Gujarat's Reintroduction Project on Grey Hornbill

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | Environment*

Why in News?

Recently, Grey Hornbill has recorded four consecutive years of successful breeding following its reintroduction in the Gir landscape.

- **Indian Grey Hornbill reintroduction programme** – The initiative was undertaken by the Gujarat Forest Department and its conservation partners.

- **Reintroduced in –** 2021
- **Source Population –** The birds were translocated from healthy hornbill populations in Gujarat's Aravalli forests after extensive habitat assessments confirmed that Gir shall provide suitable ecological conditions.
- **Phased Release** – A total of 40 hornbills was introduced to Gir in two distinct waves
  - **Phase I (2021–2022) –** 28 birds released.
  - **Phase II (2023) –** 12 birds released.
- The birds have adapted to the environment, secured territorial

boundaries, and bred successfully every single year since their initial release.

- **Telemetry Tracking –** 11 males were outfitted with satellite transmitters to monitor long-term daily ranging, territorial habits, and behavioural shifts.
- **Forest Preference –** The birds showed preference for Gir's native dry ***mixed deciduous and teak forests.***
- Birds dispersing outside the protected area frequently used orchards, water bodies, and areas close to human settlements.
- **Nest Selection** – Hornbills selected ***mature trees with large trunk girths*** for nesting, particularly *Sterculia urens* and *Terminalia bellirica.*
- **Dietary Base –** Fruits of banyan, peepal, karamda, and dhraman, supplemented by insects and other invertebrates.
- **Ecological role –** A long-distance seed disperser, helping regenerate forests by transporting seeds of fruit-bearing trees across large areas.
- **Cause of Disappearance –** Historical records suggest that hunting, rather than habitat degradation, was the primary reason for its disappearance.
- **Conservation Status**
  - **IUCN Red List –** Least Concern (LC).
  - **Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 –** Schedule II.

Gir National Park and Sanctuary – *Located in Gujarat, it is the sole global refuge of the wild Asiatic Lion (Panthera leo persica).*

Reference

The Hindu | Indian Grey Hornbill

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