



Union Environment Minister Shri Bhupender Yadav welcomes 9 Cheetahs from Botswana, at Kuno National Park

India's thriving Cheetah population reaches 48, including 28 India-born cubs

Posted On: 28 FEB 2026 3:12PM by PIB Delhi

On February 28, 2026, Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Bhupender Yadav, released nine cheetahs received from Botswana into quarantine enclosures at Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh. The animals will undergo an acclimatisation and health monitoring phase before their gradual release into the larger landscape.

In a social media post on 'X', Shri Yadav announced the arrival of nine cheetahs from Botswana — 6 females and 3 males — at Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park.

Adding to the purrs in Kuno!

After eight cheetahs from Namibia were first reintroduced to India on September 17, 2022, and 12 were brought from South Africa in February 2023, I am thrilled to announce the arrival of nine cheetahs from Botswana — 6 females and 3 males — at Madhya... pic.twitter.com/RPXknl3yWF

— Bhupender Yadav (@byadavbjp) February 28, 2026

The Minister informed that under the environmentally-conscious leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Project Cheetah has been a great success. India now has a thriving population of 48 cheetahs, including 28 India-born cubs.

The Journey

In December 2024, the Government of India initiated formal discussions with the Government of the Republic of Botswana for sourcing cheetahs, to further strengthen Project Cheetah, India's flagship wildlife restoration programme. The proposal was formally advanced by Shri Bhupender Yadav, in consultation with Mr. Boipuso Wynter Mmolotsi, Minister of Environment and Tourism, Republic of Botswana.

Botswana agreed to partner with India, considering India's comprehensive Action Plan for Cheetah Reintroduction. The collaboration underscores a shared commitment to strengthening global cheetah conservation efforts and creating an additional secure population of the species outside its traditional African range, increasing their long-term resilience.

To operationalise the partnership, an Indian delegation visited Botswana in September 2025. The visit focused on mapping out the operational modalities, transport logistics, and regulatory clearances in line with international wildlife translocation standards. Following due scientific assessment, eight cheetahs were identified and captured from the Ghanzi region of Botswana. The cheetahs were subsequently transported approximately 700 kilometres by road to Gaborone under continuous veterinary supervision.

In November 2025, during the visit of President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu, to Botswana, the eight cheetahs were formally handed over to the Government of India. They were released into quarantine enclosures at Mokolodi Nature Reserve.

An Indian delegation visited Botswana later in November 2025 to review quarantine arrangements, assess enclosure conditions, and ensure readiness for international transfer. In December 2025, a Botswana delegation visited India to review final logistical preparations and to observe ongoing cheetah conservation efforts at Kuno National Park, Madhya Pradesh.

On February 27, 2026, the cheetahs were transported from Mokolodi Nature Reserve to Gaborone Airport. With the support of the Indian Air Force, the animals were airlifted to Gwalior, India, in a controlled and monitored environment to ensure their safety and well-being throughout the journey. Upon arrival in India, the cheetahs were transferred by helicopter to Kuno National Park.

In another social media post, Shri Yadav extended his appreciation to the Indian Air Force for the seamless coordination, precision flying, and unwavering commitment displayed by the IAF ensured the safe journey of these animals to India.

India's sky high efforts for cheetahs 🐆 🇮🇳 !

The cheetahs from Botswana were extended a smooth air ride to India by IAF's C17 Globemaster from 81 squadron (the Skylords), and further to Kuno by IAF's helicopters.

The seamless coordination, precision flying, and unwavering... pic.twitter.com/WKFpsfLmgS

— Bhupender Yadav (@byadavbjp) February 28, 2026

Project Cheetah continues to progress with strengthened global partnerships and robust scientific oversight. The successful arrival of the Botswana cheetahs reinforces India's resolve to create a sustainable, free-ranging cheetah population and to contribute meaningfully to global conservation efforts.

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(Release ID: 2233898) Visitor Counter : 804

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