

Project Great Indian Bustard (GIB)

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In news— Hearing a plea to protect the endangered bird Great Indian Bustard (GIB), the Supreme Court of India recently asked if a 'Project GIB', on the lines of 'Project Tiger', could be launched.

About Great Indian Bustard-

- GIBs are the **largest among the four bustard species found in India** – the other three being MacQueen's bustard, lesser florican and the Bengal florican.
- Being terrestrial birds, they spend most of their time on the ground with occasional flights to go from one part of their habitat to the other.
- It is **found mainly in Rajasthan and Gujarat**.
- Among the heaviest birds with flight, GIBs prefer grasslands as their habitats.
- The terrestrial birds spend most of their time on the ground, feeding on insects, lizards, grass seeds, etc.
- GIBs are considered the flagship bird species of grassland and hence barometers of the health of grassland ecosystems.
- Among the **biggest threats to the GIBs are overhead power transmission lines**. Due to their poor frontal vision, the birds can't spot the power lines from a distance, and are too heavy to change course when close. Thus, they collide with the cables and die.
- It has been categorised as critically endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Great Indian Bustard: Conservation efforts-

- The Supreme Court in April 2021 ordered that all overhead power transmission lines in core and potential

GIB habitats in Rajasthan and Gujarat should be made underground.

- The government has started 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
- Also, in 2015, the Centre had launched the GIB species recovery programme. Under this, the WII and Rajasthan forest department jointly set up breeding centres where GIB eggs harvested from the wild were incubated artificially.