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VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & **STUDY CENTRE**

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

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Table of Contents

1. Impact of US Tariffs on Indian Exporters and Need for Urgent Support.....	2
2. Revamped RoC Framework: Enhancing Ease of Doing Business and Corporate Oversight.....	3
3. India's AI Governance Framework: Balancing Innovation and Trust	5
4. Public Capex Shift: Prioritizing Quality, Outcomes, and AI-Driven Monitoring.....	6
5. Jan Van and Fintech: Democratizing Carbon Trading for Climate Action	8
6. Satellite Data Signals 20% Reduction in Stubble Burning Area in Key Punjab Districts.....	9
7. Belém Summit and COP30: A Call for the 'COP of Truth' and Urgent Action	11
8. Nauradehi Sanctuary: Proposed 3rd Cheetah Home and the Tiger Challenge	13
9. Repatriation of Looted Pharaonic Artifact: A Case Study in Cultural Property Law.....	14
10. Revamping SEZ Norms: Integrating Exporters with the Domestic Market.....	16
11. DDWS Special Campaign 5.0: Enhancing Governance and Swachhata.....	18



1. Impact of US Tariffs on Indian Exporters and Need for Urgent Support

Executive Summary

The imposition of a **50% punitive tariff** by the United States, India's largest export market, has created a severe external shock for Indian exporters. While overall merchandise exports have shown resilience through market diversification, the sharp decline in shipments to the US—falling **37.5% over five months**—poses a structural threat. Labour-intensive sectors are the worst affected. Urgent government support is required to ease working capital stress and prevent job losses and permanent loss of market share.

Key Points on the Crisis

- **Tariff Shock and Sectoral Stress:** The US has levied a 50% punitive tariff on several Indian goods, causing significant stress, particularly in **labour-intensive industries** such as textiles, gems & jewellery, chemicals, and machinery.
- **Sharp Decline in US Exports:** Exports to the US have fallen sharply by **12% in September** and a cumulative **37.5%** over the last five months, despite overall merchandise exports appearing stable.
- **Impact on Overall Export Growth:** The US share in India's export basket has dropped from **24% in June to 15% in September**, dragging down India's overall export growth by **4.2 percentage points**.
- **Diversification as a Buffer:** The stable overall export figures are primarily due to **diversification to new markets** including Spain, Egypt, China, Bangladesh, and the UK.
- **Credit Tightening and Support Needed:** Exporters are facing severe **working capital stress** as banks tighten credit to "risk-classified" export sectors. They are urgently seeking government support like soft loans, relaxation in Non-Performing Asset (NPA) norms, and quick credit interventions.
- **Risk of Irreversible Damage:** Delay in a relief package could lead to the loss of US market share, mass **retrenchment of labour**, and a cascading negative impact on related domestic industries. Exporters view this as a trade shock requiring a **COVID-era style relief package**, citing precedents like Brazil's \$15.5 billion support.



Important Keywords / Concepts

Term	Definition/Context
Tariff	A tax imposed on imported/exported goods, used as a trade policy tool.
Export Diversification	Strategy to reduce overdependence on a few large markets by expanding to new destinations.
Working Capital Stress	Increased financial pressure due to higher cost of operations and delayed returns, limiting day-to-day liquidity.
Labour-Intensive Sector	A sector where a large proportion of operating costs involve employing workers (e.g., textiles, apparel, gems & jewellery).



Relevant Legal/Policy Framework

- **Foreign Trade Policy 2023:** Policy aimed at encouraging export competitiveness and market diversification.
- **Interest Equalization Scheme:** Provides interest relief to small and medium-sized exporters (potential area for expansion/enhancement).
- **WTO Norms:** Any proposed government subsidy package must remain compliant with World Trade Organization (WTO) rules to avoid potential international trade disputes.

Conclusion: Path Forward

While India's export sector has demonstrated remarkable resilience through market diversification, the sharp decline in shipments to its primary partner, the US, is a severe and **structural threat** to labour-intensive segments. **Timely financial support**, including easier credit norms and a targeted relief package, is paramount to safeguard export competitiveness and prevent substantial job losses. This must be coupled with quick, focused bilateral trade negotiations with the US to secure a reduction in the punitive tariffs.

UPSC Relevance (General Studies Examination)

- **GS Paper 3 (Economy):** Directly relevant to topics on the External Sector, Export Promotion strategies, and International Trade Policies.
- **Mains Examination:** Useful for answers on the impact of global trade wars, protectionism, maintaining export competitiveness, and supporting MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises).
- **Prelims and Interview:** Important for current events related to trade trends, global trade shifts, and their direct impact on the Indian economy.

2. Revamped RoC Framework: Enhancing Ease of Doing Business and Corporate Oversight

Key Highlights and Strategic Response

- **Major Administrative Overhaul (2026):** The Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) is implementing a significant administrative restructuring of the compliance and oversight system for **Companies and LLPs** (Limited Liability Partnerships), effective January 1, 2026.
- **Expansion of Regulatory Bodies:** The shake-up involves the creation of **six new Registrars of Companies (RoCs)** and **three new Regional Directors (RDs)**, expanding the total to 10 RDs and 32 RoCs (from 26 currently).
- **Decentralization and Local Focus:** The move includes redrawing jurisdictions across states (e.g., dual RoCs for Delhi, Maharashtra, UP, and Kolkata) to make corporate regulation more **local, responsive, and business-friendly**.
- **Addressing the Corporate Surge:** The restructuring is a timely response to the rapidly expanding corporate ecosystem in India, which sees the incorporation of nearly 150,000 companies and 75,000 LLPs annually, easing the pressure and bottlenecks on the existing oversight system.





- **Dual Objective: Efficiency and Governance:** The reform is aimed at improving both the **Ease of Doing Business** (through increased accessibility and faster approval of forms) and **regulatory efficiency** (through enhanced compliance monitoring and quicker adjudication of matters).

Important Keywords / Concepts

- **Registrar of Companies (RoC):** Government officials appointed under the **Companies Act, 2013**, responsible for registering companies/LLPs and ensuring their compliance with statutory requirements.
- **Regional Director (RD):** Senior officials who oversee and supervise the work of multiple RoCs within a defined geographical region.
- **Ease of Doing Business:** An index and policy goal focusing on simplifying business regulations and processes, directly linked to India's global competitiveness.
- **Limited Liability Partnership (LLP):** A hybrid form of business organization under the **LLP Act, 2008**, providing limited liability to partners while allowing the flexibility of a partnership.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Companies Act, 2013:** The primary central legislation governing the incorporation, responsibilities of directors, disclosure of information, and dissolution of companies in India. The RoCs derive their powers from this Act, particularly **Section 396 (Establishment of Registration Offices)**.
- **Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) Act, 2008:** The law governing the formation and regulation of LLPs. The RoCs are responsible for administering this Act as well.
- **Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA):** The nodal ministry in the Government of India concerned with corporate affairs, responsible for the administration of both the Companies Act and the LLP Act.

Conclusion

The overhaul of the RoC and RD framework, effective 2026, represents a decisive step by the MCA toward **decentralizing corporate regulation** and improving governance. By reducing the average caseload per office and enhancing local accessibility, this reform directly addresses the compliance burden for the growing number of companies and LLPs, thereby boosting India's commitment to the '**Ease of Doing Business**' environment and ensuring more effective regulatory oversight.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 2 (Governance):** Relates to government policies and interventions for development in various sectors; institutional and administrative reforms.
- **GS Paper 3 (Economy):** Directly linked to the topic of **Industrial Policy** and its effects on the growth and development of the MSME (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) and corporate sector, including 'Ease of Doing Business' reforms.
- **Prelims:** Important current affairs topic on the functions of statutory bodies (RoC, RD) and key provisions of the Companies Act/LLP Act.



3. India's AI Governance Framework: Balancing Innovation and Trust

Key Highlights and Strategic Approach (The Seven Sutras)

- **Landmark Governance Framework:** The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has published the **India AI Governance Guidelines** under the **IndiaAI Mission**, establishing a human-centric and risk-mitigation framework.
- **The Seven Guiding Principles:** The framework is built on principles, often referred to as the "Seven Sutras," which are critical for UPSC: **Trust, People First, Innovation over Restraint, Fairness & Equity, Accountability, Understandable by Design, and Safety, Resilience & Sustainability**. The core ethos is '**Do No Harm**.'
- **Innovation-First, Agile Regulation:** India has adopted a "**proportional, future-focused, and adaptive**" approach, prioritizing **innovation** and adoption. There are currently **no immediate plans for a dedicated AI law**, with the government preferring to leverage and amend existing laws (a "**light-touch**" approach).
- **Institutional Mechanism:** The framework proposes the establishment of key institutions for oversight and technical support, including the **AI Governance Group (AIGG)**, the **Technology and Policy Expert Committee (TPEC)**, and the **AI Safety Institute (AIS)**.
- **Leveraging Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI):** India's approach emphasizes integrating AI with its existing DPI stack (like Aadhaar, UPI) to ensure AI is **accessible, affordable, and inclusive** for mass societal benefit and economic growth.
- **Focus on Existing Legal Architecture:** Risks associated with AI, such as deepfakes and misinformation, will primarily be addressed through existing laws like the **Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000**, the **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023**, and the **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita**.



Important Keywords / Concepts

- **IndiaAI Mission:** A flagship government initiative with a significant investment (e.g., ₹10,000 crore) aimed at establishing India as a global hub for AI, focusing on research, infrastructure, and application development.
- **Techno-Legal Approach:** A policy strategy where regulatory compliance and safeguards (e.g., for bias detection, privacy) are embedded directly into the technology systems ("**compliance by design**").
- **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI):** Open, shared technology platforms (like UPI, Aadhaar, DigiLocker) that enable the delivery of public and private services at a population scale.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty):** The governance principles like 'Fairness & Equity' and 'People First' are aligned with the fundamental rights, especially the right to privacy (protected under Article 21) and the need to prevent algorithmic discrimination.



- **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023:** This Act forms a crucial legal foundation for AI governance, specifically by regulating how personal data is collected, processed, and used for training AI models.
- **IT Act, 2000 & its Rules (e.g., Intermediary Guidelines):** Provides the basis for regulating online content, including potential rules for mandatorily **labelling AI-generated content** (like deepfakes) to ensure traceability and accountability of platforms.

Conclusion

India's AI Governance Framework marks a measured, **pro-innovation approach** aimed at leveraging AI for inclusive growth (*Viksit Bharat*) while establishing practical "**guardrails**" through adaptive guidelines rather than immediate, rigid legislation. By focusing on core ethical principles and strengthening existing institutional mechanisms, India is positioning itself as a leader in responsible AI development, especially for the Global South, balancing technological momentum with citizen safety.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 2 (Governance & Constitution):** Relates to government policies and interventions in the technology sector; implications for Fundamental Rights (Privacy, Non-Discrimination); role of IT Act and DPDP Act.
- **GS Paper 3 (Science & Technology / Economy):** Directly covers the application and impact of Science and Technology; topics like the IndiaAI Mission, the role of AI in economic growth, challenges of cybersecurity, and ethical issues in emerging technologies.
- **Mains:** Essential for questions on the ethical dimension of AI, the need for a global governance framework, and comparing India's regulatory approach (adaptive, innovation-led) with others (e.g., EU's AI Act).

4. Public Capex Shift: Prioritizing Quality, Outcomes, and AI-Driven Monitoring

Key Highlights of the Policy Shift

- **Focus on Quality over Scale:** Policymakers are shifting emphasis from merely increasing the **size** of public Capital Expenditure (**Capex**) allocations (e.g., the budgeted ₹11.21 trillion for FY26) to improving its **quality, execution, and measurable economic impact**.
- **Outcome-Based Budgeting:** Central capital support will now be explicitly **linked to projects** that demonstrate clear **economic, social, or environmental returns**, ensuring investments translate into durable assets and productivity gains rather than being based simply on annual spending capacity.
- **Leveraging AI and Data Analytics: Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven tools** and data analytics will be deployed extensively for project appraisal, real-time monitoring, and performance tracking to minimize **cost and time overruns** and enhance transparency.
- **Crowding in Private Investment:** The strategic aim is to ensure better targeting of public investment, aligning it with national growth priorities, and using it as a **catalyst to "crowd in" private sector participation** and investment.





- **Due Diligence and Accountability:** A formal **quality and impact assessment framework** will be introduced for all infrastructure projects before providing central funds, making **greater due diligence** and closer scrutiny central to improving execution and accountability.

Important Keywords / Concepts

- **Capital Expenditure (Capex):** Funds spent by the government on acquiring, upgrading, or maintaining long-term physical assets (e.g., roads, ports, machinery). It is a long-term investment that creates future benefits.
- **Multiplier Effect of Capex:** Every rupee spent on public capex generates a larger increase in the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Estimates suggest a capex multiplier of around **2.25 to 4.80** (significantly higher than revenue expenditure).
- **Crowding In:** A positive economic effect where increased government spending (especially on infrastructure/capex) stimulates and encourages greater private sector investment.
- **AI in Project Monitoring:** Using AI, Machine Learning, and data analytics for functions like predictive maintenance, real-time progress tracking, identifying bottlenecks (e.g., land acquisition), and optimizing resource allocation.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 112 (Annual Financial Statement/Budget):** The government's plan for Capital Expenditure is presented annually in the Union Budget as part of the total expenditure, authorized by Parliament.
- **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003:** While primarily focusing on fiscal deficit reduction, the Act's framework underscores the importance of public finance management and ensuring the sustainability of public debt, which is aided by efficient, outcome-oriented capex.
- **PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan:** A technology-driven, multi-modal connectivity initiative that already utilizes GIS-based platforms for integrated planning and monitoring, providing a readymade framework for the enhanced AI-driven surveillance of projects.

Conclusion

The policy pivot from merely high-volume capex to **high-quality, outcome-driven public investment**, augmented by **AI and data analytics**, signifies a matured approach to fiscal management. This strategic shift is crucial for maximizing the **multiplier effect** of government spending, enhancing asset durability, and ensuring sustained, productivity-led economic growth. It will also improve the government's credibility, making it easier to attract private capital.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 3 (Economy):** Highly relevant to **Government Budgeting, Investment Models** (Public vs. Private Investment), **Infrastructure Development**, and the application of **Science and Technology** (AI) in governance.
- **Mains Examination:** Essential for answers on Fiscal Policy, the **Quality of Fiscal Adjustment**, the strategy for achieving **Viksit Bharat** (Developed India), and **reforms in public finance management**.
- **Prelims:** Key economic concept on **Capital vs. Revenue Expenditure** and their respective multipliers.



5. Jan Van and Fintech: Democratizing Carbon Trading for Climate Action

Key Highlights and Strategic Proposal

- **The Jan Van Proposal:** The concept proposes a "Jan Van" (People's Forest) program, leveraging the success of the **Jan Dhan** financial inclusion scheme, to **democratize carbon credit trading** by allowing mass participation.
- **Fintech as the Enabler:** The core idea is to use **Fintech** (Financial Technology), particularly **Blockchain** and **Smart Contracts**, to issue and trade carbon credits earned by individuals through verifiable activities like green-cover plantation, organic farming, or local solar adoption.
- **Incentivizing Climate Action:** This approach aims to create a **self-sustaining, subsidy-free economic stimulus** by providing financial rewards for carbon-reducing endeavours, converting climate action into a people's movement.
- **Meeting India's Targets:** The proposal directly supports India's ambitious commitment to achieve **Net Zero emissions by 2070** and adhere to the legally binding targets set under the recently notified **Greenhouse Gas Emission Intensity Target (GGEIT) Rules 2025**.
- **Expanding the CCTS Scope:** It suggests expanding India's existing **Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS) of 2023** to include individuals, allowing a farmer in a remote village to sell credits globally, potentially connecting them to a global market estimated to reach **\$4.7 trillion by 2030**.
- **Technology for Transparency and Security:** Using **Blockchain** ensures transparency, eliminates intermediation costs, facilitates peer-to-peer transactions, and allows for seamless integration with the wider global carbon market (citing pilots in China and global platforms like CTX).



Important Keywords / Concepts

Term	Definition/Context
Carbon Credit	A tradeable permit representing the right to emit one tonne of carbon dioxide (or equivalent GHGs); issued for quantifiable carbon reduction/sequestration.
Net Zero Emissions (Carbon Neutrality):	Achieving a balance between the amount of greenhouse gas emissions produced and the amount removed from the atmosphere. India's goal is 2070.
Fintech	Technology that automates and improves the delivery and use of financial services. Crucial here for trading and verifying credits.
Blockchain	A decentralized, distributed digital ledger used to record transactions across many computers, ensuring data security and immutability (ideal for carbon credit verification).
Jan Dhan-Jan Van:	Leveraging the financial infrastructure and unique identity (JAM Trinity) of the Jan Dhan scheme for the economic inclusion of citizens in carbon markets.



Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 48A (Directive Principle of State Policy - DPSP):** Obligates the State to endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country. This plan aligns with promoting environmental protection.
- **Article 51A(g) (Fundamental Duty):** Imposes a duty on every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wild life, and to have compassion for living creatures. The 'Jan Van' plan incentivizes this duty.
- **Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS), 2023:** The legal framework notified by the government that establishes the Indian carbon market for 'obligated entities' to meet emission reduction targets. The 'Jan Van' idea is an extension of this policy.
- **Paris Agreement (2015):** The global treaty under which India has submitted its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and pledged Net Zero by 2070. The GGEIT Rules 2025 are a domestic legal step toward meeting the NDC.

Conclusion

Integrating the power of **Fintech** with a people-centric initiative like the **Jan Van** program offers a transformative, decentralized pathway to achieve India's ambitious climate goals. By converting environmental stewardship into a tangible economic asset, this model could unlock **mass private participation** in emission reduction, ensuring greater compliance, transparency, and the **democratization of green finance**, thereby securing a just transition.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 3 (Economy & Environment):** Directly relevant to Climate Change Policy, Carbon Markets (Cap and Trade), the role of Technology in sustainable development, and **Green Finance/Green Bonds**.
- **GS Paper 2 (Governance):** Relates to Digital Governance, Financial Inclusion (Jan Dhan, JAM Trinity), and using innovative policy mechanisms (e.g., incentive-based) for achieving national missions.
- **Mains Examination:** Essential for questions on India's strategy for achieving Net Zero, the need for citizen participation in climate action, and the application of frontier technologies like Blockchain in environmental governance.

6. Satellite Data Signals 20% Reduction in Stubble Burning Area in Key Punjab Districts

Key Highlights and Trend Analysis

- **Significant Reduction in Burnt Area:** Satellite data suggests the actual area subjected to **stubble burning** in three major Punjab districts (Amritsar, Taran Taran, and Ferozpur) in late October was approximately **20% lower** (2.46 lakh hectares) compared to the same period last year (3.15 lakh hectares).
- **Lowest Fire Counts but Area Remains Key:** While the daily **fire counts** detected by satellites in October were at a five-year low, this data is often misleading. The actual burnt **area** provides a more accurate picture, as the area burnt had previously increased despite claims of reduced fire counts (19.4 lakh hectares burnt in 2024 vs. 15.4 lakh hectares in 2022).



- **Delayed Season Due to Weather:** The delayed emergence of satellite imagery this year (after October 10) was attributed to heavy **rainfall and flooding** during September, which delayed the paddy harvest.
- **Peak Burning Period Ahead:** Historically, the **first fortnight of November** is when farm fires in Punjab **peak**, indicating that a surge in fire counts and burnt area is still possible, requiring sustained monitoring and enforcement.
- **Impact on Air Quality:** Curbing farm fires is crucial as they have historically contributed up to **35% of the daily winter pollution load in Delhi**, making this reduction a potentially positive sign for air quality in the National Capital Region (NCR).
- **Policy Efficacy Indicated:** Experts suggest that this measured reduction in burnt area, if sustained, indicates that the measures implemented by the state government over the last five years (including promoting in-situ and ex-situ management) may finally be yielding results.



Important Keywords / Concepts

- **Stubble Burning (Farm Fires):** The practice of deliberately setting fire to the straw residue that remains after harvesting crops (primarily paddy/rice) to quickly clear fields for the subsequent wheat crop.
- **In-Situ Management:** Managing crop residue within the field, typically using machinery like the **Happy Seeder** or **Super Seeder** for incorporation into the soil.
- **Ex-Situ Management:** Managing crop residue outside the field, primarily by collecting it for use in industries such as biomass power plants or ethanol production.
- **Air Quality Index (AQI):** A tool used to communicate how clean or polluted the air is. Stubble burning significantly increases PM2.5 and PM10 concentrations, severely degrading the AQI in Northern India during winter.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 21 (Right to Life):** The fundamental right to life, which has been interpreted by the Supreme Court to include the **Right to a Healthy Environment**, underscoring the legal imperative to curb pollution sources like stubble burning.
- **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 (EPA):** The umbrella legislation empowering the central government to take measures to protect and improve environmental quality, often used to issue directives to states regarding pollution control, including farm fires.
- **Supreme Court/NGT Directives:** The **Supreme Court of India** and the **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** have consistently intervened and issued stringent orders, compelling the governments of Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh to take effective, quantifiable measures to eliminate stubble burning.
- **Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC):** Authorities often invoke sections related to public nuisance and negligent acts (e.g., **IPC Section 278**) to impose fines or register cases against farmers engaged in stubble burning.



Conclusion

While the reported 20% reduction in the burnt area in key districts is a significant and positive indicator that long-term policy measures against stubble burning are beginning to work, the problem is far from resolved, especially with the peak burning period looming in November. Sustained success requires continuous, targeted monitoring using advanced satellite data (focusing on burnt area, not just fire counts), strict legal enforcement, and aggressive promotion and subsidy of **in-situ and ex-situ residue management solutions** to offer farmers economically viable alternatives.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 3 (Environment & Economy):** Directly covers Environmental Pollution and Degradation (Air Pollution in NCR); Conservation efforts; Crop Residue Management (technology and policy); and its linkage with agricultural practices.
- **GS Paper 2 (Governance):** Relevant to Centre-State relations (coordination on pollution), the role of the Supreme Court and NGT in environmental governance, and the efficacy of government schemes (e.g., machinery subsidies).
- **Mains Examination:** Essential for answers on the challenges of urban pollution, the nexus between agriculture and environment, and the institutional mechanisms required for cross-state environmental problem-solving.

7. Belém Summit and COP30: A Call for the 'COP of Truth' and Urgent Action

Key Highlights and Global Climate Stance

- **The 'COP of Truth' Imperative:** The Belém Summit in the Brazilian Amazon, preceding COP30 (to be held in Belém), is framed as the '**COP of Truth**,' aiming to shift the global climate discourse from mere speeches and promises to urgent, concrete action to restore faith in **multilateralism**.
- **Amazon as the Focal Point:** Holding the summit in the heart of the Amazon serves to expose leaders, diplomats, and activists to the **reality of the forest** and the millions of inhabitants, emphasizing the link between climate policy and ground-level action.
- **Non-Negotiable CBDR Principle:** The Global South demands that the principle of **Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)** remain the foundation of any climate pact, requiring rich countries to honor their financial debts and provide greater access to resources, given their historical benefit from the carbon-based economy.
- **Launch of TFFF Investment Fund:** Brazil will launch the innovative **Tropical Forests Forever Facility (TFFF)**, structured as an **investment fund** rather than a donation mechanism. It rewards those who keep their forests standing, with Brazil committing **\$1 billion** as seed investment.
- **Ambitious Brazilian NDC:** Brazil set an example by presenting a new, ambitious **Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)**, committing to reduce its emissions by **59% to 67%** across all sectors, underscoring that concrete action (like halving Amazon deforestation in two years) is possible.
- **Proposed UN Climate Change Council:** A major global governance reform proposal is the creation of a **UN Climate Change Council** linked to the General Assembly. This new structure would have





the legitimacy and force to ensure countries deliver on their climate promises, addressing the current paralysis in multilateralism.

Important Keywords / Concepts

- **COP30:** The 30th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- **Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR):** A principle under the UNFCCC/Paris Agreement recognizing that all countries share the responsibility for climate change, but developed countries have a greater obligation due to their historical emissions and resources.
- **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs):** Climate action plans required by the Paris Agreement outlining a country's post-2020 climate efforts, including emission reduction targets.
- **Tropical Forests Forever Facility (TFFF):** An innovative financial mechanism (investment fund) launched by Brazil aimed at rewarding preservation and attracting capital for tropical forests, promoting a sustainable finance model.
- **Just Transition:** A framework ensuring that the shift toward a low-carbon economy is done in a way that maximizes social and economic benefits, while minimizing hardships for workers and vulnerable communities affected by the phase-out of fossil fuels.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **UNFCCC, 1992 (Rio Earth Summit):** The key convention approved in Brazil (Earth Summit 1992) that established the framework for intergovernmental efforts to tackle climate change and is the legal basis for the COPs.
- **Paris Agreement, 2015:** An agreement under the UNFCCC setting the long-term goal to hold the global average temperature increase well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and ideally to 1.5°C . NDCs are the central mechanism.
- **Declaration on Hunger, Poverty and Climate:** A proposed declaration to be launched at Belém, linking the fight against global warming directly to global efforts to combat inequality, hunger, and poverty, aligning climate policy with **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

Conclusion

The Belém Summit and the push for the 'COP of Truth' represent a critical moment for global climate action, demanding a pivot from rhetoric to verifiable commitment, guided by the non-negotiable principle of CBDR. Brazil's initiatives, including the ambitious NDC, the TFFF investment fund, and the call for a UN Climate Change Council, advocate for a **reformed multilateral system** and a **just energy transition** that places people, particularly the most vulnerable, and their access to resources at the core of all climate decisions.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 2 (International Relations & Governance):** Highly relevant to **Multilateral Institutions** (UN, COP), **Global Governance Reform** (proposed UN Climate Change Council), and India's position within the **Global South** (CBDR principle).
- **GS Paper 3 (Environment & Economy):** Directly covers **Climate Change, Conventions, and Treaties** (UNFCCC, Paris Agreement), **Green Finance** (TFFF), **Energy Transition** (renewables, biofuels, green hydrogen), and the importance of **Forests/Biodiversity** (Amazon).



- **Mains Examination:** Essential for questions on **Climate Justice**, the challenges of **Climate Finance**, the efficacy of **NDCs**, and the need for new global institutional mechanisms to enforce climate promises.

8. Nauradehi Sanctuary: Proposed 3rd Cheetah Home and the Tiger Challenge

Key Highlights of Cheetah Reintroduction

- **Nauradehi as the 3rd Cheetah Home:** Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh is being prepared as the **third potential home** for cheetahs under the ongoing reintroduction project, following Kuno National Park and Gandhi Sagar Sanctuary.
- **The Tiger Challenge:** A significant challenge to Nauradehi's suitability is the presence of **25 resident tigers** (an apex predator) in the sanctuary, which runs counter to the initial strategy adopted for Kuno National Park.
- **Strategy of 'Blank Slate' (Kuno Model):** For Kuno and Gandhi Sagar, the strategy was to ensure a **"blank slate"** environment. This involved actively **moving out other apex predators** like leopards and ensuring the absence of lions/tigers to allow the newly introduced cheetahs to establish themselves without direct inter-species conflict.
- **Cheetah Vulnerability:** Cheetahs are less dominant than tigers and leopards; the presence of a high density of apex predators like tigers poses a direct threat, risking the cheetahs' ability to hunt, breed, and survive, potentially leading to increased mortality.
- **Need for Prey Base Management:** The successful reintroduction model requires not only the management of predators but also the **augmentation of the herbivore population** (prey base) to sustain the cheetahs without encouraging them to move outside the sanctuary in search of food.



Important Keywords / Concepts

Term	Definition/Context
Cheetah Reintroduction Project:	An ambitious conservation project (under Project Cheetah) launched in 2022 to re-establish the Cheetah population in India, where the species was declared extinct in 1952.
Apex Predator:	A predator at the top of its food chain, usually preying on other animals but not being preyed upon itself (e.g., Tiger, Lion).
Intraguild Predation:	The killing and eating of potential competitors (like a cheetah) by a dominant predator (like a tiger) within the same ecosystem.
Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary:	The largest sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh, located in the Bundelkhand region, being assessed for the cheetah's third home.



Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** The primary legal framework for the protection of wildlife (including cheetahs, which are listed in Schedule II of the Act upon reintroduction) and the establishment and management of Wildlife Sanctuaries and National Parks (like Nauradehi and Kuno).
- **Project Cheetah:** Governed by guidelines and mandates issued by the **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)**, which is a statutory body under the EPA, 1986, responsible for the management of the cheetah project.
- **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES):** As the cheetahs were initially imported from Namibia and South Africa, the project is governed by international protocols under CITES to ensure legal and sustainable movement of the species.

Conclusion

The selection of Nauradehi as the third cheetah habitat offers necessary geographical diversification, but its existing population of 25 tigers presents a substantial departure from the controlled, predator-lite approach of the initial phases. The success of the cheetah reintroduction project in Nauradehi will depend crucially on developing an effective, unprecedented management strategy to **mitigate fatal interactions** between the highly dominant tiger population and the relatively vulnerable cheetahs, a scenario not yet fully tested in the Indian context.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 3 (Environment & Biodiversity):** Highly relevant to **Conservation Projects** (Project Cheetah), **Ecology and Ecosystem Management** (predator-prey dynamics, intraguild competition), and the establishment of **Protected Areas** (National Parks/Sanctuaries).
- **GS Paper 2 (Governance):** Relates to the implementation and challenges of large-scale, international conservation programs (NTCA's role, inter-state cooperation).
- **Mains Examination:** Essential for questions on **In-situ conservation challenges**, balancing conservation goals with species conflict management, and the ecological suitability factors for reintroduction programs.

9. Repatriation of Looted Pharaonic Artifact: A Case Study in Cultural Property Law

Key Highlights and Significance

- **Successful Repatriation of Pharaonic Artifact:** The Netherlands announced the return of a 3,500-year-old **Pharaonic stone head** to Egypt. The artifact, a sculpture of a high-ranking official from Pharaoh Thutmose III's dynasty, was determined to have been **looted** during the political unrest of the **Arab Spring (2011-2012)**.
- **Mechanism of Detection:** The illegally trafficked artifact was discovered at an **elite European art fair (Maastricht) in 2022** following an **anonymous tip**. Dutch and Spanish police investigation, followed by Egyptian confirmation, led to the artifact's seizure and return, demonstrating the importance of international police cooperation and due diligence in the art market.
- **Illicit Trafficking and Instability:** The case highlights the severe vulnerability of archaeological sites and cultural institutions in regions experiencing **political instability and conflict** (like the Arab Spring), which often leads to sophisticated and systematic looting and irreparable destruction (like the head being removed from a larger block statue).



- **Dealer's Voluntary Action:** The dealer voluntarily relinquished the sculpture after its illegal origin was confirmed, underscoring the increasing pressure on the international art trade to comply with **ethical guidelines and provenance requirements** to combat the black market for antiquities.
- **Value of Cultural Heritage:** The repatriation underscores the incalculable cultural and historical value of such artifacts, which are central to a nation's identity and history, and the global trend toward **restitution** and accountability for illegally exported cultural property.



Important Keywords / Concepts

- **Repatriation (Cultural Property):** The process of returning cultural property (often ancient or looted art) to its country of origin or former owners.
- **Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property:** The illegal import, export, and transfer of ownership of cultural items, which is a key driver of organized crime and the impoverishment of the cultural heritage of countries of origin.
- **Provenance:** The chronology of the ownership, custody, or location of a historical object. Establishing unbroken, legal provenance is critical for the legal sale of antiquities.
- **Arab Spring Looting:** The systematic theft and destruction of archaeological sites and museums in Middle Eastern and North African countries, particularly Egypt, during the civil and political unrest following 2011.

Relevant Legal/Policy Framework

- **UNESCO 1970 Convention:** The **Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property** (1970). This is the key international legal instrument in this field, urging signatory States to take measures to prevent illicit trafficking and cooperate in the return of stolen or illegally exported cultural property.
- **Bilateral/Diplomatic Channels:** The return was facilitated through diplomatic channels, demonstrating the political will of the Netherlands and Egypt to adhere to the spirit of international cultural heritage protection agreements.
- **India's Stance (Contextual):** India has also aggressively pursued the repatriation of its stolen artifacts, utilizing diplomatic efforts and international conventions. **The Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972**, governs the export and trade of antiquities within India.

Conclusion

The successful repatriation of the Pharaonic stone head is a significant victory for Egypt and a robust example of **effective international collaboration** in the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural property, particularly in the post-conflict context. It reinforces the principle that artifacts stolen during periods of conflict or political turmoil must be returned to their countries of origin, supporting the goals of the **UNESCO 1970 Convention** and reaffirming the ethical responsibilities of the global art market.



UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 2 (International Relations & Governance):** Highly relevant to **International Conventions** (UNESCO 1970), **Cultural Diplomacy**, and the role of **International Cooperation** (Interpol, police, and diplomatic channels) in addressing transnational crimes.
- **GS Paper 1 (Indian Heritage and Culture):** Provides context for issues related to the **Protection and Preservation of Heritage** (India's own efforts to recover looted artifacts) and the impact of the **Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972**.
- **Mains Examination:** Essential for answers on **Cultural Nationalism vs. Cultural Internationalism**, the challenges of **Repatriation and Restitution** in the modern world, and the **vulnerability of heritage** in conflict zones.

10. Revamping SEZ Norms: Integrating Exporters with the Domestic Market

Key Highlights and Policy Direction

- **Policy Pivot to Domestic Integration:** A high-level government panel is working on new Special Economic Zones (SEZ) norms to allow SEZ units greater access to the **Domestic Tariff Area (DTA)** market. This aims to boost manufacturing, improve utilization, and help exporters cope with **steep US tariffs** that have hurt their global competitiveness.
- **Demand for 'Reverse Job Work':** Exporters are primarily demanding a **'Reverse Job Work' policy** to be allowed. This would permit SEZ units to perform production or processing work for the domestic market, leveraging the Indian economy as a secondary market.
- **Addressing Capacity Under-utilisation:** The core rationale for allowing domestic access is to improve the **efficiency** of SEZ units. Due to the seasonality of export demand, labor and equipment capacity in SEZs are often **not optimally utilized**. Access to the DTA market would sustain operations and employment.
- **Gems and Jewellery Sector Focus:** The **Gems and Jewellery industry** is at the forefront of this demand, as it contributes a large share of SEZ exports (nearly 65% of studded jewellery exports) and is particularly vulnerable to US tariff pressures. They also seek measures like interest moratoriums to ease financial stress.
- **Trade-off and Regulatory Challenge:** The main hurdle is ensuring **fair competition** and revenue protection. Since SEZ units enjoy duty exemptions on inputs and capital goods, any move to allow domestic sales must factor in these duty exemptions so that the **Domestic Industry** (which pays duties) is not disadvantaged.
- **Addressing Long-standing Structural Weaknesses:** The current push for reform is also addressing pre-existing challenges in Indian SEZs, such as **low investment in Research and Development (R&D)**, skill gaps, and low **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)** (partially due to the lack of investment protection agreements and negative perception).





Important Keywords / Concepts

Term	Definition/Context
Special Economic Zone (SEZ):	A geographically delineated, duty-free enclave in India treated as foreign territory for trade, duties, and tariffs, established under the SEZ Act, 2005 , primarily to promote exports and attract FDI.
Domestic Tariff Area (DTA):	The rest of India outside the SEZs. Sales from an SEZ to the DTA are treated as imports and are subject to duties.
Reverse Job Work:	A proposed policy allowing an SEZ unit to undertake work (production/processing) for a unit in the DTA, essentially permitting a level of domestic market engagement.
De-notification of SEZ:	The formal process where a unit or an entire SEZ exits the SEZ scheme and enters the DTA regime, often sought when export benefits become uncompetitive or redundant.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Special Economic Zones (SEZ) Act, 2005:** The primary Act governing the establishment, operation, and incentives of SEZs in India. Any major change, like replacing the SEZ Act with the proposed **Development of Enterprise and Services Hubs (DESH) Bill, 2022**, requires legislative action.
- **WTO Compliance:** Reforms are crucial because the original SEZ fiscal benefits (e.g., income tax exemption linked to Net Foreign Exchange Earnings-NFE) were deemed to be prohibited **export subsidies** by the **WTO** in 2019, necessitating a shift to WTO-compliant incentives.
- **Customs Act, 1962 & Taxation:** The operation of SEZs, including the duty-free status of imports and the levy of duties on DTA sales, is governed by the provisions of the Customs Act and related taxation laws.

Conclusion

The government's move to overhaul SEZ norms, focusing on domestic market access through policies like 'Reverse Job Work,' is a pragmatic response to both global trade headwinds (like US tariffs) and domestic challenges (like under-utilized capacity). This policy shift, moving away from a purely export-centric model toward a more flexible and integrated "**Development Hub**" (as envisioned in the proposed DESH Bill), is crucial for maintaining the competitiveness of Indian manufacturing and safeguarding employment in key sectors like gems and jewellery.

UPSC Relevance IN

- **GS Paper 3 (Economy & Governance):** Directly relevant to **Industrial Policy, Foreign Trade Policy, WTO issues (Subsidies and Countervailing Measures-ASCM), FDI**, and the efficacy of **Special Economic Zones** as an engine for export-led growth.
- **Mains Examination:** Essential for questions on **Structural Reforms** needed in the manufacturing sector, the concept of **WTO-compliant incentives**, and the policy challenges of **balancing export promotion with domestic industry protection**.
- **Prelims:** Key facts related to the SEZ Act, the DESH Bill, the concept of DTA, and the sectors (e.g., Gems & Jewellery) driving the reform demand.



11. DDWS Special Campaign 5.0: Enhancing Governance and Swachhata

Key Highlights and Administrative Efficiency

- **Successful Completion of Special Campaign 5.0 (SC 5.0):** The Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS) successfully concluded the nationwide cleanliness and pendency reduction drive, SC 5.0, which ran from **October 2nd to October 31st, 2025**.
- **Focus on Multi-pronged Governance:** The campaign aimed at a multi-pronged approach to enhance governance, focusing on **resolution of pending references, improved record management, and extensive *Swachhata* (cleanliness) initiatives** across operational levels.
- **Significant Pendency Reduction:** The DDWS achieved high success in resolving pending matters, disposing of **410 Public Grievances (PGs)** and **50 PG Appeals**. Crucially, it cleared high-priority communications, including **16 VIP references** and **3 PMO references**, ensuring greater governmental responsiveness.
- **Records and Space Management**
Achievements: A key outcome was the streamlining of records, with **100 physical files** successfully weeded out and **120 square feet of office space** cleared. The disposal of unserviceable assets and scrap (including e-waste) also generated a revenue of **₹ 3,73,706**.
- **Promoting Work Culture Change:** The campaign symbolizes the Department's commitment to **efficiency, transparency, and organizational reform**. The DDWS has committed to **maintaining the momentum** and spirit of SC 5.0 throughout the year to make these gains permanent fixtures of the work culture.



Important Keywords / Concepts

- **Special Campaign 5.0 (SC 5.0):** An annual, nationwide initiative by the Government of India, typically launched by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), focusing on institutional cleanliness (*Swachhata*) and efficient governance, particularly in reducing pendency.
- **Pendency Reduction:** The systematic effort by government offices to clear backlogs of public grievances, appeals, VIP references, and old files/records, a key indicator of **administrative efficiency**.
- **Weeding Out of Files:** The process of reviewing, recording, and disposing of old, non-essential physical files and records to improve record management and reduce physical clutter.
- ***Swachhata* (Cleanliness):** In the context of the campaign, this extends beyond physical cleanliness to encompass **organizational hygiene**, including the proper disposal of e-waste and unserviceable assets.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Right to Good Governance:** While not explicitly codified, the rapid and effective disposal of Public Grievances aligns with the principles of good governance, transparency, and accountability, which are integral to India's democratic and constitutional framework.



- **Digital India Initiative:** The focus on streamlining records and reducing physical files supports the broader 'Digital India' mission by pushing for digitization and efficient, paperless governance processes.
- **Role of DARPG:** The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, under the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, is the nodal agency for promoting administrative reforms, including the Special Campaigns, ensuring better public service delivery.

Conclusion

The successful conclusion of the DDWS Special Campaign 5.0 demonstrates the efficacy of targeted, time-bound administrative drives in enhancing governmental efficiency. By simultaneously achieving quantitative targets in **pendency reduction, record management, and physical Swachhata**, the campaign contributes directly to the larger goal of **responsive, transparent, and 'Citizen-First' governance**, essential for effective public service delivery.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 2 (Governance):** Directly relevant to the topics of **E-Governance** (record management), **Transparency and Accountability, Citizen Charters, and Institutional/Administrative Reforms** (role of DARPG and Special Campaigns).
- **Mains Examination:** Useful for illustrating **case studies of administrative best practices** in public grievance redressal, improving organizational efficiency, and the implementation of the **Swachh Bharat Mission** (extended to office cleanliness).
- **Prelims:** Important for current events related to key government departments (DDWS, MoP) and initiatives focused on governance and cleanliness drives.