

# REGULATOR'S GUIDELINES ON RAJASTHAN POWER LINES 'FLOUT' SUPREME COURT ORDERS, THREATEN THE GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD: PETITIONER

Relevant for: Indian Polity | Topic: Judiciary in India: its Structure, Organization & Functioning, Judges of SC & High Courts, Judgments and related Issues

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

March 05, 2023 08:11 pm | Updated 11:55 pm IST - NEW DELHI

COMMENTS

SHARE

READ LATER

High tension power lines in Rajasthan and Gujarat, from solar plants, often lay in the flight path of the Great Indian Bustard causing them to collide — often fatally — into them. File | Photo Credit: The Hindu

In a move that helps solar power projects in Rajasthan but may hinder efforts to make the region safe for the endangered Great Indian Bustard, the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) — India's apex power regulator — has proposed that only power lines below 33 KV need to go underground and the rest be fitted with bird-diverters. Conservationists have objected to the proposal and say the move could lead to the "extinction" of the bird.

The CEA proposal was part of draft regulations issued on February 1 — and open to public comment until March 3 — that came in the background of an ongoing case involving the threat to the bustard and other birds from power lines. High tension power lines in Rajasthan and Gujarat, from solar plants, often lay in the flight path of the birds causing them to collide — often fatally — into them. While several species of migratory birds were being harmed, the matter is of particular concern to the future of the bustard as fewer than 150 of them remain, and existing conservation methods fall short of effectively replenishing their numbers.

Environmentalists and conservationists approached the Supreme Court in 2019, following which [it directed, in 2021](#), that all 'low-voltage' power lines, in areas demarcated as "priority and potential habitats of the Great Indian Bustard" in the Thar and Kutch deserts, be pushed underground. "Priority zones" are areas where the birds are known to live and "potential regions" are those where conservation programmes, such as breeding the birds in captivity, are ongoing.

A majority of the lines that transmit power from Rajasthan's solar projects have a rating above 33KV and several such proposed ones are expected to pass through the 'priority' areas. While there is no standard definition of a 'low-power' line, the Ministry of Power in affidavits to the Supreme Court defined them as power lines 132 KV and lower. The SC order would have thus required several existing and proposed lines to go underground, hiking the cost of supplying solar power. The court had also constituted a three-member committee whom power companies could approach; in case they wanted exemptions from undergrounding.

This committee, [The Hindu reported on February 4](#), recommended that 10% of the nearly 8,000-km length of proposed power lines in the Thar and Kutch deserts of Rajasthan and Gujarat be re-routed or made to go underground. No company approached the committee for exemptions to already established lines.

“These draft regulations appear to be a way to circumvent the orders of the Supreme Court,” said M.K. Ranjitsingh, lead petitioner and noted conservationist. “The 11 KV lines are relatively low [in height] and have already been exempted. It was the high tension lines that were the problem and with these regulations, virtually all high power lines get the pass-through,” he told *The Hindu*.

Also read | [Great Indian Bustards adapt to produce 2-egg clutch](#)

“If the regulations come into effect this would lead to the extinction of a critically endangered species, which is also the State Bird of Rajasthan. If this happens, this would be the second major species after the [Asiatic] cheetah to go extinct in post-independent India,” the petitioners noted.

India has currently translocated 20 cheetahs from Africa in an attempt to revive the species in India. Mr. Ranjitsingh, on behalf of the petitioners, conveyed their opposition in writing to the CEA on March 3.

COMMENTS

SHARE

[solar](#) / [wildlife](#)

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our [community guidelines](#) for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

**END**

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com