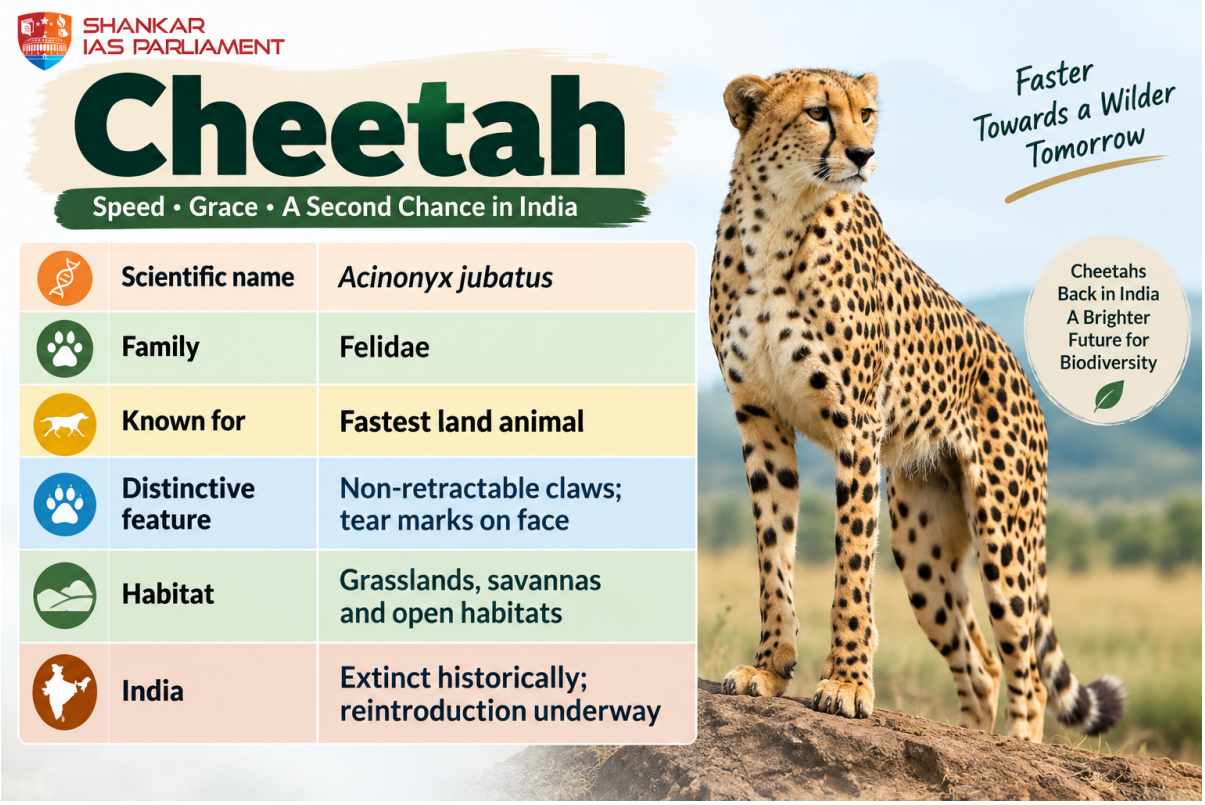
India’s Cheetah Population in 2026

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | Environment*

Why in News?

Recently, Kuno National Park released the “Four Years of Cheetahs in India – A Status Review”, covering the period from September 17, 2022 to September 17, 2026.



- **Population Numbers and Locations**
  - Total cheetah population as of September 2026 – 52 individuals.
  - India-born individuals – 32 cubs and juveniles.
- **Distribution**
  - Kuno National Park (Sheopur, Madhya Pradesh) – 49 cheetahs.
  - Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary (Madhya Pradesh) – 3 cheetahs.
- **Release status in Kuno –** Of the 49 cheetahs, 17 are free-ranging in the wild, while 32 remain in soft-release bomas, including 19 cubs under one year of age.
- **Source Countries –** Founder stock includes cheetahs from Namibia and South Africa, with recent additions from Botswana.
- **Key Translocation Batches**
  - **September 2022 –** First translocation from Namibia, marking the project

launch.
    - **February 2023 –** Twelve cheetahs from South Africa were introduced to Kuno National Park.
    - **Feb 2026 –** 9 cheetahs from Botswana introduced to improve genetic diversity.
- **Objective –** To re-establish the cheetah population in India following local extinction and to restore grassland and open forest ecosystems.
- **Global significance –** This initiative is promoted as the **world's first intercontinental translocation of a large wild carnivore.**
- **Current phase –** The project is in a phase of consolidation and expansion, with emphasis on cub survival, metapopulation management, and identification of new release sites.
- **Habitat Expansion –** Protected habitat under integrated management encompasses approximately 3,428 square kilometers, including Kuno National Park and Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary.
- **Identified future release sites**
    - Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary (MP).
    - Banni Grasslands (Gujarat).

Reference

[DD News | India’s Cheetah Population]