

INTERNATIONAL BIG CAT ALLIANCE – ENVIRONMENT

Big Cat Conservation Gets Boost as India Grants Privileges to International Alliance. India has granted special legal status to the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA), a global conservation body it initiated and hosts. This move, under the UN (Privileges and Immunities) Act of 1947, solidifies India's leadership and ensures the alliance's independent functioning.

India Grants Special Status to the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)

Recent Government Decision and Its Purpose

Key Action – The Government of India has officially extended privileges and immunities to the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA).

Legal Framework – This status was granted under the provisions of the United Nations (Privileges and Immunities) Act, 1947.

Reason for the Decision – This move is a direct follow-up to the Host Country Agreement that was signed between the Government of India and the IBCA, which formalized the establishment of the alliance's headquarters in India.

About the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)

Nature of the Organization – The IBCA is a treaty-based inter-governmental organization specifically created for the conservation of big cats and their habitats.

Launch Details – It was officially announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in April 2023.

Core Objective – The primary goal is to create a global network that promotes collaboration and the sharing of best practices in wildlife conservation.

Global Membership – It is a comprehensive alliance that brings together:

1. 95 range and non-range countries.
2. International and national conservation organizations.
3. Corporate entities.
4. Scientific partners and institutions.

Headquarters – A Headquarters Agreement has been signed, formally designating India as the host country for the IBCA's Headquarters and Secretariat.

Conservation Focus – The alliance is dedicated to the conservation of seven specific big cat species – tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, cheetah, jaguar, and puma.

Details of the Seven Big Cats Covered by IBCA

1. Tiger

- a. **Habitat** – Forests, Grasslands, and Mangroves.
- b. **Range** – India, Southeast Asia, and the Siberian region of Russia.
- c. **IUCN Status** – Endangered.

2. Lion

- a. **Habitat** – Grasslands, savannahs, and scrublands.
- b. **Range** – Primarily Africa, with a distinct population in the Gir Forest of Gujarat, India.
- c. **IUCN Status** – Vulnerable.

3. Leopard

- a. **Habitat** – Forests, mountains, and savannahs.
- b. **Range** – Widespread across Africa, South Asia, and parts of East and Central Asia.
- c. **IUCN Status** – Vulnerable.

4. Snow Leopard

- a. **Habitat** – High-altitude mountains, typically between 3,000 to 5,500 meters.
- b. **Range** – Central Asia, the Himalayas, and the Tibetan Plateau.
- c. **IUCN Status** – Vulnerable.

5. Cheetah

- a. **Habitat** – Grasslands and open savannahs.
 - b. **Range** – Primarily Africa, with a reintroduced population in India's Kuno National Park.
 - c. **IUCN Status** – Vulnerable (African) and Critically Endangered (Asian).
6. **Jaguar**
- a. **Habitat** – Tropical rainforests, wetlands, and grasslands.
 - b. **Range** – Central and South America, with the Amazon basin being its stronghold.
 - c. **IUCN Status** – Near Threatened.
7. **Puma (Cougar)**
- a. **Habitat** – Extremely adaptable, found in mountains, forests, grasslands, and deserts.
 - b. **Range** – Has the widest range among big cats, stretching from North America to South America.
 - c. **IUCN Status** – Least Concern.

First Assembly of the IBCA (June 2025, New Delhi)

Inaugural Meeting – The first-ever assembly of the IBCA was held in New Delhi in June 2025.

Leadership – The assembly was chaired by Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav.

International Participation: It was attended by ministerial delegations from nine countries: Bhutan, Cambodia, Eswatini, Guinea, India, Liberia, Suriname, Somalia, and Kazakhstan.

Key Decisions Taken – The assembly formally ratified several foundational documents, including:

1. The Headquarters Agreement with India.
2. The official Workplan.
3. The Rules of Procedure.
4. The Financial Regulations for the alliance.

Significance of Granting Privileges and Immunity to IBCA

Strengthens India's Leadership – This move solidifies India's role as the host country and a proactive leader in global wildlife conservation diplomacy.

Ensures Effective Functioning – The special status will enable the IBCA to function effectively and independently, promoting international cooperation, knowledge exchange, and capacity building focused on big cat conservation.

Reinforces India's Commitment – It serves as a strong signal of India's unwavering commitment to biodiversity protection and its active participation in global environmental governance.

About the United Nations (Privileges and Immunities) Act, 1947

Legal Purpose – This Act is the domestic legislation that gives legal effect to the UN's Convention on Privileges and Immunities within India.

Primary Goal – Its main function is to ensure that designated international organizations can operate independently and without local interference.

Eligible Bodies – The privileges apply to the United Nations, its specialized agencies, and other inter-governmental organizations that are officially notified by the Government of India.

Effect of the Privileges – Granting this status provides an organization with several key benefits that ensure its operational autonomy:

1. Immunity from legal proceedings.
2. Exemption from taxation.
3. Exemption from certain local regulations.
4. Overall diplomatic protection and smooth functioning within the host country.

Source: <https://www.newsonair.gov.in/big-cat-conservation-gets-boost-as-india-grants-privileges-to-international-alliance/>