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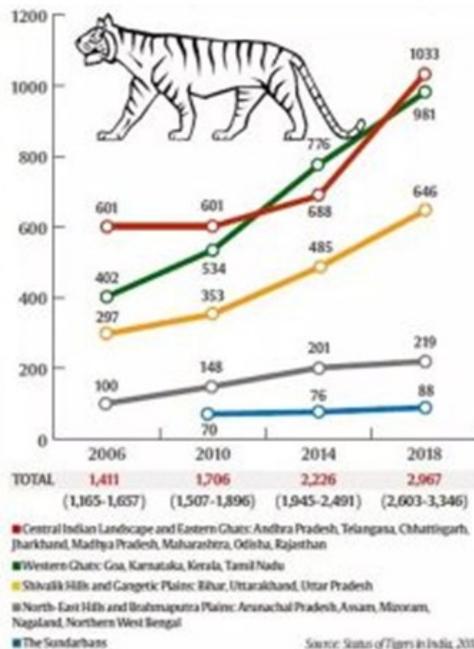


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Action Plan for Introduction of Cheetah in India

Action Plan for Introduction of Cheetah in India



India plans to restore the only large carnivore, the Cheetah, that has become extinct in independent India.

This endeavor will achieve the following goals and objectives:

Goal

Establish viable cheetah metapopulation in India that allows the cheetah to perform its functional role as a top predator and provide space for the expansion of the cheetah within its historical range thereby contributing to its global conservation efforts.

Need for Tiger Conservation: Tigers are at the top of the food chain and are sometimes referred to as “umbrella species” that is their conservation also conserves many other species in the same area. The Tiger estimation exercise that includes habitat assessment and prey estimation reflects the success or failure of Tiger conservation efforts. More than 80% of the world’s wild tigers are in India, and it’s crucial to keep track of their numbers.

Objectives of the project are-

1. To establish breeding cheetah populations in safe habitats across its historical range and manage them as a metapopulation.
2. To use the cheetah as a charismatic flagship and umbrella species to garner resources for restoring open forest and savanna systems that will benefit biodiversity and ecosystem services from these ecosystems.
3. To enhance India’s capacity to sequester carbon through ecosystem restoration activities in cheetah conservation areas and thereby contribute towards the global climate change mitigation goals.
4. To use the ensuing opportunity for eco-development and eco-tourism to enhance local community livelihoods.
5. To manage any conflict by cheetah or other wildlife with local communities within cheetah conservation areas expediently through compensation, awareness, and management actions to win community support.

The introduction of the cheetah is not only a species recovery program but an effort to restore ecosystems with a lost element that has played a significant role in their evolutionary history, allow ecosystems to provide services to their full potential, and use the cheetah as an umbrella species for conserving the biodiversity of grasslands, savanna and open forest systems.

The word Cheetah is of Sanskrit origin and the cheetah finds mention in the ancient texts such as the Vedas and Puranas; it is indeed ironic that the species is currently extinct in India. The original threats that resulted in the extinction of the cheetah have been abated and India now has the technical and financial ability to bring back its lost Natural Heritage for ethical, ecological, and economic considerations.

Successful conservation introductions are a blend of best science, technology, sociological aspects and commitment of financial resources. These aspects are integrated in this Action Plan based on the modern scientific approach recommended by the latest International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) guidelines for reintroduction and other conservation translocations, providing the framework for bringing back the charismatic cheetah to India.

About Cheetahs

- The cheetah is one of the oldest of the big cat species, with ancestors that can be traced back more than five million years to the Miocene era.
- The cheetah is also the world's fastest land mammal that lives in Africa and Asia.
- Cheetah is the only large carnivore to have become extinct in Independent India.
- Cheetah has been an integral part of Indian ecosystems, a major evolutionary force, and an important cultural heritage.
- Their restoration will likely result in better conservation of open forest, grassland, and scrub ecosystems for which they will serve as a flagship species.
- IUCN status:
 - African Cheetah: Vulnerable
 - Asiatic Cheetah: Critically Endangered.

About Tiger Census Report

- The **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)** in collaboration with the State Forest Departments, Conservation NGOs and coordinated by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), conducts a National assessment for the "Status of Tigers, Co-predators, Prey and their Habitat" every four years since 2006
- In 2018 and 2019, the 4th cycle of Tiger Estimation was conducted in India. Before this, 3 other cycles of assessment have already been held, of which, 2006 report was peer-reviewed by International experts and the **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**
- The main objective of reviewing the status of Tigers in the country every four years was to ensure that the balance between forest and wildlife is not disrupted. If Tigers were to extinguish it would severely affect the forest and cycle of nature

- The All India Tiger Estimation done quadrennially is steered by the National Tiger Conservation Authority with technical backstopping from the Wildlife Institute of India and implemented by State Forest Departments and partners

Status of Tigers in India - Findings Based on Census Report 2018

- **As of 2019, India's Tiger population stands at a total of 2967 which is 70 percent of the global tiger population**
- In 2006, the count of Tigers in the country was 1411 and with 2967 Tigers by 2019, **India successfully fulfilled its resolve of doubling tiger numbers, made at St. Petersburg in 2010, much before the target year of 2022**
- The states with the maximum Tiger population included:
 - Madhya Pradesh - 526
 - Karnataka - 524
 - Uttarakhand - 442
 - Maharashtra - 312
- It can also be assumed that **India has 75% of the global population of Tigers**
- While **Tamil Nadu's Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve registered maximum improvement** since the 2014 census, **Dampa Reserve in Mizoram and Rajaji Reserve in Uttarakhand had the least Tiger count**
- **Madhya Pradesh's Pench Sanctuary and Kerala's Periyar sanctuary** emerged as the **best-managed tiger reserves in the country**
- **Andhra Pradesh, Mizoram and Chattisgarh saw a decline in the number of Tigers since 2014.** While the count of other states was either constant or showed a positive trend
- On comparing the data from all four cycles, there has been a constant increase in the count of these striped wildcats after every census. Given below is the total count from all the four Census Reports:
 - 2006 -1,411
 - 2010 - 1,706
 - 2014 - 2,226
 - 2018 - 2,967

Measures Taken for Tiger Conservation

India and other countries have taken various measures for the conservation of Tigers. Given below are a few such measures:

1. **Project Tiger** – This was launched on April 1, 1973 , and an important movement aimed at the Wildlife conservation of tiger in India.
2. **Global Tiger Initiative** – It was launched in 2008 as a global alliance of governments, international organizations, civil society, the conservation and scientific communities and the private sector, with the aim of working together to save wild tigers from extinction
3. Formation of the **Global Tiger Initiative Council (GTIC)** with two arms – the Global Tiger Forum (GTF) and the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP)
4. More wildlife sanctuaries have been set up across the world to create a safe habitat for the striped wildcat

Puneet Bhatia

NAMASTE SCHEME



Why in the news?

- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is now preparing to undertake a nationwide survey to enumerate all people engaged in hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks, **an activity that has led to at least 351 deaths since 2017.**
- Ministry officials said that the enumeration exercise, soon to be conducted across 500 AMRUT (Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation) cities, is part of the Union government's **National Action Plan for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem (NAMASTE)**, which will streamline the process of rehabilitating sanitation workers and eventually

merge with and replace the Self-Employment Scheme for the Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS), which was started in 2007.

Features of the Scheme

The Government has formulated a scheme “National Action Plan for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem (NAMASTE)”. The NAMASTE project is a joint project of **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** and the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs**.

The project aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- Zero fatalities in sanitation work in India.
- All sanitation work to be performed by skilled workers.
- No sanitation workers should come in direct contact with human fecal matter.
- Sanitation workers are to be collectivized into SHGs and are empowered to run sanitation enterprises.
- All Sewer and Septic tank sanitation workers (SSWs) have access to alternative livelihoods.
- Strengthened supervisory and monitoring systems at national, state and ULB levels to ensure enforcement and monitoring of safe sanitation work.
- Increased awareness amongst sanitation services seekers (individuals and institutions) to seek services from registered and skilled sanitation workers.

Other benefits:

- Capital subsidies of upto 5 lakh on sanitation machinery costing upto 15 lakh
- Interest subsidies on loans, where interest rates will be capped between 4-6% for beneficiaries.

The scheme might be a turning point for the fate of people who are employed in this industry and faces not just the physical exploitation, but also the social (in the form of caste) and economic exploitation.

Samarth singh

