NEXT IAS

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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INDIA NEEDS A TRAINED WORKFORCE FOR ELDERLY CARE

Syllabus: GS2/Governance; GS3/Economy

- India's 60-plus population is **projected to touch 347 million by 2050,** underscoring the **need for a robust caregiving ecosystem.**

About

- As per the NITI Aayog's recent report India's 60-plus population, estimated at approximately 149 million in 2022, is projected to touch 347 million by 2050, forming roughly **20.8% of the total population.**
- The caregiving ecosystem will be at a serious juncture if India doesn't plan now.

Data on India's Ageing Population

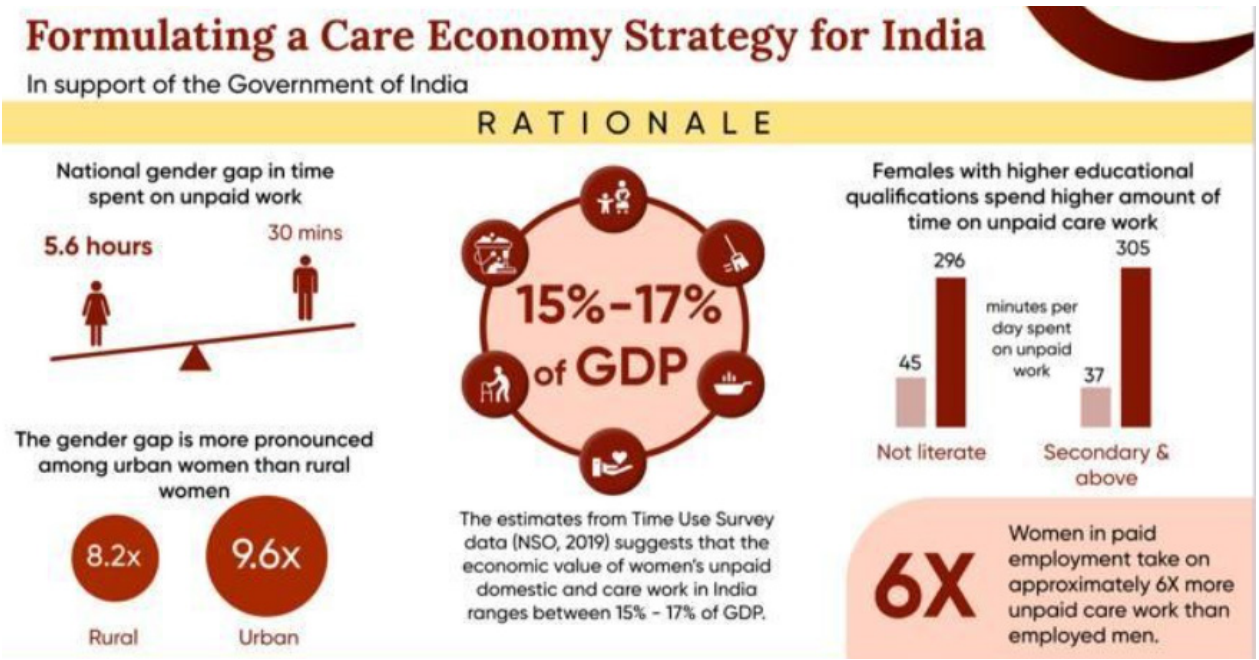
- **As per the report of the Technical Group on Population Projections constituted by the National Commission on Population,** the proportion of the population of the 60 years and above is projected to increase from 10 crores in 2011 to 23 crores in **2036.**
  - This is an increase in their share of the total population **from 8.4 to 14.9 percent.**
- **Kerala** is expected to see its elderly population surge from 13% in 2011 to 23% by 2036, making it the state with the oldest population.
- In contrast, many northern and eastern states have fewer older people for now, but their numbers are growing fast.

Challenges Faced by Elderly

- **Health:** Stigmatised mental health conditions (dementia, Alzheimer's), rising disabilities, inadequate geriatric infrastructure, Urban-rural divide in access to medical services.
- **Economic:** Insufficient social security provisions, rise of living and medical expenses, limited financial resources.
- **Social:** Weakening family support systems, social isolation, neglect, lack of companionship etc.
- **Digital divide:** Technology adoption barriers, lack of training and accessible devices.
- **Infrastructure:** Inadequate literacy, emergency response system overlooking elderly as vulnerable group. Public spaces and transport in India is largely not elderly-friendly since ramps, handrails and accessible washrooms are missing in many areas.

What is Care Work?

- **It mainly consists of two overlapping activities:** direct, personal, and relational care activities, such as feeding a baby; and indirect care activities, such as cooking and cleaning.
- **Unpaid care and domestic work**, such as nursing an ill partner or cooking for a family member, is care work provided without monetary compensation.
- **Paid care work** such as domestic services provided by domestic workers is performed by care workers in exchange for some form of remuneration.



- **Future Projections:** Evidence from the International Labour Organisation suggests that increasing investments in the care services sector have the potential to **generate 475 million jobs globally by 2030.**
  - For India specifically, direct public investment equivalent to 2% of GDP can potentially generate 11 million jobs, nearly 70% of which will go to women.

Significance of a Formal Caregiving System

- **Ageing population:** India's population aged 60 and above is projected to increase, necessitating the demand for elderly care.
- **Recognition of unpaid work:** Formal training can transform informal family caregivers into recognised and skilled professionals.
- **Employment generation:** A structured care economy can create employment opportunities, particularly for women, and strengthen the healthcare support system.
- **Improved quality of care:** Training in emergency response, medicine management, elderly care and mental health can improve the well-being of older persons and persons with disabilities.

Major Challenges in Creating a Care Economy

- **Gender inequality:** Women spend significantly more time than men on unpaid domestic work and caregiving, limiting their employment and economic independence.
- **Shortage of trained caregivers:** The planned training of 1.5 lakh caregivers remains small compared with the scale of existing and future care requirements.
- **Limited training coverage:** Programmes such as Kerala's K4 Care and elderly-care training for ASHA workers have yet to achieve widespread coverage.
- **Lack of standardisation:** The absence of a sufficiently developed national framework for certification, quality assurance and professional recognition limits the growth of the sector.
- **Complex care requirements:** Conditions such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease require specialised knowledge of cognitive decline, behavioural management and emotional support.

Government Initiatives

- **Budget 2026–27:** Training of 1.5 lakh caregivers under the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) framework.
- **Kudumbashree's K4 Care:** A Kerala-based programme that trains members of self-help groups as certified geriatric, patient and disability care executives.
- **ASHA worker training:** The National Health Systems Resource Centre (NHSRC) has developed an elderly-care training manual for ASHA workers, with training delivered through Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres.
- **The Integrated Programme for Senior Citizens (IPSrC)** provides grant-in-aid to various implementing agencies including State Governments, Union Territory Administrations through Registered Societies.
- **SAPSrC (State Action Plan for Senior Citizens):** Each State/UT is expected to plan taking into account their local considerations and frame their own State Action Plans for the welfare of their senior citizens. SAPSrC is being implemented from FY 2019-20.
- **RVY (RashtriyaVayoshriYojana):** The scheme aims for providing Physical Aids and Assisted Living Devices for Senior Citizens below poverty line and with the family income not exceeding to Rs. 15,000/-per month.
- **Elderline:** The National Helpline for Sr Citizens (14567) is to generate awareness about the Act, schemes & programmes being executed by different Central & State Governments and to provide a platform to redress grievances of Sr Citizens across the country.

Way Forward

- **Recognise and upskill informal caregivers:** Provide accessible training, certification and pathways to formal employment for existing family caregivers.
- **Expand training networks:** Scale up K4 Care and ASHA-based training, enabling trained caregivers to train others and expand coverage.
- **Establish a National Caregiver Council:** As proposed by NITI Aayog, India can standardise curricula, establish quality benchmarks and oversee caregiver certification and a national caregiver portal.
- **Promote gender parity:** Encourage the participation of men in caregiving through family-based training and awareness programmes, ensuring that responsibilities are shared more equitably.

- **Integrate specialised care:** Include geriatric mental health, dementia care, emergency response and behavioural management in national training curricula.

Source: TH

AI-BASED MECHANISATION IN INDIA'S COFFEE SECTOR

Context

- The **Coffee Board of India** has proposed a collaborative initiative with IIT Roorkee, IIT Dharwad and planters' associations to develop AI-based farm equipment and harvesting technologies suited to Indian conditions.

AI-Based Mechanisation in Coffee Sector

- **Customised harvesting prototypes:** The Coffee Board of India is collaborating with IIT Roorkee to develop harvesting machinery that is suited to Indian coffee plantations.
- **Pest and disease detection:** Tools such as eCrop by Precision Grow aim to support coffee-farm monitoring.
  - AI-based image recognition and drone-mounted cameras can help identify visible signs of pest infestation and crop diseases at an early stage, enabling timely intervention.
- **Precision farming:** Drone-based imaging and machine-learning models can monitor crop health, map plantation conditions and identify areas requiring targeted treatment.
- **Irrigation management:** Soil-moisture sensors combined with AI-based irrigation algorithms can adjust water application according to crop requirements and local conditions.

Coffee Sector of India

- India ranks as the **fifth-largest** exporter of coffee.
- The top 5 export destinations for Indian coffee are **Italy (18.09 per cent), Germany (11.01 per cent), Belgium (7.47 per cent),** the **Russian Federation (5.28 per cent),** and the **United Arab Emirates (5.09 per cent).**

Key Takeaways

- *India ranks **7th** in global coffee production, contributing **3.5%**; Annual output is **3.6 lakh tonnes** of which **70%** exported to **128 countries**.*
- ***Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu** account for **96%** of India's coffee production, with Karnataka leading at an estimated **2,80,275 MT (2025–26).***
- *Coffee exports reached a record **USD 1.8 billion** in **FY 2024–25**, marking a **40%** increase from the previous year; India positioned as the **5th-largest** coffee exporter among the Coffee producing countries.*
- *Trade pacts like **India–UK CETA** and **India–EFTA TEPA** enable duty-free access to the UK, Switzerland, Norway, and Iceland.*
- *The GST reduction from **18% to 5%** on instant coffee is expected to lower prices by **11–12%,** boosting domestic demand and expanding market reach.*

Geographical Condition for Coffee Production

- **Climate:** Coffee grows well in tropical climates. It requires a **warm, humid climate with mild winters**. Shade is essential for healthy growth, and coffee is often grown under tree cover.
- **Soil:** Requires **well-drained, fertile soils, rich in humus** and **organic matter.**
  - Soil should be slightly acidic, with a pH of **6.0–6.5.**
- **Temperature:** Ideal annual temperature ranges between **15°C and 28°C.**
  - Frost is harmful to **coffee plants**, and **extreme hot or dry conditions** also reduce yield.
- **Precipitation:** Coffee thrives in hilly regions with elevations of **600–1,600 metres** above sea level.
  - Sloping terrain ensures proper **drainage** and **prevents waterlogging.**

- **Major Coffee producing states** are **Karnataka** (largest producer, contributes nearly **70%** of India's coffee), Kerala, and Tamil Nadu.
  - **Other emerging states are:** Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, and the North-Eastern region (mainly Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, and Meghalaya).

Indian coffees with GI tags

- **Coorg Arabica coffee:** Grown in Kodagu district, Karnataka.
- **Wayanad robusta coffee:** Cultivated in Wayanad district, Kerala.
- **Chikmagalur Arabica coffee:** Produced in Chikmagalur district, Karnataka.
- **Bababudangiri Arabica coffee:** Grown in Chikmagalur, known for hints of chocolate.
- **Monsooned Malabar robusta coffee:** A distinctive speciality from Kerala, renowned for its unique taste.
- **Araku coffee:** Cultivated in the hilly terrains of the Visakhapatnam district in **Andhra Pradesh and the Odisha region,** at elevations of **900-1100 metres** above sea level.

Coffee Board of India

- It was established under the **Coffee Act VII of 1942.**
- It functions under the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry.**
- **Headquarters:** Bengaluru.

Source: TH

NOBEL PRIZE IN ECONOMICS SCIENCES

Context

- The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences has awarded the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel 2026.

About Nobel Prize in Economics and Its Recipients

- The **Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel** recognises outstanding contributions to economic sciences.
- It carries **12 million Swedish kronor**, shared equally by **Robert E. Hall and Michael Woodford.**
- The award recognises their work on the microeconomic foundations of macroeconomic stabilisation**.**

Key Contributions of the Laureates

- **Robert E. Hall: Understanding Household Consumption** that depends primarily on current disposable income.
  - His work highlighted differences between households, particularly those living hand-to-mouth, whose consumption is constrained by current income.
- **Michael Woodford: Understanding Firm Behaviour and Price-Setting**
  - Established the importance of future expectations in firms' pricing decisions and aggregate inflation.
  - Integrated price-setting behaviour with consumption and demand theories.
  - Highlighted that **transparent and credible monetary policy** influences economic outcomes by shaping public expectations.

What Is Macroeconomic Stabilisation?

- It refers to **fiscal and monetary measures** adopted by governments and central banks to reduce fluctuations in **economic growth, output, inflation and unemployment**.
  - **During a slowdown:** Lower interest rates, tax relief and increased public expenditure can stimulate demand.
  - **During overheating:** Higher interest rates and tighter fiscal policies can help contain inflation.

Evolution of Stabilisation Theory

- **Keynesian Approach:** Following the **Great Depression**, John Maynard Keynes advocated government intervention to revive demand, output and employment.
- **Need for a New Approach:** The 1970s witnessed stagflation i.e. high inflation alongside high unemployment. Oil-price shocks exposed the limitations of conventional policy prescriptions.
  - **Hall and Woodford** strengthened stabilisation theory by incorporating actual household behaviour, firms' pricing decisions and expectations into macroeconomic analysis.

Significance for Economic Policy

- **Evidence-based policymaking:** Connects macroeconomic outcomes with individual economic decisions.
- **Expectations management:** Explains why credible policy announcements influence present consumption, investment and prices.

- **Improved policy transmission:** Helps policymakers anticipate the effects of interest-rate changes and fiscal interventions.
- **Greater policy transparency:** Strengthens public confidence and the effectiveness of stabilisation measures.

Relevance for India

- **Inflation Management:** The RBI needs to consider supply shocks, household expectations and firms' pricing behaviour while setting monetary policy.
- **Demand Revival:** Tax reductions and targeted public expenditure can support consumption and investment during economic slowdowns.
- **Policy Communication:** Clear RBI guidance can influence borrowing, spending and investment decisions.
- **Inclusive Policymaking:** Household-level data can help distinguish between consumption patterns of vulnerable households and wealthier groups.

Source: IE

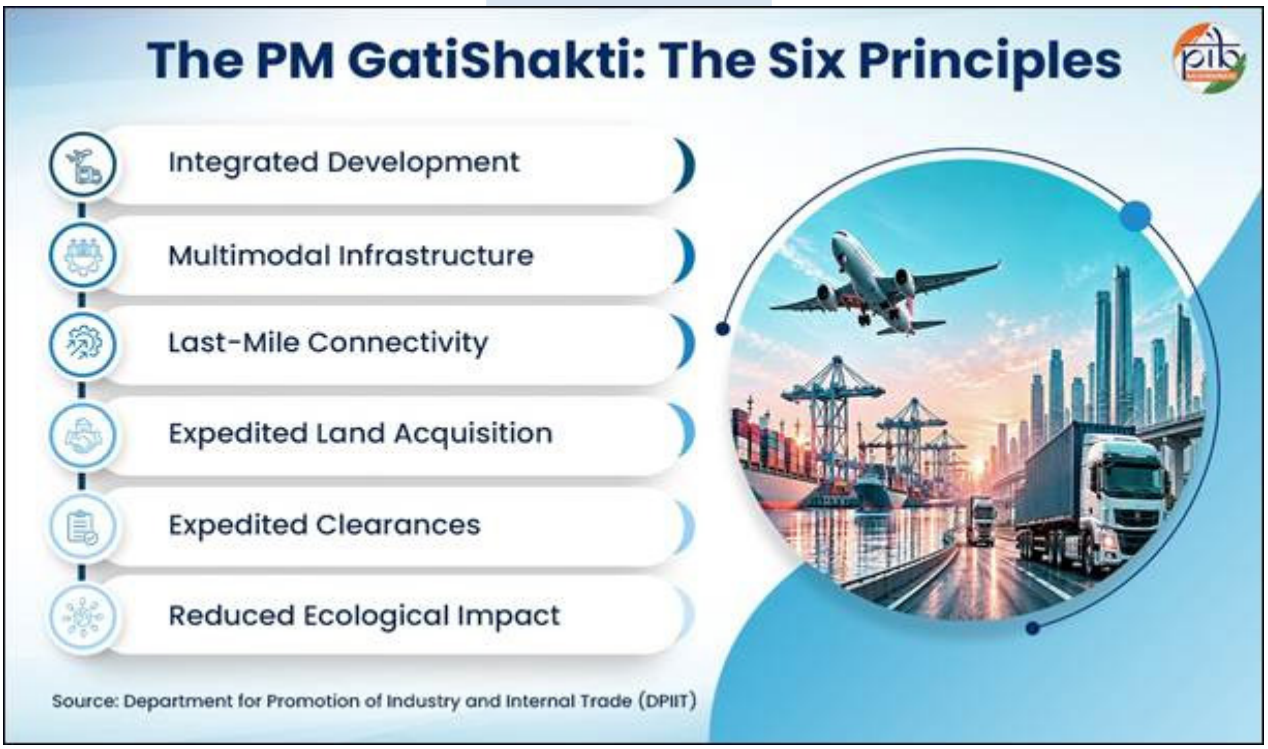
FIVE YEARS OF PM GATISHAKTI

Context

- PM GatiShakti National Master Plan (PMGS-NMP) has completed five years.

PM GatiShakti National Master Plan (PMGS-NMP)

- It was launched on **13 October 2021** for providing multimodal connectivity infrastructure to **various economic zones** and improving logistics efficiency across India.
- PM Gati Shakti **incorporates infrastructure schemes** from various ministries and state governments, such as **Bharatmala, Sagarmala, inland waterways, dry/land ports, and UDAN.**
  - It is **not under a single ministry** but is coordinated by the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- **Aim:** To provide seamless and efficient connectivity for the **movement of people, goods, and services** across various modes of transport, thereby enhancing last-mile connectivity and reducing travel time.



Key features of PM GatiShakti

- **Seven Infrastructure Engines:** Roads, Railways, Ports, Waterways, Airports, Mass Transport and Logistics Infrastructure form the core sectors of the plan.
- **Whole-of-Government Planning:** The National Master Plan covers 58 Central Ministries and Departments and all 36 States and Union Territories, enabling infrastructure proposals to be planned and assessed across sectors.

- **Integrated Digital Planning:** The NMP brings together infrastructure, and geospatial information on a common GIS-based platform, supporting spatial planning and decision-making.
- **Wider Data Access:** The PM GatiShakti Public platform provides access to 230 approved datasets, enabling site suitability analysis, connectivity mapping, alignment planning and compliance checks.

Institutional Framework of PM GatiShakti

- **Empowered Group of Secretaries (EGoS):** Chaired by the Cabinet Secretary, the EGoS oversees the implementation of PM GatiShakti and reviews, considers and approves changes in the Master Plan.
- **Network Planning Group (NPG):** The NPG brings together the Heads of Network Planning Divisions from infrastructure Ministries and Departments.
  - **It examines infrastructure proposals** and ensures unified planning, integration and optimisation.
  - **It also monitors developments** under the **National Master Plan for project planning.**
- **Technical Support Unit (TSU):** The TSU comprises domain and subject-matter experts who support the evaluation process. It assists the Logistics Division in performing its role as the PM GatiShakti Secretariat.

Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya (GSV)

- GSV is a first-of-its-kind university focused exclusively on the transport and logistics sectors.
- **Established in 2022**, the university brings together education, executive training and research across transport-related disciplines.
- GSV supports the **PM GatiShakti National Master Plan and the National Logistics Policy (2022)** through specialised education, training and research.
- As of July 2026, the university had trained more than **2.4 lakh** officers through courses designed for PM GatiShakti.

What are the challenges?

- **Interdepartmental Coordination:** Different ministries and state governments may have competing priorities, resulting in delays in project planning and execution.
- **Data Quality and Integration:** Inaccurate, outdated or incompatible datasets can affect the reliability of GIS-based planning and decision-making.
- **Land Acquisition:** Land disputes, rehabilitation requirements and environmental clearances delay infrastructure projects despite integrated planning.
- **Limited Private Sector Access:** Restrictions on access to sensitive datasets limit the information available to private investors for project planning and site selection.

Concluding remarks

- PM GatiShakti marks a shift towards integrated, data-driven infrastructure planning in India.
- Strengthening interdepartmental coordination, addressing implementation bottlenecks and ensuring environmental sustainability will be crucial to improving logistics efficiency and achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat.

Source: PIB

INSURANCE REFORMS: NEED FOR A BALANCED APPROACH

Context

- Recently, the **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI),** in a consultation paper, proposed a slew of distribution reforms.

Key Highlights

- **Aim:** The regulation would put in place a customercentric, competitive, efficient and transparent distribution ecosystem, while enabling better and sustainable outcomes for policyholders, insurers and distributors.
- **The key proposals include** recalibration of expenses of management (EoM) through **lower limits with a phased glide path.**
  - **Expenses of Management (EoM)** refer to the total operational, administrative, and distribution costs incurred by an insurance company to run its business.
- **For life insurers, the EoM limit** would move to a company level basis linked to Gross Direct Premium Income (GDPI), with the limit proposed at **15% within two years and 12.5% within five years.**

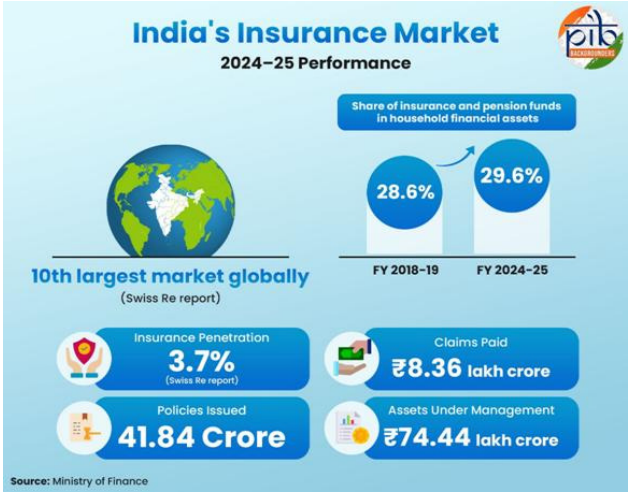
- **For general insurers,** the basis would shift from **Gross Written Premium (GWP) to domestic Gross Direct Premium Income (GDPI),** with the EoM limit reducing from **30% of GWP to 20% of GDPI within five years**.
- **Other Reforms:** The proposals include revising commission norms, easing entry and capital requirements, removing restrictions on non-insurance business opportunities for intermediaries and curbing regulatory arbitrage.
- **Simplified Distribution Structure:** Existing arrangements would be reorganised into three categories: Insurance Distribution Entities (IDEs), Insurance Distribution Persons (IDPs) and Market Infrastructure Institutions (MIIs).

Concerns Raised by the Insurance Industry

- **Insurance Companies:** Insurers have expressed reservations about the potential adverse impact of the proposed changes on their operations and business models.
- **Employment and Competition:** Insurance Brokers Association of India (IBAI) has warned that the proposed reforms could lead to job losses, slower industry growth and reduced competition.
- **Demand for Impact Assessment:** IBAI has urged the government to ensure that no commission or expense-limit regulations are notified without a published impact assessment covering policyholders, employment, public-sector insurers and foreign investment.
  - It has also argued that the existing 2023 framework should continue until its scheduled review in 2028.

Indian Insurance Sector (FY24)

- **Market Performance:** Total insurance premium grew by 7.7%, reaching 11.2 lakh crore in FY24. Reflects continued momentum despite global and domestic economic volatility.
- **Insurance Penetration:** Overall insurance penetration declined slightly from 4.0% in FY23 to 3.7% in FY24. Life Insurance Penetration dropped from 3.0% to 2.8%.
  - Non-Life Insurance Penetration remained stable at 1.0%.



- **Future Outlook:** The Swiss Re Institute has projected India's insurance sector to grow at a rate of 11.1% and is expected to become the fastest-growing market among the G20 nations over the next five years (2024-2028).
  - An expanding middle class, technological advancements, and supportive regulatory measures will likely drive this growth.
- **Insurance Companies:** At present, there are **24 life insurance companies, and 34 general insurers in the country.**
  - Among the life insurers, Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) is the sole public sector company.
  - In addition to these, there is a sole national re-insurer, namely General Insurance Corporation of India (GIC Re).

Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)

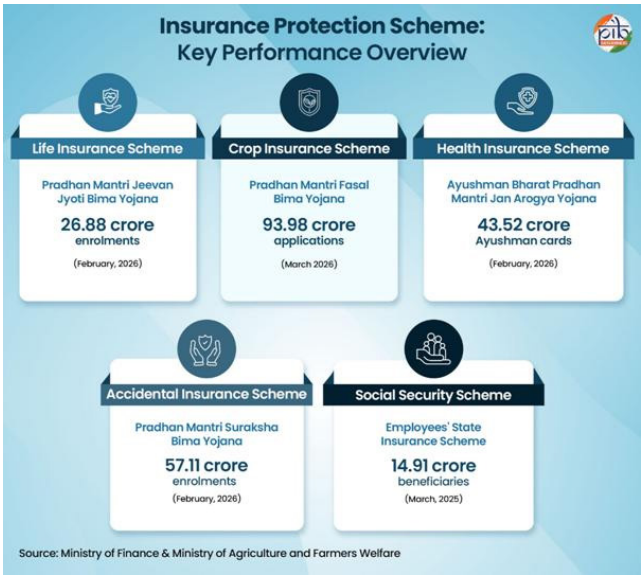
- IRDA was constituted in **1999** as an autonomous body after the recommendations of the **Malhotra Committee report** to regulate and develop the insurance industry.
  - It was incorporated as a statutory body in **2000.**
- The Authority has the power to frame regulations under **Section 114A of the Insurance Act, 1938.**
- **Objective:** The main objective of the IRDA is to protect the interests of the policyholder and regulate the insurance industry.
- IRDAI is under the jurisdiction of the **Ministry of Finance.**
- It has framed regulations ranging from registration of companies for carrying on insurance business to protection of policyholders' interests.

Challenges Faced by the Sector

- **Low Penetration:** With an overall insurance penetration rate of 3.7 per cent, below the global average of 7 per cent, there is a notable gap in coverage that presents opportunities for insurers to expand their reach.
- **Claims Settlement Issues:** Delays, rejections, and lack of transparency in the claims process create customer dissatisfaction.
- **Distribution Limitations:** There is limited reach in rural areas, and insurance distribution remains urban-centric, relying heavily on agents.
- **Affordability:** High premiums and the underpricing of certain products affect accessibility for low-income groups.
- **Fraud and Mis-selling:** Fraudulent claims and mis-selling by agents are common problems, damaging customer trust.
- **Rising Costs:** Increasing medical and claims costs impact affordability and profitability for insurers.

Initiatives Taken by the Government of India

- **Sabka Bima, Sabki Raksha (Amendment of Insurance Laws) Act, 2025:** The amendment raises the FDI limit in Indian insurance companies from 74% to 100%.
  - **GST exemption** is granted on all individual life insurance policies and health insurance policies (including family floater) along with reinsurance w.e.f. 2025.
- **Shortening of Moratorium Period:** Moratorium period in health insurance is a fixed timeframe after which insurance companies cannot deny claims on the grounds of non-disclosure except on grounds of established fraud.
  - IRDAI reduced the moratorium period from **8 years to 60 months (5 years) in 2024.**
- **Standardized 30-day free-look period:** IRDAI introduced a standard 30-day free-look-period for policies with a term of one year or more. The free-look-period is the period given to a policyholder to assess and review the policy document.
- **Third-Party Administrators (TPA) Performance Monitoring:** To increase the accountability of TPAs, performance monitoring is done by insurers to ensure efficient and effective service delivery by them.



- **Bima Sugam initiative:** It aims to empower all insurance stakeholders by connecting them all through a single platform.
  - The platform uses advanced technology to simplify processes for insurance companies, policy holders', intermediaries, insurance repositories and external data sources etc.
- **Bima Vahak:** Focus on last-mile delivery of insurance in rural areas through trained agents (Bima Vahaks).
- **Mandatory e-insurance:** IRDAI mandated the digitisation of insurance policies across all categories to streamline processes, enhance efficiency, and improve accessibility for policyholders.
- **IRDAI has decreased the health insurance waiting period** from 48 months to 36 months.
  - The waiting period refers to the duration during which policyholders are not eligible to claim benefits for any pre-existing health conditions they might have during the purchase of the insurance policy.

Way Ahead

- **By targeting tier 2 and 3 cities and rural areas** where awareness and accessibility are limited, insurers can tap into new customer segments and stimulate growth.
- **Increase Financial Literacy:** Conduct educational programs to enhance understanding of insurance products among the population.
- **Simplify Regulations:** Streamline regulatory processes to make product approvals faster and less complex, while ensuring consumer protection.

- **Improve Claims Settlement:** Ensure faster, transparent, and more efficient claims processing to build trust and reduce disputes.
- **Expand Distribution Networks:** Leverage digital platforms and mobile technology to reach underserved rural and semi-urban areas.
- **Enhance Health Coverage:** Expand coverage to include critical illnesses, hospitalization, and post-treatment care.

Source: TH

NEWS IN SHORT

GARBA DANCE

Context

- The Navratri festival features traditional outdoor **Garba dances dedicated to Goddess Ambe Maa.**

About Garba

- Garba is a traditional **Gujarati folk dance** performed during the **nine-day festival** of Navratri, **celebrating the victory of good over evil.**
- The name is derived from the Sanskrit **word for womb,** symbolising life and creation. The dance celebrates fertility, womanhood and devotion to the Mother Goddess.
- It is performed in a circle around a lamp or an image of **Goddess Shakti, representing the feminine energy of the universe.**
- Accompanied by rhythmic music, singing and clapping, Garba is open to people of all ages, genders and social backgrounds.
- Modern Garba has been influenced by **Dandiya Raas**, traditionally performed by men, giving it its energetic and contemporary form.
- In December 2023, it was inscribed on **UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**.
- Its different forms include **Mataji Garba, Krishna Garba and Lok Garba**.

Source: IE

PRESIDENT APPOINTED GOVERNORS FOR 6 STATES

Context

- President Droupadi Murmu has appointed **governors for six states.**

About Office of Governor

- **Constitutional Provisions:** The office of the Governor is defined in **Articles 153 to 162 of the Indian Constitution,**
- **Eligibility:** Citizen of India and has completed the age of thirty-five years.
  - Not a member of the Parliament and State Legislature.
  - Shall not hold any other office of profit.
- **Appointment of Governor:** The Governor of a State shall be appointed by the President.
- **Term of office of Governor:** Five years.
- **Executive Role:** The Governor is the head of the state executive, he/she appoints the Chief Minister and other ministers, who are responsible to the state legislature.
- **Legislative Role:** The Governor summons, and dissolves the state legislature and can address the state legislature at the beginning of its sessions.
  - He has the power to reserve certain bills passed by the state legislature for the President's approval.
- **Judicial Role:** The Governor can grant pardons, reprieves, respites, or remissions of punishment in some cases. They also have the authority to commute sentences in certain circumstances.
  - The Governor is involved in the appointment of judges to the state's High Court.
- **Discretionary Powers:** In cases where the Chief Minister or the council of ministers cannot command a majority in the legislature, the Governor may exercise discretionary powers to invite a different person to form the government.

Source: IE

LAKSHADWEEP BECOMES A FULLY LITERATE UNION TERRITORY

Context

- Lakshadweep has achieved full literacy status under the **ULLAS – Nav Bharat Saaksharta Karyakram.**

ULLAS - Nav Bharat Saaksharta Karyakram (New India Literacy Programme)

- It is a **centrally sponsored scheme** implemented from **2022-2027.**
  - The scheme, aligned with NEP 2020, targets adults (**aged 15 years and above**) who can't go to school.
- **It has five components**: Foundational Literacy and Numeracy, Critical Life Skills, Basic Education, Vocational Skills and Continuing Education.
- **The vision of the ULLAS** Scheme is to make India **Jan Jan Saakshar** and is based on the spirit of **Kartavya Bodh** and is being implemented on volunteerism.

About Literacy

- As per the Office of the Registrar General of India, a literate person is someone **aged 7 or above** who can read and write with understanding in any language.
- The Department of School Education and Literacy has introduced a refined definition of literacy aligned with **NEP 2020 and SDG 4.6 goals.**
  - Literacy is now defined as the ability to read, write, and compute with comprehension, along with critical life skills such as digital and financial literacy. This expanded definition aims to ensure full societal participation and economic progress.
  - A state/UT achieving **95% literacy** is considered fully literate.

Source: TH

JANTAR MANTAR NO LONGER A SITE OF PROTEST

Context

- The Delhi Police have notified that Jantar Mantar is no longer a protest site and named **three other alternatives** (Ramlila Maidan, Burari Ground, and CBD Ground).
  - The move followed a recommendation by a committee constituted by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), with a revised SOP for the new venues to be issued separately.

Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 19(1)(a)** guarantees the right to freedom of speech and expression which includes the right to protest peacefully.
- **Article 19(1)(b):** Ensures the right to gather peacefully and without arms, subject to reasonable limits under **Article 19(3)** in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India and public order.

Judicial Intervention

- **Amit Sahni v. Commissioner of Police (2020):** SC ruled that public roads and places can't be taken indefinitely and protests & rallies have to be weighed against the rights of other citizens.
- **Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan v. Union of India (2018):** The SC highlighted the necessity of balancing the freedom to protest against the rights of residents and public order.

About Jantar Mantar

- Jantar Mantar refers to a **group of astronomical observatories** built by **Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II** in the **18th century** to measure time, track celestial movements and study astronomical phenomena.
- **Locations:** Delhi, Jaipur, Ujjain, Mathura and Varanasi.
- **Jantar Mantar, Delhi,** was built in 1724. It is situated near Connaught Place and contains masonry instruments such as the Samrat Yantra, used to measure time and observe celestial movements.
- **Jantar Mantar in Jaipur** was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in **2010.**

Source: TH

PRADHAN MANTRI DHAN-DHAANYA KRISHI YOJANA

Context

- Pradhan Mantri Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana has completed one year of implementation on 11th October 2026.

PM Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana

- It is a coordinated initiative involving **36 sub-schemes across 11 ministries,** designed to accelerate agricultural progress in aspirational districts.

- The scheme targets **100 low-performing agri-districts** with an annual outlay of ₹**24,000 crore for 6 years** (starting from 2025-26).
  - It will be identified on the basis of three key indicators- low productivity , low cropping intensity and low credit disbursement.
- **Targeted beneficiaries:** 1.7 crore farmers.
- **A digital dashboard, farmer app, and district ranking system** will ensure transparency, access, and accountability.
- **Administrative Structure for Implementation:**
  - **District Level:** The District Dhan Dhaanya Krishi Yojana Samiti, headed by the District Collector/DM, prepares and implements the District Action Plan.
  - **State Level:** The State Dhan Dhaanya Krishi Yojana Samiti, headed by the Chief Secretary of the State, reviews and monitors the District Plans.
  - **National Level:** Two committees oversee the scheme. **The National Executive Committee** is headed by the Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare. **The National Monitoring Committee** is headed by the Secretary, DA&FW.



Source: PIB

INS MANGROL

Context

- The Indian Navy commissioned the **'Mangrol',** the third Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft.

About

- Ten ships had been commissioned in 2026, with another eight expected to be commissioned soon.
- By 2034, **around 60% of the Navy's platforms** are expected to have an average age of less than ten years.

About INS Mangrol

- **Mangrol** derives its name from the **coastal town and minor port of 'Mangrol',** located in Gujarat, which is a prominent harbour for the marine fishing industry.

- The ship also encapsulates the **legacy of erstwhile INS Mangrol,** an Indian Naval Minesweeper which remained in service till 2004.

- The ship comprises **over 80% indigenous content** and is equipped for underwater surveillance, Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) operations in coastal waters, Low-Intensity Maritime Operations (LIMO), along with mine warfare capabilities.
  - The ship is propelled by waterjets and equipped with state-of-the-art Torpedoes, Anti-Submarine rockets, along with advanced radars and sonars.
- The commissioning of Mangrol is yet another milestone in the Indian Navy's indigenous shipbuilding journey and a reaffirmation of the Government's vision of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'.

Source: AIR

SARUS CRANES

Context

- The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) has announced a nationwide survey to estimate the population of Sarus Cranes.

About the Sarus Crane

- **Scientific Name:** Antigone antigone.
- **Features:** The world's tallest flying bird, it stands approximately 1.5 metres tall. It is also the only resident breeding crane species in India.
- **Habitat:** It inhabits wetlands, marshes and agricultural fields, often near human settlements.
- **Distribution:** Found across the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia and northern Australia. In India, major populations occur in Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana.
- **Conservation Status:**
  - IUCN Red List: Vulnerable.
  - CITES: Appendix II.
  - Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule I.
- **Cultural Significance:** Revered in Indian culture as a symbol of lifelong devotion and marital fidelity.

Source: DTE

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