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Big flap: golden birdwing is India's largest butterfly

key Points:

- A Himalayan butterfly named golden birdwing is now India's largest, a record the southern birdwing held for 88 years.
- With a wingspan of 194 mm, the female of the species is marginally larger than the southern birdwing (190 mm) that Brigadier William Harry Evans, a British military officer and lepidopterist, recorded in 1932. But the male golden birdwing (*Troides aeacus*) is much smaller at 106 mm.
- The new measurements of this and 24 other species of butterflies were published in the latest issue of *Bionotes*, a quarterly newsletter for research on life forms. Shristee Panthee of the University of Chinese Academy of Sciences in Yunnan and Peter Smetacek of the Butterfly Research Centre at Bhimtal in Uttarakhand are the authors of the study.



Brigadier Evans's record

- The hitherto largest Indian butterfly that Brigadier Evans recorded in 1932 was an individual of the southern birdwing (*Troides minos*), which was then treated as a subspecies of the common birdwing.
- But the specimen he measured was unknown, and no other butterfly measured as much as the 190 mm that he recorded.
- While the female golden birdwing was recorded from Didihat in Uttarakhand, the largest male was from the Wankhar Butterfly Museum in Shillong.
- According to the authors, the only measurement used in the study of Lepidoptera is wingspan — a simple concept with various interpretations of the term.



More reliable method:

- Brigadier Evans followed a more reliable method. He measured a butterfly from the centre of the thorax to the tip of the forewing apex and doubled the result. His contribution was to provide the wingspans of all butterfly species then known from the Indian subcontinent and his book is still the standard work on the subject.
- The updated wingspan of three species — all from Uttarakhand — after the golden birdwing are the common windmill (*Byasa polyeuctes*) at 98 mm, the great windmill (*Byasa dasarada*) at 96 mm, and the common peacock (*Papilio bianor*) at 78 mm.
- The smallest is the quaker (*Neopithecops zalmora*) with a wingspan of 18 mm and forewing length of a mere 8 mm.
- The largest female golden birdwing's forewing length is 90 mm.

'Top priority' to complete strategic roads

- Defence Minister Rajanath Singh on Tuesday directed the **Border Roads Organisation (BRO)** that work on the strategic **Darbuk-Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldi (DSDBO) road** be completed by October, a defence source said. This was conveyed at a meeting to review the progress of the construction activities in the border areas with BRO Director-General Lieutenant General Harpal Singh.

Details:

- On the 255-km Darbuk-Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldi (DSDBO) road, the ongoing construction is almost done. About 45 km of black topping work is pending. Mr. Singh conveyed that this has to be completed by October.
- Stating that an alternative route is also being made here, the source said there was full focus on connectivity, terming it a "top priority".
- China has been objecting to Indian road and infrastructure development at several points along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). A road branching from the DSDBO road towards the Galwan Nalah is believed to be one of the reasons for their objections here.



- In May, as the stand-off was under way, the BRO began efforts to fully resume construction work on all roads delayed due to the pandemic. It is also building the 61 strategic Indo-China Border Roads (ICBRs), measuring 3,323.57 km, under the direction of the China Study Group (CSG).
- In March, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence was informed that the BRO has completed 75% of the construction work on the 61 Indo-China Border Roads (ICBRs).
- Of these, 12 roads measuring about 1,064 km, are in the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, while three roads measuring about 62 km are in Sikkim.

Value added Information

About BRO:

- Functioning under the control of the **Ministry of Defence since 2015**, the BRO is engaged in road construction to provide connectivity to difficult and inaccessible regions in the border areas of the country.
- It is staffed by **officers and troops drawn from the Indian Army's Corps of Engineers, Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, Army Service Corps, Military Police and army personnel on extra regimental employment.**
- Engineering Service and personnel from the General Reserve Engineer Force (GREF) form the **parent cadre of the Border Roads Organisation.**
- Currently, the organisation maintains operations in twenty-one states, one UT (Andaman and Nicobar Islands), and neighbouring countries such as Afghanistan, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka.
- The BRO operates and maintains over 32,885 kilometres of roads and about 12,200 meters of permanent bridges in the country.

Significance of BRO:

- The Border Roads Organization has played a very important role in both maintenance of security and in the development of border areas. Most of the development in the North Eastern states of India can be attributed to



the relentless work done by the BRO. Socio economic development in the most inaccessible nooks and corners of our country are a result of the infrastructural work undertaken by the BRO.

- Apart from its work in India, the BRO has undertaken work in numerous countries thus having contributed immensely towards maintaining friendly and diplomatic relations. The highly-skilled BRO personnel undertook and successfully completed construction of the **Delaram-Zaranj Highway in Afghanistan in 2008. The Farkhor and Ayni air bases of Tajikistan were also restored and repaired by the BRO.**
- The BRO works in close association with the Indian Army in cases of natural disasters. It is the brave men of the BRO who were responsible for much of the reconstruction work undertaken as a result of the 2004 Tsunami in Tamil Nadu, the 2010 Ladakh flash floods and even during the 2014 Jammu and Kashmir Floods.

U.S. stance on CAATSA unchanged

Key Points:

- Despite a change in the ground realities following the deadly clash between India and China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) last month, the U.S.'s message to countries, including India, on sanctions for the purchase of Russian arms has not changed. This message was reiterated in the context of India's planned jet fighter deal with Russia at an estimated ₹18,148 crore.
- Last week, the Defence Acquisition Council approved the procurement of 21 MiG-29 fighter jets for the Indian Air Force (IAF), an upgrade for 59 of these Russian aircraft and the acquisition of 12 Su-30 MKI aircraft. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had discussed defence cooperation with Russia while on a visit to Moscow two weeks ago.
- Indian and U.S. bureaucrats are scheduled to meet at the India-U.S. Foreign Office Consultations on Tuesday afternoon (India time). The CAATSA issue was not on the agenda, but the U.S. was free to raise any issues, said an Indian official.
- The U.S. President was given the authority in 2018 to waive CAATSA sanctions on a case by case basis for fiscal year 2019. However, U.S. officials



have repeatedly stated that India should not assume it will get a waiver. These remarks were made in the context of India's planned purchase of the S-400 Triumf missile defence system from Russia for about \$5 billion.

Value added Information

What is CAATSA?

- Enacted in 2017, it is a **US federal law that imposed sanctions on Iran, North Korea and Russia.**
- **Includes** sanctions against countries that engage in significant transactions with Russia's defence and intelligence sectors.
- **The Act empowers the US President to impose at least five of the 12 listed sanctions on persons engaged in a "significant transaction" with Russian defence and intelligence sectors.**

What is S-400?

- It is ***an air defence missile system*** that can take down enemies' aircraft in the sky from the surface itself.
- It is known as **Russia's most advanced long-range surface-to-air missile defence system**, capable of destroying hostile strategic bombers, jets, missiles and drones at a range of 380-km.

Why does India want S-400?

- S-400 would be like a "booster shot" in the Indian Air Force's (IAF) arm. India needs to be well-equipped against neighboring threats.
- Pakistan has over 20 fighter squadrons, with upgraded F-16s, and inducting J-17 from China in large numbers. China has 1,700 fighters, including 800 4-Gen fighters.

Mining giant told to pay \$2 bn for Arctic spill

- Russia's state environmental watchdog said on Monday that metals giant Norilsk Nickel should pay an unprecedented \$2 billion in damages over a huge Arctic fuel spill.



- Rosprirodnadzor said it had sent a request for “voluntary compensation” to a subsidiary of Norilsk Nickel, NTEK, estimating the damage to Arctic subsoil and water resources at 147.8 billion rubles (\$2.05 billion).
- Controlled by Russia’s richest man Vladimir Potanin, the company is the world’s largest producer of nickel and palladium.

‘Unprecedented damage’

- Russia’s Natural Resources Minister said the fine reflected the huge damages caused by the spill.
- The scale of the damage to Arctic water resources is unprecedented.
- Mr. Kobylkin drew comparisons to one of the worst oil spills in U.S. history — the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill off Alaska which, he pointed out, cost Exxon Mobil more than \$5 billion in punitive damages.