cheetah Range Expansion Project, and the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) in South Africa together with the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and the Wildlife Institute of India (WII).

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Reintroduction of Cheetah to India facilitates cooperation between the parties to establish a viable and secure cheetah population in India; promotes conservation and ensures that expertise is shared and exchanged, and capacity built, to promote cheetah conservation. This includes human-wildlife conflict resolution, capture and translocation of wildlife and community participation in conservation in the two countries. In terms of the MoU, the countries will collaborate and exchange best practices in large carnivore conservation through the transfer of technology, training of professionals in management, policy, and science, and to establish a bilateral custodianship arrangement for cheetah translocated between the two countries.

The terms of the MoU will be reviewed every five years to ensure it remains relevant.

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