Nationalism that’s progressive

What is a Nation?

A “nation”, should eliminate the asymmetries between “privileged and the excluded”.

It is beyond the understanding of the nation as a territorial/narrow cultural idea.

It is a means to achieve egalitarian goals.
The “state” and its institutions — the bureaucracy, the administration, the ministries, etc have to play the “nation-building” role.

The idea of nation and nationalism for the progressive Indian is opposed to the “cultural nationalist” or the “territorial nationalist”.

Cultural nationalism

Limits the Indian nation to a majoritarian construct

It reduces India to a country that is a homeland to a particular religious practice and “spiritual culture”, differences to which are treated as alien.

Territorial nationalism:

It imagines India as a geographical entity, promotes an idea of the country that is united in its diversities, envisages a state that is secular and a political unity of federal units (distinguished linguistically) in a constitutional republic.

This concept of territorial nationalism evolved over time, as part of India’s freedom struggle and its anti-colonial legacy.

Territorial nationalists strive to build a powerful Indian nation-state with nuclear weapons and to see it at the high table featuring other such countries rather than addressing inequities, poverty and socio-economic disparities in the country.

Preogressive Nationalism:-
Progressive nationalism is a humane imagining of nationhood, where the self is committed to the betterment of the other, and in particular that of other underprivileged citizens.

It is the rank opposite of cultural nationalism, which is inward-looking, narrow and demonises the other.

And it is an advance over territorial nationalism, which accommodates differences and disparity but does not do enough to overcome them.

**India adds 27 new billionaires**

India added 27 new billionaires

Mukesh Ambani, Chairman of Reliance Industries – top

Cumulative Indian billionaires’ wealth stood registered a 25 per cent growth over last year.

India is home to 111 billionaires and most of them are from Mumbai.

China:-

Overtook their U.S. counterparts

Beijing - ‘billionaire capital of the world’-first time

Number 1 in the world – generating self-made billionaires – “rags to riches,”

**GS PAPER 2**

‘Army should be used judiciously in civil crises’

Assistance of Army:-

- Chennai Floods
- Jat Agitation in Haryana
- Patel agitation in Gujarat

Primary Response:-
Army is being increasingly deployed as the primary response to assist the civil administrations and state machinery in times of crisis.

Not a healthy trend

If fear of army in the public goes away it will be a tough situation.

Deploying CAPF:-

Army is called despite Large number of Central police and paramilitary forces being available.

Army had been called in for civil aid since Independence but in the past it was because there were not enough CAPFs.

Now India has one of the largest paramilitary and CAPFs in the world

CIC gets three Commissioners

CIC gets three Commissioners

Government appointed three Commissioners at the Central Information Commission (CIC).

Amitava Bhattacharyya

Bimal Julka

Divya Prakash Sinha
India approves $150 million Iran port plan
India approved a $150 million project to develop the strategic Iranian port of Chabahar, which includes a transit route to Afghanistan bypassing neighbouring Pakistan.

Provide opportunities to Indian companies to penetrate and enhance its footprint in the region.

A sordid record in Chhattisgarh
Adivasi right activists were attacked in the recent past.

Why?
Might be for highlighting atrocities against the tribal population

Problems for tribals:-

- Killing of Adivasis in fake encounters,
- Arbitrary arrests,
- Alleged sexual assault and torture of Adivasi women by the police and security forces

Threat:-

Tribal regions though underdeveloped are mineral-rich regions and are falling prey to fierce corporate plunder of natural resources at the expense of the local population.

A partnership to Mars and beyond / Sunita’s visit to deepen space cooperation
NASA team is holding discussions with their Indian counterparts to deepen space cooperation.

Aim:-

Agreed to further promote cooperative and commercial relations between India and the United States in the field of space.

Missions Together:-

How it started?

U.S.-India civil space cooperation dates back to 1963 with the launch of NASA’s Nike-Apache sounding rocket from Indian soil.
Mars journey:-

The U.S. is leading a journey to Mars that will send astronauts to the Red Planet in the 2030s.

India and US are working together to lay the groundwork.

Joint Mars working Group:-

ISRO’s Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM) and NASA’s Mars Atmosphere and Volatile EvolutioN spacecraft (MAVEN) have been together in Mars orbit.

Third face to face meeting of Joint Mars Working Group is scheduled.

Considering ways in which we can cooperate on MOM and MAVEN and other missions in the future.

NISAR:-

First-ever joint earth science satellite mission by India and US.

The NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) will acquire critical, first-ever, all-weather, high-resolution radar measurements for use in a wide range of applications such as

- global food security,
- freshwater availability,
- human health,
- disaster prediction
- hazard response,
- climate monitoring and adaptation,
- urban management and planning.

Airborne Campaign:-

Flight of an advanced NASA visible/infrared imaging spectrometer instrument on an ISRO aircraft over sites in India.

Began last December and runs through next month, is producing vast amounts of precise data.

Women Empowerment:-

Capt. Sunita Williams has a series of engagements addressing students on her journey as an astronaut and women’s empowerment through Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education

**Pilferage remains a problem for LPG subsidy scheme**
Cylinders continue to be diverted to the commercial market.

‘March problem’:-

Customers in certain states said that they were approached by distributors to book the unused cylinders at the end of the financial year, in March.

Once these extra cylinders are booked, the report found, the distributor sells them at market rates while the families receive the subsidy amount in their accounts in the following month.

That works out to 6-10.5 per cent of the total LPG subsidy payments considering only half the eligible population across all states indulged in such activities.
Solution:-

Per-cylinder approach to the subsidy payments could remove the incidence of pilferage.

As of now the government gives a standard subsidy amount regardless of whether it is for the first cylinder consumed or the twelfth.

The report recommends a graded approach where the first few cylinders used receive a high subsidy amount while the 10th, 11th and 12th cylinders receive no subsidy at all.

Using this method, the overall subsidy received by the families for cylinders used will remain the same.

Significance of DBT:-

DBTs had led to a 23 per cent reduction in the number of gas connections, removing over 40 million ineligible ghost consumers.

GS PAPER 3

**Stone crushing unit threatens waterfall in Telangana**
A highly-polluting stone crushing machinery and tar mixing unit.

Where?

Pochera waterfalls in Adilabad district.

Why?
The Pochera stream bed and the hillocks closeby have enormous deposits of black Deccan trap rock, used in the construction sector.

Significance:-

A part of the stream and the huge pond at the foot of the waterfall are the only two watering holes within a few kilometres radius.

The large population of wild ungulates, black buck, spotted deer and nilgais come to these spots to quench their thirst at night.

Impact:-

Results in noise and dust pollution having tremendous impact on the wildlife here.

**New range to test DRDO's EW devices**

Defence Research & Development Organisation is setting up a large field, or outdoor test range, for indigenous electronic warfare (EW) devices that later get fitted on war planes, ships and army tanks

Why?

EW devices are now tested indoors in labs and are qualified for use in a year or two. An outdoor range will vastly cut this time.

What are EWs?

EW devices broadly include radars, transmitters, antennas, sensors and communication devices — the defence forces’ ‘ears and eyes’ for detecting enemy presence or to deter its intelligence gathering.
Significance:-

Some EW areas may not require imports in the near future.

Organisations Mentioned:-

- Defence Electronics Research Laboratory (DLRL)- Hyderabad
- Defence Avionics Research Establishment – Bengaluru

**A carrot for the honest / Cabinet nod to incentivise cashless transaction?**
The government is in discussions with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to allow more free ATM transactions.

Why?

Withdrawing money from an ATM costs banks less than encashment at the bank branch.

Advantages of cashless payments:-

If payments were made in cashless form

All transactions will be automatically accounted

With additional sales tax, service tax and other forms of tax collections it will increase government’s tax revenue.

Why a seller will not encourage cashless transaction?
Seller has a lot to lose by accepting the debit card.

He has to pay a merchant discount rate (varying from 0.75 per cent to 1 per cent) which decreases his margin. It is the rate charged to a merchant by a bank for providing debit and credit card services. Every such transaction is accounted for and, therefore, liable to be taxed.

Even by giving a sales tax concession for such electronic point-of-sale payments the shopkeeper would not be motivated as he will save the entire tax rather than claim a small indirect tax rebate.

How should we encourage cashless payments?

Idea:-

Give a small incentive to the taxpayer to use his card or mobile.

Example:-

The government could grant a 5 per cent income tax rebate for taxpayers who make more than 85 per cent of their payments in cashless mode.

The required percentage for high income groups could be even higher.

A routine bank statement/certificate stating percentage of cash debits separately should suffice to claim the rebate.

The rebate has to be earned over a year, the human tendency would be for taxpayers to switch to cashless transactions as a matter of habit.

And merchants will be pushed to opt for cashless transaction.
Rural empowerment:-

ATM subsidies for the relatively affluent could get suitably channelled to give adequate incentives for establishing an operating infrastructure in rural areas for accepting electronic payments and providing cash-out facilities.

Virtually all households have a bank account, and a big chunk of them have a RuPay card too.

We have to convert the direct benefits into purchasing power in the hands of the poor.

Benefits:-

Boost revenues for the government,

Increase productivity for the economy

Creates an effective infrastructure for direct benefit transfers and financial inclusion.

Steps taken by Government :-

Cabinet has approved several steps to promote cashless transactions

Steps:-

- mandatory card-based or electronic payments beyond a prescribed threshold
• withdrawal of any additional charge currently imposed on card or digital payments by various government entities
• Introduction of the required infrastructure for digital payments in all government offices
• Rationalisation of the merchant discount rate (MDR) on card transactions
• Rationalisation of telecom service charges for digital financial transactions to promote mobile banking
• Might levy a nominal cash handling charge on cash transactions above a specified level in future.

Significance:-

• Will be instrumental in reducing tax avoidance,
• Migration of Government payments and collections to cashless mode,
• Discourage transactions in cash by providing access to financial payment services to the citizens to conduct transactions through card/ digital means
• Shifting payment ecosystem from cash dominated to non-cash/less cash payments.

**Railway Budget may tickle taste buds of passengers**

People can enjoy a variety of local cuisines during train journeys

Significance:-

To give greater focus on tie-ups with local vendors for offering such a choice to travellers as part of an attempt to strengthen its e-catering business.

**Food on Track:-**

Indian Railways’ e-catering service- ‘Food on Track’,

The facility is available from 6 am-10 pm at present only in certain stations

**Mobile app:-**

Start-up companies are interested in developing a mobile application for e-catering.

**Awareness creation:-**

Promoting helpline number for e-catering will be another priority area as passengers are unaware about the present scheme.
Make names of wilful defaulters public: panel

The Standing Committee on Finance recommended that state-owned banks make public the names of their respective top 30 stressed accounts involving wilful defaulters.

Why?

- It will act as deterrent
- Enable banks to withstand pressure and interference from various quarters in dealing with the promoters for recoveries or sanctioning further loans

Other recommendations:-

- Recommended the government amend the RBI Act and other laws and guidelines.
- Specially-tasked committees be mandated to continually monitor the status of large loan portfolios and submit periodical reports to government and Parliament on the findings.
- Forensic audits should be made mandatory for specific class of borrowers.

The problem:-

Wilful defaulters owe PSU banks about 21 per cent of total non-performing assets.

Reasons for Bad loans:-

- Diversion of funds by promoters to unrelated businesses
- Poor pre-sanction due-diligence

Time for plan to roll out DBT for fertiliser subsidies

Agriculture:-

Fifty per cent of our people are dependent on the rural and farming sector.

Aim:-

Farmer should earn adequate income on a sustainable basis.
Suggestions:-

a) Crop insurance scheme should be rolled out extensively

b) More agri-produce with processing linkages will make sure that the output gets purchased at a pre-determined price.

e.g.: The direct organised linkage between farmers and sugar industry keeps the farmer in a better position and they do not depend on the vagaries of the market.

c) FDI in multi-brand retail (MBR) would actually help rural India from two perspectives.

Access to world-class technology and business practices for the entire supply chain.

With FDI in MBR, you reduce the number of middlemen; the farmer should get between 30 to 40 per cent of the final price (15-25%) doubling his income.

d) Getting electricity and roads to villages.

e) Subsidies are important for agriculture and it is time for a two-year plan to roll out direct benefit transfer (DBT) for all fertiliser subsidies for effective spending.

f) Farmer producer organizations will give better negotiating power with input providers as well as buyers.

g) The APMC Act and others have to be abolished.
The roll out of the e-platform for the national agriculture market should be done quickly. Otherwise mandis will continue to charge 15 per cent of the revenue. Digital technology is helping farmers find better prices but because of these mandi rules and poor infrastructure, they can’t move their produce around.

**Increase capital infusion in PSU banks, says Moody’s**

Moodys has said that government should increase its proposed capital infusion in public sector banks.

Why?

Increase in bad loans after Reserve Bank of India (RBI) decided to clean up banks’ balance sheets.

Credit profile will be affected:-

Credit profile of public sector banks will worsen if the government does not increase capital allocation in public sector banks in the upcoming budget.