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**VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY**  
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**STUDY CENTRE**

# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

**DATE: 03/06/2025 (TUESDAY)**



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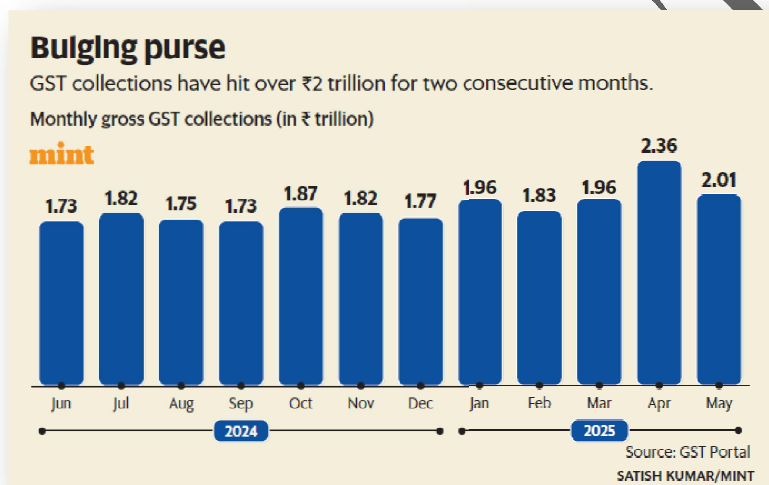
## 1. GST Mop-up: Signals for India's Economy and Tax Structure

### 1. Definition and Significance of GST

- **Goods and Services Tax (GST)** is a comprehensive, destination-based indirect tax that subsumes multiple central and state taxes.
- It is a **value-added tax levied on most goods and services sold for domestic consumption**, collected at each point of sale.
- GST is a **broad-based barometer of domestic consumption** and reflects the health of the economy, especially consumption trends.

### 2. Record-High GST Collections and Trends

- GST collections have **exceeded ₹2 trillion for three consecutive months**:
  - April 2024: ₹2.36 trillion (reflecting March transactions)
  - May 2024: ₹2.01 trillion



- Earlier six-month average: ₹1.75 trillion.

- Reflects sustained consumption and formalization of the economy.

### 3. Economic Implications of Buoyant GST Revenues

- **Rising domestic GST collections** indicate improved consumer demand:

- December: +8.4%
- April: +10.7%
- May: +13.7%

- **Rural demand** is recovering due to good monsoons and agricultural performance.
- **Urban demand** also rising, helped by lower inflation and increased disposable income.

### 4. Rising GST on Imports – A Mixed Signal

- GST on imports grew sharply:
  - April: +20.8%
  - May: +25.2%



- Indicates higher import volumes but raises concerns about the **composition of imports** (consumption goods vs intermediate goods).
- **Trade concerns:** Possible dumping from China due to U.S. tariffs; government yet to release sector-specific import GST data.

## 5. Need for GST Rate Rationalization

- The **current GST structure is complex**, with multiple slabs (0%, 5%, 12%, 18%, 28%).
- With revenue stability achieved, experts recommend:
  - **Removing the 12% slab** (contributing <4% of revenues).
  - **Ending or restructuring the compensation cess** (possibly converting it to health or green cess after March 2026).
- Rationalization will improve tax compliance and reduce litigation.

## 6. Legal and Constitutional Backing

- GST was introduced via the **101st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2016**.
- Key provisions:
  - **Article 279A:** Formation of the GST Council
  - **Article 246A:** Concurrent powers to Parliament and State Legislatures to make laws on GST
  - **Article 269A:** GST on inter-state trade and commerce to be levied and collected by the Centre

## Conclusion

The robust GST mop-up signals a strengthening domestic economy with rising consumption. As revenue stabilizes, **GST rate rationalization becomes both feasible and essential** to enhance simplicity and efficiency in tax administration. Policymakers must now focus on refining the structure while monitoring trade patterns and ensuring equitable growth.

## 2. India-US Steel Tariffs Issue Amid BTA Talks

### 1. Context and Background of the Tariff Dispute

- In 2018, the **US imposed tariffs of 25% on steel and 10% on aluminium** imports under **Section 232** of its domestic law, citing national security concerns.
- **Section 232 of the US Trade Expansion Act, 1962**, allows the US President to restrict imports that threaten national security.
- India challenged these duties as '**safeguard measures**' under the **WTO Safeguards Agreement**, demanding equivalent retaliation rights.







## 2. India's Current Strategy: Negotiation Over Retaliation

- Instead of immediate retaliation, **India is using the Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) talks** to seek the rollback of these tariffs.
- A **US delegation is scheduled to visit New Delhi between 5–8 June 2025** to discuss the BTA, during which India plans to raise the issue.
- India reserves the **right to retaliate at the WTO** if talks fail but prefers a **structured diplomatic approach** for now.

## 3. WTO Legal Framework and India's Position

- Under the **WTO Safeguards Agreement**, members can impose temporary trade restrictions to protect domestic industries from import surges—but must compensate affected nations.
- **India notified WTO** about suspending concessions in retaliation, but the **US rejected India's claim**, arguing the tariffs are **national security-based**, and thus not governed by safeguard rules.
- The US has **consistently refused to accept WTO rulings** against it on national security matters, undermining WTO's dispute settlement credibility.

## 4. Impacts on Indian Trade and Industry Concerns

- India exported **\$4.56 billion worth of steel, aluminium, and related products** to the US in FY25.
- Indian exporters fear **market loss and price disadvantages** due to these tariffs.
- Domestic industry is urging the government to act diplomatically but decisively.

## 5. Strategic and Diplomatic Calculations by India

- India's decision to **avoid escalation** reflects a pragmatic foreign trade policy approach.
- Experts like Ajay Srivastava of GTRI support **negotiated resolutions over WTO-based retaliation**, citing **fragile WTO mechanisms** and **US non-compliance with dispute rulings**.
- A **comprehensive BTA outcome** may offer India greater long-term market access and legal clarity.

## 6. Constitutional and Legal Framework (Indian Context)

- **Article 246 & 246A**: Empower Parliament to legislate on foreign trade and customs duties.
- **Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992**: Governs India's foreign trade policy and retaliation rights.
- India can invoke **Section 8A of the Customs Tariff Act, 1975** to increase import duties in retaliation if needed.

## Conclusion

India is navigating the US steel tariffs dispute through **diplomatic engagement via BTA talks** rather than immediate confrontation. With the WTO dispute mechanism under stress and US resistance to rulings, **a negotiated settlement seems strategically sound**. India aims to defend its trade interests while maintaining constructive bilateral ties, reflecting a matured global trade posture.



### 3. Digital Payment-Related Frauds in India

#### 1. Overview of Digital Payment Fraud Data

- A total of **63,315 digital payment-related fraud cases** involving **₹733.26 crore** were reported in the last **10 financial years (FY14–FY25 up to December)**.
- These cases were registered under **‘card/internet and digital payments’** category, involving amounts of **₹1 lakh or more**, as per Finance Ministry data presented in **Lok Sabha on 10 March 2025**.

#### 2. Distinction from Broader Banking Frauds

- Officials clarified that **digital payment frauds should not be conflated** with other banking frauds which may not directly impact the public.
- Broader **banking frauds** often involve **corporate loans, internal frauds**, and large-scale misappropriations not affecting individual consumers.

#### 3. Definition and Nature of Digital Payment Fraud

- **Digital payment fraud** refers to **unauthorized transactions involving digital platforms**, including cards, UPI, mobile wallets, and net banking.
- These are usually **consumer-facing frauds** such as phishing, SIM swapping, OTP theft, and fake payment links.

#### 4. Government & Institutional Safeguards

- Multiple measures by the **Finance Ministry, Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**, and **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)** have been implemented to secure digital transactions:
  - **Two-factor authentication**,
  - **Real-time fraud monitoring**,
  - **AI-based fraud detection**,
  - **User awareness campaigns and grievance redressal mechanisms**.

#### 5. Legal and Constitutional Provisions Relevant to the Issue

- **Article 246 & 246A**: Provide Parliament powers to legislate on banking and taxation of digital financial services.
- **Information Technology Act, 2000 (Sections 43 & 66)**: Deals with cyber frauds and imposes penalties for data theft and identity fraud.
- **RBI Act, 1934 and Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007**: Empower RBI to regulate digital payments, ensure consumer protection, and set operational guidelines.





## 6. Political and Public Narrative Management

- The opposition cited inflated figures from **total banking frauds**, which may lead to **public misinformation** and **undue alarm** about digital payments.
- Officials emphasized that **digital fraud levels are not alarming**, indicating **continued public confidence in digital payments** is crucial for financial inclusion.

### Conclusion

While the rise of digital payments has brought increased vulnerabilities, the data shows that the **scale of fraud is manageable and not systemically alarming**. India's robust legal and institutional framework, along with proactive efforts by RBI and NPCI, helps ensure the **safety and resilience of the digital payment ecosystem**. Clear distinction between consumer-level digital frauds and institutional banking frauds is necessary to maintain **public trust and informed discourse**.

## 4. Expanding Banking Access through India Post

### 1. Aim to Reduce Banking Access Radius to 3 km

- The **Government of India**, through the **Department of Financial Services (DFS)** and **Department of Posts (DoP)**, is preparing a proposal to provide **banking services within a 3 km radius** for all citizens.
- This is a follow-up to the earlier goal of 5 km banking access and aims to deepen **financial inclusion**, especially in **rural and remote areas**.

### 2. Role of India Post and Panchayats

- India Post, with its **extensive rural network of over 1.5 lakh post offices**, will play a **central role** in delivering these services.
- The plan will map **panchayats and villages** within 3 km clusters and mandate banking presence in such areas, involving coordination with **state governments**.

### 3. Financial Inclusion: Concept and Importance

- **Financial Inclusion** is defined as the process of ensuring **access to appropriate financial products and services** to all sections of society, especially the vulnerable groups, at an **affordable cost** in a **fair and transparent manner**.
- It is essential for reducing poverty, empowering rural communities, and achieving **inclusive economic growth**.



### 4. Delivery Model and Infrastructure

- The model will combine **brick-and-mortar post offices**, **bank business correspondents**, and **state-run electronic Point-of-Sale (ePOS)** systems.
- The infrastructure will be supplemented by designated banking days, customized for **local demand and population needs**.



## 5. Benefits of the Initiative

- **Customer convenience** and increased **transaction frequency** due to proximity.
- **Better understanding of borrower profiles** by nearby staff, useful in areas with **low digital or credit history**.
- **Improved trust and engagement** between citizens and formal banking institutions.
- Strengthens the implementation of **Direct Benefit Transfers (DBTs)**, **Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM) trinity**, and **financial empowerment schemes**.

## 6. Relevant Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 38**: Directive Principle mandating the state to strive for minimizing inequalities in income and opportunities.
- **Article 243G & 243W**: Empower Panchayats and Municipalities to assist in economic development, including facilitating financial inclusion.
- **The Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007**: Provides for RBI oversight over payment systems, ensuring safe, secure transactions.
- **Indian Post Office Act, 1898 (amended)**: Empowers India Post to expand into financial services (e.g., India Post Payments Bank).

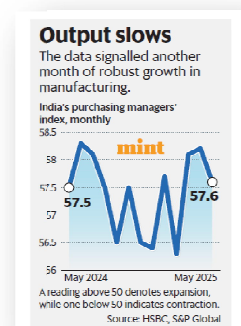
## Conclusion

This initiative aligns with India's vision of **inclusive development and universal banking access**. Leveraging India Post's vast rural network to reduce the banking access radius to 3 km is a **pragmatic and transformative move**. It not only ensures **financial empowerment of rural citizens** but also strengthens **state-centre-institution coordination** for delivering public services efficiently.

## 5. Manufacturing PMI Eases to 3-Month Low

### 1. What is PMI and Current Data Trends

- **Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI)** is an indicator of the **economic health of the manufacturing sector**, based on surveys of private sector companies. A value **above 50** indicates expansion, while **below 50** indicates contraction.
- The **HSBC India Manufacturing PMI**, compiled by S&P Global, **fell to 57.6 in May 2025**, the lowest in three months, from **58.2 in April** and **58.1 in March**.



### 2. Key Drivers Behind the Decline

- The **growth in new orders and output softened**, attributed to **heightened competition**, **rising inflation**, and **geopolitical tensions**, particularly the **India-Pakistan conflict**.
- Despite this decline, both output and new orders remained **above long-run averages**, suggesting sustained underlying demand.



### 3. Positive Trends: Employment and Exports

- **Job creation surged to a record high**, with sustained hiring momentum to manage workloads.
- **New export orders saw the strongest growth in three years**, boosted by demand from **Asia, Europe, West Asia, and the US**.
- Companies increased **input purchases**, indicating expectations of continued demand.

### 4. Rising Input Costs and Inflationary Pressure

- **Input cost inflation reached a 6-month high**, mainly due to increased prices of **aluminium, cement, iron, leather, rubber, and sand**.
- Manufacturers passed on higher costs to consumers, leading to **one of the sharpest increases in selling prices in over 11 years**, highlighting **cost-push inflation** dynamics.

### 5. Macroeconomic Context: GDP Performance

- India's GDP grew by **6.5% in FY25**, with a **7.4% expansion in the Jan-Mar quarter**.
- However, both figures are **lower than previous fiscal: 9.2% full-year growth in FY24 and 7.8% in Q4 of FY24**, indicating **moderation in economic momentum**.

### 6. Constitutional & Policy Relevance

- **Article 39(c) of the Directive Principles** emphasizes securing an economic system that does not result in the concentration of wealth and ensures equitable growth, making inclusive industrial growth essential.
- **Make in India, Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes, and National Manufacturing Policy (2011)** are key government interventions to boost manufacturing and employment.
- RBI's role in **monitoring inflation and monetary policy** becomes critical amid rising input costs.

### Conclusion

While the slight dip in manufacturing PMI signals a **moderation in growth**, the sector remains robust, supported by **strong export demand, record hiring, and expansion in capacity**. However, **cost-push inflation and geopolitical uncertainties** remain key challenges. Policymakers must balance **growth support measures** with **inflation management** to sustain industrial momentum in the medium term.

## 6. India to Receive Remaining S-400 Missile Systems by 2026

### 1. S-400 Air Defence System: Definition and Importance

- The **S-400 Triumf** is a **long-range surface-to-air missile system** developed by **Russia's Almaz Central Design Bureau**, capable of neutralizing aircraft, UAVs, cruise and ballistic missiles at a range of up to **400 km** and altitude of **30 km**.
- It is considered one of the **most advanced air defence systems globally**, significantly enhancing **India's strategic deterrence and airspace security**.





## 2. Status of Delivery and Strategic Relevance

- As per Russia's Deputy Chief of Mission in India, Roman Babushkin, the remaining units of the S-400 will be delivered by 2025–26.
- The system has reportedly performed effectively during India-Pakistan tensions, reinforcing its operational reliability and India's defence preparedness.

## 3. India-Russia Defence Ties

- India signed a \$5.43 billion deal in 2018 for five S-400 units under the framework of the India-Russia Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA).
- The S-400 deal is emblematic of India's strong defence ties with Russia, which spans across fighter aircraft, submarines, tanks, and nuclear cooperation.
- Russia has shown interest in expanding bilateral defence cooperation, including in joint production and technology transfer.

## 4. Geopolitical and Strategic Concerns

- The deal has geo-strategic implications, particularly concerning the U.S. Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), which threatens sanctions on countries dealing with Russia's defence sector.
- However, India has pursued strategic autonomy in foreign policy, balancing ties with both Russia and the U.S. under its multi-alignment approach.

## 5. Constitutional & Policy Linkages

- Article 51 of the Indian Constitution urges the state to promote international peace and security, which indirectly underscores the need for credible national defence to preserve sovereignty.
- The acquisition aligns with the goals of the Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) and India's efforts toward building a comprehensive national security architecture.



## 6. National Security and Indigenization Goals

- While the S-400 is an import, it complements indigenous efforts under 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' and DRDO-led projects like the Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system.
- India is also aiming to reduce dependence on imports through the development of local air defence systems like Akash-NG.

## Conclusion

The timely completion of the S-400 delivery by 2026 will significantly boost India's air defence capabilities, especially amid regional threats from China and Pakistan. The deal symbolizes strong India-Russia defence cooperation, while also testing India's ability to balance strategic partnerships in a multipolar world. Going forward, synergy between imported high-tech systems and indigenous development will be key to achieving a self-reliant and secure India.



## 1. What is the Southwest Monsoon?

- ## 2. IMD's Current Forecast (2025)

- ### 3. Causes for Delay in Monsoon Progress

- 

#### 4. Impact on Agriculture and Economy

- A weak or delayed monsoon affects **kharif crop sowing** (rice, pulses, cotton, etc.), impacting **food security and rural income**.
- It may also lead to **increased irrigation demands**, **stress on water resources**, and **inflation in food prices**, influencing **overall GDP growth**.

## 5. Constitutional and Policy Framework

- **Article 48A** mandates the State to protect and improve the environment, which includes effective **climate adaptation strategies**.
- The **National Monsoon Mission (by MoES)** and **Agromet Advisory Services (by IMD)** help in **scientific forecasting and climate-resilient agriculture**.
- **Disaster Management Act, 2005** enables coordinated action in case of droughts caused by monsoon failure.

## 6. Institutional and Technological Measures

- IMD uses **Doppler radars**, **satellite data**, and **numerical weather models** to monitor monsoon activity.
- **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)** provides insurance cover to farmers against monsoon variability.





- The **Integrated Agromet Advisory Services (IAAS)** disseminate region-specific monsoon alerts to aid farmers.

### Conclusion

The **subdued progress of the Southwest Monsoon**, though temporary, serves as a critical reminder of **India's vulnerability to climate and weather shocks**. Proactive planning through **early warnings, scientific forecasting, and sustainable water and crop management** is essential for **climate resilience** and ensuring **agricultural sustainability**, particularly under the evolving impacts of **climate change**.

## 8. Related-Party Transactions and MCA Advisory

### 1. What Are Related-Party Transactions (RPTs)?

- **Related-Party Transactions** are business deals between two parties who are joined by a pre-existing relationship (e.g., director and company, company and relative of a director).
- As per **Section 2(76) of the Companies Act, 2013**, related parties include **directors, key managerial personnel (KMPs), their relatives, and entities under their control or influence**.

### 2. MCA's Advisory and Gensol Case Trigger

- The **Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA)** has issued a **cautionary reminder** to promoters and businesses following the **Gensol Engineering Ltd. case**, where allegations were made regarding **violation of related-party transaction norms**.
- The government emphasized the need to maintain **arm's length principles**—meaning transactions should be conducted **as if the parties were unrelated**, ensuring **fair pricing and no undue advantage**.



### 3. Legal Framework and Penalties

- **Section 188 of the Companies Act, 2013** governs RPTs and mandates **Board/Shareholder approval** in certain cases.
- Violation of Section 188 may result in **finances and imprisonment** under **Section 188(3)**, especially if the transaction is **not disclosed or approved**.
- **Listed companies** must also comply with **SEBI (LODR) Regulations, 2015**, which require **disclosure and audit committee approval** of material RPTs.

### 4. Importance of Arm's-Length Principle

- Ensures **transparency, good corporate governance, and prevention of insider benefits or siphoning of funds**.
- Critical for protecting the **interests of minority shareholders and investors**.



## 5. Role of Independent Directors and Audit Committees

- **Independent directors** and **audit committees** play a vital role in scrutinizing and approving RPTs, especially in listed entities.
- Their involvement enhances **accountability and oversight** and ensures **compliance with fiduciary duties**.

## 6. Constitutional and Institutional Backing

- **Article 39(b) & (c)** of the **Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP)** promotes the **equitable distribution of resources** and prevents the **concentration of wealth**, which unchecked RPTs could violate.
- MCA, SEBI, and the **National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA)** are key institutions responsible for **monitoring and enforcing corporate governance norms**.

## Conclusion

The MCA's reminder underscores the growing emphasis on **corporate transparency and ethical governance** in India. Related-party transactions, if not regulated, can lead to **conflict of interest**, **financial irregularities**, and **loss of investor confidence**. Hence, strict adherence to legal provisions, **enhanced board vigilance**, and **robust disclosures** are essential to uphold **corporate integrity and accountability**, particularly in the era of **stakeholder capitalism**.

## 9. RBI's \$73 Billion Short Book and Impact on Indian Rupee

### 1. What Is a "Short Dollar Book" or Net Short Forward Position?

- The **RBI's short dollar book** refers to **forward contracts** where the RBI has agreed to **sell US dollars in the future**.
- As of April 2025, this position stood at **\$73 billion**, down from a peak of **\$88.8 billion in February**, indicating **future obligations** to deliver dollars and manage forex liquidity.

### 2. Impact on the Indian Rupee

- The rupee is the **worst-performing currency in Asia this quarter**, despite strong GDP growth of **7.4% in Q4 FY25**.
- Expected **dollar purchases** by RBI to **replenish reserves** may **put downward pressure on the rupee**, with forecasts suggesting a drop to **₹86.50–₹87.50 per USD** by December.

### 3. RBI's Forex Management Strategy

- India's **foreign exchange reserves** stood at **\$693 billion** as of May 23, 2025, slightly below the **all-time high of \$705 billion** (September 2023).
- The RBI is gradually allowing its **forward book to run off** to avoid future **reserve depletion**, while **buying dollars in the spot market** to maintain reserve buffers.





#### 4. Market Dynamics and Policy Shift

- RBI appears to be **shifting towards a more market-determined exchange rate regime**, allowing **greater rupee flexibility**.
- This is amid **capital outflows from the bond market** and global uncertainties, where **maintaining adequate reserves** is key to **ensuring currency stability**.

#### 5. Constitutional and Institutional Relevance

- As per **Article 300A**, no person shall be deprived of property (including financial assets) except by authority of law, reflecting the need for **monetary stability**.
- The **Reserve Bank of India**, under the **RBI Act, 1934**, is tasked with **monetary policy, forex management, and financial stability**—crucial for national economic sovereignty and price stability.

#### 6. Broader Economic Implications

- Weakening rupee could **raise import costs**, especially **crude oil**, leading to **imported inflation**.
- It could also affect **external debt servicing**, **capital flows**, and **investor confidence**, thereby impacting the **current account balance** and **India's global competitiveness**.

#### Conclusion

The RBI's large short dollar book reflects a **complex balancing act** between **managing rupee volatility**, **rebuilding forex reserves**, and **ensuring macroeconomic stability**. For UPSC, this case highlights the importance of **prudent forex management**, **monetary autonomy**, and the **interplay between domestic policy and global financial pressures**. Understanding such dynamics is crucial for aspirants aiming to grasp India's economic policy landscape in a globally integrated world.

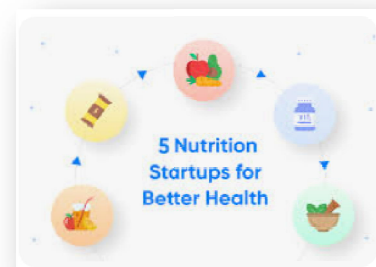
## 10. India's Protein Deficiency & the Rise of Health-Focused Startups

### 1. Context: Protein Deficiency in India

- **Definition:** Protein is a **macronutrient** essential for **muscle repair, enzyme function, and immune strength**.
- According to the **FAO**, India's **per capita protein supply in 2021** was **70.5 grams/day**, far behind **China (124.6g)** and **USA (124.3g)**.
- A **2024 IMRB** survey found **90% Indians are unaware** of protein needs; **73% of urban diets** fall short of required intake.

### 2. Rise of Protein-Based Startups and Market Trends

- Startups like **Be Brawn** (protein-infused water) and **Naturaltein** (supplements) are gaining investor attention.
- **Super You** (co-founded by actor Ranveer Singh) and **iD Fresh Foods** have introduced **innovative protein-rich snacks and traditional foods**.





- India's **protein supplement market** is projected to grow from **\$1.4 billion (2024)** to **\$1.8 billion by 2029** (Mordor Intelligence).

### 3. Entry of Large Food Brands

- **Mother Dairy** launched **Pro Milk**, with **30% more protein** than regular milk.
- **Brittania** and **Amul** have added **protein-rich biscuits, curd, and shakes**, signaling mainstream adoption.
- These brands aim to **democratize protein access** through affordable, familiar formats.

### 4. Policy and Institutional Implications

- Though **no specific constitutional article mentions nutrition**, **Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP)** under **Article 47** direct the state to **raise the level of nutrition and public health**.
- The **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** regulates labeling and nutritional claims under the **FSS Act, 2006**.
- Promoting protein intake aligns with **National Nutrition Mission (POSHAN Abhiyaan)** targets and **SDG Goal 2 (Zero Hunger)**.

### 5. Investment and Innovation Focus

- Venture capital firms such as **Sauce.vc** are funding brands that show **product innovation** (e.g., wafer bars, multigrain protein chips).
- Focus is on **format innovation and clean labels**, moving away from traditional powders to **convenient, on-the-go products**.

### 6. Societal Shift and Health Awareness

- Urban India is witnessing a **behavioral shift** toward **healthier, protein-focused diets**, cutting across **age groups and socio-economic segments**.
- Consumer education remains key as **protein awareness is still low**, indicating a need for **public-private collaboration**.

### Conclusion

India's growing awareness of **protein deficiency** is driving **startups, FMCGs, and investors** to innovate and expand access to affordable, protein-rich foods. This aligns with the broader goals of **public health, nutritional equity, and sustainable development**. For UPSC aspirants, it reflects a crucial intersection of **health, entrepreneurship, food security, and regulatory governance**, underlining the role of **policy, market, and innovation** in addressing nutritional challenges.

## 11. Misinformation a Bigger Threat than COVID-19 Uptick

### 1. Context & Current Scenario of COVID-19 in India

- COVID-19 cases have risen from a few per day to a few hundred daily since mid-May 2025.



- Wastewater surveillance and reports from other Asian countries (Singapore, South Korea) show similar upticks.
- The dominant circulating variant is **JN.1 (Pirola)**, a descendant of **Omicron (BA.1.529)**, first detected in India in late 2023.
- No new variant of concern has emerged globally since Omicron's identification in 2021.

## 2. Epidemiological Reasons for the Uptick

- **Seasonality:** SARS-CoV-2 likely follows a seasonal pattern similar to influenza and common cold, influenced by environment, behavior, and viral genetics. India may have COVID-19 surges every 8–10 months.
- **Mutation:** Being an RNA virus, SARS-CoV-2 mutates frequently, leading to sub-lineages like LF.7 and NB.1.8 of JN.1.
- **Enhanced Testing & Surveillance:** Increased COVID-19 testing inflates detected cases but doesn't always reflect severity.

## 3. Immunity & Vaccination

- The population has '**hybrid immunity**' from natural infections and vaccination, protecting against severe disease and death, though not fully preventing infections.
- There is **no current recommendation for additional COVID-19 vaccine doses** for the general population.
- Immune memory cells provide long-term protection against severe illness despite waning antibody levels.



## 4. Comparative Disease Burden & Media Attention

- Daily COVID-19 infections (200-300 cases) are low compared to diseases like tuberculosis (~8,000 cases/day) and deaths from old age and other illnesses (~30,000/day).
- Hospitalizations and deaths due to COVID-19 remain very low.
- Continued use of old metrics like 'active cases' overstates the threat, causing undue panic.

## 5. Constitutional & Legal Provisions Relevant to Public Health & Misinformation

- **Article 21** guarantees the right to life and health; the state has an obligation to protect citizens from health risks.
- **Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 47)** mandate improving nutrition and public health.
- **Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897** and **Disaster Management Act, 2005** provide legal frameworks for managing epidemics.
- The **IT Act, 2000** (Section 66A, 69A) and **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021** regulate misinformation on digital platforms.





## 6. Misinformation: The Real Threat

- Misinformation and ‘infodemic’ cause panic, strain healthcare systems, and undermine public trust.
- Rational, evidence-based reporting and public communication are essential to avoid response fatigue and misinformation spread.
- Balanced approach: neither underestimate nor exaggerate COVID-19 risk.

## Conclusion

India’s current COVID-19 uptick is a manageable seasonal phenomenon with no new variant of concern and low clinical severity. Public health focus should shift to **monitoring trends, preventing misinformation, and strengthening immunity against other health threats**. A **scientifically informed, constitutionally grounded, and legally supported response** will help manage COVID-19 as an endemic respiratory illness, avoiding unnecessary panic and maintaining public trust.

## 12. President’s Rule under Article 356

### • Definition and Constitutional Provision

- *President’s Rule* refers to the direct rule of the Central Government over a State, imposed under **Article 356 of the Indian Constitution**.
- Article 356 allows the President to assume control of a State if the government cannot be carried out according to constitutional provisions, typically due to failure of constitutional machinery.
- The President can act based on a report from the Governor or otherwise (per **Article 365** which mandates States to comply with Union directions).

### • Procedure and Duration

- The proclamation of President’s Rule must be approved by both Houses of Parliament within two months by a **simple majority**.
- Initially valid for six months, it can be extended every six months, but cannot continue beyond three years in total (exceptions exist under certain conditions, like breakdown due to war or disaster).
- The Legislative Assembly is usually either kept under *suspended animation* or dissolved after imposition.

### • Historical Misuse and Judicial Intervention

- Dr. B.R. Ambedkar hoped Article 356 would remain a *dead letter*, but it was frequently misused post-independence to dismiss elected state governments for political reasons, undermining federalism.





- Different Governors have taken varying approaches in dissolving Assemblies after President's Rule; some accepted Chief Minister's advice even when majority was doubtful, others refused.
- The Supreme Court's landmark **S. R. Bommai vs Union of India (1994)** judgment put curbs on misuse, stating:
  - President's Rule should only be imposed on **constitutional machinery breakdown**, not mere law and order issues.
  - The imposition is subject to **judicial review**.
  - Assembly dissolution should wait until Parliament approves the proclamation, otherwise the Assembly remains under suspended animation.
- **Subsequent Judicial Checks**
  - Courts struck down wrongful impositions of President's Rule in cases like **Bihar (2005)**, **Uttarakhand (2016)**, and **Arunachal Pradesh (2016)**.
  - These interventions reinforce judiciary's role as a guardian of federalism and democratic governance.
- **Revocation and Political Context**
  - President's Rule is revoked once a stable government with assembly majority is formed or fresh elections are held.
  - Example: *Manipur* was under President's Rule from February 2025 due to security and political instability; with the Assembly under suspended animation, calls for formation of a viable government persist.
  - Imposition of President's Rule is a **temporary measure** meant to restore constitutional governance, not to replace democracy permanently.
- **Key Definitions for UPSC**
  - *Suspended Animation*: Temporary freezing of a State Legislative Assembly without dissolution.
  - *Breakdown of Constitutional Machinery*: Failure of constitutional provisions to operate effectively, justifying central intervention under Article 356.

## Conclusion

Article 356 is a crucial yet sensitive constitutional provision designed to maintain the integrity of State governance. While intended as a safeguard against breakdown of constitutional machinery, its historical misuse necessitated judicial scrutiny. The **S. R. Bommai case** has been pivotal in protecting federalism and democracy by imposing checks on arbitrary imposition of President's Rule. For UPSC, understanding Article 356 highlights the balance between Centre-State relations, constitutional safeguards, judicial activism, and the evolving nature of Indian federalism. The recent Manipur example underscores the contemporary relevance of these constitutional provisions in maintaining democratic governance.





### 13. French Nuclear Umbrella and Its Implications for Europe

- **Context and Background**

- On May 14, 2025, French President Emmanuel Macron expressed openness to stationing French nuclear weapons on other European countries' soil.
- This move responds to growing European security concerns amid the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict and perceived unreliability of U.S. security guarantees under NATO.

- **French Policy of European Strategic Autonomy**

- Macron's initiative aligns with France's goal of "European strategic autonomy" — the EU's capacity to independently manage its defense and security without over-reliance on the U.S.
- This represents a shift from France's traditional stance of guarding its nuclear deterrent as a strictly national tool.

- **Nuclear Sharing Model**

- Nuclear sharing involves a nuclear-armed state deploying weapons in allied non-nuclear states with specific use arrangements.
- The U.S. practices nuclear sharing within NATO by stationing B61 nuclear bombs in Belgium, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, and Turkey.
- Legally, ownership and control remain with the nuclear state; the host country neither owns nor independently controls the weapons.

- **France's Nuclear Arsenal and Challenges**

- France possesses approximately 290 nuclear warheads deliverable via submarines and Rafale fighter jets.
- Extending deterrence by basing weapons abroad presents logistical, doctrinal, and command-control challenges.
- It might require increasing warhead numbers and deploying French military units and infrastructure overseas.



- **Security Implications and Risks**

- Supporters argue that stationing French nuclear weapons in Europe would enhance deterrence against Russia by demonstrating stronger European resolve.
- Critics warn it may provoke Russian military escalation, citing Russia's deployment of tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus as a countermeasure.
- Such developments risk intensifying a nuclear arms competition in Europe.



- **International Legal Aspect**

- The 1968 **Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)** forbids nuclear-weapon states from transferring weapons or control over them (Article I).
- NATO's nuclear sharing is justified as compliant because no transfer of legal ownership or peacetime control happens.
- However, the legality of such arrangements remains debated among experts and non-proliferation advocates.

### Key Definitions

- **Nuclear Umbrella:** A security guarantee by a nuclear-armed state to defend its non-nuclear allies, extending the deterrent effect.
- **European Strategic Autonomy:** The EU's goal to independently manage its security and defense policies without dependence on external powers.
- **Nuclear Sharing:** Deployment of nuclear weapons by a nuclear state on allied non-nuclear states' territory with shared operational planning but no transfer of ownership or control.

### Conclusion

France's offer to extend its nuclear deterrent across Europe signifies a major shift towards European strategic autonomy, reflecting changing geopolitical dynamics amid Russia's aggression and doubts over U.S. commitments. While it could bolster Europe's defense posture, it also raises legal questions under international law and risks escalating nuclear tensions with Russia. For UPSC, this issue highlights the intersection of global strategic diplomacy, international treaties like the NPT, and evolving security architectures in Europe.