



NAMAN SHARMA
IAS ACADEMY

Daily **CURRENT AFFAIRS**

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Index

- 1. SC to decide today on plea for passive euthanasia**
- 2. Vulture Safe Zones will be created in Tamil Nadu, State govt. tells Madras HC**
- 3. UGC brings out new rules against caste discrimination**
- 4. Centre took several steps to popularise Tamil culture: PM**
- 5. The continued custody in the Delhi Riots cases is an injustice.**
- 6. Why India needs a mentoring movement**

1. SC to decide today on plea for passive euthanasia

Why in the News?

The Supreme Court of India is scheduled to pronounce a final order on a plea seeking passive euthanasia for Harish Rana, a 31-year-old man who has been in a permanent vegetative state (PVS) for over 13 years following a severe accident in 2013.

A Bench comprising Justices J.B. Pardiwala and K.V. Viswanathan interacted personally with the parents and siblings of the patient, who unanimously requested withdrawal of artificial life support to prevent further suffering. The Centre, through the Additional Solicitor General, also conveyed that medical boards recommended discontinuation of life-sustaining treatment.

Living in pain

Harish Rana, 31,
has been bedridden
for 13 years

He had sustained
severe head injuries
and 100% quadriplegic
disability after a fall
from the fourth floor
of his paying guest
accommodation



According to them
[relatives], if the
medical treatment is not
making any difference, then
there is no point in continuing
with such medical treatment
and making Harish
suffer for no good
reason

**SUPREME
COURT**



Background

- Harish Rana, a student of Panjab University, suffered severe head injuries and 100% quadriplegic disability after falling from the fourth floor of his paying guest accommodation in 2013.
- Since then, he has remained bedridden, dependent on artificial life support, with no medical possibility of recovery.
- Medical boards (primary and secondary) constituted as per Supreme Court guidelines concluded that:
 - The patient would remain in a permanent vegetative state for years
 - There is no scope for regaining consciousness or leading a normal life
- The family approached the Supreme Court seeking permission for passive euthanasia, citing prolonged suffering, emotional trauma, and concerns about future care as the parents age.

Feature

What is Passive Euthanasia?

- Passive euthanasia involves withdrawing or withholding life-sustaining treatment (such as ventilators, feeding tubes), allowing natural death.
- It differs from active euthanasia, which involves direct actions to cause death and

remains illegal in India.

Legal Position in India

The Supreme Court has gradually evolved jurisprudence on passive euthanasia:

Aruna Shanbaug case (2011):

- Passive euthanasia is permitted under exceptional circumstances with court approval.

Common Cause case (2018):

- Recognised the right to die with dignity as part of Article 21.
- Legalised passive euthanasia.
- Allowed Living Wills / Advance Medical Directives.

2023 Clarification:

- Simplified procedural requirements for withdrawal of life support, reducing bureaucratic hurdles.

Ethical Dimension

- Balances the sanctity of life with human dignity.
- Recognises the moral authority of family members when the patient has lost the capacity to decide.

Challenges

Ethical Dilemmas

- Fear of misuse in cases involving inheritance disputes or social pressure.

- Difficulty in objectively assessing the “best interests” of the patient.

Medical Uncertainty

- Prognosis in neurological cases can be complex.
- Risk of premature withdrawal if protocols are weak.

Procedural Complexity

- Despite simplifications, hospital-level implementation remains uneven.
- Lack of awareness among doctors and families about legal safeguards.

Absence of Living Wills

- Most Indians do not execute advance directives, shifting the burden of decision-making to families and courts

Way Forward

Strengthen Institutional Protocols

- Standardised, time-bound procedures across hospitals for end-of-life care decisions.
- Clear roles for medical boards and ethics committees.

Promote Living Wills

- Government-led awareness campaigns on advance medical directives.

- Simple formats and digital registration options.

Capacity Building

- Training doctors and hospital administrators on legal and ethical aspects of passive euthanasia.

Palliative Care Integration

- Expand access to palliative and hospice care to reduce unnecessary prolongation of suffering.

Safeguards Against Misuse

- Mandatory documentation, multiple medical opinions, and family consent to ensure transparency.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's impending decision in the Harish Rana case is not merely about one individual, but about India's evolving understanding of dignity, compassion, and the right to a humane death. By carefully weighing medical opinion, family consent, and constitutional morality, the Court continues to refine the balance between preserving life and preventing needless suffering.

2. Vulture Safe Zones will be created in Tamil Nadu, State govt. tells Madras HC

Why in the News?

The Tamil Nadu Forest Department has informed the Madras High Court that it has initiated the process of establishing Vulture Safe Zones (VSZs) across the State. The first such zone will be developed around the Moyar River Valley within the Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve, as part of the Vision Document for Vulture Conservation in Tamil Nadu (2025–2030). This submission was made in response to a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) seeking urgent measures to prevent the near-extinction of vultures due to toxic veterinary drugs.



Background

- India has witnessed a catastrophic decline of over 95% in vulture populations since the 1990s.

- The primary cause has been the veterinary use of diclofenac, a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID), which causes acute kidney failure in vultures feeding on treated cattle carcasses.
- Though diclofenac was banned for veterinary use in 2006, illegal and proxy use continues.
- Tamil Nadu hosts important vulture habitats, particularly in forested landscapes adjoining tiger reserves and protected areas.

Features of Vulture Safe Zones (VSZs)

What are Vulture Safe Zones?

- Designated landscapes (often 100 km radius) where:
 - Use of toxic veterinary NSAIDs is strictly prohibited.
 - Availability of safe, uncontaminated carcasses is ensured.
 - Nesting and roosting habitats are actively protected.

Features of Tamil Nadu's VSZ Plan

- First VSZ around Moyar River Valley, a critical wildlife corridor.
- Constitution of a field-level monitoring committee, chaired by the Field Director of Mudumalai Tiger Reserve.

Committee members include:

- District Forest Officers of Nilgiris, Gudalur, Coimbatore, and Erode

- Deputy Directors of Mudumalai, Anamalai, and Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserves
- Representative from the Advanced Institute for Wildlife Conservation, Vandalur

Mapping of:

- Vulture nesting sites
- Habitat-use areas
- Carcass hotspots meeting VSZ criteria
- Strict surveillance to prevent the use of banned NSAIDs by veterinarians.

Challenges

Illegal Use of Banned Drugs

- Continued availability of diclofenac in human formulations used for cattle.
- Weak enforcement at the grassroots level.

Carcass Management Issues

- Inadequate monitoring of carcass disposal practices.
- Risk of contaminated carcasses entering the food chain.

Low Awareness

- Limited awareness among veterinarians, cattle owners, and rural communities.
- Poor uptake of safer alternatives like meloxicam.

Fragmented Habitats

- Vultures range across administrative boundaries, complicating VSZ enforcement.

Way Forward

Strengthen Drug Regulation

- Strict monitoring of pharmacies and veterinary supply chains.
- Penal action against illegal sale and misuse of banned NSAIDs.

Promote Safe Alternatives

- Mandatory prescription and subsidisation of vulture-safe drugs like meloxicam.
- Training programmes for veterinarians.

Community Engagement

- Awareness campaigns among livestock owners on vulture conservation.
- Incentivised carcass disposal systems in VSZ areas.

Scientific Monitoring

- Regular population surveys and tagging of vultures.
- Use of GIS-based mapping for carcass hotspots and nesting sites.

Inter-State Coordination

- Harmonisation of VSZ policies with neighbouring States to ensure landscape-level conservation.

Conclusion

The decision to establish Vulture Safe Zones in Tamil Nadu marks a significant step towards reversing one of India's worst wildlife population collapses. By combining legal oversight, scientific monitoring, and community participation, the initiative aligns conservation with ecological necessity. For India's biodiversity and public health, given vultures' role in preventing disease spread, such proactive, landscape-based conservation models are not just desirable, but essential.

3. UGC brings out new rules against caste discrimination

Why in the News?

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has notified the University Grants Commission (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026, introducing stricter rules to curb caste-based discrimination in higher education institutions (HEIs). Under the new regulations, institutions violating anti-discrimination norms may face severe penalties, including loss of recognition and debarment from offering degrees or academic programmes. The move follows criticism of the draft rules for excluding Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and for proposing penalties for "false complaints".

Background

- The UGC has had anti-discrimination regulations since 2012, aimed at protecting students and staff from unfair treatment in universities and colleges.
- In February 2025, the UGC released a draft update of these regulations for public consultation.

The draft drew widespread criticism for:

- Excluding OBCs from the definition of caste-based discrimination.
- Offering a vague definition of discrimination.
- Proposing fines to “discourage” allegedly false complaints.
- Following feedback from academics, civil society, and student groups, the UGC revised the draft before final notification.

Features

Expanded Definition of Caste-Based Discrimination

- “Caste-based discrimination” now explicitly covers Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and OBCs.
- Discrimination is defined as:
 - Any unfair, differential, or biased treatment, whether explicit or implicit.
 - Based on religion, race, caste, gender, place of birth, disability, or any combination thereof.

- It also includes acts that undermine equality, dignity, and fair treatment in education.

Mandatory Institutional Mechanisms

- Every HEI must establish an Equal Opportunity Centre (EOC) to promote equity and social inclusion.

Strong measures

The UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026, were notified on Tuesday

■ Discrimination has been defined as “any unfair, differential, or biased treatment or any such act against any stakeholder, whether explicit or implicit, on the grounds only of religion, race, caste, gender, place of birth, disability, or any of them”

■ Caste-based discrimination means “discrimination only on the basis of caste or tribe against the members of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes”



■ The new rules specify punishments, which can range from being debarred from offering degrees or programmes, for non-compliance

Under the EOC, an Equity Committee is mandatory:

- Chaired by the head of the institution.
- Must include representation from SCs, STs, OBCs, persons with disabilities, and women.

Meeting and reporting requirements:

- Equity Committees: At least two meetings per year.
- EOCs: Bi-annual reports to be submitted.

Strong Enforcement and Penalties

Non-compliance can lead to:

- Withdrawal of UGC recognition.
- Debarment from offering degrees or academic programmes.
- A national-level monitoring committee will be set up by the UGC, with representatives from statutory professional councils and commissions.

Key Changes from the Draft Version

- Inclusion of OBCs within the ambit of caste-based discrimination.
- Removal of the provision discouraging “false complaints”.
- A broader and clearer definition of discrimination, drawing from the 2012 regulations.

Challenges

Implementation Gap

- Many institutions already have grievance cells that function only on paper.
- Risk of equity committees becoming symbolic rather than effective.

Power Asymmetries on Campuses

- Students from marginalised backgrounds may still fear retaliation.
- Hierarchical academic cultures can inhibit reporting.

Monitoring and Accountability

- Ensuring regular meetings, genuine inquiry, and follow-up action across thousands of HEIs is a major administrative challenge.

Balancing Due Process

- Need to ensure fairness to all parties while avoiding dilution of protections for vulnerable groups.

Way Forward

Capacity Building

- Mandatory training of faculty and administrators on caste sensitivity and constitutional values.
- Orientation programmes for students on rights and grievance redressal mechanisms.

Transparency

- Public disclosure of EOC and equity committee reports.
- Clear timelines for inquiry and resolution of complaints.

Independent Oversight

- Periodic audits by the UGC or third-party bodies to assess effectiveness, not just compliance.

Integration with Constitutional Mandate

- Align campus policies with Articles 14, 15, and 21 of the Constitution, reinforcing equality and dignity.

Conclusion

The UGC's 2026 equity regulations mark a significant shift from symbolic anti-discrimination norms towards enforceable accountability in higher education. By explicitly including OBCs, strengthening definitions, and linking compliance to institutional recognition, the regulations respond to long-standing concerns about caste-based exclusion on campuses. Their success, however, will ultimately depend on robust implementation, institutional sincerity, and continuous monitoring, ensuring that universities become spaces of genuine inclusion rather than mere compliance.

4. Centre took several steps to popularise Tamil culture: PM

Why in the News?

Narendra Modi stated that the Centre has taken multiple initiatives to popularise Tamil culture across India and globally, describing it as a shared heritage of humanity. Speaking at Pongal celebrations hosted at the residence of L. Murugan in New Delhi, the Prime Minister highlighted programmes such as

the Kashi-Tamil Sangamam, which reinforce the vision of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat.

Background

- Tamil culture is regarded as one of the oldest living civilisations in the world, with a continuous literary, cultural, and philosophical tradition.
- India has historically promoted cultural federalism, where regional cultures contribute to a shared civilisational identity.
- The Union government has increasingly used cultural diplomacy and internal cultural exchange programmes to foster national unity.



- Pongal, a harvest festival celebrated in Tamil Nadu, symbolises gratitude to farmers, nature, the sun, and the earth, aligning with ecological values.

Key Features

Kashi-Tamil Sangamam

- Launched in 2022, the initiative aims to:
- Celebrate the civilisational linkages between Kashi and Tamil Nadu.
- Promote academic, cultural, and people-to-people exchanges.
- Kashi was described as a civilisational anchor, historically associated with learning, spirituality, and moksha.
- The programme strengthens the idea of unity without erasing diversity.

Promotion of Tamil Culture

- **Government initiatives focus on:**
 - Expanding the national footprint of Tamil festivals and traditions.
 - Encouraging linguistic and cultural appreciation across States.
- The Prime Minister reiterated that Tamil culture belongs not just to Bharat but to all humanity.

Pongal as a Global Festival

- Pongal has acquired global recognition among the Tamil diaspora.

Emphasises:

- Sustainable living
- Gratitude to nature
- Balance between human activity and the environment

Challenges

Cultural Homogenisation Concerns

- Balancing national integration with preservation of regional identities.

Symbolism vs Substance

- Cultural events must translate into long-term educational and institutional engagement.

Language Preservation

- Ensuring classical languages like Tamil thrive in higher education, research, and digital platforms.

Inclusive Cultural Representation

- Avoiding selective celebration and ensuring equal attention to all regional cultures.

Way Forward

Deepen Cultural Exchanges

- Institutionalise programmes like Kashi-Tamil Sangamam across other cultural regions.

Education Integration

- Promote classical languages and regional histories in curricula under NEP 2020.

Cultural Federalism

- Strengthen cooperative cultural initiatives between the Centre and the States.

Global Outreach

- Use India's diaspora and cultural diplomacy to project ancient traditions globally.

Sustainability Linkage

- Align traditional festivals with contemporary environmental goals.

Conclusion

The Prime Minister's remarks underscore a broader vision where India's unity is built through mutual respect for its diverse civilisational streams. By highlighting Tamil culture as a living, forward-looking civilisation and promoting initiatives like Kashi-Tamil Sangamam, the Centre seeks to reinforce cultural integration without cultural dilution.

For India, such initiatives are not merely cultural celebrations but instruments of nation-building, sustainability, and soft power, resonating well beyond national borders.

5. The continued custody in the Delhi Riots cases is an injustice.

Why in the News?

On January 5, 2026, the Supreme Court of India granted bail to five accused but denied bail to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam in the Delhi Riots "larger conspiracy" case.

The decision has reignited debate on personal liberty, prolonged

pre-trial incarceration, and the judiciary's approach to bail under stringent anti-terror laws, especially when the trial has not even commenced after more than five years.

Background

- The case relates to the Delhi riots of 2020, which followed protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019.
- Several students and activists were arrested and accused of instigating or orchestrating the violence.
- By the time the matter reached the Supreme Court:
 - The accused had spent over five years in custody
 - The trial had not yet begun
- Indian constitutional jurisprudence has repeatedly held that:
 - The right to speedy trial is an integral part of Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty).
 - Prolonged incarceration without trial can itself become a ground for bail.

Features

Differential Treatment Among Accused

- Bail granted to five accused.
- Bail denied to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam.
- Reason: they were allegedly involved in “conceptualising” or leading the conspiracy, placing them on a “different footing”.

Delay in Trial

- The court acknowledged the long delay.

- However, it observed that the delay was not entirely attributable to the prosecution, noting adjournments sought by the accused.

Liberty to Reapply

- The Court allowed the two accused to reapply for bail after one year on the grounds of further delay.

Critical Issues Raised

Prolonged Pre-Trial Detention

- Over five years of imprisonment without trial challenges the core of Article 21.
- Bail denial based purely on accusations risks converting “process into punishment.”

Unequal Application of Liberty

- The right to a speedy trial cannot depend on the gravity of allegations alone, especially when those allegations remain unproven.
- Accusation-based differentiation undermines the presumption of innocence.

Broad Interpretation of Terror Laws

- The Court’s expansive reading of what constitutes “terrorist acts” raises concerns:
- Peaceful protest methods such as chakka jams risk being subsumed under anti-terror provisions.

- This increases prosecutorial discretion and weakens civil liberties.

Impact on Bail Jurisprudence

- Stringent bail provisions mean:
- Once a prima facie case is presumed, bail becomes nearly impossible.
- Courts rely heavily on prosecution material at the bail stage, limiting meaningful scrutiny.

Challenges

Erosion of the Right to Protest

- Blurring the line between dissent and violence risks chilling democratic expression.

Judicial Deference to Prosecution

- Excessive reliance on prosecution inferences, especially conspiracy theories, can sideline evidentiary rigour.

Endless Incarceration

- A large number of witnesses and complex charges imply trials may take decades, normalising prolonged custody.

Precedential Risk

- Such interpretations may set a precedent where liberty becomes the exception, not the rule.

Way Forward

Re-centre Article 21

- Courts must treat delay itself as a substantive constitutional violation, not a procedural inconvenience.

Narrow Interpretation of Stringent Laws

- Vague phrases must be read restrictively, especially in laws that severely limit bail.

Stricter Judicial Scrutiny at Bail Stage

- Courts should distinguish between:
 - Evidence on record, and
 - Speculative inferences by the prosecution.

Time-Bound Trials

- Mandatory timelines or periodic judicial review in long-pending custody cases.

Strengthening the Presumption of Innocence

- Bail jurisprudence must reaffirm that incarceration before conviction is exceptional, not routine.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's denial of bail to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam, despite over five years of incarceration without trial, exposes a deep tension in India's criminal justice system between state security and individual liberty. If constitutional guarantees under Article 21 are to retain real meaning, delay cannot be normalised, accusation cannot replace proof, and

conspiracy cannot become a substitute for evidence. The continued custody in this case, as argued, represents not merely a legal issue but a profound injustice to personal liberty, one that demands urgent judicial correction.

6. Why India needs a mentoring movement

Why in the News?

India's demographic moment - with over 40 million students in higher education and 10 million youth entering the labour market annually- has sharpened focus on how young people transition from education to employment. While recent policy measures have expanded skilling, internships, and first-job support, experts argue that mentoring is emerging as a critical missing link in translating learning into livelihoods, especially amid rapid changes driven by Artificial Intelligence and evolving workplace demands.

Background

- India is experiencing a youth bulge, which can become a demographic dividend or a liability depending on employability outcomes.
- Despite increased enrolment in higher education, employability gaps persist, particularly for:
 - First-generation learners
 - Students from underserved backgrounds

- Young women, whose labour force participation remains below 40% despite educational parity.
- Employers increasingly prioritise human-centric skills - communication, adaptability, leadership - which are difficult to impart through formal curricula alone.



Features: Why Mentoring Matters

Bridging the Human Gap

Mentoring addresses what policy and infrastructure cannot:

- Fear, low confidence, and uncertainty among young people
- Limited exposure to professional norms and networks

- Absence of role models, especially for first-generation learners

A mentor provides context-sensitive guidance, helping youth navigate career decisions, workplace culture, and setbacks.

Building Human-Centric Skills

According to platform-level insights from LinkedIn, employers value:

- Communication
- Problem-solving
- Adaptability
- Leadership

Mentoring is a proven way to cultivate these non-technical but decisive skills.

Addressing Gender Inequality

- Men's professional networks are significantly stronger than women's.
- Job seekers are four times more likely to secure employment through existing connections.

Mentoring expands networks and aspirations for young women, improving:

- Entry into the workforce
- Retention
- Career progression

Experiences from Mentor Together show that mentoring positively shifts gender attitudes, self-efficacy, and career outcomes.

Emerging Policy Integration

- The Ministry of Labour and Employment has integrated mentoring into the National Career Service (NCS) platform.
- State governments like Karnataka and Telangana are implementing mentoring at scale in collegiate and technical education.
- These steps mark a shift from seeing mentoring as optional to recognising it as core human-capability infrastructure.

Challenges

Unequal Access

- Quality mentoring remains concentrated in elite institutions and urban centres.

Lack of Standards

- Absence of common frameworks for mentor training, safeguarding, and outcome measurement.

Scale vs Quality Trade-off

- Rapid expansion risks reducing mentoring to superficial interactions without sustained impact.

Digital Divide

- Technology can expand reach, but risks excluding those without access or weakening human connection.

Way Forward: Towards a National Mentoring Movement

Government

- Embed mentoring structurally in education, skilling, and employment systems.
- Create enabling policy architecture and funding support.

Non-Profits

- Develop evidence-based curricula, mentor training, and safeguarding frameworks.
- Support institutions to implement mentoring with consistency and quality.

Corporates

- Mobilise employees as mentors through CSR and leadership development.
- Programmes like LinkedIn's coaching initiatives show how volunteering can:
 - Open hidden opportunity pathways
 - Build empathetic leadership within firms

Philanthropy & Research

- Fund long-term infrastructure: digital platforms, evaluation, and capacity building.
- Generate evidence on what works, for whom, and at what cost.

Citizens

- Encourage professionals to mentor at least one young person a year, creating large-scale social impact through small individual commitments.

Conclusion

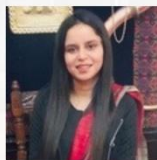
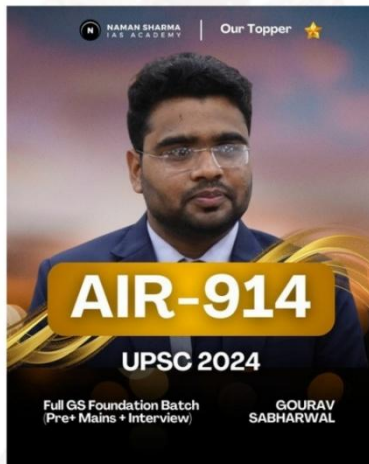
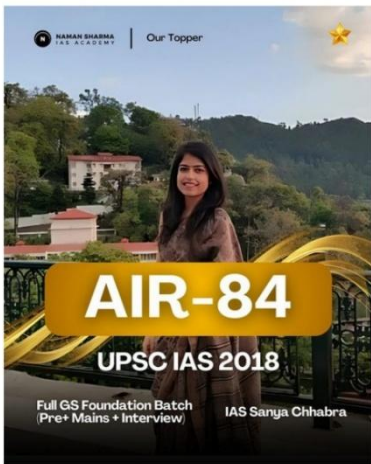
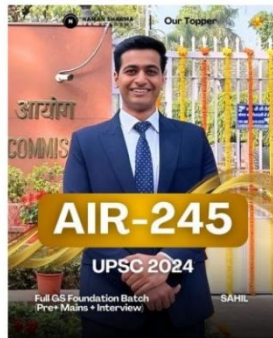
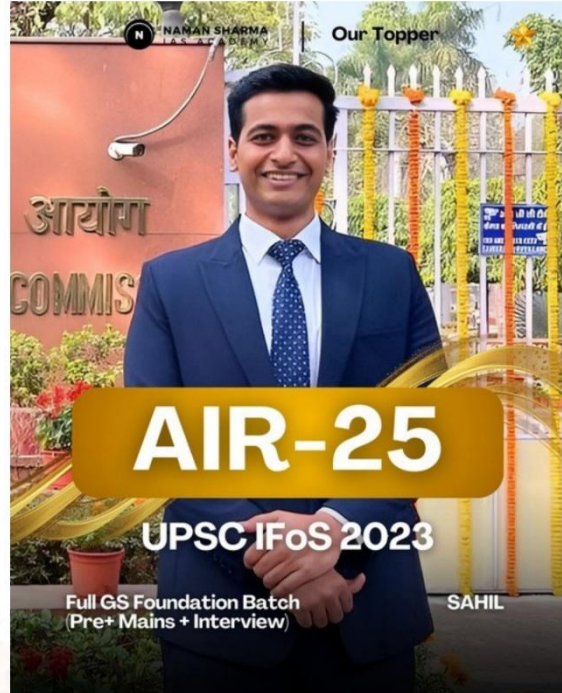
Mentoring responds directly to India's inequality of opportunity, not by replacing formal systems, but by humanising them. As education expands and work transforms, guidance, confidence, and networks will increasingly determine who succeeds.

A national mentoring movement - rooted in quality, inclusion, and collaboration - can turn India's demographic scale into a true demographic dividend.



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