



**KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY**  
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# International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)

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**Context:** India has urged all big cat range nations to join the **International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)** and also invited them to participate in the **Global Big Cats Summit** to be hosted in New Delhi in 2026. This strengthens India's leadership in global wildlife conservation diplomacy.

## About IBCA

### Genesis and Purpose

**Launched in 2023** by India as a global platform dedicated to the conservation of **seven big cat species**:

oTiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar and Puma.

Seeks to foster **research, capacity building, technology transfer, and financial assistance** among participating countries.

### Organizational Structure

**Nature:** A multi-country, multi-agency coalition bringing together:

o**95 big cat range countries**,

o**non-range countries** interested in conservation,

o**global scientific institutions**, private sector entities and conservation NGOs.

**Secretariat:** Located in **New Delhi, India**, reinforcing India's role as a global conservation hub.

### Membership:

o**18 member countries** + 3 observer countries currently.

oAll **UN member states** are eligible to join.

### Governance:

o**IBCA Assembly** is the apex decision-making body, comprising nominated representatives from each member country.

oFunctions include approving action plans, conservation strategies and financial mechanisms.

### Significance of Big Cats

### Presence in India

India is home to **five of the seven big cat species**:

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- Tiger
- Lion
- Leopard
- Snow Leopard
- Cheetah

## Ecological and Environmental Significance

- **Apex predators** that regulate prey populations and maintain **trophic balance**.
- **Keystone species** ensuring:
  - prevention of excessive grazing,
  - protection of grasslands and forest regeneration,
  - maintaining habitat integrity and biodiversity.
- **Flagship species** for landscape-level conservation, attracting global funding and ecological attention.
- **Climate significance:** Healthy big-cat habitats like forests and grasslands act as **major carbon sinks**, aiding climate mitigation goals.

## Behavioural Traits

- Most big cats are **solitary** hunters.
- **Lions** are an exception, living in social groups known as **prides**.

## Threats to Big Cats

- **Habitat loss and fragmentation** due to deforestation, infrastructure expansion, and urbanisation.
- **Human–wildlife conflicts** stemming from encroachment into wildlife corridors.
- **Poaching and illegal wildlife trade**, especially for skins and body parts.
- **Genetic isolation** due to shrinking, disconnected habitats.
- **Climate change** altering prey availability and habitat suitability.

## Why IBCA Matters for India

- Reinforces India's global image as the **champion of big cat conservation** after successes such as:
  - doubling tiger population,
  - increasing Asiatic lion numbers,
  - reintroduction of the cheetah.
- Offers a platform for **South-South cooperation**, especially with Africa and Latin America.
- Supports access to **pooled funds, expertise, and technology** to address common threats.