



“ We help you reach for the star ”

VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & STUDY CENTRE

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

DATE: 20/12/2025 (SATURDAY)



9972258970 & 9740702455

**#317/A SKB Arcade, D. Subbaiah Road,
Ramaswamy Circle, Mysuru-570004**



Table of Contents

1. Government Initiatives for Strengthening Farm Extension, Skill Development and Rural Livelihoods.....	2
2. Escrow Account Mechanism under Revised PMFBY Guidelines (Implemented from Kharif 2025)	3
3. Delhi POCSO Courts Achieve Highest-Ever Clearance Rate amid Backlog Reduction Drive	4
4. IN-SPACE's Antariksh Prayogshala Initiative: Establishing Space Labs in Academic Institutions.....	5
5. Kerala 2.0: Reclaiming Fiscal Prudence, Governance Integrity and Sustainable Development.....	6
6. Significance of a Strong Defence Industrial Base for India@2047	7
7. Bureau of Port Security (BoPS): Strengthening Maritime and Port Security Architecture.....	9
8. National Portal for Online Forest Rights Services under FRA	10
9. GI-Tagged Indi Lime Export to Oman: Early Gains under India–Oman CEPA	11
10. Supreme Court on Child Trafficking: Victim-Centric Judicial Approach and Evidentiary Sensitivity	12
11. Supreme Court on Corporate Environmental Responsibility under CSR	13
12. Amendments to PFRDA (Exits and Withdrawals under NPS) Regulations, 2015: Enhancing Flexibility and Subscriber Autonomy	14



1. Government Initiatives for Strengthening Farm Extension, Skill Development and Rural Livelihoods

Key Highlights:

- **ATMA (Support to State Extension Programs for Extension Reforms):** A Centrally Sponsored Scheme operational since 2005-06 across 734 districts in 28 States and 5 UTs to promote a decentralized, farmer-centric agricultural extension system by disseminating latest technologies and Good Agricultural Practices through trainings, demonstrations, exposure visits, Kisan Melas, farmer groups and farm schools.
- **STRY (Skill Training of Rural Youth):** Implemented since 2015-16 to enhance employability and entrepreneurial skills of rural youth and farmers in agri-based vocational areas through short-duration, skill-oriented training; implemented by MANAGE with support of SAMETIs and ATMA, having trained over 86000 beneficiaries so far.
- **SMAM (Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanisation):** Aims to improve access and affordability of farm machinery by providing financial assistance of 40-50% of the cost of agricultural equipment, with differential support based on farmer category, thereby addressing labour shortages and enhancing productivity.
- **DAY-NRLM (Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana–National Rural Livelihoods Mission):** Focuses on strengthening both farm and non-farm livelihoods through women-centric Self-Help Groups, with emphasis on financial inclusion, capacity building, and sustainable income generation.
- **SVEP under DAY-NRLM:** The Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme creates a rural enterprise ecosystem enabling SHG members and their families to establish small non-farm enterprises, currently implemented across 31 States and UTs.
- **Market Access and Branding of SHG Products:** DAY-NRLM promotes structured marketing support through institutional strengthening, digital enablement, and convergence, with national-level trademarks such as Saras, SarasAajeevika and Aajeevika to integrate SHG products into mainstream physical and digital markets.



Key Definitions

- **Agricultural Extension:** A system of education and support services that transfers scientific knowledge, technologies and best practices from research institutions to farmers to improve productivity and sustainability.
- **Rural Livelihoods:** Means of securing basic necessities of life through farm and non-farm economic activities in rural areas, emphasizing sustainability and resilience.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 38 and Article 39:** Direct the State to promote welfare, reduce inequalities and ensure adequate means of livelihood.
- **Article 43:** Mandates the State to secure a living wage and decent standard of life for workers, including those in rural and agricultural sectors.



- **Eleventh Schedule (73rd Constitutional Amendment):** Empowers Panchayats in agriculture, rural development, skill development and poverty alleviation, providing grassroots support to schemes like ATMA and DAY-NRLM.

Conclusion

Collectively, ATMA, STRY, SMAM and DAY-NRLM represent a comprehensive, multi-dimensional approach to rural transformation by integrating agricultural modernization, skill development, mechanization and women-led livelihood diversification.

UPSC Relevance

Important for Prelims (government schemes, objectives, implementing agencies) and Mains GS-2 (government policies and interventions), GS-3 (agriculture, rural development, livelihoods, skill development), with scope for linking to inclusive growth, women empowerment and sustainable rural economy.

2. Escrow Account Mechanism under Revised PMFBY Guidelines (Implemented from Kharif 2025)

Key Highlights:

- **Revised PMFBY Operational Guidelines, 2023:** Introduce a mandatory Escrow Account mechanism requiring States/UTs to commit their premium subsidy liabilities in advance, ensuring timely availability of funds and fiscal discipline in crop insurance implementation.
- **Advance Subsidy Commitment:** States/UTs must release 50% of advance premium subsidy for each season, calculated on the basis of the corresponding previous season's subsidy for each implementing insurance company, with subsequent instalments aligned to seasonality norms.
- **NCIP-Based Conditional Enrolment:** The National Crop Insurance Portal opens farmer enrolment only after insurance companies confirm receipt of the advance subsidy deposit in the escrow account, strengthening accountability and preventing delayed claim settlements.
- **Coverage Status:** As of Kharif 2025, 20 out of 24 PMFBY-implementing States have operationalized escrow accounts; Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Manipur, Mizoram and Sikkim are yet to onboard.
- **Operational Management:** Escrow accounts are managed by State Agriculture or Horticulture Departments and opened in Scheduled Commercial Banks or Cooperative Banks, based on State prerogative, through a multi-party agreement among State Departments, banks and insurance companies.
- **Objective of the Mechanism:** To reduce delays in premium subsidy release, enhance insurer confidence, improve claim settlement timelines, and ensure smoother seasonal rollout of PMFBY.



Key Definitions

- **Escrow Account:** A ring-fenced bank account where funds are deposited in advance and can be used only for specified purposes, ensuring financial commitment, transparency and reduced default risk.
- **Premium Subsidy:** The portion of insurance premium paid by Central and State governments on behalf of farmers to keep crop insurance affordable.



Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 38:** Directs the State to promote welfare and minimize inequalities, including income insecurity of farmers.
- **Article 39(b):** Emphasizes equitable distribution of material resources, relevant to risk mitigation in agriculture.
- **Seventh Schedule (State List Entry 14 – Agriculture):** Empowers States in agricultural administration, justifying State-managed escrow mechanisms under PMFBY.
- **Fiscal Responsibility Principles:** Advance commitment of liabilities aligns with prudent public finance management and accountability norms.

Conclusion

The escrow account mechanism under revised PMFBY guidelines marks a structural reform in crop insurance financing by enforcing advance fiscal commitment from States, strengthening transparency, and reducing implementation bottlenecks, though its impact assessment will be possible only after multiple seasons.

UPSC Relevance

Relevant for Prelims (PMFBY features, NCIP, escrow mechanism) and Mains GS-2 (governance reforms, Centre–State coordination) and GS-3 (agriculture, risk management, farmer welfare, financial discipline in schemes).

3. Delhi POCSO Courts Achieve Highest-Ever Clearance Rate amid Backlog Reduction Drive

Key Highlights:

- **Record Disposal Performance:** Delhi POCSO courts disposed 1792 cases against 1006 new filings in 2025, achieving one of the highest annual clearance rates nationally and significantly reducing long-pending backlogs.
- **National Comparison:** Chhattisgarh recorded the highest clearance rate at 189%, followed by Delhi and Odisha at 178%, Rajasthan at 170%, Sikkim at 155% and Madhya Pradesh at 139%, while the national average disposal rate stood at 109%.
- **Backlog Characteristics:** In Delhi, a large share of pending POCSO cases (2075) were between six to 10 years old, indicating early-stage accumulation of pendency and systemic delays in trial progression.
- **All-India Trend:** Across India, 80320 child sexual abuse cases were filed in 2025 and 87754 cases were disposed, reflecting an overall net reduction in pendency but with wide inter-State disparities.
- **Report Findings:** The study titled *Pendency to Protection: Achieving the Tipping Point to Justice for Child Victims of Sexual Abuse* by India Child Protection highlights uneven disposal and conviction rates, with nearly half of pending cases unresolved for over two years.
- **Data Sources and Accountability:** The analysis draws on the National Judicial Data Grid, National Crime Records Bureau and information tabled in the Lok Sabha, strengthening evidence-based policy assessment.





Key Definitions

- **Clearance Rate:** The ratio of cases disposed to cases instituted in a given period, expressed as a percentage; a rate above 100% indicates reduction of backlog.
- **Pendency:** The stock of cases that remain unresolved at a given point in time within the judicial system.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 21:** Guarantees right to life and personal liberty, judicially interpreted to include speedy justice, especially critical in child protection cases.
- **Article 39(f):** Directs the State to ensure children are protected against exploitation and moral and material abandonment.
- **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012:** Mandates child-friendly procedures, special courts and time-bound trials to safeguard minors from sexual offences.

Conclusion

Delhi's high POCSO clearance rate signals improved judicial responsiveness and administrative focus, yet the persistence of very old cases and inter-State disparities underscores the need for sustained reforms in investigation quality, court capacity and victim-centric procedures.

UPSC Relevance

Important for Prelims (judicial data, child protection law) and Mains GS-2 (judiciary, governance, access to justice), GS-1 (social issues related to children) and essay topics on justice delivery, child rights and institutional reforms.

4. IN-SPACE's Antariksh Prayogshala Initiative: Establishing Space Labs in Academic Institutions

Key Highlights:

- **Antariksh Prayogshala (Space Labs):** IN-SPACE has issued a Request for Proposal to establish first-of-its-kind state-of-the-art space laboratories within select Indian academic institutions to strengthen India's space technology and innovation ecosystem.
- **Objective and Scope:** The initiative aims to provide hands-on training, applied research exposure and early-stage innovation opportunities to students pursuing space technology-related courses, aligning academic learning with real industry needs.
- **Institutional Coverage:** Up to seven academic institutions will be selected in a phased manner, ensuring balanced regional representation with one Space Lab proposed in each geographical zone of India.
- **Financial Support Pattern:** IN-SPACE will provide financial assistance of up to 75% of the total project cost, capped at ₹5 crore per institution, reducing entry barriers for advanced space research infrastructure.





- **Shared Ecosystem Approach:** The labs will function as shared facilities accessible not only to students and researchers but also to Non-Governmental Entities (NGEs), fostering academia–industry collaboration in each zone.
- **Two-Stage Selection Process:** Institutions will first be screened based on eligibility criteria specified in the RfP, followed by detailed evaluation to ensure capacity for sustainable operation and meaningful outcomes.

Key Definitions

- **IN-SPACe (Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre):** An autonomous body under the Department of Space responsible for promoting, regulating and authorising private sector participation in India’s space activities.
- **Applied Research:** Research aimed at practical application of scientific knowledge to solve real-world problems, particularly relevant for space technologies and downstream applications.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 51A(h):** Enjoins citizens to develop scientific temper, humanism and spirit of inquiry, which such space labs directly promote.
- **Article 246 read with Union List:** Space and related activities fall under Union domain, enabling central initiatives for national capacity building.
- **National Space Policy, 2023:** Emphasizes private sector participation, academic collaboration and human resource development in the space sector, providing policy backing to Antariksh Prayogshala.

Conclusion

The Antariksh Prayogshala initiative represents a strategic shift towards decentralised, capability-driven space education and innovation, bridging gaps between academia, industry and national space priorities.

UPSC Relevance

Relevant for Prelims (IN-SPACe, space sector reforms, National Space Policy) and Mains GS-3 (science and technology, indigenisation, innovation ecosystem) and GS-2 (role of autonomous institutions, policy support for emerging sectors).

5. Kerala 2.0: Reclaiming Fiscal Prudence, Governance Integrity and Sustainable Development

Key Highlights:

- **Fiscal and Economic Distress:** Kerala faces mounting public debt driven by borrowing for revenue expenditure, high debt-servicing costs exceeding development spending, overdependence on remittances, liquor taxes and lotteries, GST leakages, and persistent youth unemployment leading to out-migration.
- **Governance and Moral Crisis:** The article highlights erosion of accountability, politicisation of administration, patronage-driven work culture, coercive labour practices such as nokkukooli, frequent hartals, and over-regulation that discourages enterprise and investment.
- **Governance Reforms Agenda:** Calls for depoliticisation of bureaucracy, restoration of institutional integrity, radical deregulation, digitised and transparent administration, empowerment of local bodies, and a single-window “One Kerala Permit” system to shift from control-based to facilitation-based governance.



- **Economic Model Reset:** Emphasises moving beyond remittance-led consumption to a production-driven economy focused on green technologies, high-tech agro-processing, startups in AI, space tech, biogenetics, precision manufacturing, maritime and logistics sectors, along with stronger support for women entrepreneurs.
- **Human Development Renewal:** Urges reforms in education and health to focus on life skills, employability, internships, resilient healthcare systems, and revival of Kerala's pluralistic, inclusive cultural ethos inspired by Sree Narayana Guru's philosophy of social upliftment.
- **Quality-of-Life and Ecological Challenges:** Flags urgent crises related to environmental degradation, rising drug abuse among youth, and the stray dog menace causing rabies deaths, advocating missions like Clean & Green Kerala 2030, strengthened de-addiction systems, and effective Animal Birth Control implementation.



Key Definitions

- **Fiscal Prudence:** Responsible management of public finances to ensure sustainable debt levels and productive public expenditure.
- **Depoliticisation of Bureaucracy:** Ensuring administrative decisions are guided by merit, rules and public interest rather than partisan considerations.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 38:** Obliges the State to promote welfare and reduce inequalities, relevant to inclusive growth and social justice.
- **Article 39:** Directs equitable distribution of resources and adequate means of livelihood.
- **Article 40 and 243G:** Mandate empowerment of Panchayati Raj Institutions for local governance and development.
- **Article 48A:** Enjoins the State to protect and improve the environment, central to Kerala's ecological concerns.

Conclusion

The vision of Kerala 2.0 articulated by **Shashi Tharoor** presents a reformist roadmap that links fiscal discipline, governance overhaul, economic diversification and social renewal as essential to restoring Kerala's development leadership.

UPSC Relevance

Highly relevant for Mains GS-2 (governance, federalism, institutional reforms), GS-3 (State finances, employment, environment, economic development), GS-1 (society, culture, social issues), and Essay topics on development models, governance reform and State-level economic transformation.

6. Significance of a Strong Defence Industrial Base for India@2047

Key Highlights:

- **Strategic Imperative:** India's goal of becoming a developed nation by 2047 critically depends on a resilient defence industrial base to reduce import dependence, ensure supply-chain security, and enhance strategic autonomy amid an unstable global security environment.



- **Reform-Led Shift:** Recent reforms—opening to private sector participation, liberalised FDI norms, corporatisation of the Ordnance Factory Board, expansion of ‘Make’ procurement, and innovation promotion—have boosted defence production and exports to over 80 countries.
- **Geopolitical Opportunity:** Conflicts and supply disruptions in Europe, West Asia and Asia, coupled with Europe’s higher defence spending and demand for cost-effective platforms, create export opportunities India is well-placed to capture due to its strategic geography and diplomacy.
- **Ease of Doing Business Gaps:** Persistent regulatory complexities constrain MSMEs and startups; faster export licensing, JV and technology-transfer approvals, long-term demand visibility, and policy continuity are essential to reach the ₹50,000crore defence export target by 2029.
- **Evolving Role of DRDO:** The next phase requires sharper role clarity—frontier R&D with Defence Research and Development Organisation, while production, scaling and commercialisation increasingly shift to industry to match global best practices.
- **Export Enablement Architecture:** A dedicated, professionally staffed export facilitation agency, improved export financing, integrated testing and certification aligned with international standards, and proactive G2G mechanisms can enhance credibility and competitiveness.



Key Definitions

- **Defence Industrial Base:** The ecosystem of public and private entities engaged in R&D, manufacturing, testing, certification and export of defence platforms, systems and services.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** The capacity of a nation to make sovereign security decisions without undue external dependence, supported by indigenous capabilities.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 246 read with Union List (Defence):** Vests defence production and procurement with the Union, enabling national-level reforms.
- **Article 51:** Encourages international peace and cooperation, relevant to defence exports via G2G agreements.
- **Public Procurement Frameworks:** ‘Make’ procedure and indigenisation lists underpin domestic manufacturing and innovation.

Conclusion

Strengthening India’s defence industrial base is central to national security, high-skilled employment, technological maturity and geopolitical leverage; sustained reforms and export-oriented ecosystems are decisive for long-term success.

UPSC Relevance

Mains GS-3 (defence manufacturing, indigenisation, exports, employment), GS-2 (institutions, reforms), Essay (Atmanirbhar Bharat, strategic autonomy). Views articulated by **Rajiv Gauba**, Member, **NITI Aayog**.



7. Bureau of Port Security (BoPS): Strengthening Maritime and Port Security Architecture

Key Highlights:

- **Creation of BoPS:** The Union Government will constitute the Bureau of Port Security (BoPS) as a dedicated body to oversee security of ships and port facilities across India, modelled on the lines of the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security.
- **Statutory Backing:** BoPS will be established as a statutory body under the provisions of the Merchant Shipping Act, 2025, giving it a clear legal mandate for regulation and oversight of maritime security.
- **Institutional Placement:** The Bureau will function under the aegis of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways and will be headed by a Director General of IPS rank (Pay Level-15), ensuring high-level administrative authority.
- **Cybersecurity Focus:** BoPS will ensure timely analysis, collection and exchange of security-related information, with a dedicated cybersecurity division to protect port IT infrastructure and vessels from digital threats.
- **Risk-Based Security Framework:** Union Home Minister **Amit Shah** stressed graded and risk-based implementation of port security measures, factoring in vulnerabilities, trade potential, strategic location and threat perception.
- **Transition and Existing Arrangements:** During the one-year transition period, the Director General of Shipping will act as DG, BoPS; earlier, the Central Industrial Security Force had been designated as a Recognised Security Organisation for port facilities.



Key Definitions

- **Port Security:** A set of regulatory, physical, technological and cyber measures aimed at protecting ports, ships, cargo and related infrastructure from terrorism, sabotage, cyberattacks and other security threats.
- **Risk-Based Security:** An approach where security measures are proportionate to assessed threats, vulnerabilities and criticality of assets.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 246 read with Union List:** Shipping, navigation and maritime security fall under Union jurisdiction, enabling central legislation and institutions like BoPS.
- **Merchant Shipping Act, 2025:** Provides statutory authority for regulation of shipping and port-related security, safety and compliance.
- **National Security Framework:** BoPS complements India's internal security architecture by integrating maritime security with broader homeland security objectives.

Conclusion

The establishment of BoPS marks a significant institutional reform to address evolving physical and cyber threats in the maritime domain, enhancing India's preparedness as a major trading nation with strategic ports and sea lanes.



UPSC Relevance

Important for Prelims (new statutory bodies, maritime security, Merchant Shipping Act, 2025) and Mains GS-2 (governance, internal security, institutional mechanisms) and GS-3 (ports, shipping, cybersecurity, coastal security).

8. National Portal for Online Forest Rights Services under FRA

Key Highlights

- **Single-Window Digital Platform:** The Union Government is developing a national web portal to bring the entire Forest Rights Act (FRA) ecosystem online, covering filing, processing and monitoring of forest rights claims from Gram Sabha level up to State-Level Monitoring Committees.
- **End-to-End FRA Services:** The portal will enable digital issuance of title deeds, storage of legacy records of recognised rights, and creation of an FRA Atlas to map potential forest areas where rights may be claimed in future.
- **Institutional Framework:** The initiative is being led by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and was discussed at a national consultative workshop organised by the National Tribal Research Institute on challenges in FRA implementation.
- **Integration with Welfare Delivery:** FRA records generated through the portal are proposed to be used for identification of beneficiaries to achieve saturation of existing government welfare schemes, linking land rights recognition with socio-economic inclusion.
- **Roadmap and Timeline:** The portal will form part of an overarching FRA roadmap, expected to be finalised by the first half of 2026; a beta version of the portal, tentatively named TARANG, has already been developed.
- **Focus on Geo-Tagging and Livelihoods:** Emphasis has been laid on geo-tagging all recognised forest rights, digitisation of records, and strengthening livelihood promotion linked to legally recognised forest rights.



Key Definitions

- **Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006:** A law enacted to recognise and vest individual and community forest rights of Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers over forest land they have traditionally occupied and used.
- **Community Forest Rights:** Rights vested in forest-dwelling communities to protect, manage and use forest resources sustainably.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 244 read with Fifth Schedule:** Provides constitutional basis for protection and governance of tribal areas.
- **Article 46:** Directs the State to promote educational and economic interests of Scheduled Tribes and protect them from social injustice and exploitation.
- **Forest Rights Act, 2006:** Statutory framework for recognition of individual, community and livelihood rights over forest land.



Conclusion

The proposed FRA portal marks a significant governance reform by leveraging digital technology to improve transparency, efficiency and accountability in forest rights recognition, while also strengthening livelihood security of forest-dwelling communities.

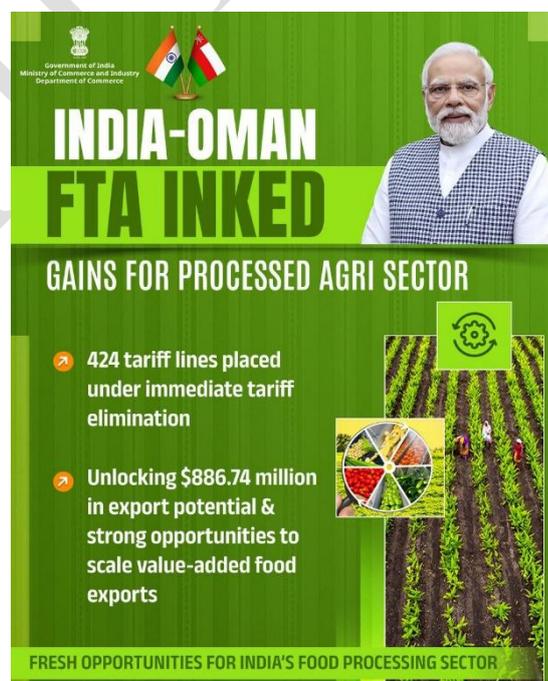
UPSC Relevance

Relevant for Prelims (FRA features, ministries, institutions) and Mains GS-2 (governance, rights-based legislation, tribal welfare), GS-3 (forest governance, sustainable livelihoods, digital public infrastructure).

9. GI-Tagged Indi Lime Export to Oman: Early Gains under India–Oman CEPA

Key Highlights:

- **First Export to Oman:** 3 metric tonnes of GI-tagged Indi Lime from Vijayapura district, Karnataka, were exported to Oman on 19 December 2025, marking the fruit's entry into a new international market.
- **Rising Global Demand:** The Oman shipment follows a successful maiden export of 3MTs to Dubai in August 2025, after which exports to the UAE expanded nearly fourfold to about 12MTs, reflecting strong overseas market acceptance.
- **Market Diversification:** As part of export diversification, 350kg of GI-tagged Indi Lime was also shipped to the United Kingdom, taking cumulative exports from Vijayapura to around 12.35MTs.
- **Role of India–Oman CEPA:** The export assumes added significance under the recently signed Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement between India and Oman, which enhances market access for Indian agricultural, processed food and animal products.
- **GI Advantage:** The Geographical Indication status of Indi Lime, characterised by distinctive aroma, high juice content and longer shelf life, has enabled premium positioning and competitiveness in global markets.
- **Institutional Support:** Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority has supported promotion, branding and compliance with international quality and phytosanitary standards, improving farmer incomes and reducing vulnerability to domestic price fluctuations.



Key Definitions

- **Geographical Indication (GI):** A form of intellectual property that identifies goods as originating from a specific region where a given quality, reputation or characteristic is essentially attributable to its geographical origin.
- **CEPA (Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement):** A broad-based trade agreement covering goods, services, investment and economic cooperation to deepen bilateral economic integration.



Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 19(1)(g):** Guarantees freedom to practice any profession or carry on trade, supporting export-oriented agricultural activities.
- **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999:** Provides legal protection to GI-tagged products in India.
- **Foreign Trade Policy:** Encourages diversification of export markets and value-added agri-exports.

Conclusion

The successful export of GI-tagged Indi Lime to Oman highlights how GI protection, institutional support and trade agreements together can enhance India's agri-export competitiveness while ensuring better income realisation for farmers.

UPSC Relevance

Relevant for Prelims (GI tags, APEDA, CEPA) and Mains GS-3 (agriculture, agri-exports, farmer income, trade agreements) and GS-2 (international economic relations, FTAs).

10. Supreme Court on Child Trafficking: Victim-Centric Judicial Approach and Evidentiary Sensitivity

Key Highlights:

- **Grave Reality Acknowledged:** The Supreme Court of India recognised child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation by organised cartels as a “deeply disturbing reality” persisting despite existing protective laws.
- **Complex Crime Structure:** The Court noted that trafficking networks operate through layered and diffused verticals—recruitment, transportation, harbouring and exploitation—often masked by deception, making precise narration by victims inherently difficult.
- **Victim's Testimony—High Evidentiary Value:** Courts must not disbelieve a trafficked child's testimony due to minor inconsistencies; if credible and convincing, the sole testimony can sustain conviction.
- **Injured Witness Doctrine:** A trafficked child is not an accomplice; her deposition must be treated with the same weight as that of an injured witness, warranting due regard and credence.
- **Sensitivity to Vulnerability:** Judicial appreciation must account for socio-economic and cultural vulnerability, especially for minors from marginalised communities; delayed protest or incomplete recollection cannot be grounds to discard evidence.
- **Upholding Convictions:** The judgment upheld convictions under the anti-trafficking law, underscoring the State's constitutional obligation to protect children from moral and material abandonment.

Judicial sensitivity

Courts have been asked to bear in mind several key points while recording the evidence of a minor trafficking victim

- The child's socio-economic and cultural vulnerability, especially if from a marginalised or backward community
- Organised crime networks operate through complex, layered structures that often mislead minors; victims should not be faulted for failure to protest promptly
- Judicial consideration of a minor's testimony must be sensitive and avoid secondary victimisation
- A conviction can rest on the sole testimony of the victim if it is credible and convincing
- A trafficking victim's testimony deserves the same weight as that of an injured witness

Key Definitions

- **Child Trafficking:** Recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for exploitation by means of coercion, deception or abuse of vulnerability.



- **Injured Witness:** A victim whose testimony is accorded enhanced credibility due to direct suffering of harm from the offence.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 21:** Right to life and personal liberty includes dignity and bodily integrity of children.
- **Article 23:** Prohibits trafficking in human beings and forced labour.
- **Article 39(f):** Directs the State to ensure children are protected against exploitation and abandonment.
- **Criminal Jurisprudence Principles:** Appreciation of evidence must be realistic and sensitive in crimes involving vulnerable victims.

Conclusion

The judgment reinforces a humane, victim-centric evidentiary framework, aligning criminal adjudication with constitutional values of dignity and protection for children while strengthening accountability against organised trafficking networks.

UPSC Relevance

Prelims (constitutional provisions on trafficking), Mains GS-2 (judiciary, rights-based adjudication), GS-1 (social issues—children), GS-4 (ethical sensitivity in justice delivery), and Essay (child protection and rule of law).

11. Supreme Court on Corporate Environmental Responsibility under CSR

Key Highlights:

- **CSR Reinterpreted:** The Supreme Court of India held that Corporate Social Responsibility inherently includes environmental responsibility, asserting that corporations, as legal persons and key organs of society, have a fundamental duty to protect the ecosystem.
- **Constitutional Duty Applied to Corporates:** The Court brought companies within the ambit of Article 51A(g), extending the constitutional duty to protect and improve the natural environment to corporate entities, not merely individual citizens.
- **From Shareholders to Stakeholders:** The judgment marks a shift from shareholder-centric responsibility to ecosystem-centric accountability, holding that corporations cannot claim social responsibility while ignoring environmental harm.
- **CSR as Obligation, Not Charity:** Allocation of CSR funds for environmental protection is not voluntary philanthropy but fulfillment of a constitutional obligation, especially where corporate activities impact biodiversity.
- **Polluter Pays Principle:** Where corporate operations such as mining, power generation or infrastructure threaten endangered species or habitats, companies must bear the cost of recovery through in-situ and ex-situ conservation using CSR funds.
- **Habitat Protection Directives:** Power producers near sensitive habitats were reminded they “share the environment” with wildlife and must operate with restraint; the Court upheld revised priority conservation areas in Rajasthan and Gujarat based on expert recommendations.

Key Definitions

- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):** A statutory obligation under company law requiring certain firms to contribute to social and environmental welfare beyond profit-making.



- **Polluter Pays Principle:** An environmental law principle mandating that those who cause pollution or ecological damage bear the costs of mitigation and restoration.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 51A(g):** Fundamental Duty to protect and improve the natural environment and have compassion for living creatures.
- **Article 21:** Judicially expanded to include the right to a clean and healthy environment.
- **Environmental Jurisprudence:** Polluter Pays and Precautionary Principles guide liability and preventive action.
- **Company Law Framework:** CSR obligations operationalised under statutory corporate governance norms.

Conclusion

The judgment constitutionalises corporate environmental responsibility, integrating CSR with ecological protection and strengthening accountability for biodiversity conservation.

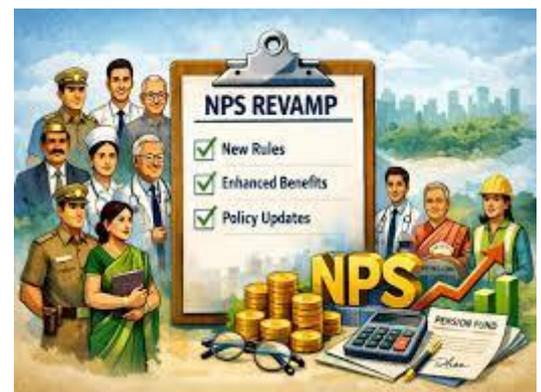
UPSC Relevance

Prelims (Fundamental Duties, environmental principles), Mains GS-2 (judiciary, constitutional interpretation), GS-3 (environment, CSR, sustainable development), Essay (corporate accountability and environmental ethics).

12. Amendments to PFRDA (Exits and Withdrawals under NPS) Regulations, 2015: Enhancing Flexibility and Subscriber Autonomy

Key Highlights:

- **Objective of Amendments:** The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority notified amendments to the NPS exit and withdrawal regulations to strengthen old-age income security while providing greater flexibility, choice and autonomy to subscribers, especially in the non-government sector.
- **Major Relief for Non-Government Subscribers:** For the All Citizen Model, the minimum lock-in period for premature exit has been removed, and the vesting period for normal exit has been rationalised to 15 years or 60 years of age, whichever is earlier, recognising the voluntary nature of participation.
- **Higher Lumpsum Withdrawal:** On normal exit, eligible subscribers in the non-government sector can now withdraw up to 80% of the corpus as lumpsum (earlier 60%), with only 20% mandated for annuity purchase, increasing liquidity and choice at retirement.
- **Tiered Exit Options Based on Corpus Size:** Revised provisions allow 100% withdrawal, Systematic Lumpsum Withdrawal (SLW) or Systematic Unit Withdrawal (SUR) for lower corpus slabs, while higher corpus amounts retain partial annuitisation, balancing flexibility with pension adequacy.
- **Expanded Age Limits and Automatic Continuation:** Entry and exit age limits under NPS have been enhanced up to 85 years, and the requirement of prior intimation for continuation beyond superannuation has been removed, enabling seamless automatic continuation





- **New Financial and Operational Features:** Subscribers can seek limited financial assistance against their pension corpus through regulated institutions, partial withdrawal frequency has been rationalised, medical withdrawal purposes broadened, and a framework introduced for specific purpose schemes under NPS.

Key Definitions

- **National Pension System (NPS):** A voluntary, defined-contribution pension scheme regulated by PFRDA, aimed at providing retirement income security to citizens.
- **Annuity:** A financial product that provides a regular income stream post-retirement in exchange for a portion of the pension corpus.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 41:** Directs the State to provide public assistance in cases of old age, forming the constitutional basis for pension reforms.
- **PFRDA Act, 2013:** Establishes PFRDA and empowers it to regulate NPS and protect subscriber interests.
- **Social Security Framework:** Amendments align with broader objectives of inclusive and sustainable social security coverage.

Conclusion

The amended NPS exit and withdrawal norms reflect an evolution towards a more subscriber-centric pension architecture, balancing liquidity, flexibility and long-term retirement security in line with changing workforce realities.

UPSC Relevance

Relevant for Prelims (NPS features, PFRDA) and Mains GS-2 (social sector, welfare architecture) and GS-3 (financial inclusion, pension reforms, demographic transition).