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# TATHASTU ICS

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### INDIA-GREECE RELATIONS

SOURCE: [HINDUSTAN TIMES](#) , [ECONOMIC TIMES](#) , [MoEA](#)

#### WHY IN NEWS?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Greek PM Kyriakos Mitsotakis decided to upgrade bilateral ties to strategic partnership during the first prime ministerial visit to Greece in 40 years, made a commitment to quadruple bilateral trade by 2030, and decided to finalise a migration and mobility accord soon.



#### WHAT ALL ISSUES WERE DISCUSSED?

1. The nations decided to enhance collaboration in **defence, security, infrastructure, agriculture, education, and emerging technologies.**
2. They also planned to establish a **structured dialogue framework at the level of National Security Advisers**, and they committed to reinforcing **cooperation in defence industry.**
3. Both India and Greece aimed to **support peaceful solutions for the Ukraine crisis**, highlighting their strong alignment on global and regional matters, including the Indo-Pacific region.
4. Both nations emphasized their complete unity in **upholding maritime security** and the significance of adhering to the Convention on the Law of the Sea. This was deemed vital in light of concerns over the situations in the Eastern Mediterranean and Indo-Pacific areas.
5. The feasibility of **direct air connectivity between India and Greece** was discussed, acknowledging the potential benefits for the tourism sector.
6. Discussions encompassed mutual efforts **in countering terrorism and enhancing cybersecurity.**
7. An **accord on agricultural cooperation** was also signed after the discussions.
8. Topics covered included **digital payments, shipping, pharmaceuticals, tourism, culture, education, and people-to-people relationships.**
9. The leaders engaged in talks regarding regional and international matters such as the European Union, Indo-Pacific, and Mediterranean. They emphasized the **importance of respecting international law, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.**
10. An agreement for migration and mobility partnership is on the horizon, aimed at facilitating skilled migration between the two countries.

#### GEOPOLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

- ❖ India and Greece are pivotal states with significant geopolitical importance in Eurasia.

- ❖ Bilateral relations have been steadily growing, with mutual support for each other's foreign policy objectives.
- ❖ Both nations share concerns about international terrorism and are strengthening ties through consistent initiatives.

BRIEF ACCOUNT OF INDO-GREEKS IN INDIA:		
Time Period	Indo-Greek Rulers	Key Events
3rd century BCE	Alexander the Great's Conquests	Alexander's invasion of India introduces Greek influence.
3rd-2nd centuries BCE	Seleucid Empire Influence	Seleucid Empire rules over parts of north-western India after Alexander's death.
180-160 BCE	Demetrius I	Demetrius establishes the Indo-Greek Kingdom, starting a period of direct Greek rule.
160-135 BCE	Menander I	Menander's rule is marked by interactions with Indian religions, as seen in Buddhist coinage.
150-130 BCE	Eucratides I	Eucratides briefly captures north western Indian territories from the Indo-Greek Kingdom.
130-125 BCE	Menander II	Menander II's rule is relatively short and characterized by conflicts with neighbouring regions.
120-80 BCE	Strato I & Others	Various Indo-Greek kings rule different territories, often facing struggles against Indian rulers.
80 BCE	Indo-Scythians Emerge	Indo-Scythians overthrow Indo-Greek rule, marking the decline of direct Greek influence.

#### WAY FORWARD:

- **Diplomatic Collaboration:** Establish regular high-level dialogues between the leaders of both countries to set strategic goals and maintain momentum.
- **Defining Common Goals:** Identify shared interests, such as maritime security, counterterrorism, and regional stability, to serve as the foundation for strategic cooperation.
- **Enhanced Defence Cooperation:** Strengthen defence ties through joint military exercises, technology sharing, and capacity building to address evolving security challenges.
- **Trade and Investment Promotion:** Facilitate trade and investment by forming business forums and eliminating trade barriers, promoting economic growth and collaboration.
- **Cultural and Educational Exchange:** Establish exchange programs for students, researchers, and artists to foster mutual understanding and appreciation of each other's cultures.
- **Tourism and People-to-People Ties:** Promote direct air connectivity to boost tourism, allowing people from both countries to experience each other's heritage and landscapes.

## SMART CITIES AWARDS: MP ADJUDGED BEST STATE, INDORE BEST CITY FOR 6TH YEAR IN ROW

SOURCE: [ECONOMIC TIMES](#) , [IE](#) , [DNA INDIA](#) , [HINDUSTAN TIMES](#)

### WHY IN NEWS?

- The **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** has designated **Indore as the top city** and **Madhya Pradesh as the leading state** in the **India Smart Cities Awards 2022**, part of the **Smart Cities Mission**.
- Securing the **second and third positions** among cities were **Surat and Agra**, respectively, while **Tamil Nadu earned the second spot among states**. The **third position was jointly attained by Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh**.
- A **total of 66 awardees across various categories** were declared. The awards ceremony, scheduled for September 27 in Indore, will feature the **presentation of awards by President Draupadi Murmu**.
- Earlier in the year, the deadline for the mission was extended to the following year from June 30 to enable the 100 cities to finalize their projects.

### DETAILS:

- **Indore** has secured the top position in cleanliness rankings within the Swachh Bharat Mission, holding the title of the **cleanest city for an unbroken span of six years**.
- **Madhya Pradesh** has also achieved recognition as the cleanest state in the Swachh Survekshan 2022 evaluation.
- In the preceding Smart Cities awards, Indore had jointly secured the first rank with Surat.
- In the India Smart Cities Awards 2022, **Coimbatore's project focusing on model roads and the restoration of lakes was acclaimed as the finest in the built environment category**.
- **Jabalpur was honoured with an award for its economic incubation center**.
- **Chandigarh** was recognized for its **public bike sharing initiative** and **e-governance services**, winning accolades in the mobility and governance segments, respectively. Additionally, Chandigarh emerged as the overall winner in the Union Territory category.

### ABOUT SMART CITIES MISSION:

Aspect	Details
Smart Cities Mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An initiative by the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry.</li><li>• Launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on June 25, 2015.</li><li>• Involved cities submitting proposals to enhance municipal services and liveability.</li><li>• 100 cities selected over five rounds from January 2016 to June 2018.</li><li>• Projects initially slated for completion within five years of city selection, but the Ministry extended the deadline to June 2023 in 2021.</li></ul>
Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Core objective is promoting cities with essential infrastructure, clean environment, and a good quality of life through 'smart solutions'.</li><li>• Aims to drive economic growth and enhance quality of life by focusing on social, economic, physical, and institutional aspects of cities.</li></ul>
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Operates as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central Government provides financial support of Rs. 48,000 crores over 5 years (approximately Rs. 100 crore per city per year).</li> <li>• Equal contribution required from the State/ULB on a matching basis.</li> <li>• Additional funds sourced through convergence, ULBs' resources, Finance Commission grants, innovative mechanisms like Municipal Bonds, government programs, and borrowings.</li> </ul>
<b>Fundamental Principles of Smart Cities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although no fixed definition exists for a smart city, in India, it rests on <b>six core principles</b>:</li> <li>• 1. Core Infrastructure: Fundamental services like water, sanitation, and mobility.</li> <li>• 2. Sustainable Environment: Focus on environmental sustainability.</li> <li>• 3. Quality of Life: Enhancement of citizens' well-being.</li> <li>• 4. Smart Solutions: Integration of technology-driven innovations for efficiency.</li> <li>• 5. Economic Development: Encouraging economic activities.</li> <li>• 6. Inclusive Governance: Ensuring inclusivity and participation.</li> </ul>

#### CHALLENGES:

- **Funding Constraints:** Limited resources hinder comprehensive project execution.
- **Infrastructure Upgradation:** Overhauling existing infrastructure disrupts urban life.
- **Technology Integration:** Merging technology into diverse services requires careful planning.
- **Citizen Participation:** Engaging public input in decision-making is challenging.
- **Lack of Skilled Workforce:** Scarcity of experts in urban planning and tech slows progress.

#### WAY FORWARD:

- **Public Awareness and Engagement:** Foster awareness campaigns to educate citizens about smart city goals and involve them in decision-making.
  - Example: Singapore's "Smart Nation" initiative uses public feedback to shape urban solutions.
- **Capacity Building and Training:** Invest in training programs to develop a skilled workforce in urban planning, technology, and data management.
  - Example: Barcelona's "Digital City" program offers courses to empower citizens with digital skills.
- **Data Governance and Privacy:** Establish robust data governance policies to protect citizen data and ensure privacy.
  - Example: Amsterdam's "City Data Exchange" platform sets strict data-sharing guidelines.
- **Cross-Sector Collaboration:** Encourage partnerships between public and private sectors for holistic smart solutions.
  - Example: Helsinki's "Smart Kalasatama" district involves companies and citizens in co-creating urban services.
- **Inclusive Design and Accessibility:** Design smart solutions that cater to diverse citizens, including those with disabilities and limited resources.

- Example: Toronto's "Quayside" project prioritizes inclusivity through accessible infrastructure.
- **Sustainability Integration:** Integrate sustainability goals into smart city projects to align with environmental targets.
  - Example: Copenhagen's "Carbon-Neutral by 2025" plan combines technology and sustainability.

OTHER DEVELOPMENT RELATED INITIATIVES BY THE GOVERNMENT:	
Initiative	Description
<b>AMRUT (Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation)</b>	Aims to provide basic urban services like water supply, sewerage, and urban transport to improve quality of life. Focuses on 500 cities with population over 100,000.
<b>HRIDAY (Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana)</b>	Aims to preserve and develop heritage cities in an inclusive manner. Focuses on revitalizing urban areas while preserving their heritage.
<b>UDAY (Urban Development &amp; Authorities for Democracy)</b>	Promotes good governance and citizen participation through capacity building of urban local bodies and communities.
<b>Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Campaign)</b>	Launched to achieve open defecation-free urban areas, effective solid waste management, and improved sanitation. Aligned with the Smart Cities Mission's cleanliness objectives.
<b>PMAY-U (Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Urban)</b>	Aims to provide affordable housing to urban poor by 2022. Focuses on in-situ slum redevelopment and affordable housing construction.
<b>National Urban Innovation Hub (NUIH)</b>	Encourages innovation in urban planning, management, and service delivery. Supports Smart City projects through research, capacity building, and technology adoption.
<b>SWM (Solid Waste Management) Rules, 2016</b>	Sets guidelines for effective waste management, promoting waste segregation, recycling, and proper disposal. Aligns with Smart Cities' clean environment goals.
<b>Smart Roads Project</b>	Aims to enhance road quality using technology and innovation. Involves improving road infrastructure, traffic management, and monitoring through sensors and data analytics.
<b>City Surveillance Projects</b>	Involves installing CCTV cameras for improved urban security and traffic management. Integrates data analytics for real-time monitoring and response.
<b>Integrated Command and Control Centers (ICCC)</b>	Centralizes city operations through a unified platform, integrating various services like traffic management, emergency response, and public information dissemination.



## STATE OF BIRDS

SOURCE: [STATE OF INDIA'S BIRDS](#) , [THE WIRE](#) , [BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL](#)

### WHY IN NEWS?

- The "**State of India's Birds, 2023**" report indicates that some **bird species are currently experiencing a decline**, while others are projected to face a decrease in the long term.
- Several bird species like the **Indian Peafowl, Rock Pigeon, Asian Koel, and House Crow** are displaying an "**increasing trend**" in terms of their numbers and distribution. However, their **overall health in terms of abundance and distribution remains compromised**.
- The most significant declines have been observed in raptors, migratory shorebirds, and ducks.

### ABOUT STATE OF INDIA'S BIRDS REPORT:

1. Published after a span of three years, the report represents an evaluation of the distribution scope, variations in population size, and preservation status of 942 out of India's total of 1,200 bird species. This comprehensive assessment has been conducted by a consortium of 13 collaborating organizations, which include esteemed institutions like the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI).
2. The assessments hinge on three distinctive indices. Among these, two indices are associated with alterations in population size: the long-term trend, which spans across three decades, and the current annual trend, encapsulating alterations over the preceding seven years. The third index gauges the extent of distribution range within India.

### KEY FINDINGS OF THE REPORT:

1. **Lack of Trends for Many Species:** The report highlights that for numerous among the 942 species, neither long-term nor current annual trends could be established.
2. **Long-Term Trends of 338 Species:** Among the 338 species with identifiable long-term trends, 204 (60%) have experienced decline, 98 remain stable, and 36 have shown an increase.
3. **Current Annual Trends of 359 Species:** Among the 359 species analysed for current annual trends, 142 (39%) are declining, 64 are rapidly declining, 189 remain stable, and 28 species are increasing.
4. **Range Size Assessment:** The assessment included measuring the range size, or territorial area, of all 942 bird species. Around 39% of species have a moderate range size, 33% possess a very large range, and 28% inhabit "restricted and very restricted" regions.
5. **Impact on Specialist Species:** Bird species specialized to specific habitats like wetlands, rainforests, and grasslands are rapidly declining. Birds with a broader habitat range like plantations and agricultural fields are faring better as a group.
6. **Threat to Insectivores:** Species that primarily feed on invertebrates, including insects, are declining rapidly, echoing global trends of decreasing insect populations. Birds feeding on fruits and nectar show more favourable trends.
7. **Endemic and Threatened Species:** Bird species endemic to the Western Ghats and Sri Lanka biodiversity hotspot have experienced significant decline in India in recent decades.
8. **Vulnerability of Bustards:** All three species of bustards breeding in India, including the Great Indian Bustard, Lesser Florican, and Bengal Florican, are particularly vulnerable, even though half of all bustards globally face threats.

# Bird populations are in decline around the world

Data from the IUCN Red List show that 49% of bird species worldwide (5,412) have declining populations, while 38% (4,234) are stable, just 6% (659) are increasing and 6% (693) have unknown trends. Declines are not restricted to rare and threatened species – even common and widespread species are declining rapidly in some cases. Although decline rates in these common species may not be great enough to classify them as globally threatened, the substantial reduction in the number of individuals is likely to impact ecosystem function and the provision of ecosystem services.

## More than 3 billion birds have been lost across North America and the EU in the last half-century

The most comprehensive long-term monitoring data for birds, come from Europe and North America, where surveys started almost 50 years ago. Analysis of these survey data reveals the scale of loss of total bird abundance. There has been a net loss of 2.9 billion birds (29%) in North America since 1970. These losses have been most severe in species associated with grassland and those that migrate, with respective net losses of 700 million individuals across 31 species and 2.5 billion individuals across 49 species. A similar trend has occurred in the European Union, which has experienced a net loss of 560-620 million birds (17-19%) since 1980 from an area five times smaller. Patterns of loss are similar to those in North America – long-distance migrants have fared worse than resident species, while familiar birds have shown the most significant declines. In both regions, losses are driven primarily by declines in a subset of common and abundant species.

## Declines are widespread across the globe

Data on long-term trends in bird abundance are much scarcer in other parts of the world, however there is increasing evidence that population declines are occurring around the globe. Recent reports have highlighted declines in near-ground and terrestrial insectivores in Brazil's undisturbed Amazon rainforest, and resident, insectivorous and specialised species in the agricultural countryside of Costa Rica. In Kenya, 19 of 22 raptor species have declined since the 1970s, while Uganda's forest and savannah specialist species have also suffered declines. Citizen science is helping to fill data gaps in some countries, revealing declines in grassland/shrub and wetland specialists in India and seabirds off south-eastern Australia.



**49%** of bird species worldwide have declining populations

Sources: Barnes et al. 2021, Gorta et al. 2019, Kizaceva et al. 2022, LeBlond et al. 2019, North American Breeding Bird Survey data (courtesy of John Sauer USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center), Ogada et al. 2022, PWC 2018-2021, Rosenkerry et al. 2019, Selkovic et al. 2019, Sill-B 2020, Stanton et al. 2018, Stouffer et al. 2020, Watton et al. 2020.

## THREATS:

- Habitat Loss:** Destruction of natural habitats due to urbanization and deforestation. Conversion of land for agriculture and infrastructure.
- Pollution:** Contamination of air and water by chemicals and pollutants. Adverse effects of pesticides and industrial waste on bird health.
- Climate Change:** Altered migration patterns and nesting times due to changing weather. Loss of suitable habitats and food sources.
- Hunting and Poaching:** Illegal hunting for sport, food, or trade. Targeting migratory birds during their journeys.
- Invasive Species:** Competition and predation by non-native species. Disruption of ecosystems and food chains.
- Nest Destruction:** Disturbance and destruction of nests by humans and predators. Loss of breeding and nesting sites.
- Pesticides:** Harmful effects of pesticides on bird populations. Contamination of food sources and water bodies.
- Disease Outbreaks:** Spread of avian diseases, impacting wild and domestic birds. Transmission of diseases between bird populations.
- Human Disturbance:** Disturbances from tourism, recreation, and development. Interference with nesting and feeding behaviours.

## OTHER CONSERVATION EFFORTS:

Biodiversity Conservation Efforts in India	Description and Initiatives
<b>National Biodiversity Authority (NBA)</b>	Regulates access to biological resources and associated traditional knowledge to ensure conservation and equitable benefit-sharing.
<b>Wildlife Protection Act (1972)</b>	Provides legal protection to wildlife and their habitats, regulates hunting, and prohibits trade in wildlife and their products.



<b>Project Tiger (1973)</b>	Focuses on the conservation of Bengal tigers and their habitats through the establishment of tiger reserves and anti-poaching efforts.
<b>Project Elephant (1992)</b>	Aims to protect Asian elephants and their habitats, address human-elephant conflicts, and ensure the welfare of captive elephants.
<b>Biosphere Reserves</b>	Designated areas that aim to reconcile conservation of biodiversity with sustainable development, involving local communities.
<b>National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries</b>	Protected areas for conserving various species of flora and fauna, providing them safe habitats and facilitating research and ecotourism.
<b>National Wildlife Action Plan (2017-2031)</b>	A comprehensive strategy to safeguard wildlife and their habitats, addressing emerging threats and challenges.
<b>Green India Mission (GIM)</b>	Part of the National Action Plan on Climate Change, GIM focuses on increasing forest and tree cover, enhancing ecosystem services, and biodiversity conservation.
<b>In-situ Conservation</b>	Preserving species within their natural habitats, such as through protected areas, to ensure their survival and ecological balance.
<b>Ex-situ Conservation</b>	Conservation of species outside their natural habitats, often involving captive breeding programs and botanical gardens.
<b>Conservation of Wetlands</b>	Includes programs like the National Wetland Conservation Programme to protect and restore wetland ecosystems crucial for biodiversity.
<b>International Collaboration</b>	Partnerships with international organizations and agreements, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), to promote global biodiversity conservation.
<b>Community-Based Conservation</b>	Involving local communities in conservation efforts, acknowledging their role in safeguarding biodiversity.
<b>Biodiversity Registers and People's Biodiversity Registers (PBR)</b>	Documentation of local biodiversity and traditional knowledge, facilitating community involvement and benefit-sharing.

#### **WAY FORWARD:**

- **Comprehensive Monitoring:** Strengthen monitoring efforts for declining bird species, focusing on raptors, migratory shorebirds, and ducks.
- **Habitat Restoration:** Prioritize habitat conservation and restoration to support declining species and migratory birds.
- **Research and Action:** Conduct in-depth research to identify specific threats causing declines and take targeted conservation actions.
- **Policy Enhancement:** Advocate for stricter enforcement of wildlife protection laws and regulations to safeguard vulnerable species.
- **Community Engagement:** Involve local communities in bird conservation efforts, raising awareness and promoting responsible practices.