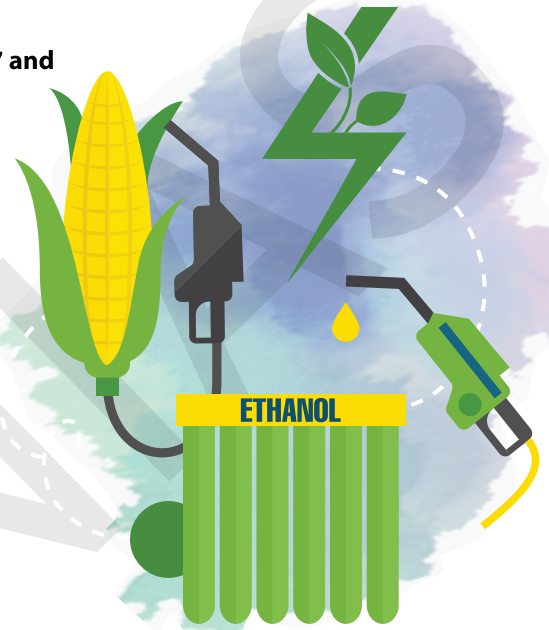


NEWS TODAY

INDIA ON TRACK TO SURPASS CHINA AS THIRD LARGEST ETHANOL CONSUMER BY 2026: INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY (IEA)

- The IEA report also noted that **ethanol demand in India tripled between 2017 and 2021** with consumption expected at 3 crore liters in the last calendar year.
 - Ethanol is a **renewable fuel made from various plant materials** collectively known as "biomass."
 - It is a **clear, colourless liquid that has a higher octane number (ON)** than gasoline, providing premium blending properties.
 - ON is a **measurement of the quality or performance of gasoline**. The higher the number, the better the fuel burns.
- India in its pursuits of becoming carbon neutral by 2070, **brought forward its 20% ethanol blending target with gasoline from 2030 to 2025** and is aiming to start selling 20% blends in 2023.
 - India is **on track to achieve 10% blending** this calendar year.
- Significance of ethanol blending:**
 - Helps reduce oil imports
 - Cut down air pollution
 - Offers economic and employment opportunities for farmers.
- Challenges:**
 - Vehicle compatibility:** Existing vehicle fleet may have compatibility issues with fuel blends above E10.
 - Greenhouse gas (GHG) and sustainability criteria
 - Feedstock availability
 - Maintaining incentives** at the right level



Steps to promote ethanol economy

- A **guaranteed prices** per litre of ethanol according to feedstock;
- Established **financial support** for new ethanol capacity;
- Planning to mandate flex-fuel vehicles** that can operate on higher ethanol blends.

INDIA'S OLD DAMS: GANDHI SAGAR IN MADHYA PRADESH (MP) NEEDS IMMEDIATE REPAIR, SAYS CAG REPORT

- According to the CAG report, **absence of regular checks, non-functional instruments and choked drains** are the major problems plaguing the dam for years.
- Other Issue highlight by CAG**
 - State dam safety organisation (SDSO)** did **not comply with recommendations by the Central Water Commission (CWC)** and Dam Safety Inspection Panel (DSIP) on remedial measures.
 - Irregular discharge of water**
 - No measures to deal with **changing rainfall patterns**.
- Dams are **artificial barriers on rivers which store water** and help in irrigation, power generation, flood moderation, and water supply.
- As on June 2019, **India has 5,745 large dams** (includes dams under construction).
 - After China and USA, **India is the 3rd largest dam-owning nation** in the world.
 - Most of the dams in India are **constructed and maintained by the states**, while some of the bigger dams are managed by autonomous bodies such as Damodar Valley Corporation or Bhakra Beas Management Board of Bhakra-Nangal Project.
 - Over 75% of these dams are more than 20 years old** and about 220 dams are more than 100 years old poses greater safety risks.

Recently, parliament passed Dam safety act, 2021

- Bill proposes to help all states and UTs **adopt uniform dam safety procedures** and seeks to set up an **institutional mechanism to ensure the safe functioning of specific dams** in the country.
- It provides for **adequate surveillance, inspection, operation, and maintenance of all the large dams** in the country so as to prevent dam failure related disasters.

INDIA, ISRAEL IN TALKS FOR FREE TRADE AGREEMENT (FTA)

- India's dialogue with Israel for concluding a FTA coincides with the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries.
- Relations between the two countries started right after the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 and reached its peak with the establishment of full diplomatic relations in 1992.
 - In 2017, during the **first-ever visit** by an Indian Prime Minister to Israel, the relationship was upgraded to strategic partnership.
- Major areas of cooperation:
 - Economic:** India is Israel's **third-largest trade partner in Asia** and seventh largest globally.
 - Agriculture:** Both countries have signed a **three-year work program (2021-2023)** for development in Agriculture cooperation to benefit local farmers.
 - Defence & Security:** Israel has been among India's **top three arms suppliers** for the last five years.
 - Cultural Relationship:** There are approximately 85,000 Jews of Indian-origin in Israel.
- Foreign policy concerns for the two countries are **dominated by third party issues such as Palestinian and the Iran issue.**
 - To address this, India has **followed the de-hyphenated policy**, where relationship with one country is carried forward, ignoring the complexities of its relations with the other.

About FTA

- A FTA is a **pact between two or more nations to reduce barriers** (like tariffs, quotas etc.) to imports and exports among them.
- It is the **opposite of trade protectionism** or economic isolationism.
- Currently, India is looking to have FTA with 5 countries - UAE, UK, Australia, Canada and Israel.

INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE (IUCN) GREEN STATUS OF SPECIES

- The IUCN Green Status of Species complements the Red List by providing a **tool for assessing the recovery of species' populations and measuring their conservation success.**
 - The **IUCN Red List of Threatened Species is the global standard for assessing the risk of extinction** that individual species of animal, fungus, and plant faces.

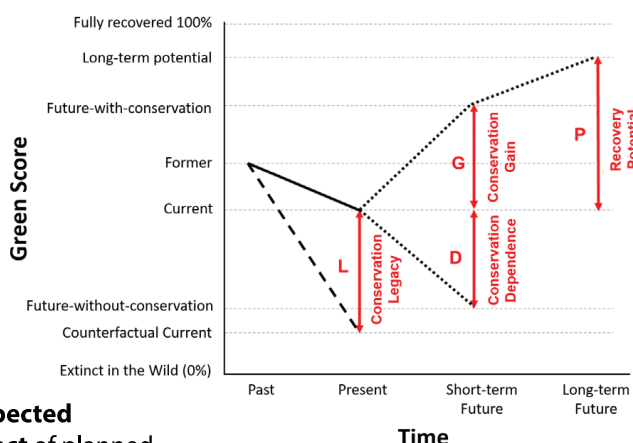
Main objectives

- To **provide a standardised framework for measuring species recovery**
- To **recognise conservation achievements**
- To **highlight species whose current conservation status is dependent on continued conservation actions**
- To **forecast the expected conservation impact** of planned conservation action
- To **elevate levels of ambition for long-term species recovery.**

Conservation Legacy = Current - Counterfactual Current
(measuring the impact of conservation actions conducted to date)

Conservation Dependence = Current Baseline - Future-without-conservation
Conservation Gain = Future-with-conservation - Current Baseline
(both measuring the short-term future effect of ongoing and planned conservation actions)

Recovery Potential = Long-term Potential - Current
(measuring the long-term future effect of plausible conservation effort and innovation)










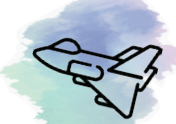

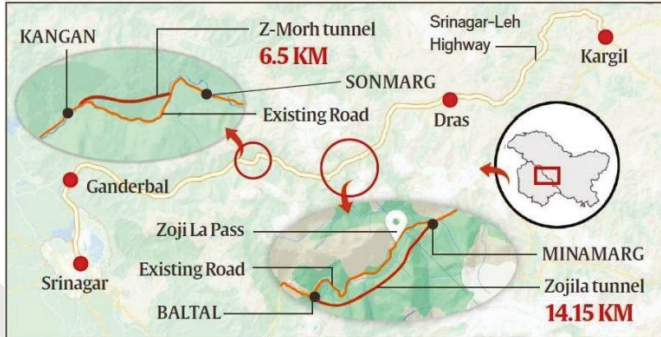
- They are **represented by a Species Recovery Score**, and by **four conservation impact metrics** (Conservation Legacy, Conservation Dependence, Conservation Gain, Recovery Potential).
 - These metrics are **quantified as differences between the Green Score of the species in different time steps** or under different scenarios.
- Some of the green status Species: **Pink pigeon** (Mauritius); **Burrowing bettong** (Australia); **Sumatran rhino** (Indonesian islands of Sumatra and Borneo).

ROW ERUPTS OVER MOVE TO FREE TEMPLES FROM KARNATAKA GOVT'S CONTROL

- The Karnataka government is mulling to bring in a law to free temples from the state's control.
- The **practice of State control over religious institutions began during colonial rule** in the Bengal and Madras Presidency in 1817.
 - In 1925, the **Madras Religious and Charitable Endowments Act** brought temples under government control.
 - Since the **minority communities strongly protested**, their places of worship were released, and only **Hindu temples were held.**
 - In recent years, **the state control has extended to temples across India.**
- Arguments favouring state control**
 - Huge revenue is generated in temple,
 - Government oversight could **prevent financial irregularities**
 - Social reforms like** challenging hereditary priesthood, no discrimination in entry in public temples etc.
- Arguments against state control**
 - Revenue of temples is **property of society** that should be used for developing temples and social work.
 - Alleged use of temple revenue for **promoting other religious institutions.**
 - Violation of Articles 14 and 15** of the constitution as other religious institutes are not governed by any similar government enactment.
 - Dismal record in maintaining** the archaeological nature of the structures.

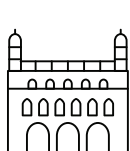
ALSO IN NEWS

 <p>Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SBI, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank continue to remain D-SIB. • D-SIB means that the bank is too big to fail. According to the RBI, some banks become systemically important due to their size, cross-jurisdictional activities, complexity and lack of substitute and interconnection. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Banks whose assets exceed 2% of GDP are considered part of this group. • As per the framework, from 2015, the central bank has to disclose names of banks designated as D-SIB.
 <p>Surety bonds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India has unveiled the final guidelines, facilitating the launch of various types of surety bonds. • A surety bond is provided by the insurance company on behalf of the contractor to the entity, which is awarding the project. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ When a principal breaks a bond's terms, the harmed party can make a claim on the bond to recover losses. ➤ It can effectively replace the system of bank guarantee, and help reduce risks due to cost overrun, project delays and poor contract performance.
 <p>Reserve Bank of India-Retail Direct (RBI-RD) Scheme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has notified the RBI-RD Scheme, which was formulated as a one-stop solution to facilitate investment in Government Securities (G-Secs) by individual investors. • Under the Scheme, retail individual investors will be able to open a Retail Direct Gilt (RDG) Account with the RBI. • The Scheme aims to bring G-secs within easy reach of the common man by simplifying the process of investment.
 <p>Airtel Payments Bank as a scheduled bank</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Airtel Payments Bank has been categorised as a scheduled bank by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). • All banks which are included in the Second Schedule to the RBI Act, 1934 are Scheduled Banks. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ These banks comprise Scheduled Commercial Banks and Scheduled Co-operative Banks. • Benefits of being a scheduled bank: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Becomes eligible for debts/loans at the bank rate from the RBI ➤ Automatically acquires the membership of clearing house ➤ Rediscount of first class exchange bills from the RBI
 <p>Arabian sea primary choice for Crew module (CM) landing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Arabian Sea, which is comparatively calmer, is the primary choice for return of the CM (habitat of astronauts) of the Gaganyaan (the country's maiden manned space mission scheduled for launch in 2023). ➤ However, the Bay of Bengal (BoB) is also being considered as a backup option. • Note: BoB (i.e. the east coast) is preferred for launching the satellites which are placed in geo-stationary orbit because Earth rotates from west to east giving these satellites initial speed boost and saving fuel cost.
 <p>(IHU, or University Hospital Institutes) : New CoVID Variant</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • France reported new variant of CoVID - called IHU. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A variant is a viral genome (genetic code) that may contain one or more mutations. • It can be detected a polymerase chain reaction analysis, hence lesser need of genome sequencing for its identification. • The IHU variant that the researchers mention is B.1.640 which, according to global databases, was first discovered way back in January last year. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The one that the French researchers found among people in November has now been classified as a sub-lineage B.1.640.2.
 <p>India COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health System Preparedness Package (ECRP)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Health Ministry clarified that Centre by 24th aug 2021 released 50% funds earmarked for states under ECRP phase II and states have utilized 60% of the approved funds. • The ECRP is a centrally sponsored scheme to prevent, detect and respond to the threat posed by the ongoing pandemic and strengthen the national health systems for emergency response and preparedness across the country. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Cabinet approved ECRP-Phase-II to be implemented from July 1, 2021, to March 31, 2022

 <p>Omi Sure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is made in India kit to detect the omicron, recently got approval by Indian Council of Medical Research. It is developed by The Tata Medical and Diagnostics that can detect the Omicron in nasopharyngeal/oropharyngeal specimens during the RT-PCR tests. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Omicron patients are detected only after genome sequencing. But this test can help eliminate that step and detection can be done during the testing.
 <p>P-8I aircraft</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In a big boost to India's defence capabilities, the Indian Navy's Boeing P-8I aircraft commenced operations from INS Hansa in Goa. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Till now, the aircraft were based in Tamil Nadu on the eastern seaboard. P-8I is a long-range multi-mission maritime patrol aircraft capable of broad-area, maritime and littoral operations.
 <p>Places in News</p>	<p>Zoji La Pass</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the first time Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has kept the Zoji La mountain pass open beyond 31st December. Zoji La Pass is a high mountain pass at an elevation of 3,528m (11,575ft) above the sea level, located in the Kargil district of Ladakh. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is the strategic link connecting Ladakh to Srinagar and the rest of India. To provide all-weather connectivity to Ladakh, the Zojila Tunnel is being constructed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once completed, at 14.15 km, it will be India's longest road tunnel, and Asia's longest bi-directional tunnel. 



DELHI



LUCKNOW



JAIPUR



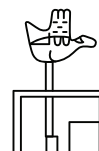
HYDERABAD



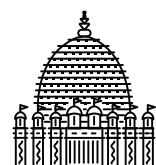
PUNE



AHMEDABAD



CHANDIGARH



GUWAHATI