

ENVIRONMENT MINISTRY INITIATES 33-CRORE PROJECT TO SAVE THE GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD

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The government has released over 7.9 crore to Maharashtra and Rajasthan for conservation of the great Indian bustard. | Photo Credit: [Azeet](#)

With just 130 great Indian bustards left in the country, the Centre has initiated a project worth 33.85 crore for their conservation and protection, the Environment Ministry told Lok Sabha on Friday.

Responding to a query on measures being taken to protect the Indian bustard, one of the heaviest birds listed under critically endangered species, Union Minister of State for Environment Babul Supriyo said the ministry was providing funds to states and Union Territories for conservation and protection of 21 critically endangered species, including the great Indian bustard.

“The ministry, through its Centrally Sponsored Scheme-Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats (CSS-IDWH), provides funds to states or Union Territories under the component ‘Species Recovery Programme’ for conservation and protection of 21 critically endangered species, including the great Indian bustard,” Mr. Supriyo said in a written response.

He added that the ministry has also initiated a project, titled ‘Habitat Improvement and Conservation Breeding of Great Indian Bustard-An Integrated Approach’, with a financial support of Rs 33.85 crore for five years from the ad hoc Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) for conservation, breeding of the Indian bustard with technical support from the Wildlife Institute of India (WII).

“The important objective of this programme is to build up captive population of great Indian bustard and to release the chicks in the wild for increasing the population. Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra are the important range states involved in this programme,” said the Minister.

In the last four years, the government has released over Rs 7.9 crore to Maharashtra and Rajasthan for conservation of great Indian bustard under the CSS-IDWH.

According to government figures, Maharashtra got Rs 4.79 crore between 2015 and 2019, while Rajasthan received Rs 3.12 crore.

However, on a question on the role of noise pollution in endangering the Indian bustard, the ministry said the government does not recognise such a cause.

A senior official of the WII, an organisation working on the Indian bustard breeding project, said power lines are killing these birds and in order to increase their population, their breeding has started.

“We are starting a breeding programme to repopulate the great Indian bustard. We collect their eggs, incubate them and hatch them. The second and third generation born out of the breeding will be then released into the wild when the environment is suitable for them. But it will take at least 15 years for them to be released into the wild,” said Y V Jhala, scientist, WII.

Currently, there are two centres for breeding and hatching -- one in Jaisalmer and the other in Kota, both in Rajasthan, he said.

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