

International Big Cat Alliance

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International Big Cat Alliance: India's Global Leadership in Wildlife Conservation

Context:

India has officially been designated as the **Headquarters and Secretariat** of the *International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)*, following a recent agreement signed between the Central Government and IBCA. This development strengthens India's leadership in global wildlife conservation efforts.

About International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)

- IBCA is an international coalition of **96 countries** — including both **big cat range countries and non-range countries** — committed to the conservation of **seven big cat species** and their habitats.
 - The concept of IBCA was first proposed by **India's Prime Minister in 2019** and was officially launched on **April 9, 2023**, marking the **50th anniversary of Project Tiger**.
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Objectives of IBCA

- To combat **illegal wildlife trade** involving the seven big cats.
 - To strengthen the **protection and conservation** of big cat habitats.
 - To mobilize **financial and technical resources** for conservation activities.
 - To build international cooperation on conservation practices, research, and policy exchange.
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Focus Species

IBCA concentrates on the conservation of the following seven species:
Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Puma, Jaguar, and Cheetah.

Among these, **five species are found in India:**
Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, and Cheetah.

Institutional Framework

- **Depository Authority:** *Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India.*
 - **Membership:** Open to all **United Nations member states**. Initial members include:
 - Republic of **India**
 - Republic of **Nicaragua**
 - Kingdom of **Eswatini**
 - Federal Republic of **Somalia**
 - Republic of **Liberia**
 - **Partner Organizations:** Nine global organizations are associated as IBCA partners.
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Governance Structure

- The alliance functions through:
 - An **Assembly of Members**
 - A **Standing Committee**
 - A **Secretariat** (hosted by India)

- The structure is modeled on the **International Solar Alliance (ISA)** framework.
 - The **Director-General (DG)** is appointed by the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**.
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Need for IBCA

- Big cat populations face sharp decline due to:
 - **Habitat loss**
 - **Poaching and illegal wildlife trade**
 - **Human-wildlife conflict**
 - **Climate change**
 - A coordinated **global conservation effort** is essential to reverse these trends and stabilize their populations.
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Financial Commitment

- India has committed **₹150 crore (2023-2028)** to support IBCA operations.
 - Additional funding is being explored via **bilateral, multilateral, and donor agency partnerships**.
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Role in Global Conservation

- **Collaborative Platform:** Brings together **governments, researchers, conservationists, and policymakers**.
- **Knowledge Sharing:** Promotes the exchange of expertise in **anti-poaching, habitat management, and ecological restoration**.

- **Funding Support:** Functions as a **pooled global funding mechanism** for conservation projects.
 - **Capacity Building:** Offers **technical guidance and scientific research support** to under-resourced nations.
 - **Strengthening Global Treaties:** Complements existing agreements like:
 - **CITES** (*Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species*)
 - **CMS** (*Convention on Migratory Species*)
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Ecological Significance

- Big cats are **apex predators**, and their conservation ensures:
 - **Biodiversity preservation**
 - **Ecosystem stability**
 - **Climate resilience**
 - IBCA-backed conservation of forests and grasslands aids in:
 - **Carbon sequestration**
 - **Climate adaptation**
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National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)

- **Established:** 2005, following **Tiger Task Force** recommendations.
- Granted statutory authority under **Section 38L, Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act, 2006**.

- Ensures:
 - Central accountability in **tiger reserve management**.
 - Support for **local livelihoods** around protected areas.
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India's Conservation Initiatives for Big Cats

- **Project Tiger** (1973) — Flagship tiger conservation program.
- **Asiatic Lion Conservation Project** — Focused on Gir's unique lion population.
- **Project Snow Leopard** — Protects the high-altitude snow leopard habitat.
- **Project Cheetah** — Aims at reintroducing and conserving cheetahs in India.
- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972** — Legislative backbone for wildlife conservation.
- **National Board for Wildlife (NBWL)** — Apex advisory body for wildlife protection.

