Prelim Bits 23-07-2021 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

No Great Indian Bustards in Kutch Bustard Sanctuary

- The Central government informed that there were no Great Indian Bustards (GIB) in Kutch Bustard Sanctuary (KBS) in Gujarat.
- KBS near Naliya in Kutch district's Abdasa block is a tiny sanctuary notified in 1992 and spread over just 2 sqkm. But its eco-sensitive zone spread over 220 sqkm covers most of present-day core GIB habitat.
- Besides the KBS, Prajau, Bhanada and Kunathia-Bhachunda are important grasslands that are declared unclassified forests.
- Due to the barrier created by the power infrastructure on all its sides, sightings of GIB inside the KBS' notified area is becoming rare.
- **SC's intervention** - In April 2021, the Supreme Court ordered that all overhead power transmission lines in core and potential GIB habitats in Rajasthan and Gujarat should be undergrounded.
- The SC also formed a three-member committee to help power companies comply with the order.

Great Indian Bustards

- They are **terrestrial birds**, that spend most of their time on the ground with occasional flights.
- They are the largest among the four bustard species in India. (Other three - MacQueen's Bustard, Lesser Florican & Bengal Florican)
- GIBs' historic range included much of the Indian sub-continent but it has now shrunken to just 10% of it.
- Among the heaviest birds with flight, GIBs are the flagship bird species of grassland and hence barometers of the health of grassland ecosystems.
- **Threats**

    1. Overhead power transmission lines (Major Threat)
    2. Agriculture;
    3. Energy production & Mining;
    4. Transportation
    5. Invasive species.
    6. Change in the landscape by farmers, which otherwise used to remain fallow due to frequent droughts in Kutch.
    7. Cultivation of cotton and wheat instead of pulses and fodder.

- **Conservation Measures** - In 2015, the Central government launched the GIB species recovery program.
- Under this, the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and the Rajasthan forest department have jointly set up conservation breeding centres.
- In these centres, GIB eggs harvested from the wild are incubated artificially and hatchlings raised in controlled environment.
- To know more about Great Indian Bustards, click here.

Dying Declaration

- A special CBI court awarded life sentences to two policemen for the custodial death of a murder accused. The judgment relied heavily on the 'dying declaration' made by the victim prior to his death.
- **Section 32 of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872** deals with cases in which statement of relevant fact is made by a person who is dead or cannot be found.
- The law presumes that no person will meet their maker with a lie in their mouth, and so it accepts the veracity of the person's statement, dispensing with the requirements of oath and cross-examination.
- An exclusion of this dying declaration would also leave the court without a scrap of evidence.
- **Rules** - The general rule under Section 60 of the Act is that all oral evidence must be direct - he heard it, saw it or perceived it.
- The grounds of admission under a dying declaration have been based on two broad rules,
    1. The victim being generally the only principal eye-witness to the crime; and
    2. The sense of impending death, which creates a sanction equal to the obligation of an oath.
- **Reasons to set aside dying declaration** - Though a dying declaration is entitled to great weight, it is worthwhile to note that the accused has no power of cross-examination.
- This is why the courts say that the dying declaration be of such a nature as to inspire full confidence of the court in its correctness.
- **Duty of the Court** - The courts must check if the deceased's statement was a result of either tutoring, or prompting or a product of imagination.
- The Court must be further satisfied that the deceased was in a fit state of mind after a clear opportunity to observe and identify the assailant.
- The Supreme Court had noted that the dying declaration made through signs, gestures or by nods are admissible as evidence.
- But in the case of Orissa vs Parasuram Naik (1997), the accused was alleged

to have poured petrol on his wife's body and lit a fire causing extensive burns.
- It was held that the oral dying declaration cannot be accepted because there was no medical officer certifying that the deceased was medically fit to make a statement.
- **Recording of dying declarations** - Anyone can record the dying declaration of the deceased as per law. The law does not compulsorily require the presence of a Judicial or Executive Magistrate to record it.
- A dying declaration recorded by a Judicial or Executive Magistrate will muster additional strength to the prosecution case though.
- A dying declaration can form the sole basis of conviction. The rule requiring corroboration is merely a rule of prudence.
- It is not to be rejected, equally merely because it is a brief statement. On the contrary, the shortness of the statement itself guarantees truth.
- A dying declaration which suffers from infirmity cannot form the basis of conviction and merely because a dying declaration does not contain the details as to the occurrence.

Bhartiya Prakritik Krishi Padhati

- This centrally sponsored scheme is implemented under the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) scheme since 2020-21.
- This scheme aims to promote Natural Farming and traditional indigenous practices. It mainly emphasizes on,
    1. Promoting traditional indigenous practices which reduce externally purchased inputs;
    2. Exclusion of all synthetic chemical inputs;
    3. Promoting on-farm biomass recycling with major stress on biomass mulching, use of cow dung-urine formulations, plant-based preparations and
    4. Time to time working of soil for aeration (periodic soil aeration).
- Under BPKP, financial assistance of Rs 12200/ha for 3 years is provided for cluster formation, capacity building and continuous handholding by trained personnel, certification and residue analysis.

Tele-education Programme

- EDUSAT, India's first thematic satellite dedicated exclusively for educational services, had manifold objectives,
    - To supplement the curriculum-based teaching,
    - To impart effective teacher training,
    - To provide access to quality resource persons and new technologies.
- EDUSAT satellite was used extensively to cater to a wide range of interactive

educational delivery modes like one-way TV broadcast, video conferencing, computer conferencing, web-based instructions, etc.
- It provided connectivity to schools, colleges and higher levels of education and also supported non-formal education.
- EDUSAT Programme was implemented in three phases - pilot, semi-operational and operational phases.
- Tele-education networks established by ISRO under EDUSAT programme comprise two types of terminals - Satellite Interactive Terminals (SITs) and Receive Only Terminals (ROTs).
- EDUSAT (GSAT-3) satellite provided its services till September-2010, supporting Tele-education, Telemedicine and Village Resource Centres (VRC) projects of ISRO.

National Offshore Wind Energy Policy

- This Policy was notified by the Government in 2015 providing the basic framework for developing the offshore wind sector.
- [Offshore wind power or energy is the deployment of wind farms sited in bodies of water. It is the clean and renewable energy obtained by taking advantage of the force of the wind that is produced on high seas.
- In the high seas, offshore wind energy reaches a higher and more constant speed than on land due to the absence of barriers.]
- **Objective** of this Policy is to develop offshore wind energy in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) along the Indian coastline.
- [EEZ of the country includes area up to the seaward distance of 200 Nautical Miles from the baseline.]
- **Nodal Ministry** - Ministry of New and Renewable Energy will act as the nodal Ministry for overall monitoring of Offshore Wind Energy development in India.
- It will work in close coordination with other government entities for the Development and Use of Maritime Space within the EEZ of the country.
- **Nodal Agency** - National Institute of Wind Energy (NIWE), Chennai will be the nodal agency,
    1. To carryout resource assessment, surveys and studies in EEZ,
    2. Demarcate blocks and facilitate developers for setting up offshore wind energy farms.
- The Ministry set a target of 5.0 GW of offshore wind installations by 2022 and 30 GW by 2030.

Other initiatives

- Through NIWE, the Government has issued ‘Guidelines for Offshore Wind Power Assessment Studies and Surveys’ in 2018 to enable private investors

to carryout offshore wind resource assessment.

- Further, Government is carrying out offshore wind resource assessments through NIWE to validate the offshore wind resource potential in identified locations off the coast of Gujarat and Tamil Nadu.
- The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy has formulated a committee to finalize a roadmap for offshore wind development in the country.
- The Government has permitted Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) up to 100% under the automatic route for renewable energy projects, including offshore wind energy projects.

Catch the Rain Project

- Recently, the Ministry of Jal Shakti launched a campaign "Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain" (JSA:CTR) with the tag line "Catch the rain, where it falls, when it falls".
- This campaign was aimed at giving a nudge to the states and all stakeholders to create Rain Water Harvesting Structures (RWHS) suitable to the climatic conditions and sub-soil strata.
- The Ministry has taken up the campaign to cover all the blocks of all districts across the country during the pre-monsoon and monsoon period (22nd March 2021 and 30th November 2021).
- As a part of the campaign, the following activities will be taken up,
    1. Creation of new and maintenance of old Rainwater harvesting structures;
    2. Revival of traditional rainwater harvesting structures;
    3. Enumeration, geo-tagging, making inventory of water bodies, reuse and recharge of bore wells;
    4. Watershed development, intensive afforestation preparation of scientific water conservation plans and
    5. Setting up of Jal Shakti Kendras.

Source: PIB, The Indian Express

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