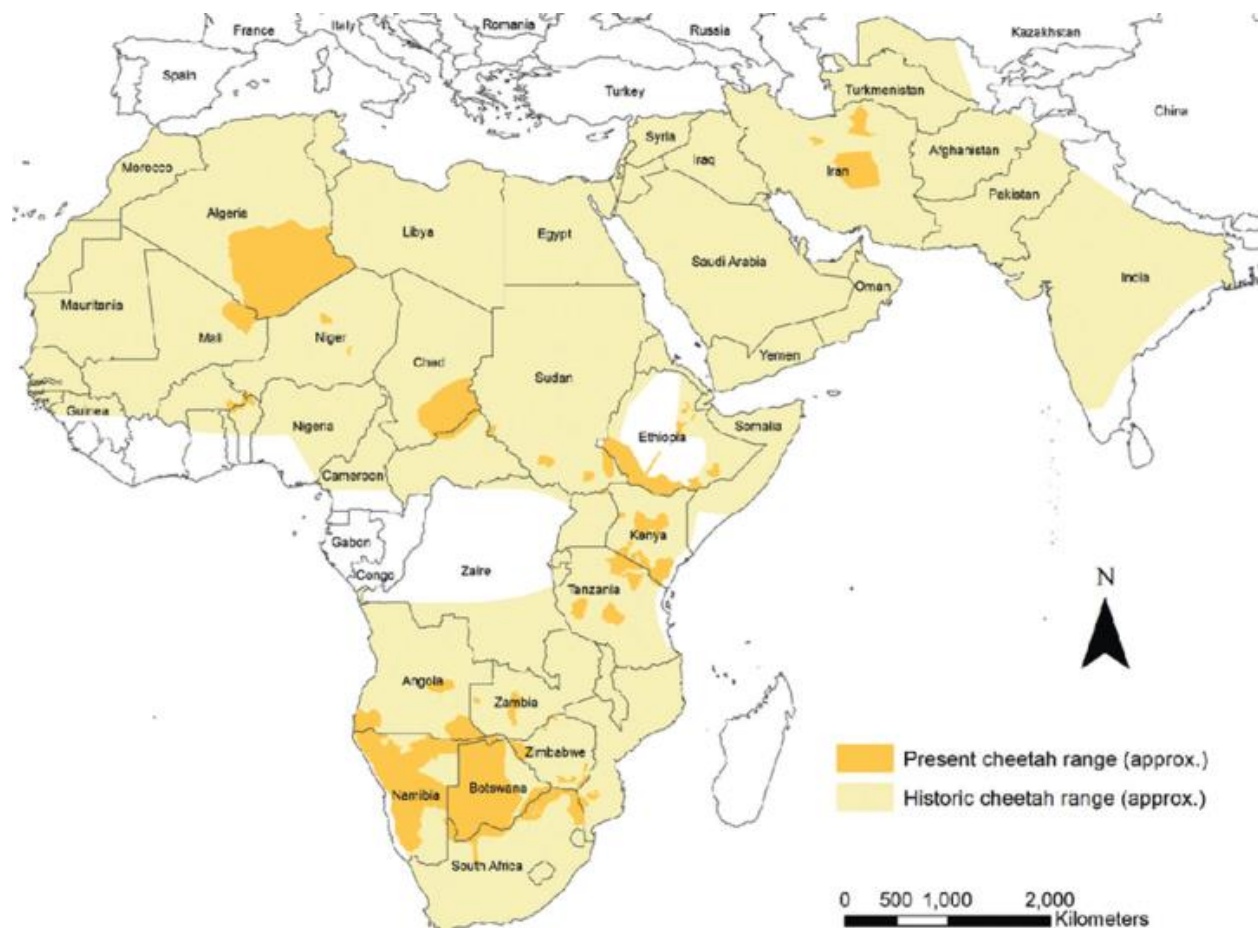


## Re-introducing African Cheetahs to India

With the Union Government establishing an action plan in Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park, the cheetah, which became extinct in India after Independence, is on its way back.

According to the plan, roughly 50 of these giant cats will be imported from Africa's savannas, which are home to endangered cheetahs, during the next five years.

### Cheetah distribution in India



- Asiatic cheetahs had a large distribution in India in the past. From Punjab in the north to Tirunelveli district in southern Tamil Nadu in the south, from Gujarat and Rajasthan in the west to Bengal in the east, there are credible evidence of their occurrence.
- The majority of the data come from a band that runs from Gujarat to Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Odisha.



- A cluster of complaints has also emerged from southern Maharashtra, which has spread to portions of Karnataka, Telangana, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu.
- The cheetah's range was extensive, spanning the whole Indian subcontinent. They showed up in large numbers.
- The cheetah's habitat was likewise diversified, with scrub woods, dry grasslands, savannahs, and other open areas being preferred.

### **What caused cheetahs to become extinct in India?**

The following are the primary causes of the Asiatic cheetah's extinction in India:

- In the wild, fertility is low and infant mortality is high.
- Incapacity to reproduce in confinement
- Hunting for fun
- Bounty murders are a type of crime when people are killed

During his half-century reign from 1556 to 1605, Mughal Emperor Akbar is said to have housed 1,000 cheetahs in his menagerie and amassed as many as 9,000 cats.

Cheetah numbers were rapidly dwindling by the end of the 18th century, despite the fact that their prey base and habitat lasted much longer.

Although the last cheetahs were shot in India in 1947, credible tales of sightings of the cat date back to around 1967.

### **The reintroduction of these animals has conservation goals**

- It is impossible to infer that the choice to bring the African cheetah to India is founded on science based on the current facts.
- Science appears to be being utilised to legitimise what appears to be a politically motivated conservation agenda.
- This, in turn, puts conservation priorities, a Supreme Court injunction, socioeconomic restraints, and academic rigour on the back burner.
- The situation necessitates an open and educated discussion.

### **What is the official objective?**

- To build a healthy cheetah meta-population in India that permits the cheetah to act as a top predator.
- To allow the cheetah to expand its range within its historical habitat, thereby contributing to worldwide conservation efforts.



## Problems with reintroduction

- Experts are divided on whether the reserve would provide a favorable climate for African cheetahs in terms of prey abundance.
- Cheetah habitat was required to sustain a genetically viable population.

## Asiatic Cheetah (Back2Basics)

- In 1952, the world's fastest land animal, the cheetah, was proclaimed extinct in India.
- The IUCN Red List lists the Asiatic cheetah as a "critically endangered" species that is thought to only exist in Iran.
- After the Supreme Court relaxed restrictions on its reintroduction, it was expected to be reintroduced into the country.
- Because of poaching, hunting of their principal prey (gazelles), and habitat encroachment, their numbers have decreased from 400 in the 1990s to 50-70 now.

