



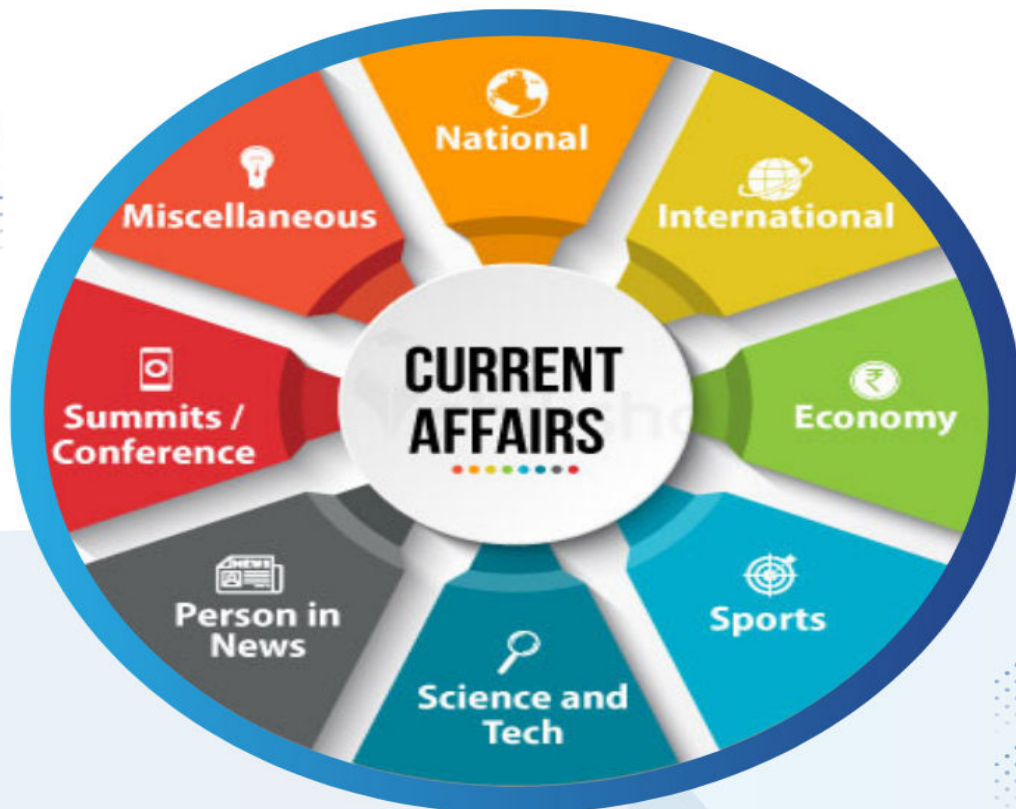
“ We help you reach for the star ”

VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & STUDY CENTRE

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

DATE: 02/06/2026 (TUESDAY)



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1. Re-basing of Index of Industrial Production (IIP)

- **Context and Base Year Revision:** India's industrial output growth, measured by the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), slowed to 4.9% in April 2026. This comes under the newly introduced IIP series which revises the base year to 2022-23 from the earlier 2011-12, following similar recent updates to national indicators like GDP.
- **Expanded Scope and Basket:** The new 2022-23 series expands the product basket from 839 items (mapped to 407 groups) to 1,042 products mapped to 463 item groups. Crucially, the coverage has been broadened by incorporating two new sectors: water supply, sewerage & waste management, and gas supply, alongside the existing core sectors.
- **Sectoral Performance & Weight Realignment:** Under the revised format, the expanded sectors showed mixed trends in April 2026: manufacturing grew by 6.2%, water supply/sewerage grew by 6.6%, and electricity/gas grew by 4.9%, while the mining and quarrying sector contracted by 5.1%. Item weights have been realigned with the updated 2022-23 Gross Value Added (GVA) data.
- **Granular Data Classification:** The new series introduces enhanced data categorization to capture modern economic realities. The mining index now explicitly classifies fuel, metallic (including rare earths), and non-metallic (including minor) minerals, while the electricity index is now split into renewable and non-renewable sources.
- **Key Definitions:** **IIP** is a composite indicator measuring short-term changes in the volume of production of a basket of industrial products over a given period relative to a chosen base period. **Base Year** is a specific year used as a benchmark for economic indices to eliminate the distorting effects of inflation and structural shifts over time.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

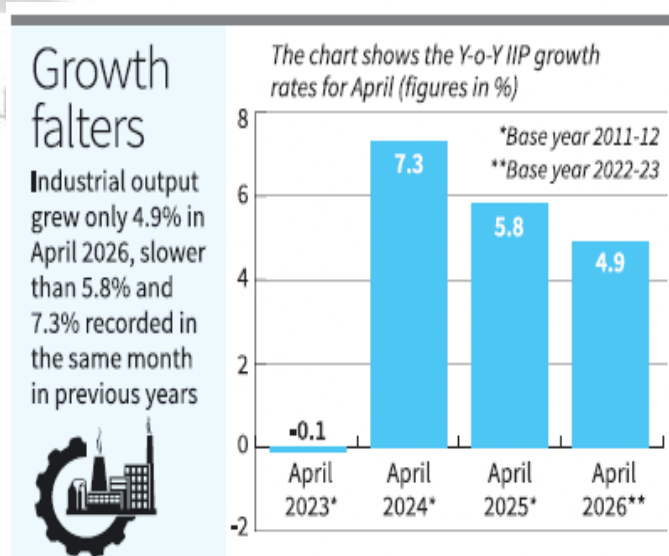
The collection of industrial data is governed by the **Collection of Statistics Act, 2008**, which mandates the statistical framework for socio-economic data collection. While not explicitly mentioned in the Constitution, economic planning and statistics fall under **Entry 20 (Economic and social planning)** and **Entry 94 (Inquiries, surveys and statistics)** of the Concurrent List (Seventh Schedule), giving Parliament the jurisdiction to regulate macroeconomic indicators.

Conclusion

The structural shift to the 2022-23 base year represents a vital modernization of India's macroeconomic toolkit. By integrating green energy data and waste management, the new IIP offers a more realistic, granular reflection of India's shifting industrial landscape, ensuring robust data-driven policy formulation.

UPSC Relevance

GS Paper III: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development, and employment. Essential for understanding macroeconomic indicators, structural transformations in manufacturing, and indexing methodology.





2. Demise of Suman Kalyanpur: An Era Ends in Indian Music

- **Passing of a Musical Legend:** Renowned playback singer Suman Kalyanpur, a definitive voice of the golden era of Hindi cinema, passed away in Mumbai at the age of 89. Born on January 28, 1937, in Dhaka, she relocated to Mumbai in 1943, where her career flourished over three decades, culminating in her being honored with the prestigious Padma Bhushan.
- **Classical Foundation and Style:** Initially passionate about painting at the Sir J.J. School of Art, Kalyanpur transitioned to music under Pandit Keshav Rao Bhole. She received rigorous grounding in Hindustani classical music from maestro Khan Abdul Rehman Khan of the Kirana Gharana, developing an understated, luminous, and intimate vocal style.
- **Career Breakthrough and Trajectory:** Discovered by legendary singer Talat Mahmood during a college function in 1953, she secured her first break with the HMV record label. She successfully navigated a highly competitive industry dominated by contemporary giants, rendering soulful tracks in around 100 films across multiple regional languages.
- **Artistic Identity and Distinctions:** While often compared to Lata Mangeshkar due to vocal similarities—leading to frequent radio misattributions—discerning listeners celebrated Kalyanpur for her softer, rounder vocal texture. Her versatility spanned deep romantic yearning (*Na Tum Hamein Jano*) to vibrant, playful numbers (*Aaj Kal Tere Mere Pyar Ke Charche*).
- **Key Definitions: Playback Singing** refers to a technical process where a singer pre-records a song for use in films, which actors later lip-sync on screen. **Kirana Gharana** is one of the most prominent lineages (schools) of Hindustani classical music, deeply characterized by its emphasis on perfect intonation (*swara*) and emotional expressiveness.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

Cultural preservation is protected under **Article 29(1)** of the Constitution, which guarantees citizens the right to conserve their distinct language, script, or culture. Furthermore, **Article 51A(f)** mandates a Fundamental Duty to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture. On the executive side, the civilian honor of the **Padma Awards** (such as the Padma Bhushan awarded to Kalyanpur) is institutionalized to recognize exceptional service in fields like Art and Culture, managed by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Conclusion

Suman Kalyanpur's demise marks the structural closing of the classic playback era. Her journey highlights the profound depth of India's classical traditions and their successful integration into popular media. Her legacy endures through timeless melodies that continue to serve as cultural benchmarks for successive generations of Indian musicians.

UPSC Relevance

GS Paper I: Indian Culture, salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature, and Architecture from ancient to modern times. Specifically relevant for topics covering Hindustani classical music gharanas, evolution of modern performing arts, and institutional recognition of cultural icons via National Awards.

3. Telangana Mandates Digital Wages and Minimum Wage Net for Gig Workers

- **Policy Intervention & Cash Ban:** Through Government Order (GO) Ms No. 6, the Telangana government has banned cash wage payments, making electronic transfers mandatory. This move aims to institutionalize financial transparency, eliminate under-the-table deductions, and establish a verifiable digital audit trail for labor compensation.



- **Inclusion under Minimum Wage Net:** The executive order extends the statutory minimum wage protections to previously excluded segments of the labor force. Specifically, it brings e-commerce, courier, and platform-based workers directly under the ambit of the official minimum wage legal framework.
- **Legislative Backing:** This administrative order serves as the formal enforcement mechanism for the Telangana Platform-Based Gig Workers (Registration, Social Security and Welfare) Act, 2026. The act was passed earlier by the state assembly to build a robust regulatory safety net for informal digital workers.
- **Overtime and Compliance Penalties:** To curb exploitative working hours common in the gig economy, the order legally requires digital platforms to compensate workers for overtime at double the standard wage rate. Compliance measures have been significantly tightened to ensure platforms do not bypass these mandates.
- **Key Definitions:** **Gig Workers** are individuals performing work or participating in a work arrangement and earning from such activities outside of a traditional employer-employee relationship. **Platform Workers** are a subset of gig workers whose work is accessed, coordinated, or allocated through online digital platforms or applications.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

Labor regulations in India fall under the **Concurrent List (Seventh Schedule)** under **Entry 22 (Labour welfare)** and **Entry 24**, allowing both Center and States to legislate. This mandate aligns with **Article 43** of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP), which directs the State to secure a living wage and decent standard of life for all workers. It also reinforces the spirit of **Article 21 (Right to Life with Dignity)** by preventing economic exploitation. Nationally, this mirrors the intent of the **Code on Wages, 2019**, and the **Code on Social Security, 2020**, which first structurally recognized gig workers.

Conclusion

Telangana's regulatory framework marks a pioneering step toward formalizing India's booming gig economy. By legally linking platform work to minimum wage protections and digital accountability, the state addresses a critical gap in labor jurisprudence, setting a transformative precedent for nationwide welfare architecture.

UPSC Relevance

GS Paper III: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development, and employment. Inclusive growth and issues arising from it. **GS Paper II:** Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes.

4. Changes in NFHS-6: Rationale and Missing Key Indicators

- **Reduction in Key Indicators:** The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare released the National Family Health Survey-6 (NFHS-6) factsheet, dropping the number of key indicators to 101 from the 131 indicators tracked in NFHS-5 (2019-21). This structural trimming is aimed at "data harmonisation" across various government data-producing bodies.
- **Omission of Critical Demographic Data:** Key population-level data points have been omitted, including the overall population sex ratio, sex ratio at birth, mortality rates, and percentages of births and deaths recorded under the civil registration system. These omissions come despite survey questions on these topics being actively asked during the 2023-2024 fieldwork.



- **Exclusion of Welfare and Health Metrics:** Several indicators on women's health, family planning (e.g., adolescent fertility rate, type of contraceptives used), and access to central welfare schemes like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (sanitation) and Ujjwala Yojana (clean cooking fuel) were removed. Screening data for cervical, breast, and oral cancers was also dropped due to historically poor uptake statistics.
- **Methodological Shift in Anaemia Tracking:** Data on anaemia prevalence, a major highlight in previous surveys, has been excluded from NFHS-6. Experts noted that the older finger-prick blood method could overestimate prevalence, shifting this tracking role to the venous blood-sample-based "Diet and Biomarker" survey conducted by the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN).
- **Key Definitions:** **NFHS** is a large-scale, multi-round household survey conducted across India to track vital data on health, family welfare, and nutrition, coordinated by the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS). **Data Harmonisation** is the process of integrating data from different sources into a cohesive system to avoid duplication, eliminate conflicting metrics, and improve structural efficiency.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

Public health, sanitation, and statistics fall squarely under the **Seventh Schedule** of the Constitution, specifically split between the State List (**Entry 6: Public health and sanitation**) and the Concurrent List (**Entry 94: Inquiries and statistics**). Tracking these metrics fulfills the **Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP)** under **Article 47**, which mandates the State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and to improve public health.

Conclusion

While the rationalization of indicators under NFHS-6 reduces survey redundancy and attempts to correct methodological flaws in metrics like anaemia, removing key demographic indicators like the sex ratio could obscure long-term social trends. A balanced approach requires replacing these omissions with equally robust, alternative administrative data streams.

UPSC Relevance

GS Paper II: Issues relating to the development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources. Performance of welfare schemes and the critical role of robust statistical data infrastructure in evidence-based policymaking.

5. Delhi HC on Right to be Forgotten and De-indexing of Legal Records

- **Restriction on Name-Based Indexing:** The Delhi High Court ruled that legal records and judgments should not be indexed online solely through name-based search mechanisms when it causes disproportionate harm to an individual's privacy and dignity. This primarily safeguards acquitted persons, discharged accused, victims, and parties involved in sensitive matrimonial or personal disputes.
- **Perpetual Digital Marking:** The Court emphasized that digital permanence creates an "involuntary and perpetual marking" of individuals. This continuous online exposure severely impacts an individual's reputation, livelihood, and social standing, effectively functioning as a social punishment that outlasts the formal judicial process.
- **De-indexing vs. Erasure:** The judgment clarified that de-indexing does not delete or erase official court records or judicial decisions. The core legal texts remain publicly accessible through alternative



identifiers like case numbers, legal citations, or specific court details, thereby restricting only unrestricted, casual name-based discovery.

- **Balancing Open Justice and Privacy:** The Court directed search engines and digital legal databases to limit name-based search functionalities in specific verified cases. This mechanism structurally balances the foundational principle of open court transparency with an individual's constitutional right to privacy.
- **Key Definitions: Right to be Forgotten (RTBF)** is the right of an individual to limit, delink, or remove personal information from public digital platforms when such data becomes irrelevant, excessive, or no longer serves a public purpose. **De-indexing** refers to the process of removing specific web links from search engine results without deleting the original underlying content from the source website. **Informational Self-determination** is the legal concept granting an individual authority to control the disclosure, processing, and dissemination of their personal data.

Constitutional & Legal Dimensions

The judgment is rooted in **Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty)**, which includes the Right to Privacy and informational self-determination as affirmed by the Supreme Court in the landmark **Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017)** case. This right must be judicially balanced against **Article 19(1)(a) (Freedom of Speech and Expression)**, which protects public access to information and open court principles. Furthermore, **Article 14 (Right to Equality)** ensures fairness, preventing arbitrary and disproportionate digital harm. While the **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023** strengthens data processing norms, a dedicated statutory framework for RTBF remains evolving.

Conclusion

The Delhi High Court's ruling establishes a progressive legal equilibrium between open justice and human dignity. By preventing judicial transparency from morphing into a mechanism of lifelong social stigmatization, the judiciary has fortified digital privacy boundaries within India's evolving constitutional jurisprudence.

UPSC Relevance

GS Paper II: Indian Constitution—historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions, and basic structure. Judicial review and the impact of technology on fundamental rights. **GS Paper IV:** Theoretical and practical dimensions of ethics, human dignity, and the right to privacy in the digital age.

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6. Iran Conflict and Geopolitical Realities of IMEC

- **Asymmetric Warfare Realities:** The conflict involving Iran, Israel, and the United States has exposed structural vulnerabilities in modern military strategies. Despite the technological and conventional superiority of the US-Israel alliance, Iran's asymmetric tactics—including drone and missile swarms—have inflicted unprecedented logistical strain, damaging advanced assets like fifth-generation stealth fighters and depleting vital defensive missile stockpiles.
- **Vulnerability of Global Choke Points:** The conflict underscores how maritime bottlenecks dictate global economic stability. By disrupting the Strait of Hormuz, through which nearly one-third of the world's maritime oil passes daily, the crisis has directly impacted energy security. This particularly vulnerabilities nations like India, which imports roughly 88% of its annual crude oil requirements.
- **The Imperative for Strategic Corridors:** Supply chain shocks have heightened the urgency to develop alternative, multi-modal transit networks that bypass traditional maritime vulnerabilities.



Transnational corridors like the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) are increasingly vital to eliminate reliance on single, conflict-prone transit paths.

- **Geopolitical Bottlenecks in West Asia:** While intended to optimize global trade, the execution of IMEC faces severe disruptions. Geopolitical volatility in Gaza and Iran has physically threatened key infrastructure, such as Israel's Port of Haifa and the UAE's ports of Jebel Ali and Fujairah, while straining the internal diplomatic cohesion required among partner nations like Saudi Arabia and the UAE.
- **Strategic Re-alignments and Adaptations:** To navigate ongoing regional fragility, specialists suggest diversifying IMEC routes. Strategic alternatives include using ports in Oman (Salalah, Duqm) to bypass the Strait of Hormuz completely, or routing western links through Egypt's Mediterranean infrastructure until Levantine terminals achieve stability, necessitating a high degree of diplomatic coordination from partners like India.
- **Key Definitions: Asymmetric Warfare** refers to unconventional conflict where weaker combatants employ unexpected strategies, technologies, or terrain advantages to neutralize the conventional military superiority of a stronger adversary. **Global Choke Points** are strategic, narrow maritime passages that handle massive volumes of international trade and resource flows, rendering them highly critical to global supply chain resilience.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

International relations, transnational trade, and cross-border connectivity frameworks fall exclusively under the jurisdiction of the Union Government via the **Seventh Schedule** of the Indian Constitution, under **Entry 10 (Foreign affairs)**, **Entry 14 (Entering into treaties and agreements)**, and **Entry 57 (Inter-state trade and commerce)**. Furthermore, these proactive diplomatic engagements echo the principles enshrined in **Article 51** of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP), which mandates the State to foster international peace, security, and just relations between nations.

Conclusion

The conflict demonstrates that modern infrastructure projects cannot be divorced from regional geopolitics. For strategic initiatives like IMEC to transform global trade successfully, they must evolve from rigid transport lines into highly flexible, diplomatically resilient networks capable of dynamically adapting to structural shifts in West Asian stability.

UPSC Relevance

GS Paper II: India and its neighborhood-relations; Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests. Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's economy and security. **GS Paper III:** Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways. Supply chain resilience.

China's Counter-Space Capabilities and Strategic Implications for India

- **Dual-Level Space Ambitions:** China's space strategy focuses on technological competitiveness and strategic weaponization. While maintaining around 1,900 operational satellites compared to over 8,000 US assets, Beijing has long-term targets to achieve a crewed moon landing by 2036, launch a nuclear-powered shuttle by 2040, and build a massive 36,000 Low-Earth Orbit (LEO) constellation to rival Starlink.



- **Evolution of Defensive and Offensive Tactics:** The People's Liberation Army (PLA) has developed sophisticated counter-space capabilities. These include direct-ascent kinetic attack missiles (DN-3, SC-19), directed-energy laser systems designed to blind optical sensors, and co-orbital satellites (SJ and TJS series) capable of physically maneuvering or dislodging hostile space infrastructure.
- **The Doctrine of First-Strike Blinding:** In a potential conflict scenario, such as a Taiwan contingency or a border escalation, China's operational doctrine prioritizes soft-kill electronic jamming or laser dazzling over immediate physical destruction. This approach disrupts an adversary's Command and Control (C2) and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) networks during the vital first 24 to 48 hours.
- **Vulnerabilities and Redundancy Gaps for India:** India currently operates approximately 60 functional satellites compared to China's 400-plus dedicated military satellites. This asymmetry creates a critical structural gap in orbital redundancy; losing even five to six dual-use assets like the CARTOSAT or RISAT series could degrade India's tactical-level imagery and disable NavIC navigation over regional flashpoints.
- **Deterrence Limits and Resilience Measures:** While India's "Mission Shakti" anti-satellite test established basic kinetic deterrence, it does not counter non-kinetic laser blinding or co-orbital interference. To mitigate this vulnerability, experts suggest expanding private sector launch capacities, disaggregating large single platforms (like GSAT) into resilient small-satellite constellations, and securing institutional data-sharing pacts with strategic partners.
- **Key Definitions: Counter-Space Capabilities** refer to kinetic, directed-energy, or cyber mechanisms designed to deceive, disrupt, degrade, or destroy an adversary's space transit assets and ground control infrastructure. **Kessler Syndrome** is a theoretical scenario where the density of manufactured debris in low-Earth orbit reaches a threshold where each collision generates cascading fragments, rendering specific orbital planes entirely unusable.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

Space exploration, outer space security, and international treaties fall strictly within the Union List under the **Seventh Schedule** of the Indian Constitution, specifically governed by **Entry 10 (Foreign affairs)** and **Entry 14 (Treaties and agreements)**. Internationally, these dynamics are regulated by the UN-backed **Outer Space Treaty (1967)**, to which India is a signatory, which bans the stationing of weapons of mass destruction in orbit and mandates that space exploration be conducted for peaceful purposes.

Conclusion

China's expanding footprint in the space domain necessitates a shift from purely retaliatory deterrence to active structural resilience. By building small-satellite constellations and establishing clear strategic red lines, India can effectively neutralize peacetime grey-zone harassment and safeguard its critical space infrastructure.

UPSC Relevance

GS Paper III: Science and Technology—developments and their applications and effects in everyday life; Awareness in the fields of Space; Security challenges and their management in border areas. **GS Paper II:** Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.



7. Capital Flows, Remittances, and the Dynamics of Rupee Depreciation

- **Rupee Depreciation and Capital Ebbing:** The Indian rupee has depreciated by nearly 12% against the US dollar since May 2025. This downward pressure is intensified by structural reversals in the Financial Account, with net Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and net Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI) flows both turning negative as of the third quarter of 2025-26.
- **The Structural Trade Deficit Burden:** The Indian currency faces inherent structural depreciation due to a persistent Current Account Deficit (CAD), which is primarily driven by a chronic merchandise trade deficit. This structural gap is currently being exacerbated by escalating energy import costs triggered by geopolitical conflicts in West Asia.
- **Heavy Lifting by Secondary Income:** While financial analyses overemphasize FDI and FPI, Net Secondary Income (NSI)—consisting of inbound workers' remittances—performs the core stabilizing role. India remains the world's largest remittance recipient, attracting \$138 billion in 2024, which significantly cushions the external sector balance sheet.
- **Remittances as a Deficit Shield:** Since mid-2013, inbound remittances have averaged roughly 3% of India's GDP, financing more than the entirety of the national trade deficit on average. Consequently, the actual CAD requiring Financial Account intervention is merely a residual liability left over after remittances have absorbed the bulk of the trade gap.
- **Inherent Stability of Diaspora Transfers:** Unlike volatile FPI "hot money" or profit-repatriating FDI, remittances are non-claim unrequited transfers that do not generate future external liabilities. Driven by altruistic familial needs and diaspora savings rather than speculative arbitrage, they offer a highly stable, low-transaction-cost cushion against sudden stops.
- **Key Definitions: Current Account Deficit (CAD)** occurs when a country's total imports of goods, services, and transfers exceed its total exports over a specific period. **Remittances** are private, non-commercial financial transfers sent by migrant workers abroad directly to their families in their home countries, classified under Net Secondary Income.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

The regulatory framework governing external macroeconomic stability, foreign exchange, and balance of payments falls exclusively under the Union List of the **Seventh Schedule** of the Indian Constitution, specifically via **Entry 36 (Foreign exchange)** and **Entry 57 (Inter-state trade and commerce)**. Management of currency valuation and capital flows is statutorily enforced by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) under the **Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999**, and the **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934**.

Conclusion

Relying strictly on volatile Financial Account components like FDI and FPI to defend the rupee overlooks India's core macroeconomic shock absorber. To mitigate external sector vulnerabilities during global energy disruptions, policy architecture must actively monitor and structurally facilitate remittance corridors alongside traditional investment routes.

UPSC Relevance

GS Paper III: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development, and employment; Balance of Payments (BoP), components of Current and Capital Accounts, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI) dynamics.



8. Dynamics of Summer Air Pollution and Emerging Urban Challenges

- **Shift in Seasonal Pollution Profiles:** While winter air pollution in the Indo-Gangetic plain is dominated by fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) trapped by thermal inversion, summer pollution is driven by coarser PM₁₀ particles and ground-level ozone (O₃). This shift prompted the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) to activate Stage 1 of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) during the peak summer of 2026.
- **Mechanism of Ground-Level Ozone Formation:** Photochemical ozone is a secondary pollutant not emitted directly from sources. It triggers when primary precursors—Nitrogen Oxides (NO_x) from vehicular exhaust and Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC_s) from industrial solvents and paints—undergo chemical transformations catalyzed by intense heat and strong solar radiation.
- **Meteorological Drivers of PM₁₀ Spikes:** Intense solar heating over the Indian subcontinent establishes an expansive low-pressure trough extending toward West Asia. This pressure gradient generates high-velocity winds, including the regional *loo*, which transports transboundary desert dust from the Thar and Arabian peninsulas, causing prolonged PM₁₀ breaches exceeding the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS).
- **Anthropogenic Amplification of Dust:** The lifting of stringent winter construction bans often leads to a surge in unmitigated demolition and infrastructure activities. This building boom, coupled with heavy vehicles resuspending loose silt over dry, broken urban roads, severely intensifies the background natural dust load during arid summer months.
- **Pan-Indian Urban Impact:** Summer pollution episodes extend beyond Delhi to coastal and southern peninsular hubs like Mumbai, Chennai, and Bengaluru. High vehicular concentrations and local convection thunderstorms generate micro-regional dust vortices and ozone hotspots, demonstrating that air quality degradation is a perennial, pan-India structural crisis.
- **Key Definitions:** **Ground-Level Ozone (O₃)** is a secondary gas formed via the photochemical reaction of NO_x and VOC_s under sunlight, acting as a severe respiratory irritant. **Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)** is an institutional emergency framework that triggers stratified administrative and economic restrictions based on progressive degradation of the Air Quality Index (AQI).

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

Air quality governance is regulated under **The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981**, which empowers pollution control boards to set and enforce ambient standards. The CAQM operates as a statutory body under the **CAQM in NCR and Adjoining Areas Act, 2021**, superseding older ad-hoc panels. These interventions fulfill the constitutional mandate of **Article 48A** (Directive Principles), which tasks the State with protecting and improving the environment, and **Article 51A(g)**, which establishes a Fundamental Duty to protect the natural environment. Legally, a pollution-free atmosphere is recognized as a fundamental right derived from the Right to Life under **Article 21**.

Conclusion

The recurrence of summer pollution episodes invalidates the conventional policy approach that treats air pollution as a seasonal winter crisis. Mitigating this risk requires a structural shift toward year-round airshed management, integrating real-time forecasting data from the Air Quality Early Warning System (AQEWS) with strict enforcement of industrial VOC_s controls and urban dust mitigation protocols.



UPSC Relevance

GS Paper III: Environmental pollution and degradation; Changes in critical geographical features and the effects of such changes. **GS Paper II:** Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies (CAQM, CPCB) and their role in evidence-based environmental governance.

9. Supreme Court Strength and Judicial Appointments

- **Expansion of Judicial Strength:** The Union Government cleared the appointment of five new judges to the Supreme Court, raising its working strength to 37. This executive clearance follows the enactment of the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Ordinance, 2026, which formally increased the court's total sanctioned strength from 34 to 38 judges.
- **Presidential Approval and Warrant:** The appointments were officially approved by the President of India exercising executive powers under the warrant of appointment. The new inductions comprise four elevated Chief Justices from various state High Courts and one direct elevation from the senior bar.
- **Gender Representation in the Higher Judiciary:** The appointment of a senior woman advocate highlights ongoing efforts to address structural gender imbalances within the higher judiciary. Prior to these appointments, the bench maintained only one sitting female judge, who also serves as a member of the institutional Collegium.
- **The Collegium Recommendation Pathway:** These judicial inductions were processed based on formal recommendations made by the Supreme Court Collegium. This institutional timeline underscores the operational coordination between the judicial recommendation panel and the executive branch's processing Ministry.
- **Key Definitions: Collegium System** is a non-constitutional, judicially evolved forum consisting of the Chief Justice of India and the senior-most judges of the Supreme Court that recommends appointments and transfers of judges. **Sanctioned Strength** refers to the maximum statutory limit of judges permitted to sit on a court, which can only be modified through parliamentary legislation or an executive ordinance.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

Judicial appointments to the apex court are explicitly governed by **Article 124(2)** of the Constitution, which mandates that every judge of the Supreme Court shall be appointed by the President by warrant under hand and seal. The power to alter the total number of judges rests exclusively with Parliament under **Article 124(1)**, which specifies that the bench consists of a Chief Justice unless Parliament prescribes a larger number by law. This procedural framework operates under the legal doctrines established through the **Three Judges Cases**, which firmly consolidated the primacy of the Collegium's consensus over executive discretion.

Conclusion

The rapid operationalization of the expanded judicial strength reflects an institutional effort to tackle the mounting pendency of cases in the apex court. While increasing numerical capacity is a critical step, ensuring long-term structural diversity and institutional transparency within the appointment mechanism remains vital for robust judicial administration.

UPSC Relevance

GS Paper II: Indian Constitution—historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions, and basic structure. Structure, organization, and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary.



Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions, and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.

10. Delhi HC Framework on the Right to be Forgotten and De-indexing

- **Constitutional Validation of RTBF:** The Delhi High Court held that the Right to be Forgotten (RTBF) flows directly from the fundamental Right to Privacy under Article 21 of the Constitution. It enables individuals to seek the restriction or removal of personal information from public digital accessibility when it no longer serves a legitimate public purpose.
- **Scope of the Judicial Framework:** Justice Sachin Datta delivered a landmark 144-page judgment laying down a structured framework to govern the de-indexing of judicial records from search engines. It also provides for the masking of personal identifiers from publicly available court databases to prevent perpetual digital vulnerability.
- **Absence of Specific Legislation:** The Court explicitly noted that while India currently lacks a comprehensive, dedicated statutory framework explicitly governing the RTBF, the absence of specific legislation does not preclude constitutional courts from recognizing, evolving, and enforcing this fundamental right.
- **Target Beneficiaries of the Ruling:** The judgment addressed over 30 combined petitions from individuals experiencing lingering social penalties. The relief specifically protects acquitted individuals, discharged accused, parties involved in matrimonial disputes, and those whose criminal proceedings were quashed or settled.
- **Harm to Dignity and Prospects:** Petitioners highlighted that casual, name-based online searches of concluded legal proceedings caused disproportionate, continuous harm to their reputation, employment opportunities, and social standing. The court countered this by ordering intermediaries and legal databases to de-index designated records from direct name searches.
- **Key Definitions: Right to be Forgotten (RTBF)** is an individual's right to request the removal, masking, or delinking of personal digital data when it is no longer relevant, necessary, or serving a public interest. **De-indexing** is the technical process where search engines remove specific URLs or webpages from their search index, making the content unsearchable via direct name queries without deleting the original source document.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

The verdict fortifies **Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty)** by incorporating informational self-determination, building upon the foundational jurisprudence established in **Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017)**. This right must be balanced against **Article 19(1)(a) (Freedom of Speech and Expression)**, which covers the public's right to know and the principle of open courts. Furthermore, while the **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023** provides a statutory mechanism for the erasure of personal data processed by data fiduciaries, the specific boundary for public judicial records remains heavily reliant on case-by-case judicial balancing.

Conclusion

The Delhi High Court's ruling successfully operationalizes a vital human rights protection within the digital ecosystem. By establishing clear rules for masking and de-indexing, the judiciary ensures that open justice remains transparent without transforming into a tool for perpetual social stigmatization.



UPSC Relevance

GS Paper II: Structure, organization, and functioning of the Judiciary; Important Supreme Court and High Court judgments; Effect of policies and interventions on fundamental rights. **GS Paper IV:** Ethical dimensions of privacy, human dignity, and technological governance in the internet era.



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