News: The Supreme Court on Tuesday lifted its seven-year stay on a proposal to introduce African cheetahs from Namibia into the Indian habitat on an experimental basis. The plan was to revive the Indian cheetah population.

Background

- India’s last spotted cheetah died in 1947 and the animal was declared extinct in the country in 1952.

- In May 2012, the top court had stalled the plan to initiate the foreign cheetahs into the Kuno-Palpur Wildlife Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh fearing they may come into conflict with a parallel and a much-delayed project to reintroduce lions into the same sanctuary.

- The court was also worried whether the African cheetahs would find the sanctuary a favourable clime as far as abundance of prey is concerned.

Arrangements made by SC

- The SC was hearing a petition filed by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) seeking permission for the introduction of African Cheetah from Namibia.

- But the Bench made sure that the right precautions are taken.

- It set up a three-member committee, comprising former Director of Wildlife of India, DG of Wildlife of India, and DIG, Wildlife, Ministry of Environment and Forests, to ‘guide’ the NTCA.
• It also directed the committee to **file a progress report every four months**.

• The Supreme Court made it clear that a proper survey should be done to identify the best possible habitat for the cheetahs. Every effort should be taken to ensure that they adapt to the Indian conditions. **The committee would help, advise and monitor the NTCA on these issues.**

• The **action of the introduction** of the animal would be **left to the NTCA’s discretion**. The court order notwithstanding, the actual process of translocation might be long-drawn.