Big Cat Conservation

Prelims: Current events of national importance | Conservation

Why in News?

Recently, Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change inaugurated the 'Lion' Species Spotlight Event at Sasan Gir, Gujarat.

Precursor to - International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) Summit

IBCA

- ***Launched -*** *Officially launched by India on April 9, 2023, and entered into force as an international organization in early 2025.*
- ***Headquarters -*** *India.*
- ***Tagline -*** *"Save Big Cats, Save Humanity, Save Ecosystem*
- ***Target Species -*** *Aims to protect 7 iconic big cats: Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar, and Puma.*

Highlights of the Event

- **Focus -** Pre-summit series highlighting the global conservation status of big cats, with a particular focus on India's successful landscape-based conservation models.
- **New Natural Habitats -** The government highlighted the development of Barda Wildlife Sanctuary (Gujarat) as a critical new site for the natural dispersal of Asiatic lions to ease habitat pressure in the Gir landscape.
- **Infrastructure Initiatives -** Mention was made of the upcoming National Wildlife Referral Centre in Junagadh, Gujarat, to strengthen big cat disease diagnostics and healthcare management.

Asiatic Lion Status in India

- **Population Trends -** According to the 16th Lion Population Estimation (2025), the population of Asiatic lions in the Greater Gir Landscape has risen to 891 individuals, marking a 32% increase compared to 2020.
- **Distribution -** Over the last decade, their geographic distribution range has expanded by nearly 60% across the Saurashtra region. Amreli district currently holds the highest concentration of lions in the landscape.
- **Legal Protection Status - Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Schedule-I (highest legal protection).
    - **CITES:** Appendix-I.
    - **IUCN Red List:** Endangered.

Project Lion –

- **Launched in** - 2020 on India's 74th Independence Day.
- **Approach -** Adopts a comprehensive, long-term, landscape-based approach rather than focusing purely on isolated protected pockets.
- **Key Components -** Focuses on habitat restoration, managing human-wildlife interactions, building ecological resilience, and setting up robust community-based eco-development models.

For Reference - PIB | IAS Parliament

