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WHAT CHALLENGES DOES INDIA FACE IN FERTILIZER IMPORTS?

- A fertilizer is a chemical product either mined or manufactured material containing one or more essential plant nutrients that are immediately or potentially available in sufficiently good amounts.
- Fertilizers have played an essential role in agricultural production, providing vital nutrients for crops, increasing demands over the years.
- As an agrarian country, India is home to numerous small and marginal farmers and is often plagued by low productivity and low quality.
- Crops are mainly rain-fed and cultivated on a single piece of land over time, decreasing soil fertility in many regions.
- Thereby, increasing quantities of nitrogen fertilizers have been used in the country.

Macro & Micro Elements in Fertilizers:

- Macro Nutrients: Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P), Potash (K), Calcium, Sulfur (S), and Magnesium are known as macro-nutrients (required in comparatively larger amounts).
- Micro Nutrients: Iron (Fe), Zinc (Zn), Copper, Boron, Manganese Molybdenum, Chloride, and others are the micro-nutrients (required in a smaller quantity) for the growth and development of crop plants.
- Among the various types, **NPK** (nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium) fertilizers are the most common ones, and **Urea** stands as the most highly consumed fertilizer in India.
- India is the second-largest consumer of fertilizers globally, with an annual consumption of more than 55.0 million metric ton.

Current Fertilizer Import Scenario:

- India's domestic fertilizer production does not meet its full demand, creating a dependency on imports. As per the **2023 Standing Committee of Parliament report**:
 - **Urea**: 20% of the domestic requirement is imported.

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- **Diammonium Phosphate (DAP):** 50-60% of the demand is met through imports.
- **Muriate of Potash (MOP):** 100% dependency on imports.
- The report stresses a need for self-reliance in fertilizer production to stabilize supplies.

Impact of the Ukraine and Gaza Conflicts:

- Experts, at the **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)**, highlighted potential volatility in fertilizer prices due to the Ukraine and Gaza conflicts. This unrest could:
 - Affect **oil prices**, impacting petroleum-based fertilizer production.
 - Disrupt imports from **Russia** and **West Asia**, two significant suppliers for India's fertilizer imports.

Strategic Initiatives for Self-Reliance:

- Experts recommend increasing India's production capacity and reducing reliance on imports:
 - **New Urea Plants:** Since the **2012 investment policy**, six new urea plants have been established, adding **76.2 LMT** to India's production capacity. Currently, **36 urea plants** operate, with recent additions like **Ramgundam, Gorakhpur, Sindri, and Barauni** facilities.
 - **Shift to Sustainable Fertilizers:** Emphasis on **nano urea** and **natural farming** could reduce chemical fertilizer usage and dependency.
 - **Investment in Domestic Production:** The Standing Committee suggests fostering a favorable environment for investments from public, cooperative, and private sectors in fertilizer manufacturing.

Policy Recommendations and Future Outlook:

- Increasing incentives for fertilizer manufacturing within India.
 - Encouraging use of **nano urea** and shifting focus to organic and sustainable farming practices.
 - Investing in infrastructure to better utilize existing fertilizers efficiently.
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THE BURGEONING EXPENDITURE OF ELECTIONS

The estimated total expenditure for the upcoming U.S. presidential and Congressional elections in November 2024 is approximately **\$16 billion** (around **₹1,36,000 crores**).

In contrast, the total expenditure by various political parties for the recent general election to the Lok Sabha in India was about **₹1,00,000 crores**, according to the Centre for Media Studies (CMS). This raises various debates surrounding campaign finance (election expenditure) in India.

Election expenditure limit in India

- **Existing limit**
 - The election expenditure limit for candidates is ₹95 lakh per Lok Sabha constituency in larger States and ₹75 lakh in smaller States.
 - With respect to Legislative Assemblies, they are ₹40 lakh and ₹28 lakh for larger and smaller States respectively.
 - These limits are set, from time to time, by the Election Commission (EC). There are no limits on the expenditure of political parties during elections.
- **Purpose and Reality of Expenditure Limits**
 - While limits aim to minimize the influence of wealth in elections and ensure a level playing field, the effectiveness is questionable.
 - The Representation of the People Act mandates candidates keep accurate spending records within these limits and submit affidavits post-election.
 - However, analysis from the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) shows most candidates report spending far below the limits, raising doubts about transparency.

Associated challenge

- **Political Party Spending — The "Elephant in the Room"**

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- Currently, no cap exists on political parties' expenditures during elections, which can indirectly favor wealthy candidates.
- Experts argue that real reform requires transparency in party finances and internal democratization to achieve genuine equality for all candidates.
- **Possible gap between actual and reported costs**
 - The official expenditures declared by the BJP and Congress for the 2019 election were ₹1,264 crores and ₹820 crores, respectively. However, according to a report by the CMS, ₹50,000 crore was spent by various parties during the 2019 election.
 - The report suggests that 35% of this money was spent on campaigns and publicity, while 25% was illegally distributed among voters.
- **Unholy nexus between the elected representatives and donors**
 - Elections across the world democracies have become very expensive.
 - Such increased expenditure that is met primarily through large donations creates an unholy nexus between the elected representatives and donors who seek favours.
- **Creates an entry barrier into electoral politics**
 - Expensive elections act as an entry barrier into electoral politics for many well-meaning citizens.

Way forward

- **Advocacy for State Funding of Elections**
 - The Indrajit Gupta Committee (1998) and the Law Commission report (1999) have proposed state funding of elections. They suggested that the government should partially cover the election expenses of candidates nominated by recognized political parties.
- **Proposed Electoral Reforms**
 - The Election Commission's 2016 report on proposed electoral reforms outlines practical steps to create a more equitable environment concerning election expenditures:



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- **Regulating Financial Assistance:** Amend the law to ensure that any financial assistance provided by political parties to their candidates falls within the candidates' prescribed expenditure limits.
 - **Ceiling on Party Expenditures:** Establish a ceiling on the total expenditures of political parties, set at no more than the expenditure limit for individual candidates multiplied by the number of candidates from that party contesting the election.
 - **Expediting Legal Processes:** Appoint additional judges in High Courts to facilitate the speedy disposal of election-related cases, serving as a deterrent against violations of expenditure norms.
 - **Need for Bipartisan Support**
 - These reforms require bipartisan political support and prompt implementation to be effective in addressing the challenges associated with election financing in India.
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RAIGAD FORT

It is a hill fort situated in the Raigad district, **Maharashtra**.

- It is surrounded by **valleys shaped by the Kal and Gandhari rivers**, stands as an isolated massif without connections to neighbouring hills.

History

- In **1653 CE**, Raigad (then known as Rairi) was captured by the Maratha forces from the **Mores'**.
- Shivaji Maharaj assigned the work of reconstruction of the fort to **Hiroji Indulkar**.
- Subsequently, on **6th June, 1674 CE** a grand **coronation ceremony** of Shivaji Maharaj was held on Raigad post, during which he attained the title of **“Chhatrapati”**.



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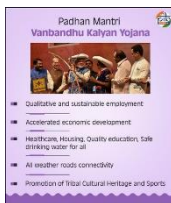
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- The fort served as the second capital of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and played an important role in the administration and expansion of the Maratha Kingdom.

Features:

- There were two main gates both flanked by bastions, **Nana Darwaza and Maha Darwaza**.
- It is remarkable for magnificently designed gates, fortification walls and imposing monuments.
- **Other structures within the fort are:** Naqqar Khana, Sirkai Devi Temple, Jagadishwar Temple – a shrine dedicated to Lord Siva - including the Hall of Public Audience (Rajsadar), **Royal Complex**, Queens' palace Bazarpeth, Manore (pleasure pavilions), Wadeshwar Temple, Khublada Burj, Massid Morcha, Nanne Darwaza
- **The Royal Complex:** It includes Ranivasa, Rajsadar, Naqqarkhana, Mena Darwaza, and Palkhi Darwaja, is well-fortified and accessible only through three entrances: Naqqarkhana, Mena Darwaja, and Palkhi Darwaja. This fortified complex is **commonly known as Balle Qilla** (citadel).
- The fort of Raigad is part of the 12 forts nominated for **UNESCO World Heritage** under the title “**Maratha Military Landscapes of India**”.

PRADHAN MANTRI VANBANDHU KALYAN YOJANA



It was launched on **October 28, 2014**.

- It aims to **empower tribal communities** in India, recognizing their historical neglect. The initiative not only provides financial assistance but also establishes a **framework for sustainable development**.

Six Key Steps Under PMVKY

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- **Pradhan Mantri Adi Adarsh Gram Yojana**
 - It revamps the existing Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub-Plan, which focuses on integrated village development in 36,428 villages with significant tribal populations.
 - It targets critical sectors such as road and telecom connectivity, education, health services, and sanitation, all of which aim to raise the living standards of tribal communities.
 - **Development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)**
 - It is designed to ensure the **socio-economic upliftment** of the most marginalized tribal communities (PVTG families) while preserving their cultural heritage.
 - The initiative provides financial support to state governments for tailored developmental activities in housing, health, and education sectors.
 - The **Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development Mission** has been launched to enhance further living conditions and provide PVTG families with access to basic facilities.
 - **Support to Tribal Research Institutes (TRI):** It facilitates **research and documentation** efforts related to **tribal communities**. Financial assistance is allocated to state governments and UTs based on their proposals to strengthen the knowledge base concerning tribal cultures and challenges.
 - **Pre-Matric Scholarships:** It caters to students in **grades IX and X**, the scholarship is available for students with a parental income of up to ₹2.50 lakhs, ensuring that financial constraints do not hinder educational advancement.
 - **Post-Matric Scholarships:** It follows similar terms and conditions as the Pre-Matric scheme but caters to Scheduled Tribe students **studying beyond class 10**.
 - **Administrative Assistance for Project Management Units:** The PMVKY also allocates funds to establish **project management units within state governments**, ensuring that schemes related to the welfare of Scheduled Tribes are effectively monitored and implemented.
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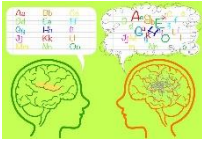
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DYSLEXIA



Dyslexia is a learning disorder that involves difficulty reading due to problems identifying speech sounds and learning how they relate to letters and words (decoding).

- It is also called a reading disability, dyslexia is a result of individual differences in areas of the brain that process language.
- It is not due to problems with intelligence, hearing or vision.
- It is often misunderstood as **the ‘slow-learner syndrome’**.

The **exact cause of dyslexia isn’t clear**. However, several clues hint at how and why most cases happen.

- **Genetics:** It is highly genetic and runs in families. A child with one parent with dyslexia has a 30% to 50% chance of inheriting it.
- **Differences in brain development and function:** Research shows people with dyslexia have differences in brain structure, function and chemistry.
- **Disruptions in brain development and function:** Infections, toxic exposures and other events can disrupt fetal development and increase the odds of later development of dyslexia.

Specific Learning Disabilities, including **dyslexia**, were officially **recognized under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act of 2016**, which mandates equal opportunities in education, employment, and other aspects of life.

- The **National Education Policy 2020** reinforces this mandate, emphasizing inclusive education from foundational to higher education levels. NEP 2020 reforms focus on early identification, teacher capacity building, and providing necessary support and accommodations to students.
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KONARK SUN TEMPLE



Location: It is located on the coastline of Odisha in Puri district.

- Also called the **Surya Devalaya**, the temple is dedicated to the **Hindu god Surya**.
- Textual evidence indicates that **Narasimha I** (who reigned between 1238 and 1264) of the **Eastern Ganga dynasty** built the temple in **1250**.
- It was designated a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in 1984.

Features:

- It is a classic example of the **Odisha style of architecture** or **Kalinga architecture**.
 - The temple complex has the **appearance of a 100-foot-high solar chariot**, with 24 wheels and **pulled by six horses, all carved from stone**.
 - It is **oriented towards the east** so that the **first rays of the sunrise strike the main entrance**.
 - The **wheels of the temple are sundials**, which can be used to calculate time accurately to a minute.
 - Around the base of the temple, there are images of animals, foliage, warriors on horses, and other interesting structures.
 - The temple also features **elaborate stone carvings** depicting scenes from Hindu mythology.
 - The temple, **built from Khondalite rocks**, is also known as '**BLACK PAGODA**' due to its dark colour.
 - The temple remains a site of contemporary worship for Hindus, during the **annual Chandrabhaga Festival**, around the month of February.
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