

## EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS-AUGUST 26,2023

### TAMIL NADU

- On August 25, Chief minister M K Stalin – inaugurated the extension of the breakfast scheme at the Panchayat Union middle school at Thirukkuvalai, where his father and former CM M Karunanidhi studied.



- ✓ With this, Tamil Nadu has now become the first state in the country to provide free breakfast to all primary school students in all government schools
- ✓ Thirukkuvalai in Nagappatinam district, about 23 km from Tiruvarur, is the native place of former Chief Minister Dr. M. Karunanidhi
- ✓ The initiative will benefit students studying in schools from 1st to 5th standard across the entire state.
- ✓ The extended breakfast scheme will cater to 17 lakh children in all the 31,008 government schools across the state at an annual cost of Rs 404.41 crore.
- ✓ The chief minister launched the scheme on September 15, 2022, in Madurai.
- ✓ The first phase after the launch covered 1.14 lakh children in 1,545 corporation, municipality and panchayat schools at a cost of Rs 33.56 crore..
- ✓ As many as 1.54 lakh students in 1,968 schools were brought under the scheme from February 28.

- ✓ The program's expansion is expected to provide nutritious meals to a wider segment of young learners, promoting their health and overall educational experience.
- ✓ The five objectives of the scheme are to ensure children attend school without hunger, see that there is no nutrition deficiency, no anemia, increased attendance and reducing the burden of working women
- ✓ In Chennai, youth welfare minister Udhayanidhi Stalin launched the scheme's expansion and said attendance of students had increased by 30% to 40% following the scheme's launch last year.
- ✓ Elected representatives belonging to the ruling DMK, allies including Congress inaugurated the scheme in state-run primary schools in their constituencies.
- ✓ Health minister Ma Subramanian inaugurated the programme at the Chennai Primary School at Manthope in Saidapet.
- ✓ In his Independence Day address, CM Stalin announced the free breakfast scheme's expansion, scheduled on August 25.
- ✓ In a first, the noon meal scheme was launched in 1922 in a Chennai Corporation school by Mayor Pitti Theagarayar, stalwart of the Justice Party.
- ✓ Later in 1955, former Chief Minister K Kamaraj inaugurated the noon meal scheme and former Chief Minister M G Ramachandran launched the nutritious meal programme in 1982.
- ✓ Chief minister M Karunanidhi included an egg every two weeks to the menu of the nutritious meal scheme in 1989
- **The state government - has issued an order enhancing the quantum of advance amount availed by government employees from their salaries to meet the educational expenses of their children pursuing higher education.**
- ✓ In the case of employees, whose children are studying in professional colleges, they can avail up to Rs.50,000 from the existing Rs.2,500.
- ✓ The limit has been fixed at Rs. 25,000 for arts and science colleges from the previous amount of Rs.2,000 and Rs.25,000 for polytechnic institutions from the earlier Rs.1,000.
- ✓ These orders shall take effect from the current academic year
- ✓ An amount equal to one month's basic pay or the limits suggested by the order, whichever is higher, would be allowed for Group C and D employees.
- ✓ About 50% of one-month basic pay or the limits suggested in the order, whichever is higher, would be allowed for Group A and B employees.
- ✓ The 'education advance' is being provided interest-free and recovered in 10 monthly instalments from the salary of the month succeeding the drawal of advance.
- ✓ The previous revision of the education advance was made during 1993.
- **The Tamil Nadu Land Consolidation (for Special Projects) Act, 2023 - has come into force from August 17.**

- ✓ Governor RN Ravi has accorded his assent to the Act, following which a gazette notification has been issued.
- ✓ The Tamil Nadu Land Consolidation (for Special Projects) Act, 2023 was passed on the last day of the recent assembly session, on April 21
- ✓ While moving the bill, Revenue Minister KKSSR Ramachandran explained the necessity for such legislation.
- ✓ The act, which intends to protect water channels, rivers and streams, will allow acquiring large parcels of land for special projects even if there are water bodies.
- ✓ Firms that require more than 100 hectares for projects can apply to the government for consolidation of the required land.
- ✓ Expert committees will be constituted to publish the land consolidation plan and conduct public hearings.
- ✓ Finally, district collectors will send a report for the project to be 'approved' or 'approved with conditions'.

## NATIONAL

- **On August 25, the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry - announced the winners of the fourth edition of India Smart Cities Awards (ISCA) under the Smart Cities Mission (SCM) for the year 2022.**
- ✓ President Draupadi Murmu will felicitate the winners on September 27 in Indore
- ✓ Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have emerged as the first and second best performers, while Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh have jointly bagged the third spot.
- ✓ Among the Union territories, Chandigarh has got the highest score.
- ✓ Indore, which has been the cleanest city for the past six years in a row, has bagged the best "National Smart City Award" of 2022 for exemplary performance among the 100 smart cities.
- ✓ Surat and Agra have emerged as the second and third winners among the cities
- ✓ Among cities, Coimbatore took the top spot for built environment, Ahmedabad for the culture and Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) category, Jabalpur for economy, Chandigarh for governance and mobility, Indore for sanitation, water and urban environment, Vadodara for social aspects, Hubballi Dharwad for the innovative idea category and Surat for Covid innovation category.
- ✓ Additionally, partner award for the industry has been given to Enviro Control Private (infrastructure), L&T Construction and PwC.
- ✓ A total of 845 nominations were received for ISAC 2022 from 80 qualifying smart cities.
- ✓ Of these, under the five awards categories, 66 final winners have been announced – 35 in Project award, six in Innovation award, 13 in National/Zonal City award, five in state/UT Award and seven in Partner Award categories.
- ✓ The fourth edition of the ISAC was launched in April 2022 during the 'Smart Cities-Smart Urbanization' event in Surat.
- ✓ In the past, the ISAC has witnessed three editions in 2018, 2019 and 2020

- ✓ In the last contest in 2020, Uttar Pradesh was declared the best state whereas Surat and Indore were the joint winners of the best smart cities, while the results were not announced in 2021
- ✓ In 2018 and 2019, Surat was adjudged as the best smart city based on its performance.
- ✓ The awards recognise and reward cities, projects and innovative ideas that promote sustainable development across 100 Smart cities, as well as stimulating inclusive, equitable, safe, healthy and collaborative cities, thus enhancing quality of life for all.
- ✓ They were organised by the Union ministry of housing and urban affairs
- ✓ Launched in June 2015, the Smart Cities Mission is aimed at providing core infrastructure, clean and sustainable environment and a decent quality of life to their citizens through the application of smart solutions.
- ✓ Of the total proposed projects under the Smart Cities Mission, 6,041 (76%) projects worth Rs 1,10,635 crore have been completed and the remaining 1,894 projects worth Rs 60,095 crore will be completed by June 30, 2024

## INTERNATIONAL

- **Cambodia's parliament - has appointed Hun Manet as the new prime minister for a five-year term**



- ✓ Hun Manet, the eldest son of outgoing Prime Minister Hun Sen, is a member of the ruling Cambodian People's Party's (CPP) powerful permanent committee.
  - ✓ Hun Manet has already served as commander of the Royal Cambodian Army since 2018.
  - ✓ The 45-year-old four-star general has only contested a parliamentary seat for the first time in July's election
  - ✓ Hun Sen, 71, a former Khmer Rouge guerrilla and self-styled strongman has decided to remain in politics in other roles for at least a decade
  - ✓ One of the world's longest-serving leaders, Hun Sen has expressed desire to become president of the upper house Senate next year.
- **Srettha Thavisin from the Pheu Thai Party - was elected as the 30<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister of Thailand**



- ✓ Srettha, 61, won 482 votes in a joint sitting of the parliament's two chambers with 747 lawmakers recently on August 22
- ✓ Srettha Thavisin became the first new leader to take charge of Thailand since 2014, when former army chief Prayuth Chan-Ocha staged a coup and became Prime Minister
- ✓ Srettha, a former real estate tycoon, will lead a coalition of 11 parties assembled by Pheu Thai, for the elections held in May
- ✓ Thavisin's unexpected rise coincides with the return of Thaksin Shinawatra, founder of Pheu Thai Party, after 15 years of exile

## INDIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi - landed in Greece capital Athens on August 25 on a one-day official visit at the invitation of his Greek counterpart Kyriakos Mitsotakis**



- ✓ PM Modi's visit is the first to Greece by an Indian prime minister in 40 years since Indira Gandhi visited the country in September 1983
- ✓ During the day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi met his Greek counterpart Kyriakos Mitsotakis and discussed ways to further deepen bilateral relations in various sectors with focus on expanding political, defence and security cooperation.

- ✓ The visit resulted in an elevating the relationship between both the countries to 'Strategic Partnership,' underscoring the shared commitment to collaboration across diverse domains.
- ✓ Earlier during the day, PM Modi was conferred with 'The Grand Cross of the Order of Honour' by President of Greece Katerina Sakellaropoulou.
- ✓ The PM is the first foreign head of government to receive the honour.
- ✓ PM Modi arrived in the Greek capital from Johannesburg, South Africa where he attended the 15th BRICS Summit and held bilateral meetings with several world leaders
- ✓ Alongside their historical civilisational links, Greece is one of India's most significant European partners and instrumental to India's growing trade with Europe.

## PERSONALITIES

- **A 10-year-old Mumbai schoolboy, Dwit Nandu - has become the world's youngest certified Junior Open Water Scuba Diver**



- ✓ Scuba Diving is regulated by the Australia-based Professional Association of Dive Instructors (PADI), working in 186 countries
- ✓ The Association issues certification to divers which make them qualified to dive around the world.
- ✓ According to PADI rules, the minimum age for a certified diver is 10 years.
- ✓ The first level certification is termed Junior Open Water Diver (12 metres) with the next step being Open Water Diver.
- ✓ This is followed by Advanced Open Water Diver who can go to a depth of 30 metres after which the next higher category is Deep Diver qualified for a depth of 40 metres.
- ✓ There is also a written exam based on five modules that has to be cleared to get the certificate.

## DEFENCE

- **On August 25, the defence ministry - signed the over Rs.19,000 crore contract with Hindustan Shipyard (HSL) at Visakhapatnam to build five fleet support ships**



- ✓ These support ships will replenish warships with fuel, water, ammunition, spares and stores on the high seas to prolong their operational deployments.
- ✓ These ships can also be deployed for evacuation of people as well as HADR (human assistance and disaster relief) operations
- ✓ The PM-led cabinet committee on security had cleared the long-pending mega acquisition project for the Navy on August 16
- ✓ The first of the fleet support ships, with a displacement of 44,000 tonne, will be delivered to the Navy around four years from now.
- ✓ Thereafter, one ship will be delivered every year by HSL.
- ✓ The Navy currently has just four ageing fleet support ships, with the oldest one being commissioned over 30 years ago.

## ECONOMY

- **Mumbai-based quick commerce startup Zepto – has become the country's first unicorn of 2023**



- ✓ It was founded by Stanford University dropouts Aadit Palicha and Kaivalya Vohra
- ✓ The startup has bagged afresh \$200 million (around Rs 1,653 crore) in funding led by new investor StepStoneGroup at a valuation of \$1.4 billion
- ✓ Zepto's recent funding round was also backed by new investor Goodwater Capital and a clutch of existing backers, including Nexus Venture Partners, Glade Brook Capital and Lachy Groom.
- ✓ Zepto, which competes with Swiggy Instamart, Blinkit and struggling peer Dunzo, had last raised \$200 million at a valuation of \$900 million in May last year.

- ✓ Of late, India's pace of adding new unicorns slowed — the country added less than 25 unicorns in 2022 compared to over 40 in 2021.
- ✓ The startup Zepto makes \$50-60 million in sales per month.

## SPORTS

- **Tiyana, Sakshi Suryavanshi and Kirandeep Kaur - combined to clinch the ISSF World Championships gold in the women's 50m pistol in Baku on August 25.**
- ✓ India finished the event with six gold and eight bronze medals, ranking second behind China overall.



- ✓ India also ensured four Paris Olympic quotas from the tournament.
  - ✓ In the team event, the Indian trio of Tiyana, Sakshi and Kirandeep secured gold while China finished second, and Mongolia were third.
  - ✓ Later, Tiyana also won bronze in the individual women's 50m pistol event.
  - ✓ A day earlier, Amanpreet Singh won the men's 25m standard pistol to give India their fifth gold medal
  - ✓ In the women's 25m standard pistol, while none among Tiyana, Yashita Shokeen and Kritik a Sharma could win individually, they bagged the team bronze combinedly.
- **Amateur golfer Avani Prashanth - has achieved a historic victory at the Ashsell Final, becoming the third Indian woman to win in Europe this year.**





- ✓ She won her maiden international pro title at the Ahlsell Final on the Ladies European Tour's Access Series in Sweden on August 25.
- ✓ The 16-year-old Avani's win is a landmark moment for Indian women's golf, setting her apart as the first Indian woman to conquer the Ladies European Tour's Access Series (LETAS)
- ✓ Her victory adds to the successes of Aditi Ashok and Diksha Dagar on the main Ladies European Tour earlier this season.

## STATE OF INDIA'S BIRDS - REPORT

- The second edition of State of India's Birds report - was published in New Delhi on August 25, after a gap of three years

### Warning signs for bird species

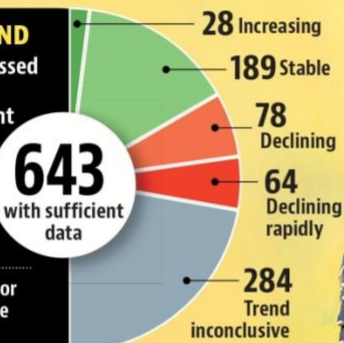
A total of 142 bird species in India were found to be declining, while only 28 were increasing, in recent years (annual change over past eight years), according to the State of Indian Birds report 2023 released on Friday. A look at its findings. **By Jayashree Nandi**

#### CURRENT ANNUAL TREND

**942** birds assessed (299 had insufficient data)

**142** species declining (of which 64 seeing a rapid decline)

**217** species stable (189) or increasing (28) in the last eight years



#### HOW SPECIES ARE FARING

Certain groups of birds are faring particularly poorly, including open habitat species such as bustards and coursers; riverine sandbar-nesting birds; coastal shorebirds; open-country raptors; and a number of ducks, the report said.

- 14 species, including **Indian Roller**, recommended for IUCN Red List reassessment
- **Asian Koel** has increased in the past three decades
- Birds that **live in key habitats** like open ecosystems, rivers, and coasts have declined
- **Indian Peafowl** continues to thrive
- Raptors, migratory shorebirds, and ducks have **declined the most**

The Asian Koel (top) shows a dramatic increase since 2000. **Photo by Abhishek Das**

Western Ghat endemic birds like the White-bellied Blue Flycatcher (above) are most severely impacted. **Photo by Albin Jacob**

### THE MAJOR THREATS FACING INDIAN BIRDS

#### CLIMATE CRISIS

Timings of annual events (e.g. migration, nesting, insect emergence) become asynchronous.

For sedentary birds, dealing with climate change will require rapid adaptive changes.

Higher temperatures also cause birds to alter their behaviour, making them more likely to seek shade and spend less time foraging.

Bird species are shifting their ranges to higher latitudes (i.e., away from the tropics and towards the poles) and in mountains, to higher elevations.

#### DISEASE

Nearly 7% of globally threatened bird species have declined due to avian malaria.

Avian influenza outbreaks in 2020-2021 across India, caused mass mortality of wild birds.

#### ENERGY INFRA

Collision of birds with rotating wind turbine blades; Displacement of birds from the turbine area due to disturbance

#### URBANISATION

Urban habitats tend to be unsuitable for rare and specialist species, while promoting common species.

In central Delhi, fruiting trees offer resources for arboreal frugivorous birds such as Brown-headed Barbet and Yellow-footed Green Pigeon. But, urbanisation leads to a homogenisation of bird communities due to the increased abundance of birds adept at exploiting ecological niches.

- ✓ According to the report, more than 60% of India's bird species saw a decline over the long term and only a small fraction increased
- ✓ The report assessed 942 species of birds and found that populations of raptors, migratory shorebirds, and ducks are on the sharpest decline in the country.
- ✓ The report was based on contributions of 30 million observations by 30,000 birdwatchers which were analysed for trends and distribution across India.

- ✓ The report was compiled by a group of 13 government and non-government organisations, including Wildlife Institute of India, Bombay Natural History Society, National Centre for Biological Sciences, WWF-India and WTI, together with a number of independent professionals
- ✓ It highlighted that 204 species of birds have been declining in the past three decades while the population of 217 species is stable or is increasing in the last eight years.
- ✓ It also concluded that birds that live in key habitats like open ecosystems, rivers, and coasts have declined.
  - ✓ According to the report, birds that are present in the open habitats have to majorly face two categories of threats — from conversion of open to closed habitat, and those that 'directly cause mortality and lower survival'.
- ✓ Further, the report has classified 178 species, including Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Common Teal, Tufted Duck, Greater Flamingo, Sarus Crane, Indian Courser and Andaman Serpent Eagle to be of 'high conservation priority'.
- ✓ Fourteen species, including Indian Roller, Common Teal, Northern Shoveler and Common Sandpiper, have dropped by 30% or more and have been recommended for IUCN Red List reassessment
- ✓ As per the report, several bird species such as the Indian Peafowl, Rock Pigeon, Asian Koel and House Crow are not only healthy in both abundance and distribution, but showing an "increasing trend".

