

HOW DO YOU PLAN TO SAVE THE GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD, SUPREME COURT ASKS GOVERNMENT

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A Supreme Court bench said the government had to come out with a plan which would save the Great Indian Bustard from extinction largely due to collision with high transmission power lines in Gujarat and Rajasthan, which also happen to be the natural habitat of the bustards. File photo: Special Arrangement

The Supreme Court directed the Centre to come clean on its plans to save the critically-endangered Great Indian Bustard by February.

A three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud said the government had to come out with a plan which would save the bird species from extinction largely [due to collision with high transmission power lines](#) situated in areas in Gujarat and Rajasthan, which also happen to be the natural habitat of the bustards.

The court said the government's plan ought to maintain a balance between the preservation of the bird species and India's global commitments to shed its carbon footprints and embrace alternative forms of energy such as solar power.

"We are conscious of the fact that we are dealing with an area of development. India has to meet its international obligations with regard to alternative forms of energy. Obviously, you [Centre] cannot do anything which will put paid to all those projects. At the same time, we have to balance between the preservation of the Great Indian Bustard and make sure that solar power is available keeping in mind international commitments to shed carbon footprints," Chief Justice Chandrachud addressed Attorney General R. Venkataramani, appearing for the Union government.

The order came after senior advocate A.M. Singhvi, appearing for one of the parties in the case, said the areas which were natural habitats of the birds also happen to be India's "most prolific solar power producer areas".

"It is the only area which will allow us to fulfill our anti-carbon footprint commitments," Mr. Singhvi submitted.

He said it was highly dangerous to have the power lines run underground.

Senior advocate Shyam Divan, for petitioner M.K. Ranjitsinh, said bird diverters fixed in the key habitats of the birds in the two States were either sub-standard or the collisions continued on the power lines or the diverters had just fallen off.

“The ball is in your court now, Mr. Attorney General. What is the way forward that the government is going to take? What does the government intend to do?” Chief Justice Chandrachud asked Mr. Venkataramani.

The Chief Justice, at one point, asked whether there was any authentic data or government-monitored study as to the efficacy of the bird diverters.

The top law officer said he would file a detailed affidavit by February 9, the next date of hearing.

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