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News: Protecting the Great Indian Bustard

Great Indian Bustard (GIB)

- GIB is also called **Indian Bustard** and **Ghorad**.
- It is also the **state bird of Rajasthan**.
- GIB is the **heaviest flying bird weighs up to 15 kg** and grows up to 1 metre high.
- Most **commonly arid and semi-arid grasslands**, open country with shrub. **They normally avoid irrigated areas**.
- GIB is also **endemic to Indian Sub-continent**.
- This **omnivorous bird** is considered as **a flagship species in grassland ecology**.
- They have poor frontal vision.
- GIBs are the largest among the fur bustard species in India, the others being MacQueen's bustard, lesser Florican and the Bengal Florican.
- These birds are often found associated in the **same habitat as Blackbuck**.
- GIB is found majorly in **Central and Western India and Eastern Pakistan**.

- The GIB lays one egg every 1-2 years and the success rate of these eggs is 60-70 per cent. However, this rate has been reduced to 40-50% due to predators like fox and dogs.
- Population in India is reduced to 150 approximately in 2018. Out of them, 122 are in Rajasthan.
- Recent survey shows that only four female GIBs are left in Gujarat.
- IUCN Status of Great Indian Bustard is Critically Endangered.
- It is also protected under Appendix I of CITES Schedules and Schedule I of Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
- Threats faced include developmental projects leading to collision led deaths, Hunting, Loss of Eggs, Noise pollution makes the mating call impossible and Habitat destruction.
- Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary/ Jawaharlal Nehru Bustard Sanctuary, Project Great Indian Bustard and Project Godawan by Rajasthan Gov are intended to protect Great Indian Bustard.
- It is also protected in Rollapadu Wildlife Sanctuary in Andhra Pradesh and Karera Wildlife Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh.
- The government has recently released Rs 33 crore to a project, titled "Habitat Improvement and Conservation Breeding of Great Indian Bustard-An Integrated Approach", for five years from the Compensatory Afforestation Fund

Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) for conservation and breeding of the GIB.

- In 2015, the Union Government launched the GIB species recovery programme, under which the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and Rajasthan forest department have jointly setup conservation breeding centres, where GIB eggs harvested from the wild are incubated artificially, and hatchings raised in a controlled environment.
- Until 2020, 9 eggs have been hatched.
- The plan is to create a population that can act as insurance against the threat of extinction and to release the third generation of these captive-bred birds.
- The World Conservation Congress in its session held in November 2004 had urged the Government of India to initiate action to conserve the species of bustards by launching a specific 'Project Bustard' on the lines of Project Tiger.
- Recently, the government informed Rajya Sabha that there were no GIBs in the Kutch Bustard Sanctuary in Gujarat.

M.K. Ranjitsinh & Others vs Union of India & Others

- The Supreme Court in *M.K. Ranjitsinh & Others vs Union of India & Others*, said that, in all cases where the overhead lines in power projects exist, the governments of Rajasthan and Gujarat shall take steps forthwith to install bird

diverters pending consideration of the conversion of overhead cables into underground power lines.

- In protecting the birds, the Court has affirmed and emphasised the **biocentric values of ecopreservation**.
- The philosophy of biocentrism holds that the **natural environment has its own set of rights which is independent of its ability to be exploited by or to be useful to humans**.
- Biocentrism often comes into conflict with its contrarian philosophy, namely **anthropocentrism**.
- Anthropocentrism argues that **of all the species on earth humans are the most significant** and that all other resources on earth may be justifiably exploited for the benefit of human beings. Example: Snail darter fish case in USA.