



Great Indian Bustards

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Why in News

Recently, a group of hunters shot down two **Great Indian Bustards (GIBs)** in a protected area of southern Punjab's Cholistan in Pakistan.



Key Points

- **About:**
 - The **Great Indian Bustard (GIB)**, the **State bird of Rajasthan**, is considered India's most critically endangered bird.
 - It is considered the **flagship grassland species**, representing the health of the grassland ecology.
 - Its population is confined mostly to **Rajasthan and Gujarat**. Small populations occur in **Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh**.
 - The bird is under constant threats due to **collision/electrocution** with power transmission lines, **hunting** (still prevalent in Pakistan), **habitat loss** and alteration as a result of widespread agricultural expansion, etc.
- **Protection Status:**
 - **International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List: Critically Endangered**
 - **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES): Appendix 1**
 - **Convention on Migratory Species (CMS): Appendix I**
 - **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule 1**
- **India's Concerns:**
 - The grassland habitat in the Cholistan desert, where the GIBs were killed, is very similar to the habitat in **Rajasthan's Desert National Park (DNP)**, where the GIB's last remnant wild population is found.
 - DNP is situated near the towns of Jaisalmer and Barmer, forming a part of the mighty **Thar desert**.
 - It was declared as a National Park in 1981 to protect the habitat of the Great Indian Bustard.
 - As Rajasthan shares the international border with Pakistan's Sindh and Punjab provinces, the birds will become an easy prey for the gun-toting poachers there.
 - The hunting of the rare bird will not only drastically reduce India's GIB population, but will also affect the desert ecosystem.
- **Government's Initiatives:**
 - It is kept under the **species recovery programme** under the **Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats** of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC).
 - The MoEFCC has also launched a program called '**Habitat Improvement and Conservation Breeding of Great Indian Bustard-An Integrated Approach**'.
The objective of the programme is to build up a captive population of Great Indian Bustards and to release the chicks in the wild for increasing the population.
 - Rajasthan government has launched '**Project Great Indian Bustard**' with an aim of constructing breeding enclosures for the species and developing infrastructure to reduce human pressure on its habitats.

Source: TH