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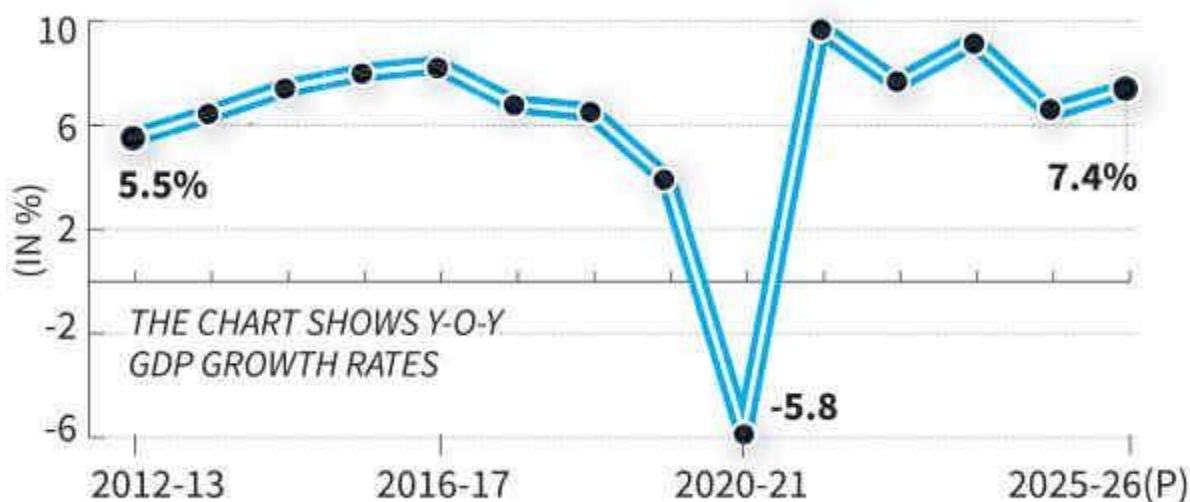
1. Govt. pegs real GDP growth at 7.4% amid concerns over tariffs

Why in the News?

The Union government has pegged India's real GDP growth at 7.4% for 2025–26 in the First Advance Estimates (FAE) released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. The estimate comes amid global trade uncertainties, particularly 50% U.S. tariffs on Indian exports, and signals a moderation in growth during the second half of the fiscal year.

GDP trajectory

Real GDP is estimated to attain a level of ₹201.90 lakh crore in FY26, registering a growth rate of 7.4% compared to FY25



Background

Advance Estimates of GDP are released in stages:

- First Advance Estimates (FAE) – January
- Second Advance Estimates (SAE) – February 27
- Provisional Estimates – May 30

These estimates are crucial as they:

- From the basis of Union Budget calculations
- Influence fiscal deficit, debt ratios, and expenditure planning

India recorded 6.5% real GDP growth in 2024–25, and the current estimate indicates an improvement, though with emerging risks.

Features

Overall Growth Trend

- Real GDP growth: 7.4%
- Nominal GDP growth: 8%

Quarter-wise performance:

- Q1: 7.8%
- Q2: 8.2%
- Implied H2 average: ~6.8% (growth moderation)

Primary Sector

- Mining & quarrying: -0.7% contraction (from +2.7% last year)

Secondary Sector

- Gross Fixed Capital Formation (investment): 7.8% growth

Tertiary (Services) Sector

- Overall growth: 9.1% (from 7.2%)
- Financial, real estate & professional services: 9.9%
- Public administration, defence & other services: 9.9%
- Trade, hotels, transport & communication: 7.5%

Demand-side Indicators

- Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE):
- Expected growth: 7%
- Slightly slower than 7.2% in 2024-25

Challenges

External Trade Headwinds

50% U.S. tariffs have affected labour-intensive sectors:

- Textiles
- Apparel
- Engineering goods

Risk of:

- Export slowdown
- Job losses in MSME-heavy sectors

Growth Moderation in H2

- Sharp contrast between strong Q1-Q2 and weaker H2
- Indicates:
 - Possible demand fatigue
 - Impact of global slowdown and trade barriers

Sluggish Consumption Recovery

- PFCE growth remains below potential

- Tax cuts have not fully translated into a robust demand revival

Sectoral Imbalances

- Mining contraction raises concerns for:
- Core sector momentum
- Resource-linked industrial activity
- Heavy reliance on services for growth sustainability

Global Uncertainty

- Geopolitical tensions, protectionism, and supply chain disruptions
- Aligns with cautious projections by the Reserve Bank of India, which has estimated 7.3% GDP growth for 2025–26.

Way Forward

Strengthening Export Resilience

- Diversify export markets beyond the U.S.
- Accelerate FTAs with the EU, UK, and Global South economies
- Targeted support for labour-intensive sectors

Reviving Consumption

- Boost rural demand through:
- Employment schemes
- MSP-linked income support
- Urban consumption via:
 - Credit flow to MSMEs
 - Housing and service-sector incentives

Investment-led Growth

- Crowd-in private investment through:
- Policy certainty
- Faster clearances
- Sustain public capex momentum in infrastructure

Reducing Sectoral Vulnerabilities

- Address the mining slowdown via:
- Regulatory streamlining
- Faster environmental clearances
- Promote manufacturing under PLI schemes

Macroeconomic Prudence

- Maintain fiscal discipline while supporting growth
- Coordinate monetary and fiscal policy to manage inflation-growth trade-offs

Conclusion

The government's 7.4% GDP growth estimate reflects India's macroeconomic resilience, especially driven by services and investment. However, external trade shocks, slowing consumption, and second-half moderation pose real challenges.

Sustaining high growth will depend on reviving domestic demand, protecting export competitiveness, and ensuring balanced sectoral development, making the forthcoming Union Budget and policy responses crucial for long-term economic stability.

2. Kerala's new language Bill is unconstitutional: Karnataka

Why in the News?

A delegation from Karnataka has urged the Governor of Kerala, Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar, to reject the Malayalam Bhasha Bill, 2025, which makes Malayalam the compulsory first language in all schools across Kerala. Karnataka argues that the Bill is unconstitutional and violates the rights of the Kannada-speaking linguistic minority, particularly in Kasaragod.

Background

- Kerala has a linguistically diverse border population, especially in Kasaragod district, where over 70% of residents are Kannada speakers.
- Many students in the region study Kannada as their first language, with Malayalam or another language as the second.
- A similar Bill in 2017 mandating Malayalam as the compulsory first language was rejected by the President, citing constitutional concerns.
- The issue comes amid heightened tensions between Karnataka and Kerala, following disputes like the Kogilu Layout demolition and broader inter-state political frictions.

Features

- Mandatory Malayalam as the first language in:
 - All government and aided schools
 - From Class 1 to Class 10
- Applies uniformly across Kerala, without exemptions for linguistic minority regions.
- Section 2(6) of the Bill defines Malayalam as the compulsory first language.

Constitutional and Legal Challenges

Violation of Linguistic Minority Rights

- Article 350A: Mandates states to provide facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage to linguistic minorities.
- Article 350: Ensures the right to submit representations in one's language.
- Making Malayalam compulsory as the first language dilutes the educational rights of Kannada-speaking minorities.

Conflict with Supreme Court Jurisprudence

- The Supreme Court has repeatedly upheld:
 - Freedom of linguistic minorities to choose the medium and first language of instruction.
 - Limits on excessive state control over linguistic choices in education.

Federal and Interstate Sensitivities

- Language is deeply linked to identity, culture, and federal harmony.
- The Bill risks aggravating inter-state tensions, particularly in border regions with shared linguistic communities.

Precedent of Presidential Rejection (2017)

- The similarity with the earlier rejected Bill weakens the constitutional defensibility of the 2025 legislation.



Way Forward

Exemption for Linguistic Minority Regions

- Kasaragod and other Kannada-dominated areas should be explicitly excluded from the Bill's purview.

Flexible Language Policy

- Allow students to choose their mother tongue as the first language, with Malayalam as:
 - Second or third language
 - Compulsory subject, not compulsory first language

Governor's Constitutional Role

- **The Governor may:**
 - Withhold assent
 - Return the Bill for reconsideration

- Reserve it for Presidential assent, given interstate and constitutional implications.

Inter-State Dialogue Mechanism

- Establish a Karnataka–Kerala coordination forum on border-area governance, including language, education, and cultural rights.

Align with National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

- NEP encourages mother-tongue-based education and multilingual flexibility, not linguistic uniformity.

Conclusion

The Malayalam Bhasha Bill, 2025, though rooted in the legitimate aim of promoting the state language, raises serious constitutional concerns when applied uniformly to linguistically diverse regions like Kasaragod. In a federal and plural society like India, language policy must balance cultural promotion with minority protection. A constitutionally sound, inclusive, and flexible approach rather than coercive uniformity, is essential to uphold unity in diversity and prevent avoidable interstate discord.

3. 'Natgrid', the search engine of digital authoritarianism

Why in the News?

- Recent media reports (December 2025) indicate a major operational expansion of the National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID).
- NATGRID now reportedly processes around 45,000 queries per month, with access extended beyond central intelligence agencies to State police officers up to the rank of Superintendent of Police.
- More critically, NATGRID has been integrated with the National Population Register (NPR), which contains demographic and relational data of over 119 crore residents.
- This expansion has revived concerns about mass surveillance, algorithmic policing, and the absence of statutory oversight, prompting renewed debate on privacy and constitutional safeguards.

Background

- The origins of NATGRID lie in the psychological and institutional shock following the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks (2008), where over 160 lives were lost.
- Post-attack inquiries highlighted “intelligence failure, particularly the inability to collate fragmented data across immigration, travel, financial, and telecom records.
- In response, NATGRID was conceived as a middleware intelligence platform enabling authorised agencies to query multiple databases through a single interface.
- Announced publicly in December 2009, NATGRID was cleared in 2012 by executive decision, not by an Act of Parliament, with an initial outlay of over ₹1,000 crore (Horizon-I).

- For years, delays led many to believe NATGRID was ineffective or dormant, but recent developments confirm its full-scale operationalisation.

Features

Multi-Database Integration

- Allows authorised agencies to access data across 21 categories, including identity, travel, financial transactions, telecom metadata, and now population registers.

Middleware Architecture

- NATGRID does not store data centrally but acts as a real-time query interface connecting multiple provider databases.

Advanced Analytics

- Deployment of analytical engines such as “entity resolution” systems, capable of determining whether disparate data points relate to the same individual.

Algorithmic Inference

- When combined with facial recognition, KYC databases, and machine learning tools, NATGRID moves from data retrieval to predictive and inferential policing.

Expanded User Base

- Originally restricted to select central agencies, access is now being widened to State police forces, increasing both scale and frequency of use.

Challenges and Concerns

Absence of Statutory Backing

- NATGRID operates without a dedicated law, relying solely on executive approval.
- This raises constitutional concerns under the right to privacy, especially after the Supreme Court recognised privacy as a fundamental right.

Mass Surveillance Paradigm

- Integration with the NPR transforms NATGRID from a targeted counter-terror tool into a mechanism capable of mapping the entire population.
- The focus shifts from investigating events to profiling individuals and households.

Algorithmic Bias

- Predictive systems risk replicating social biases (caste, religion, geography) embedded in policing data.
- A false positive may be a minor inconvenience for the privileged but can become life-altering or violent for marginalised communities.

Tyranny of Scale

- With tens of thousands of monthly queries, safeguards like logging and internal authorisation risk becoming procedural rituals, not meaningful checks.

Lack of Independent Oversight

- There is no parliamentary committee, judicial warrant system, or independent regulator overseeing NATGRID's functioning.

Mission Creep

- NATGRID has drifted from its stated purpose of counter-terrorism into routine law-and-order policing, diluting the original justification of "exceptional necessity".

Way Forward

Statutory Framework

- Enact a comprehensive NATGRID law defining scope, purpose, limitation, data minimisation, and penalties for misuse.

Independent Oversight

- Establish parliamentary and judicial oversight mechanisms, including prior authorisation for sensitive queries.

Transparency and Accountability

- Periodic public reporting (with safeguards for national security) on query volumes, types of agencies accessing data, and redress mechanisms.

Algorithmic Audits

- Mandatory bias and accuracy audits of analytical tools, especially those used for profiling and prediction.

Separation from Population Registers

- Clear legal firewalls between intelligence platforms and population databases to prevent universal surveillance.

Institutional Capacity Building

- Strengthen professional policing, training, and accountability, recognising that intelligence failures are often institutional, not technological.

Conclusion

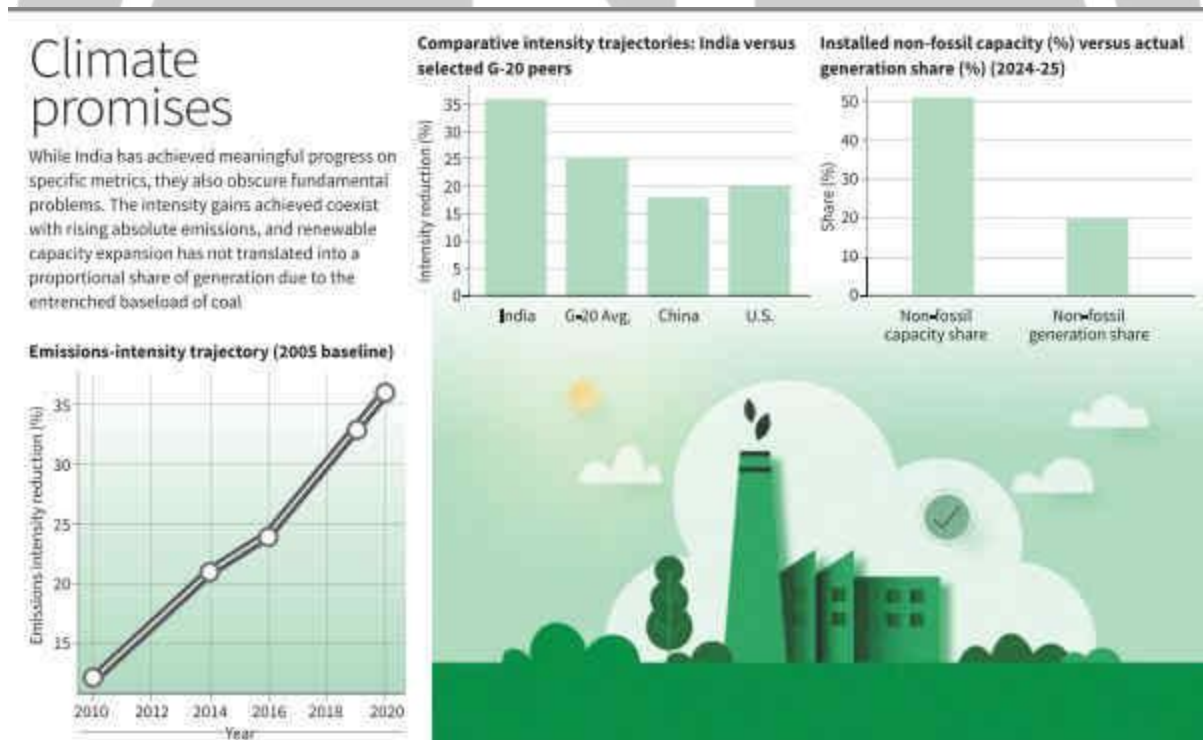
The trauma of 26/11 continues to shape India's security imagination, but technology cannot substitute accountability. NATGRID, conceived as a tool to prevent terror, is rapidly evolving into an architecture of suspicion-normalised through fear and powered by data and algorithms. Without law, oversight, and democratic scrutiny, NATGRID risks becoming less a guardian of security and more a pillar of digital authoritarianism.

4. India's Progress on Its Climate Targets

Why in the News?

Over a decade after the Paris Agreement commitments, India's climate performance is under renewed scrutiny amid:

- Judicial and policy debates on environmental protection (e.g., Aravalli region).
- New data show early achievement of emissions-intensity and non-fossil capacity targets, but a continued rise in absolute emissions.
- Recent assessments highlight the gap between headline climate achievements and ground-level ecological outcomes, especially in energy generation and forest governance.



Background

At the **Paris Climate Summit (2015)**, India committed to four quantified targets, guided by the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities:

- Reduce emissions intensity of GDP by 33–35% by 2030 (from 2005 levels).
- Achieve 40% non-fossil fuel electricity capacity (later enhanced to 50%).
- Install 175 GW of renewable energy by 2022 (subsequently expanded to 500 GW by 2030).
- Create an additional forest carbon sink of 2.5–3 billion tonnes of CO₂e by 2030.

These commitments recognised India's historically low per-capita emissions, even as it emerged as the third-largest absolute emitter globally.

Features

Emissions Intensity Reduction

- Using 2005 as a baseline, emissions intensity declined by ~36% by 2020, surpassing the Paris target a decade early.

Drivers:

- Expansion of non-fossil power (solar, wind, hydro, nuclear).
- Structural economic shift toward services and digital sectors.
- Efficiency schemes like PAT and UJALA.

Partial Decoupling

- GDP growth has outpaced emissions growth, reducing intensity but not absolute emissions.
- India's territorial GHG emissions stood at ~2,959 MtCO₂e in 2020 and remain high.
- Heavy industries (steel, cement) and transport continue to see emissions growth.

Renewable Capacity Expansion

- Non-fossil capacity rose from ~30% (2015) to over 51% by mid-2025.
- Solar surged from ~3 GW (2014) to ~111 GW (2025); wind reached ~51 GW.
- India outperforms many G-20 peers in intensity decline, as noted by the International Energy Agency.

Challenges

Generation Gap

- Despite >50% non-fossil capacity, over 70% of electricity generation still comes from coal.
- Renewables supplied only ~22% of electricity in 2024-25 due to:
 - Low capacity factors.
 - Intermittency.
 - Storage shortages.
- Coal remains the backbone with ~250 GW of baseload capacity.

Storage Bottleneck

- Central Electricity Authority estimates a need for 336 GWh of storage by 2029-30.

- Operational battery storage as of 2025: ~500 MWh — a massive shortfall.

Missed and Masked Targets

- The 175 GW renewables target for 2022 was missed.
- Capacity-based targets mask the reality that installed capacity is not actual generation.

Forest Carbon Sink: Numbers vs Ecology

- India State of Forest Report 2023 shows near-achievement of the forest sink target.
- However:
 - “Forest cover” includes plantations, monocultures, and roadside trees.
 - Natural forests and biodiversity restoration are not adequately distinguished.
- Under the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act (2016), utilisation of funds remains uneven across States.

Climate Stress on Forests

- Warming and water stress threaten real carbon assimilation, especially in the Western Ghats and Northeast.
- Plantation-heavy approaches prioritise carbon accounting over ecosystem resilience.

Way Forward

Translate Intensity Gains into Absolute Reductions

- Develop a transparent roadmap for phasing out coal, aligned with the 2070 net-zero pledge.
- Accelerate industrial decarbonisation (steel, cement, transport).

Bridge the Capacity–Generation Gap

- Rapidly scale battery and pumped-hydro storage.
- Upgrade transmission infrastructure and grid management.

Strengthen Renewable Execution

- Resolve land acquisition, grid connectivity, and State-level regulatory delays.
- Improve integration of rooftop solar and decentralised systems.

Reform Forest Governance

- Differentiate natural regeneration from plantations.
- Align carbon sequestration targets with biodiversity and livelihood outcomes.

Enhance Data Transparency

- Publish sector-wise and region-wise emissions and generation data to track real progress.

Conclusion

India has broadly delivered on its Paris-era commitments, particularly in terms of emissions intensity and non-fossil fuel capacity. Yet, these successes mask deeper structural issues. Absolute emissions continue to rise, coal dominates electricity generation, and forest gains remain ecologically fragile. The next five years represent a critical window. India's climate credibility will depend not on capacity additions alone, but on converting them into sustained clean generation, moderating absolute emissions, and ensuring that climate action strengthens, rather than dilutes ecological integrity.

5. Fine-tune this signal to sharpen India's AMR battle

Why in the News?

Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) has re-entered the national spotlight after Narendra Modi flagged it as a "matter of concern" in the 129th episode of 'Mann Ki Baat' (December 28, 2025). Citing Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) data, the Prime Minister warned that antibiotics are becoming less effective against common infections such as pneumonia and urinary tract infections, largely due to indiscriminate and self-medicated use.

Background

- Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites evolve resistance to medicines designed to kill them.
- India bears one of the highest global burdens of infectious diseases and is also among the largest consumers of antibiotics, making it particularly vulnerable.
- Drivers of AMR in India include:
 - Over-the-counter availability of antibiotics
 - Poor prescription practices
 - Inadequate infection prevention and control
 - Antibiotic use in livestock and agriculture
 - Environmental contamination from pharmaceutical waste
- India adopted a National Action Plan on AMR (NAP-AMR) aligned with the World Health Organisation's Global Action Plan, yet implementation remains uneven.

Features

Evidence-based Political Communication

- Use of ICMR surveillance data lends scientific credibility.
- Positions AMR as a collective societal problem, not merely a clinical issue.

Behavioural Nudge at Scale

- By discouraging self-medication, the speech targets the largest contributor to AMR in India - irrational antibiotic use at the community level.
- Such top-down messaging has potential reach unmatched by prior policy interventions.

Implicit Push towards a One Health Approach

- Recognition that AMR cannot be tackled in silos and requires coordination across human health, animal health and environmental sectors.

Challenges and Gaps

Limited and Skewed Surveillance

- India's National AMR Surveillance Network (NARS-Net) currently comprises about 60 sentinel government medical college laboratories.
- Data largely originates from urban, tertiary-care centres, overstating resistance patterns while excluding rural and community settings.

Under-representation of Private Healthcare

- A significant proportion of healthcare delivery occurs in the private sector, yet private hospitals remain largely outside the surveillance net, affecting data reliability.

Inadequate Community-level Data

- Absence of AMR prevalence data from primary and secondary healthcare centres weakens policy targeting.

Weak Enforcement of Antibiotic Regulations

- Schedule H1 provisions and prescription norms exist but suffer from poor monitoring and enforcement.

Insufficient Investment

- Surveillance expansion, laboratory capacity building, diagnostics, and research demand sustained financial and political commitment.

Way Forward

Expand and Decentralise Surveillance

- Extend NARS-Net to district hospitals, CHCs, PHCs and private laboratories.
- Generate community-level AMR data for representative national estimates.

Integrate the Private Sector

- Mandate data-sharing partnerships with private hospitals and diagnostic chains.
- Incentivise compliance through accreditation and reimbursement linkages.

Operationalise the One Health Framework

- Institutionalise coordination between:
 - Ministry of Health

- Ministry of Animal Husbandry
- Ministry of Environment
- Monitor antibiotic use in livestock, aquaculture and pharmaceutical effluents.

Strengthen Stewardship and Regulation

- Enforce prescription-only sale of antibiotics.
- Scale up antimicrobial stewardship programmes in hospitals.

Sustain Public Awareness Campaigns

- Convert the 'Mann Ki Baat' signal into continuous risk communication, especially in regional languages.
- Embed AMR awareness into school health programmes and primary care outreach.

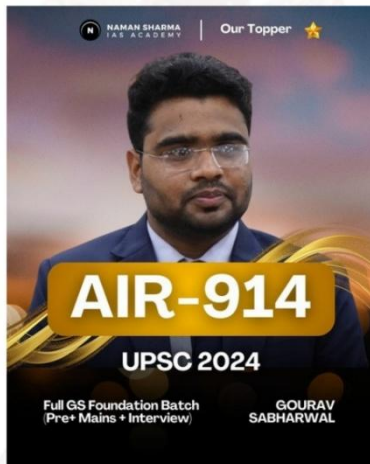
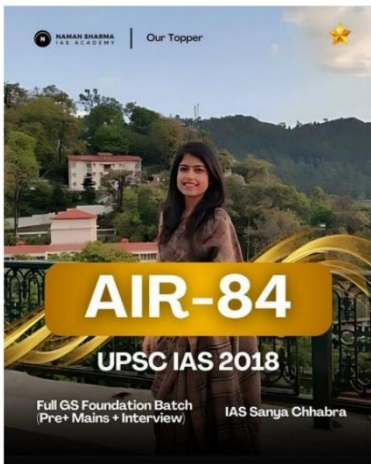
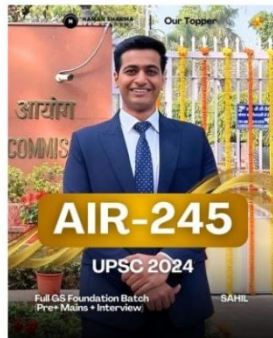
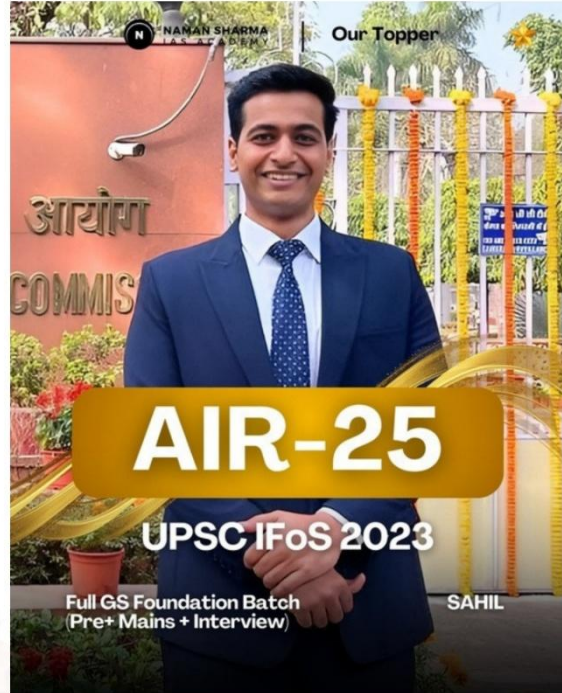
Conclusion

The December 2025 'Mann Ki Baat' reference to antimicrobial resistance marks a critical political anagnorisis - recognising AMR as a looming national crisis rather than a niche medical concern. While this high-level messaging can catalyse behavioural change, awareness without robust surveillance and systemic reform will be insufficient. India's AMR battle can only be sharpened by credible, representative data, One Health governance, and sustained regulatory enforcement. The signal has been sent; the challenge now is to fine-tune it into lasting institutional action.

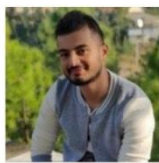


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