

GRAND CROSS OF THE ORDER OF HONOUR

The Indian Prime minister was recently conferred with the Grand Cross of the Order of Honour by the Greek President in Athens.



About Grand Cross of the Order of Honour:

- It is the second-highest civilian honour in Greece.
- It is conferred to "eminent personalities who, by reason of their distinguished position, have contributed to enhancing the stature of Greece".
- The Order of Honour was established in 1975.
- The head of the goddess Athena is depicted on the front side of the Star with the inscription "ONLY THE RIGHTEOUS SHOULD BE HONOURED".

Key Facts about Greece:

- **Location:** It is located in southeastern Europe, on the southern tip of the Balkan Peninsula.
- **Official Name:** Hellenic Republic
- **Bordering Countries:**
 - The country is bordered by Albania, Bulgaria, Turkey, and North Macedonia.
 - Greece shares maritime borders with Cyprus, Egypt, Italy, and Libya.

Geography:

- The mainland has rugged mountains, forests, and lakes.
- The country is well known for the thousands of islands dotting the blue Aegean Sea to the east, the Mediterranean Sea to the south, and the Ionian Sea to the west.
- The largest Greek island is Crete.
- **Capital:** Athens

History:

- Greece is often referred to as the "cradle of Western civilisation" because of its contributions to philosophy, democracy, and literature.
- It was the home of famous ancient philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.
- During ancient times, the country was divided into city-states, which were ruled by noblemen. The largest were Athens, Sparta, Thebes, and Corinth.
- **Independence:** Greece gained its independence from the Ottoman Empire in the early 19th century, following a war of independence that began in 1821.

Political System:

- It is a **parliamentary republic** with a **head of government - the prime minister** - who has the **most political power**, and the head of state - the president - whose duties are largely ceremonial.
- The **executive power is exercised by the government**.
- **Languages:** Spoken languages are Greek (official) and Turkish (predominantly spoken by a minority of Turks in Western Thrace).
- **Olympics:**
 - The Olympic Games have their origins in ancient Greece, where the first Olympic Games were held in Olympia in 776 BC.
 - Greece also hosted the first modern Olympic Games in Athens in 1896.

SMART CITIES MISSION & RANKINGS

Why in News?

- The Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry named **Indore** the best city and **Madhya Pradesh** the best state in the Smart Cities Mission in its India Smart Cities Awards 2022.

About Smart Cities Mission:

- Smart Cities Mission was launched by the Union government in **June, 2015**.
- The main objective of the Mission is to **promote cities that provide core infrastructure, clean and sustainable environment and give a decent quality of life to their citizens through the application of 'smart solutions'**.



CROSS & CLIMB ROHTAK



- The Mission aims to drive economic growth and improve quality of life through comprehensive work on social, economic, physical and institutional pillars of the city.
- The focus is on sustainable and inclusive development by creation of replicable models which act as lighthouses to other aspiring cities.

Core Infrastructure Elements of Smart Cities Mission:

- The core infrastructure elements in a Smart City are as follows:
 - Adequate water supply
 - Assured electricity supply
 - Sanitation including solid waste management
 - Efficient urban mobility and public transport
 - Affordable housing, especially for the poor
 - Robust IT connectivity and digitalization
 - Good governance, especially e-governance and citizen participation
 - Sustainable environment
 - Safety and security of citizens, particularly women, children and the elderly
 - Health and education
- The focus is on sustainable and inclusive development and the idea is to look at compact areas, create a replicable model to serve as a beacon to other aspiring cities.

Coverage of Smart Cities Mission:

- The mission will cover **100 cities** that have been distributed among the States /Union Territories (UT) on the basis of an equitable criteria.
- The formula gives equal weightage (50:50) to urban population of the State/UT and the number of statutory towns (a town with a municipality, corporation, cantonment board or notified town area committee) in the State/UT.
- Based on this formula, each State/UT will, therefore, have a certain number of potential Smart Cities, with each State/UT having at least one.

News Summary:

- The Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry named **Indore** the best city and **Madhya Pradesh** the best state in the Smart Cities Mission in its India Smart Cities Awards 2022.
- **Surat** and **Agra** were named second and third best among cities and Tamil Nadu second in states, with the third prize being shared by Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.
- The cities were selected based on their ranking in terms of progress of projects, project outcomes and presentations submitted for the awards.

STATE OF INDIA'S BIRDS 2023 REPORT: MOST SPECIES SHOW DIP, INDIAN PEAFOWL AMONG THOSE FLOURISHING

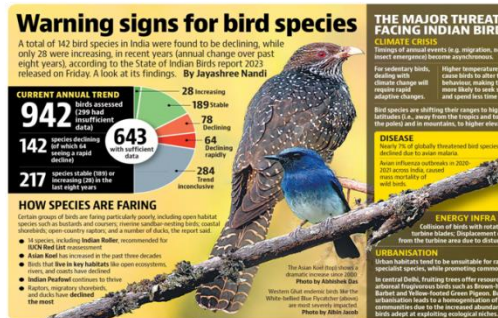
Why in News?

- According to the State of India's Birds 2023 Report, there is a general decline in numbers in most bird species in the country.
- While the raptors, migratory shorebirds and ducks have declined the most, several bird species such as the Indian Peafowl, Rock Pigeon, Asian Koel and House Crow are showing an "increasing trend".

About the State of India's Birds (SoIB) 2023 Report:

- The SoIB report was created to assess the conservation status of the majority of species that regularly occur in the country.
- SoIB is published by the **State of India's Birds Partnership**, a group of 13 government (including SACON, WII, ZSI) and non-governmental organisations.
- Worldwide, common and widespread species are declining. But in India, **lack of information has meant that conservation attention has been focussed on only a few species** (usually large, charismatic and threatened).
- **The 2023 Report**, in its second iteration (1st in 2020), fills this gap by using over 30 million observations uploaded to the eBird platform by more than 30,000 birdwatchers.

- This helped in evaluating the **distribution range size** of 942 Indian birds, and their trends in **abundance** in both the long term (over 25+ years) and currently (since 2015).



- Using these three measures, plus information from the IUCN Red List of global threat status, this report places Indian species into **Low, Moderate and High categories** of Conservation Priority for India.

- A large number of species that are thought to be common and widespread find themselves as of **High**

Conservation Priority in the SoIB 2023 Report.

Major Threats to Bird Species:

- The report also highlighted major threats including - **forest degradation, urbanisation and energy infrastructure** - that bird species face across the country.
- **Environmental pollutants** including veterinary drugs such as nimesulide still threaten vulture populations in India.
- Other concerns include the **impacts of climate change** (such as on migratory species), **avian disease and illegal hunting and trade**.

WHAT IS GUN JUMPING?

Recently, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) imposed a penalty on Platinum Trust for Gun Jumping.



About Gun Jumping:

- It essentially means **acting before the appropriate time** and refers to situations where a party or parties to a combination (M&A deal) **consummate a transaction before CCI approves the transaction**, thereby violating standstill obligations.
- It is all about **competition and merger control**.

- Gun Jumping in competition jurisprudence occurs when parties to Mergers and acquisitions **consummate the transaction without keeping the competition authorities informed.**
- Most competition regimes, including India, **require pre-merger notification** (in India, it is the CCI).
- The concept of gun-jumping has not been expressly defined in the Competition Act of 2002.
- The law requires parties to a deal satisfying certain monetary thresholds, to first notify the CCI about the impending transaction.
- Parties are then obligated to conform to **the standstill provisions** — **wait for 210 days** from the date of notifying or till CCI approval happens, whichever is earlier.
- During the standstill period, the parties are required to continue to operate their businesses as independent entities.
- If the parties fail to **notify CCI before the consummation** of the deal or violate standstill obligations, this is typically referred to as gun jumping.

Penalties:

- The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has the power to penalise parties for Gun Jumping under **Section 43A of the Competition Act 2002.**
- The penalty can be as **high as 1 per cent of the total turnover** or 1 per cent of the assets, whichever is higher, of the combination.

WHAT IS BIDRIWARE?

Indian Prime Minister recently gifted Bidri work pair of 'Surahi' from Telangana to South African President Cyril Ramaphosa.



About Bidriware:

- It is a form of metal handicraft that **has Persian influences** and has been made for centuries by artisans from Karnataka's Bidar district.

- It is renowned for its **intricate, handcrafted designs**.

Origin:

- The origin of **Bidriware** as a craft is **attributed mostly to the Bahamani Sultans** who ruled the region during the 14th and 15th centuries.
- It was **first brought to India** by the noted Sufi Khwaja Moinuddin Hasan Chisti in the form of **utensils**.
- The art form developed in the kingdom was a mix of **Turkish, Persian and Arabic influences**, which were intermingled with the local styles, and thus a unique style of its own was born.
- This native art form has obtained a **Geographical Indications (GI) registry**.
- **Bidar** in Karnataka and **Hyderabad** in Telangana are the most vibrant centers of **Bidriware**.

How is Bidriware made?

- Bidri Ware is **manufactured from an alloy of copper and zinc** (in the ratio 1:16) by casting.
- The **zinc content** gives the alloy a deep black colour.
- The craftsman uses small chisels to engrave the design over the freehand etching.
- **Fine wire or flattened strips of pure silver** are then carefully **hammered into these grooves**.
- A special variety of soil, which is available only in the unlit portions of the **Bidar fort**, is used for the final blackening process. It is mixed with **ammonium chloride** and water to produce a paste, which is then rubbed onto a heated Bidri surface. The paste selectively darkens the body while it has no effect on the silver inlay.
- The product then undergoes a process called **buffing** to smoothen the surface.

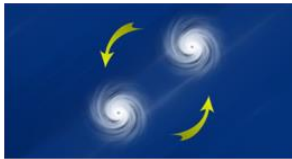
THE FUJIWHARA EFFECT: WHEN CYCLONES DANCE

Why in news?

- Earlier this year, California witnessed an unusually wet winter, with at least twelve **atmospheric river storms** battering the state.

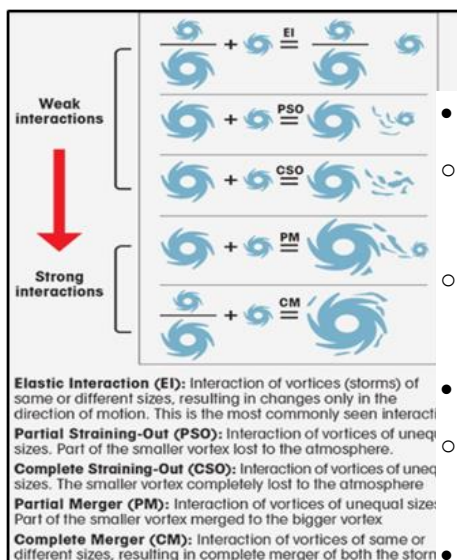
- Atmospheric rivers are vast airborne currents carrying dense moisture and hanging low in the atmosphere.
- In one of these storms, two small areas of low pressure were drawn together in a ‘dance’, commonly known as **Fujiwhara effect**.

What is the Fujiwhara effect?



- It is a phenomenon that occurs when two nearby cyclonic storms, such as hurricanes, typhoons, or tropical cyclones, come close enough to each other to interact.
- As per the National Weather Service (NWS), when two hurricanes (or cyclones), spinning in the same direction, are brought close together, they begin an **intense dance around their common centre**.
- This interaction between two cyclones is called the Fujiwhara effect.
- The interaction could lead to changes in the track and intensity of either or both storms systems.
- In rare cases, the two systems could merge, especially when they are of similar size and intensity, to form a bigger storm.

Five different ways in which Fujiwhara Effect can take place



- **Elastic Interaction (EI)**
 - In these interactions, only the direction of motion of the storms changes and is the most common case.
 - These are also the cases that are difficult to assess and need closer examination.
- **Partial Straining-Out (PSO)**
 - In this, a part of the smaller storm is lost to the atmosphere.
- **Complete Straining-Out (CSO)**

- It takes place in which the smaller storm is completely lost to the atmosphere.
- The straining out does not happen for storms of equal strengths.

- **Partial Merger**

- In this, the smaller storm merges into the bigger one.

- **Complete Merger**

- It takes places between two storms of similar or different strength.

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How is this related to today's climate?

- Experts have noted the rising frequency of this unusual effect, attributing it to a rapidly warming world and the subsequent heating of ocean waters.
 - A warming climate is giving rise to stronger cyclones, and thus, increasing the possibility of the Fujiwhara effect.
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