

India to get more than 100 cheetahs from S.Africa

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A cheetah from Namibia being released in India's Kuno National Park in September 2022.

South Africa said Thursday that it had reached a deal to transfer more than 100 cheetahs to India as part of an ambitious project to reintroduce

the spotted cats in the south Asian country.

The environment ministry said an initial batch of 12 cheetahs would be flown to India next month, after eight cheetahs arrived from Namibia last September.

"The plan is to translocate a further 12 annually for the next eight to 10 years" to help establish a "viable and secure cheetah population," the ministry said in a statement.

India was once home to the Asiatic cheetah but the animal was declared extinct there by 1952, primarily because of [habitat loss](#) and deaths at the hands of hunters seeking their distinctive spotted hides.

Efforts to reintroduce the animals gathered pace in 2020 when India's Supreme Court ruled that African cheetahs, a different subspecies, could be brought into the country at a "carefully chosen location" on an experimental basis.

Negotiations for the deal with South Africa were long in the making, with the first cheetahs initially expected to be flown to India last August. They have been living in quarantine in the meantime.

"The cheetahs in quarantine... are all still doing well," said Adrian Tordiffe, a veterinary wildlife specialist at the University of Pretoria who is involved in the project.

Officials said the previous transfer from Namibia marked the first intercontinental relocation of [cheetahs](#), the planet's fastest land animal.

The Namibian specimens were released at Kuno National Park, a [wildlife sanctuary](#) 320 kilometers (200 miles) south of New Delhi, selected for its abundant prey and grasslands.

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