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Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (AHRCs)

- Recently, the Union Cabinet has given its approval for Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (AHRCs) for urban migrants and poor.
- *AHRC will be as a sub-scheme under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U).*
- The existing vacant government funded housing complexes will be converted in ARHCs through Concession Agreements for 25 years.
- The States/UTs will select concessionaire through transparent bidding.
- It will make the complexes livable by repair/retrofit and maintenance of rooms and filling up infrastructure gaps like water, sewer/ septage, sanitation, road etc.
- The special incentives like use permission, concessional loan at priority sector lending rate, tax reliefs at par with affordable housing etc. will be offered to private/public entities *to develop ARHCs on their own available vacant land for 25 years.*
- **Target Beneficiaries -** A large part of workforce in manufacturing industries, service providers in hospitality, and construction or other sectors, laborers, students etc. who come from *rural areas or small towns.*

Agriculture Infrastructure Fund

- Union Cabinet has given approval to Agriculture Infrastructure Fund.
- It is *a pan India central sector scheme.*
- It aims to inject formal credit into farm and farm-processing based activities.
- It is a part of the over Rs. 20 lakh crore stimulus package announced in response to the Covid-19 crisis.
- It will provide medium - long term debt financing facility for investment in viable projects for post-harvest management Infrastructure and community farming assets.
- The funds will be provided for setting up of cold stores and chains, warehousing, silos, assaying, grading and packaging units, e-marketing points linked to e-trading platforms and ripening chambers, besides PPP projects for crop aggregation sponsored by central/state/local bodies.
- *Duration of the scheme is FY 2020 to 2029.*

Open Sky Agreements

- Open Sky Agreements are bilateral agreements that the two countries negotiate to provide rights for airlines to offer international passenger and cargo services.
- *It expands international passenger and cargo flights.*
- The National Civil Aviation Policy (2016) allows the government to enter into an 'open sky' air services agreement on a reciprocal basis with SAARC nations as well as countries beyond a 5,000 kilometre radius from New Delhi.
- It implies that nations within 5,000 kilometer of distance need to enter into a bilateral agreement and mutually determine the number of flights that their airlines can operate between the two countries.
- India has Air Service Agreements (ASA) with 109 countries including UAE covering aspects relating to the number of flights, seats, landing points and code-share.
- *But does not allow unlimited number of flights between two countries.*
- Recently, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has expressed interest to have an Open Sky Agreement with India.
- Open skies between India and UAE *will allow unlimited number of flights to the selected cities of each other's countries.*

Fifth and Sixth Freedom of Air

- The freedoms of the air are a set of commercial aviation rights granting a country's airlines the privilege to enter and land in another country's airspace.
- The Freedom of air was formulated in the *Convention on International Civil Aviation of 1944, known as the Chicago Convention.*
- The fifth freedom of air includes the right to fly between two foreign countries on a flight originating or ending in one's own country.
- The sixth freedom of air includes the right to fly from a foreign country to another while stopping in one's own country for non-technical reasons.

Measles and Rubella Elimination

- Recently, the Maldives and Sri Lanka have become the first two countries in the World Health Organisation’s South-East Asian Region (WHO SEAR) to have eliminated both measles and rubella ahead of the 2023 deadline.
- The Maldives reported its last endemic case of measles in 2009 and of rubella in October 2015.
- Sri Lanka reported the last endemic case of measles in May 2016 and of rubella in March 2017.
- In September 2019, member countries of WHO SEAR set 2023 as the target

for the elimination of measles and rubella.
- Earlier Bhutan, DPR Korea and Timor-Leste are countries in the region which have eliminated measles.
- Earlier Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste have controlled Rubella.
- A country is verified as having eliminated measles and rubella when there is *no evidence of endemic transmission of the respective viruses for over three years in the presence of a well-performing surveillance system.*

Measles

- It is a highly contagious viral disease and is a cause of *death among young children globally.*
- It is particularly dangerous for children from the economically weaker background, as it attacks malnourished children and those with reduced immunity.
- It can cause serious complications, *including blindness, encephalitis, severe diarrhoea, ear infection and pneumonia.*

Rubella

- Rubella is a contagious, generally mild viral infection that *occurs most often in children and young adults.*
- It is also called German measles.
- Rubella infection in pregnant women may cause death or congenital defects known as Congenital Rubella Syndrome (CRS) which causes irreversible birth defects.

Lithium

- Lithium, a light element commonly used today in communication device technology.
- It was first produced in the Big Bang, around 13.7 billion years ago when the universe came into being, along with other elements.
- The present abundance of lithium in the universe is only four times the original (Big Bang) value.
- It is actually destroyed in the stars.
- *The Sun, for instance, has about a factor of 100 lower amount of lithium than the Earth.*

Helium Flash in Stars

- A forty-year-old puzzle regarding the production of lithium in stars has been solved by Indian researchers.

- Stars, as per known mechanisms of evolution, actually destroy lithium as they evolve into red giants.
- *Planets were known to have more lithium than their stars as is the case with the Earth-Sun pair.*
- However, leading to a contradiction, *some stars were found that were lithium-rich.*
- When stars grow beyond their Red Giant stage into what is known as the Red Clump stage, *they produce lithium in what is known as a Helium Flash and this is what enriches them with lithium.*

Source: PIB, the Hindu

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