

Environment & forest ministry to be split

Chetan Chauhan

■ chetan@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The National Board for Wildlife headed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Thursday decided to divide the Environment and Forest ministry into two departments — one for environment and another for forests and wildlife.

There has been a long demand by wildlife conserva-

tionists that forests and wildlife should be separate departments headed by an Indian Forest Service official.

Forests cover about 23 per cent of India's geographical area and have one of the richest reserves of mineral wealth.

But, most civil society groups believe that because of poor forest and wildlife management many of these areas are in the bad shape.

"The PM also approved min-

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BETTER MANAGEMENT**

istry's proposal for wildlife management policy on the lines of environment policy," a board member said.

Apart from it, the ministry

will also come up with comprehensive scheme to protect all species listed as endangered under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

Environment and Forest minister Jairam Ramesh also briefed the PM about the progress of the project to import Cheetahs from Africa and release them in wild.

The ministry is conducting a feasibility study in four states — Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat,

Rajasthan and Chattisgarh — to find appropriate location to release the animals, which went extinct from India more than 30 years ago.

The National Tiger Conservation Authority made a presentation on status of tiger population in India and efforts made by the ministry to protect the animal, listed as most endangered for extinction by international NGO WWF in 2010.