WHAT IS INSURANCE REGULATORY AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF INDIA (IRDAI)?

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) recently made some major changes in the regulatory norms for health insurance policies.

- It is a **statutory body** formed under an Act of Parliament, i.e., the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act, 1999 **(IRDAI Act 1999),** for the overall supervision and development of the insurance sector in India.

- **Objectives**:
    - To protect the **interests** and **fair treatment** of the policyholder.
    - To **regulate** the insurance industry in fairness and ensure the financial soundness of the industry.
    - To regularly **frame regulations** to ensure the industry operates without any ambiguity.

- **Head Office: Hyderabad**

- It is **responsible for registering** and/or **licensing insurance, reinsurance companies,** and **intermediaries** according to the regulations.

- It sets the eligibility criteria, qualifications, and capital requirements for obtaining licenses in the insurance business.

- **Entities regulated by IRDAI:**
    - **Life Insurance Companies**: Both public and private sector companies
    - **General Insurance Companies**: Both public and private sector Companies. Among them, there are some standalone Health Insurance Companies which offer health insurance policies.
    - **Re-Insurance Companies**
    - **Agency Channel**
    - **Intermediaries,** which include the following:

- ▪ Corporate Agents

- ▪ Brokers

- ▪ Third-party Administrators

- ▪ Surveyors and Loss Assessors.

- **Composition**: It is a **10-member** body- a chairman, five full-time members, and four part-time members appointed by the **Government of India.**

NEW SYSTEM TO IDENTIFY SCAM/FRAUD CALLS

Department of Telecom (DoT) recently introduced a new tool to identify genuine calls from those made by fraudsters.

- **Dedicated Phone Number Series:** The DoT has allocated a dedicated **10-digit numbering series** starting with 160 for service and transactional calls made by the government, regulators, and financial entities.

- These 10-digit numbers will include additional information to help you recognize the caller.

- The 10-digit number series has been designed by the DoT in such a manner that citizens will get an idea about **calling entities** as well as the **telecom operator** and the place from where it has originated.

- This new system aims to give you more information about incoming calls, empowering you to identify potential scams.

- **Incoming calls from banks, government departments to display 160 Prefix:**

  - o The 10-digit number will have a **160 prefix** and will be issued in **1600ABCXXX format for government**, **financial institutions, and telecom regulators**.

    - ▪ The **AB** will show the **code of the telecom circle,** like 11 for Delhi and 22 for Mumbai.

    - ▪ While the **digit at C** place will show the **code of the telecom operator**.

    - ▪ The XXX will be digits between 000-999.

Numbers for financial institutions to be issued in 1601ABCXXX format:

- o For financial entities regulated by the RBI, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), PFRDA (Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority), and Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA), the 10-digit number will be issued in 1601ABCXXX format.

- **Verification and Transparency:**
  - o Telecom service providers (TSPs) are responsible for verifying each entity requesting a 160 series number.
  - o They will also obtain a commitment that the number will only be used for legitimate service and transactional calls.

WHAT IS K-9 VAJRA?

Several key 'Made in India' defence projects, including proposals for acquiring more K-9 Vajra self-propelled howitzers and fighter aircraft engines, are awaiting final approval by the Centre after the elections.

- It is a 155 mm, 52-caliber tracked **self-propelled artillery system**.
- It can fire shells at great elevation angles to hit targets far away.
- It is built by **Larsen & Toubro** with technology transferred from **South Korean** defence major Hanwha Défense based on its **K9 Thunder** platform.
- It can perform a variety of missions due to its capacity to fire a wide range of artillery ammunition, including high explosive, smoke and illumination shells.
- **Features:**
  - o It has all-**welded steel armour** up to 19mm thick.
  - o The main weapon is the 155mm / 52 calibre gun.
  - o The gun weighs 50 tonnes and can fire 47kg bombs.
  - o It has a **burst rate of fire** of **three rounds per 15 seconds** and a maximum rate of fire of six to eight rounds per minute for three minutes.
  - o It can strike enemy targets at around **50 kilometres**.

o   It can also **turn around at zero radius**, basically at the same place where they are standing.

o   The K9 uses a **digital fire control system**, by which it can fire multiple rounds that can impact a given area at the same time.

AMRUT SCHEME

Why in news? Around 36% of India's population is living in cities and by 2047 it will be more than 50%. The World Bank estimates that around $840 billion is required to fund the bare minimum urban infrastructure over the next 15 years. Against this backdrop, the **AMRUT (Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation) scheme** was launched in June 2015, with its 2.0 version launched on October 1, 2021.

Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT)

o   AMRUT was launched to provide basic civic amenities as to improve the quality of life for all especially the poor and the disadvantaged.

o   The focus of the Mission is on infrastructure creation that has a direct link to provision of better services to the citizens.

o   The Mission covers 500 cities that includes all cities and towns with a population of over one lakh with notified Municipalities.

AMRUT 2.0

o   The target in the second phase of AMRUT is to

▪   improve sewage and septic management,

▪   make our cities water safe cities and

▪   ensure that no sewage drains anywhere in our rivers'

o   In other words, AMRUT 2.0 focused on enhancing sewerage and septic management and to make all Indian cities water secure.

• **Challenges**

- o The AMRUT scheme was fundamentally flawed, adopting a project-oriented rather than holistic approach.
- o It lacked city participation and was driven by bureaucrats, parastatals, and private companies, with minimal involvement from elected city governments.
- o Governance was dominated by non-elected officials, violating the 74th constitutional amendment.
  - ▪ The apex committee was headed by the MOHUA secretary, and state committees were led by chief secretaries.
  - ▪ It excluded people's representatives and favored a private nexus of consultants and professionals.
- o Water management in cities must consider climate, rainfall patterns, and existing infrastructure.
- o Sewage treatment plants are inefficiently designed, with faecal matter traveling longer distances than the average worker's commute.
- o Urban planning, driven by private players and real estate developers, often leads to the disappearance of water bodies, disrupted storm water flows, and a lack of proper storm water drainage systems.

DELHI SIZZLES AS ONE STATION RECORDS 52.9°C

Why in news? The Mungeshpur weather station in Delhi recorded a maximum temperature of 52.9 degree Celsius, an all-time record for any location in India. However, later, in an update, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) clarified that the record-breaking temperature was an error in sensor or local factor. The IMD is currently examining the data and sensors to verify the accuracy of the recorded temperature.

Temperature Anomaly in Delhi

- o The maximum temperature across Delhi NCR varied from 45.2 degrees Celsius to 49.1 degrees Celsius in different parts of the city.

- The IMD runs 20 weather stations in Delhi, 15 of which are automatic weather stations, or AWS, including Mungeshpur.
- AWS record and transmit weather parameters without human intervention.
  - Mungeshpur reported 52.9 degrees Celsius as an outlier compared to other stations.
  - The IMD stated that this discrepancy could be due to an error in the sensor or specific local factors.

- **Factors leading to high temperature in Delhi**
  - The rain deficit contributed to the heat build-up.
  - Clear skies and westerly winds from Rajasthan where temperatures have hit 50 degrees have contributed to the heat in Delhi-NCR.
  - Climatology-wise, this is also the time of intense heating across northwest India, including Delhi-NCR.

- **Heatwave conditions to reduce in next 2-3 days**
  - As per IMD, heatwave conditions will reduce during the next 2 - 3 days due to:
    - gradual fall in temperature in association with approaching western disturbance,
    - rainfall/thunderstorm and
    - south-westerly wind blowing from the Arabian Sea to northwest India.

How temperature records are tumbling across the world?

- **Statistics from around the world**
  - United Kingdom crossed 40 degree Celsius for the first time ever in July 2022.
  - A small town in China's northwest recorded 52 degree Celsius last year, the highest ever for that country.
  - In 2021, Sicily in Italy recorded 48.8 degree Celsius, the highest for Europe ever.
    - The highest ever temperature recorded anywhere on Earth, 56.7 degree Celsius in a place called Death Valley in the desert of California, United States, was recorded more than 100 years ago, in 1913.

- **Study report by Carbon Brief (UK-based publication focused on climate change)**
  - The study showed that nearly 40% of the Earth had recorded its highest-ever daily temperature between 2013 to 2023.
  - This includes places in Antarctica as well.

- **Global Warming**
  - The year 2024 was predicted to be extremely warm. Last year had emerged as the warmest year on record, globally, and the effect was expected to continue this year as well.

- **Warming in India**
  - The warming over India is not as pronounced as the world taken as a whole.
  - Annual mean temperatures over India have risen by about 0.7 degree Celsius compared to 1900 levels.
  - This is significantly lower than the 1.59 degree Celsius rise for average land temperatures across the world.
    - If oceans too are included, global temperatures right now are at least 1.1 degree Celsius higher than pre-industrial averages.
  - However, heatwaves over India are noticeably more severe.
  - In 2023, heatwave conditions prevailed even in February, technically a winter month for which heatwave thresholds are not even defined because they are not expected.

WHAT IS INDIAN COMPUTER EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM (CERT-IN)?

India's Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) recently issued a warning for a high-severity vulnerability reported in Google Chrome for desktops.

- It is the **national nodal agency** for responding to **computer security incidents** as and when they occur.

- It is a functional organisation of the Ministry of **Electronics and Information Technology**, Government of India, with the objective of securing Indian cyberspace.
- CERT-In has been operational since January **2004**.
- The constituency of CERT-In is the Indian cyber community and Indian cyberspace.
- The **Information Technology (Amendment) Act 2008**, designated CERT-In to serve as the national agency to perform the **following functions** in the area of cybersecurity:
  - Collection, **analysis and dissemination of information** on cyber incidents.
  - **Forecasts and alerts** of cyber security incidents
  - **Emergency measures** for handling cyber security incidents
  - **Coordination** of cyber incident response activities.
  - Issue guidelines, advisories, vulnerability notes, and whitepapers relating to information security practices, procedures, prevention, response, and reporting of cyber incidents.
  - Such other functions relating to cyber security as may be prescribed.
- To perform these functions, CERT-In is **empowered to call for information and issue directions** to service providers, intermediaries, data centres, body corporates and any other person.
- CERT-In provides services to organizations in **the Government, Public, and Private sectors.** In addition, CERT-In provides services to individuals and home users as well.
- Disclosure of information will be followed in accordance with Indian Constitutional laws.

WHAT IS PRAGATI-2024?

The Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS), an autonomous body under the Union Ministry of Ayush, launched "PRAGATI- 2024".

- **Pharma Research in AyurGyan And Techno Innovation** (PRAGATI) aims to explore research opportunities and **foster collaboration** between CCRAS and the Ayurveda drug industry.

Key facts about Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS)

- It is an autonomous body under the **Ministry of AYUSH, Govt. of India.**
- It is an apex body in India for undertaking, coordinating, formulating, developing and promoting research on scientific lines in **Ayurvedic sciences.**
- The research activities of the Council include Medicinal Plant Research (Medico-Ethno Botanical Survey, Pharmacognosy and Tissue Culture), Drug Standardization, Pharmacological Research, Clinical Research, Literary Research & Documentation and Tribal Health Care Research Programme.
- It also does formulation, coordination, development and promotion of research on scientific lines in Ayurveda and Sowa-Rigpa system of medicine.

Headquarter: New Delhi