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INTERNATIONAL BIG CAT ALLIANCE (IBCA)

THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF THE "INTERNATIONAL BIG CAT ALLIANCE (IBCA)". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "ENVIRONMENT" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The establishment of the International Big Cats Alliance (IBCA), which would have its headquarters in India and receive a one-time financial commitment of Rs. 150 crore for a period of five years, from 2023–2027, has been authorised by the Union Cabinet. IBCA's Framework of Agreement has been substantially modelled after the International Solar Alliance.

INTERNATIONAL BIG CAT ALLIANCE

- At the **Global Tiger Day gathering in 2019**, Prime Minister Modi appealed to leaders worldwide to collaborate in combating poaching in Asia. This appeal was reiterated on April 9, 2023, during the commemoration of **India's Project Tiger's 50th anniversary**, where he announced the initiation of the International Big Cat Alliance.
- The **International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)** is a wide-ranging coalition bringing together numerous countries, organisations, and experts dedicated to the conservation of big cats. This multilateral effort aims to **facilitate cooperation between various stakeholders, fostering knowledge sharing, capacity building, and resource support for big cat conservation efforts around the globe.**
- **Goal:** The primary objective of the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) is to lead initiatives dedicated to the safeguarding and preservation of the **seven major big cat species**, namely the **tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, puma, jaguar, and cheetah.**
- **Membership:** The alliance will extend membership opportunities to 96 countries categorised as "range" nations, signifying countries that encompass the native habitats of the seven major big cat species.

A MULTIFACETED APPROACH:

IBCA adopts a multifaceted approach to achieving its goals. This includes:

- **Knowledge sharing:** Facilitating the exchange of best practices and technical expertise among member countries.
- **Capacity building:** Equipping member states with the resources and skills needed for effective big cat conservation.

- **Networking:** Building strong connections between individuals and organisations working towards the same goal.
- **Advocacy:** Raising awareness and promoting policies that support big cat conservation.
- **Financial and resource support:** Providing financial assistance and essential resources for conservation initiatives.
- **Research and technical support:** Facilitating research and technical expertise to support effective conservation strategies.
- **Education and awareness:** Educating the public and fostering a sense of responsibility towards big cat conservation.

BUILDING A COLLABORATIVE PLATFORM:

IBCA envisions a collaborative platform that fosters:

- **Sharing of best practices:** Disseminating knowledge about the most effective methods for big cat conservation.
- **Centralised knowledge base:** Providing access to a central repository of technical expertise and resources.
- **Strengthening existing initiatives:** Bolstering existing species-specific conservation efforts and transnational collaborations.
- **Addressing climate change:** Mitigating the harmful effects of climate change on big cat populations and their habitats.

HOLISTIC AND INCLUSIVE CONSERVATION:

IBCA recognises the crucial role of integrating biodiversity policies with sustainable development goals (SDGs). This holistic approach ensures that conservation efforts are inclusive and address the needs of local communities alongside the well-being of big cats. By advocating for policies that align conservation efforts with local needs, IBCA strives to achieve sustainable and long-term conservation success.

THE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE OF IBCA

The International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) employs a well-defined governance structure to ensure effective decision-making and implementation of its goals. This structure **consists of three key components:**

General Assembly: This body comprises representatives from all member countries of the alliance. They serve as the ultimate authority, collectively overseeing the organisation's direction.

Council: This smaller group, composed of 7 to 15 elected member countries, holds responsibility for advising the General Assembly and guiding the alliance's strategic direction. Their five-year terms ensure continuity and provide members with opportunities to contribute significantly.

Secretariat: This permanent administrative body handles the day-to-day operations of IBCA. The Secretary-General, appointed by the General Assembly upon the Council's recommendation, leads the Secretariat and coordinates its activities.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE IBCA:

The International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) holds immense importance for several reasons:

- **Global Leadership:** IBCA serves as a demonstrative step in assuming a leadership role for big cat conservation. It brings together a diverse range of countries and stakeholders on a common platform, fostering collaboration and unified action.
- **Sustainable Resource Management:** The Alliance encourages the sustainable use of natural resources, preserving their long-term sustainability for future generations. Additionally, it addresses the challenges of climate change, mitigating its negative impacts on big cat populations and their habitats.
- **Holistic Benefits:** By protecting big cats and their habitats, IBCA contributes to natural climate adaptation. This, in turn, enhances water and food security for the thousands of communities residing within these ecosystems, promoting their well-being.
- **International Cooperation:** IBCA fosters cooperation among countries for mutual benefit. This collaborative approach strengthens the global fight against threats to big cats and promotes long-term conservation efforts.
- **Sustainable Future:** The Alliance paves the way for a future where natural ecosystems flourish. By emphasising their value, IBCA encourages integrating their conservation into economic and development policies, ensuring their sustained health for generations to come.

PRELIMS PRACTISE QUESTIONS

Q1. Among the following Tiger Reserves, which one has the largest area under “Critical Tiger Habitat”? (UPSC Prelims-2020)

- (a) Corbett
- (b) Ranthambore
- (c) Nagarjunasagar-Srisailem
- (d) Sundarbans

Answer: C

Q2. Consider the following statements:

- (a) The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was adopted at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992.
- (b) The Leopard seal is considered one of the seven big cats.
- (c) Snow Leopards are also known as “ghosts of the mountains”.
- (d) Teardrop markings under the eyes are a distinctive feature of Cheetah.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All four

ANSWER: C

MAINS PRACTISE QUESTION

Q1. Explain the importance of maintaining genetic diversity within big cat populations for long-term conservation success. How can conservationists address genetic challenges in their efforts to protect these species?

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