

EDITORIAL HIGHLIGHTS

30-07-2026

Syllabus Mapping

1. **GS Paper:** GS Paper 3

2. **Syllabus Topics:**

1. Security challenges and their management in border areas.
2. Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.
3. Defense reforms and military modernization. (TH PAGE NO 8)

India's theatre reform needs a readiness framework

India's theatre-isation is nearing completion. The United States, the United Kingdom, and China have already made this shift: modern conflict favours integrated structures over single-service models. India is now moving in the same direction. The transition, however, may temporarily reduce operational readiness. The key question is what will be lost, how much, and for how long before capability is restored.

Transforming a single-service structure that has stood for seven decades is difficult. The merger of 17 single-service commands into three integrated theatres carries three real risks.

First, the knowledge gap at the top. A theatre commander will command forces from three services, at least two of which he has not spent decades honing. Staff can advise, but it cannot replace the instincts built over a career – knowing how quickly a mechanised brigade mobilises or a fighter squadron scrambles. In a fast-paced conflict such as Operation Sindoor (2025), that gap becomes critical when domain expertise matters most.

Second, each service has unique values and cultures – merging them is difficult, which will show up sharpest around careers and rank. A joint force worried about career progression or rank-equivalence – hurting morale and motivation – can dampen active combat.

Third, slower decision-making. Adding the Vice Chief of Defence Staff (VCDS), alongside the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), adds a layer between the theatre commanders and the Raksha Mantri – one more link between order and action. Theatre commanders are to report directly to the Raksha Mantri once fighting starts. But an untested structure cannot suddenly switch on under fire, and peacetime habits of routing through the VCDS would be hard to break when speed matters most.

None of this argues against theatre commands; the reform must proceed. All three hit short-term



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Modernising
military
structures while
maintaining
readiness
remains the
key challenge

readiness first, with no time to recover once fighting starts. The risk compounds; gaps in data links, jointness and logistics rarely surface until a crisis forces the question. India's Air Force chief has argued that coordination may serve better than forcing fusion too fast. The next question is how much this costs, and for how long.

How much and for how long

Here is a rough but useful distinction. First, the nature of change. Reforms touching weapon-platforms show results within months; those touching structures such as the Andaman and Nicobar Command took over a decade.

Theatre-isation is the second category – who commands what, and how fast the three services fuse as one fighting system – and that costs readiness.

Second, the scale of the delay. The current plan may take two to three years, while full transition could take a decade or more. China created theatre commands in two years and the U.S. in 10; India has spent 25 years debating the move. The real challenge is not money or hardware, but mindsets – hierarchy, authority, and command structures. Even the U.K. restructured its joint command twice since 2012. For India, the risk is reduced readiness along the borders during transition.

Third, the timing. India faces pressure on two fronts – an unresolved boundary with China, a festering rivalry with Pakistan. A long war gives theatre-isation time to mature; a short one runs on whatever readiness is on hand. China raised five theatre commands in 2016; the one facing India was tested at Doklam in 2017, and in 2020. The Goldwater-Nichols Act (1986), a success after its first test in Panama, spent a decade absorbing its readiness costs – diluted expertise, command friction.

Indian defence planning just treats reform as self-executing: approve the structure, allocate

roles, and assume readiness follows. Beijing shows otherwise: it took two years to raise five theatre commands.

The gap is partly procedural and partly semantic. India still speaks of "defence preparedness"; modern militaries focus on "military readiness" – staying ready, always. India has yet to develop a military readiness framework. It needs one now, along with four key reforms.

First, the metrics – a public statement of what the joint force must be ready to fight is essential. Naming these readiness risks matters. A "two-front" threat can quietly become "two-and-a-half" if left unaddressed. No one in India has said this openly.

Second, the standards that measure force structures against operational demands. India measures inputs – money, manpower, machines, and material (4Ms) – rather than actual military capability. A readiness standard needs three elements: unit-level readiness, force readiness, and sustainability with surge capacity. The transition window will not wait.

Third, India needs mechanisms that compel policymakers to notice and act. The U.S. created a Readiness Oversight Council in the 1990s. India needs a similar structure: a Defence Readiness Council at the ministry level, a Military Readiness Committee under the CDS, and sub-committees within each service and theatre command.

Fourth, hedge the transition itself. Keep a reserve force outside the new structure so short wars are not fought entirely on untested ground. Diplomacy with China and Pakistan may not resolve long-standing disputes, but it can buy the time theatre-isation requires. Neither guarantees peace, but both create valuable time.

Theatre-isation is not the problem, but assuming it comes at no cost is. Readiness is what is at stake, and war does not wait for the transition to finish.

Syllabus Mapping

1. **GS Paper:** GS Paper 2 & GS Paper 3

2. **Syllabus Topics:**

1. Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Labor and Employment.
2. Important aspects of governance, transparency, and accountability.
3. Government policies and interventions for development. (TH PAGE NO 9)

India's refusal to uphold a global gig work law

On June 12, in Geneva, the International Labour Conference adopted Convention No. 193, 'Decent Work in the Platform Economy', which is the first binding international treaty written for the rider, driver, picker and data-labeller who earns a living through an app. The vote was lopsided: 406 in favour (which included nations such as China, Brazil, Germany, France, South Africa, and Japan), 8 against, and 36 abstentions.

India abstained. Under the International Labour Organization's (ILO) tripartite system, each country votes through three delegates. Only India's government abstained; its employer and worker delegates voted in favour.

Abstention is not neutrality. It is a decision to maintain distance from a treaty that millions of workers waited two years to win.

What India walked away from Convention No. 193 does what India's own laws refuse to. It extends a floor of rights to platform workers regardless of classification, even if a company calls them "employees" or "independent partners". Core protections, which include pay as per the statutory or negotiated minimum; on-time payment; occupational safety and health; and social security on terms no less favourable than what comparable workers receive, apply to all.

The Convention also enters territory no global standard has touched – algorithmic management, the opaque software that allocates work, sets pay, monitors performance, and silently deactivates accounts. Platforms must now disclose significant automated decisions, explain them in writing, and keep a human in the loop. Further, Article 9 of the Convention strikes at the gig economy's central fiction: governments must classify workers correctly, guided "mainly by the facts relating to the



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Convention No. 193 extends a floor of rights to platform workers regardless of classification, even if a company calls them 'employees' or 'independent partners'

performance of work" and by what the worker does.

It is no utopian document. It is a floor for worker's rights that India's gig workers currently do not stand on.

India's gig workforce stood at roughly 7.7 million in 2020-21. By NITI Aayog's own projection, it will reach 2.35 crore by 2029-30, about 6.7% of the non-agricultural workforce. This is no longer the urban side-hustle of marketing decks. Gig work is now becoming the mode through which India's cities are fed, moved and supplied.

Further, NITI Aayog data shows that about 39% of gig workers earn ₹10,000-₹25,000 a month and 34% earn ₹25,000-₹40,000, with wages stretched across 12-hour shifts; fuel paid for by the worker himself; and no overtime, because overtime requires an employer to exist. Only about 15% have any social security. The rest ride into Indian traffic each morning with no accident cover, no sick pay, no pension, and an algorithm that can switch off their income without explanation.

The government's defenders will say that India needs no Geneva treaty because it has its own framework. The Code on Social Security, 2020, part of the four Labour Codes brought into force in November 2020, was among the world's first central laws to define "gig worker" and "platform worker". It directs aggregators to pay 1%-2% of their annual turnover, capped at 5% of worker payouts, into a social security fund.

While on paper, this sounds like leadership, in practice, it is a promise printed and shelved. Neither the central law nor most of the State laws specify the nature, quantum or eligibility of benefits. The contribution mechanism remains largely un-operationalised and the schemes are notional. Meanwhile, the real laws have come from the States: Rajasthan's Platform-Based Gig Workers Act of 2023, and the welfare boards drafted in Karnataka and Telangana. The

Centre abstains in Geneva while its own States legislate.

India's abstention at the Conference reads less like a one-off position than a habit. India is a founding member of the ILO and has ratified six of the eight core conventions. It has not ratified Convention No. 87 (Freedom of Association) or No. 98 (Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining) because they would give government servants the right to strike, which domestic rules bar. Nor has it ratified Convention No. 190 on violence and harassment at work.

A founder of the ILO that will not sign the ILO's own guarantees is not a country caught off-guard. It has a settled posture: endorse the principle but withhold the obligation. The logic is consistent. India ratifies Conventions only once national law is in full conformity. There is a federalism argument too, as labour is a concurrent subject. But abstention does not protect federalism; the States are already moving.

What abstention costs

When a country ratifies an ILO convention and writes it into domestic law, a worker can sue a platform for redress. Abstention forecloses that future. It tells every aggregator in India that the classification fiction is safe here and that the algorithm need not explain itself. It widens the gap between a delivery worker in China, who will have rights, and one in Chennai, who will not.

The government had a choice between the worker and the platform, and in one of the most public forums on earth it chose to make no choice at all, which, when one party holds the app and the other the handlebars, is the same as choosing the app.

The World Bank estimates that 154-435 million people already earn through platforms worldwide. Twenty-three and a half million of them will be Indian by 2030. They delivered the meal. The least their government owed them was a show of hands.

Syllabus Mapping

1. GS Paper: GS Paper 3

2. Syllabus Topics:

1. Science and Technology—developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.
2. Indigenization of technology and developing new technology.
3. Awareness in the fields of IT, Computers, and Robotics.(TH PAGE NO 10)

Behind China's AI gift, a constraint

China's embrace of open-weight AI models is driven as much by compute constraints as by a bid to project itself as a responsible global AI power; until it overcomes chip and inference bottlenecks, Beijing is likely to keep sharing its models with the world

WORLD INSIGHT

Amit Kumar

At the ninth World AI Conference in Shanghai this month, Chinese President Xi Jinping addressed the gathering for the first time in nine years. It is indicative of the priority that AI occupies for the leadership. At the conference, Mr. Xi pitched Chinese AI models as a global public good. The contrast was clear as day. America is selling closed-source, proprietary models while China is offering open-weight models to the world. This distinction is not merely technical, but equally political.

Unlike Anthropic, OpenAI, and Google, which host their frontier models on their respective servers and offer services via an application programming interface (API), Chinese labs such as DeepSeek, Qwen, and Moonshot also release their weights for anyone to download. Unlike American models, these can be customised, modified, and even further trained. There is no subscription to cancel or terms of service. The maker cannot revoke or restrict access. So long as one can manage the requisite compute to host the model, even Papua New Guinea or Senegal can run it locally on their servers. And most importantly, the data never leaves the border.

AI diplomacy

However, one may wonder what explains China's benevolence. Well, to begin with, the objective is to project China as a responsible AI player in the comity of nations. Unlike the Americans, who he alleged to have overstretched the concept of national security to AI, and thereby adopted an exclusionary approach, China is committed to sharing the benefits and fruits of AI. Mr. Xi's framing was indicative in this regard. He described AI as "humanity's collective wisdom," a "historic opportunity" to "bridge the AI and digital divides," and something that



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"should not be a solo performance by a single country but a symphony of international cooperation." The underlying message, aimed at Washington, projected Beijing as the open and cooperative alternative to the U.S.'s AI models.

But there is a limiting factor at play too that explains Beijing's benevolence – its compute constraint, both for training and inference.

Since 2022, the U.S. administration, in concert with its allies, has imposed a series of export restrictions on China, limiting its ability to both mass-import and mass-manufacture high-end chips.

The compute constraint

To understand this constraint, one must separate two very different tasks – training a model and serving it. Training is a one-time cost. A lab assembles a cluster of chips, runs it for a few months and comes up with a finished model. The fleet required is numerically small. For instance, GPT-4 was trained on an estimated 25,000 Nvidia chips, and Meta trained its Llama 3.1 on 16,400 chips. DeepSeek, on the other hand, trained its acclaimed V3 model on 2,000 export-compliant H800s. A frontier

model, in other words, needs chips in the thousands, and it needs them only once.

Serving that model to the public, however, is an altogether different proposition. Inference scales with the user base and requires continuous expansion as it must answer hundreds of millions of user queries. OpenAI crossed a million GPUs in 2025, and Meta targeted the equivalent of 1.3 million by the end of 2025. Thus, for any model with a mass consumer base, the serving fleet dwarfs the training fleet, often by ten to a hundred times.

In other words, the distinction is that of a stockpile and a flow. To train a model, a lab can accumulate ten or twenty thousand chips through smuggling, stockpiling, and modest domestic production. This is precisely why the export controls could not prevent China from reaching parity at the model level. Inference, however, cannot be solved this way. The export controls mean that the most advanced chips remain out of bounds for Chinese firms. Additionally, the concessions the U.S. has offered exist largely on paper. Around 10 Chinese firms were cleared in principle to buy up to 75,000 H200 chips each, but not a single unit had been delivered by mid-2026, as

sales remained stalled and Beijing itself directed firms towards domestic alternatives.

China can attempt to bridge the shortfall through domestic production, but even here, restrictions on export of EUVs continue to prove a handicap. SMIC's 5nm line in China runs at roughly 20% yield without EUV tools, far short of commercial viability. This severely restricts the ability of Chinese labs to offer services via API alone. DeepSeek's decision to freeze new registrations in January 2025 was influenced by a surge in traffic it could not serve, alongside a reported 'large-scale malicious attack'.

Openness by necessity

Furthermore, given that Chinese models are nearly as good as the U.S.'s frontier models, their popularity is increasing. Data show that the Chinese models' share of U.S. firms' AI usage has hit a record 60% on OpenRouter – a marketplace for routing queries to various models based on requests.

American firms are preferring Chinese models as they provide comparable services at a fraction of the cost. But this success comes with a rider – the need for enormous compute. The solution thus is to simply outsource compute via open-weight models. Hence, China's open-weight offering to the world is largely a product of its structural constraint. It can build models that rival the U.S. but cannot serve them at scale.

But Beijing cannot ignore the urge to securitise and restrain access for too long. Sooner or later, it will face that choice. Indeed, Beijing is already reported to be weighing restrictions on overseas access to its most capable models.

One can expect China's frontier models to move towards proprietary models, while trailing models remaining open-weight. But so long as China cannot overcome the larger constraint, it is likely to continue fielding open-weight models. And China's constraint is the world's gain. (Amit Kumar is a Staff Research Analyst at Takshashila Institution)

THE GIST

China's open-weight AI models can be downloaded, customised and deployed on local servers, allowing countries to retain control over their data without relying on proprietary, API-based services.

Even as Beijing promotes open-weight AI as a global public good, it is already weighing restrictions on overseas access to its most capable frontier models, signalling that this openness may not be permanent.

Syllabus Mapping

1. **GS Paper:** GS Paper 1 & GS Paper 3

2. **Syllabus Topics:**

1. Modern Indian history—Bengal Renaissance scientific awakening.
2. Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology. (TH PAGE NO 10)

The IACS and the making of modern Indian science

Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science fulfilled Mahendralal Sircar's vision of scientific self-reliance

Shekhar Mande

The late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries marked a period of profound intellectual and cultural awakening across India, with Bengal emerging as its prominent centre. Although similar currents of intellectual, social, and cultural reform were taking shape in several other parts of the country, the scale, diversity, and enduring influence of this awakening found their fullest expression in Bengal.

What is now widely known as the Bengal Renaissance not only transformed Bengal but also profoundly influenced the intellectual, social, and cultural evolution of modern India. The movement fostered remarkable advances across a broad spectrum of disciplines, ranging from philosophy, spirituality, literature, and the arts to education, social reform, and the natural sciences. It produced an extraordinary generation of philosophers, reformers, educators, scientists, writers,

and artists whose collective vision and achievements laid many intellectual and institutional foundations of modern India.

A vision for scientific self-reliance

One of the most influential figures of this remarkable period was Mahendralal Sircar (1833-1904). Deeply concerned that the colonial administration had failed to provide adequate opportunities for Indians to pursue education and research in the natural sciences, Sircar articulated a bold vision for scientific self-reliance.

In 1869, in an article published in the *Calcutta Journal of Medicine*, he proposed the establishment of the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science (IACS), arguing that scientific education was indispensable for India's intellectual and societal progress. As he wrote: "The best method, and under the present circumstances, the only method, that we can conceive of, by which the people of India can be essentially improved, by which the Hindu mind can be developed to its full proportions, is as we have seen

above, by the cultivation of the Physical Sciences". Three years later, while addressing a meeting of the Bethune Society at the Medical College Theatre in Calcutta in 1872, Sircar lamented the lack of institutional support for scientific research in India under colonial rule: "I must say, though I say with deep regret, that our Government has hitherto afforded no opportunity, nor offered any encouragement to the pursuit of science by the native of this country".

These statements reveal Sircar's remarkable foresight. At a time when scientific research in India received little official encouragement, he envisioned an institution that would enable Indians to pursue scientific inquiry and contribute to the advancement of knowledge. That vision culminated in the establishment of the IACS on July 29, 1876, as the country's first national institution dedicated to scientific research by Indians. Today, as we celebrate its 150th anniversary, we honour not merely the founding of an institution but the birth of a scientific

movement that transformed the landscape of Indian science.

Among the most celebrated scientists associated with the IACS was C.V. Raman, whose pioneering work transformed modern physics. Shortly after joining the Accountant General's Office in Calcutta in 1907, Raman noticed a "strange-looking board" bearing the name 'Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science'. Intrigued, he made enquiries about the institution and was introduced to Amrit Lal Sircar, the son of the Association's founder. Recognising Raman's enthusiasm for scientific research, Amrit extended an open invitation to use the Association's laboratories for his experiments outside office hours.

For nearly a decade, Raman followed a remarkable routine. He spent the early mornings and evenings at the IACS laboratory while serving as a government officer during the day. This extraordinary dedication continued until 1917, when he resigned from the Finance Department to accept the Palit Professorship of Physics at the University of Calcutta. Even thereafter, IACS remained the principal venue for his experimental investigations.

It was in the laboratories of IACS that Raman made his most celebrated discovery, the Raman effect, which he announced to the world on February 28, 1928. This landmark discovery earned him the Nobel Prize in physics in 1930, making him the first Asian scientist to win this prize in the sciences. In many ways, Raman's achievement represented the

fulfilment of Sircar's vision: that an institution founded and nurtured by Indians for the cultivation of science could produce discoveries of the highest international significance.

A legacy that endures

The founding of the IACS also marked a defining moment in the renaissance of science in India. More than the establishment of a scientific institution, it embodied the aspiration that Indians should not merely learn science but actively create it. Over the past century and a half, IACS has nurtured generations of exceptional scientists, provided a vibrant institutional framework for the pursuit of scientific inquiry, and made contributions of enduring significance to the advancement of science worldwide.

As we commemorate this historic milestone, we pay our deepest tribute to the vision and foresight of Mahendralal Sircar, whose unwavering belief in the transformative power of science made the institution possible. We also celebrate the extraordinary legacy of the IACS itself, a legacy of intellectual curiosity, scientific excellence, and national service that continues to inspire generations of researchers. May that spirit continue to guide the Institute, advancing the frontiers of knowledge and contributing to the scientific and technological progress of India and the world. (Shekhar C. Mande is president, Indian National Science Academy, and national president, Vijnana Bharati)

Syllabus Mapping(IE PAGE NO 14)

1. **GS Paper:** GS Paper 2

2. **Syllabus Topics:**

1. Parliament and State Legislatures—structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.
2. Delimitation issues and federal representation.

An 850-seat Lok Sabha means more MPs, less Parliament



THAROORTHINK

BY SHASHI THAROOR

THE GOVERNMENT'S seeming determination to proceed with a revised delimitation that drastically increases the size of the Lok Sabha to 824 or 850 seats marks a disastrous watershed in India's institutional architecture. The underlying justification offered by the government is purely mathematical: The size of the Lower House cannot remain frozen at the 543-seat limit established in 1972, since when the nation's population has more than doubled. Yet, beneath this seemingly democratic argument lies a profound hazard.

Amid all the other major challenges of the looming delimitation exercise — notably the severe political and federal friction caused by penalising southern states for successful population control, while disproportionately rewarding the northern Hindi heartland for its failures — a basic question remains unaddressed: Does it make any sense to have a legislature so massive and structurally unwieldy? No established democracy does.

Every mature democratic system recognises that a Parliament must be capped at a size that permits genuine legislative scrutiny, cohesive debate, and individual member participation. By choosing to push the Lok Sabha towards 850 seats (a size no other democratic legislature has), India is charting an anomalous and dangerous course. Democratic theory and global practice consistently show that beyond a threshold, a legislature

ceases to function as a deliberative body and deteriorates into a chaotic colosseum where only a select few can speak, while the rest are reduced to passive spectators, mere numbers on voting machines.

After all, the United States House of Representatives was legally capped at 435 in 1929, when the United States population stood at 120 million. Today, the American population has tripled to over 335 million, yet the size of the House remains at 435. Americans recognise that increasing the number of representatives to match population growth would paralyse the legislative process. Instead, each member simply represents a larger number of voters, relying on robust local staff, modern communication, and a highly organised committee system to bridge the governance gap. Indian MPs can do that too.

The realities of an 850-member Lok Sabha are devastating for individual legislators. In a standard parliamentary session, time is an unyielding, scarce resource. Consider the daily Question Hour or a standard legislative debate on a complex bill. If a debate is allocated four hours, and time is distributed according to party strength, at most 15-20 MPs out of 850 will be able to participate. In practice, backbenchers and members of smaller parties will be mostly silenced.

With an oversized Parliament, a vast majority of MPs will never get to ask a question, initiate a private member's bill, or participate in a substantive debate during their entire five-year tenure. They will be transformed into silent placeholders, raising their hands when the party commands. This will worsen an already distressing trend in Indian governance: The shrinking role (and systemic degradation) of Parliament. In recent years, the number of days Parliament meets

annually has steadily declined, bills have been passed via voice vote within minutes without standing committee scrutiny, and the Opposition is frequently sidelined. Flooding the chamber with hundreds of additional members will accelerate this marginalisation, burying quality under the sheer weight of quantity.

An oversized legislature where the vast majority of members have no voice suits an executive that prefers compliance over scrutiny. When a Parliament becomes too large to debate, it naturally cedes its oversight power to the executive cabinet. The individual lawmaker loses leverage, and the House is reduced to a notice board and a rubber stamp.

This structural transformation bears an ominous resemblance to the authoritarian legislative model in Beijing or Pyongyang. Specifically, an 850-seat Lok Sabha risks becoming a desecration of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference or the North Korean Supreme People's Assembly — enormous, unwieldy bodies designed to look grand, representative, and pluralistic, but reduced to applauding set speeches by the Great Leader. Their sheer size guarantees they cannot engage in real legislative negotiation or challenge the ruling executive. They exist to perform consensus, not to build it through debate. If India builds a massive legislature where MPs are stripped of their voices due to the arithmetic of time constraints, it will have successfully hollowed out its democracy, replacing a vibrant

deliberative body with a performative pageant. Far better to save the extra expenditure on salaries, accommodation, travel and pensions for 300 more MPs and instead build a serious office building for the existing MPs near Parliament, as every other democracy provides its legislators.

The government's primary defence — that a single MP cannot effectively represent 2 to 3 million citizens — is a fallacy that misinterprets the role of a national lawmaker. An MP's constitutional duty is national legislation, foreign policy, macro-economic governance, and holding the Union executive accountable. They are not municipal councillors or MLAs. If India established a sharp, institutional demarcation between the roles of Members of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs) and Members of Parliament (MPs), a smaller, focused group of MPs could easily represent large constituencies. Local grievances, municipal infrastructure, and civic amenities fall squarely within the domain of state legislatures and local panchayats or municipal corporations under the 73rd and 74th Amendments; as population increases, expand the number of MLAs! If local governance frameworks are empowered, the local citizen does not need to look to an MP for everyday civic needs. By keeping the Lok Sabha compact and focused on national governance, and leaving localised representation to state and municipal levels, India could maintain a highly efficient, effective, and truly participative federal structure, without ruining the functionality of Parliament.

The proposal to expand the Lok Sabha to 850 would create a House that is not a forum for governance but an echo chamber for the government. As we contemplate the future of our democracy, we must realise that true representation lies in the quality of debate, the rigour of legislative committee scrutiny, and the empowerment of local levels of government — not in creating an unwieldy mega-chamber that replaces democratic discourse with empty theatre.

The writer is a fourth-term Congress MP from Thiruvananthapuram.

An oversized legislature where the vast majority of members have no voice suits an executive that prefers compliance over scrutiny

Syllabus Mapping(IE PAGE NO 14)

GS Paper: GS Paper 1 & GS Paper 4

Syllabus Topics:

1. Indian culture—Bhakti movement and social reform philosophies.
2. Ethics and Human Values; Moral thinkers and philosophers from India.
3. Concept of Antyodaya and inclusive governance.

Syllabus Mapping(IE PAGE NO 14)

GS Paper: GS Paper 2 & GS Paper 3

Syllabus Topics:

1. Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.
2. Science and Technology—developments and their applications in healthcare.
Vector-borne disease control and public health management.

From Ravidas and Begumpura, a philosophy of governance



ABHINAV PRAKASH

RAVIDAS IS a saint amongst the saints. Kabir's line captures the place of Sant Shiromani Guru Ravidas ji Maharaj in awakening the consciousness of the Bhakti era. To carry that consciousness to every household, BJP president Nitin Nambin has launched a special campaign from Varanasi, running from Guru Purnima on July 29 to Magh Purnima on February 20, the 650th *jayanti* of Sant Ravidas.

This is not just an occasion for remembrance but also a chance to reaffirm our faith in the long-neglected, unbroken line of Indian social and spiritual thought. To understand Ravidas, one must revisit the Bhakti movement and the consciousness it produced, which expressed itself not in the language of philosophers but in *lok bhasha*, the language of the people.

Modernity is often confused with Western influence, but the seeds of Indian modernity lie in the Bhakti movement, especially the teachings of Ravidas.

Modernity rests on four pillars. The first is equality and human dignity. To speak of equality in a society divided by *jati* and *varna*, and to carry spiritual democracy into social equality, was the movement's greatest achievement. Ravidas's famous line, "What separation is there between you and me?", is a social manifesto. The second is the reality of this world and the primacy of *karma*. Against every temptation of escapism, Ravidas insisted that this world is real, and that one must work here and make it better. The third is the dignity of labour. In a society that had long regarded physical work with contempt, Ravidas raised it to the level of worship. The fourth is good governance and welfare. Ravidas did not confine himself to individual liberation; in conceiving Begumpura, he left a standard against which any state may be measured.

The modernisation and democracy the BJP articulates in modern political vocabulary is a contemporary translation of these teachings, which are also reflected in the concept of *ekama manav darshan*. Ravidas wanted a state in which everyone was fed, and the great and the small lived as equals.

That is *Antyodaya*, which guides the BJP's governance philosophy.

How that conception is being translated into policy can be read in his poem, "Begumpura". Ravidas names his ideal city "the place without sorrow". PM-KISAN, Ayushman Bharat, the Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana and the Jal Jeevan Mission all seek a society in which no citizen is one illness or one failed harvest away from ruin. He then describes the city as having no revenue demand, no property burden, no fear, no wrongdoing, no dread of decline. Six centuries later, that list reads like a governance agenda, and it has been met by GST and direct tax reform, BNS, the SVAMITVA Scheme.

The governance of this city, he continues, is settled and permanent, and within it there is no second rank or third, for all are of one standing. That is a constitutional principle stated in the 15th century. Its fulfilment lies in discrimination-free access to government schemes, and in the abrogation of Article 370, which gave the people of Jammu and Kashmir the same rights as every other Indian.

Then comes the sharpest political demand in the poem: "Residents walk wherever they please, and nobody is stopped at the palace gate." This is a call for the abolition of the *darbar*. Seven Race Course Road is now Lok Kalyan Marg, Rajpath is now Kartavya Path, Raj Bhavans are now Lok Bhavans, and the new central secretariat is Kartavya Bhavan. These are not renamings but a change in the culture of power, as is direct benefit transfer, which removed the modern courtiers who once stood between the citizen and what he was owed.

Ravidas closes by naming himself and his caste without apology: Whoever is a citizen of this city is a friend of mine. That is the fraternity on which Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat rests. His Begumpura, Kabir's Premnagar, Tukaram's Pandharpur and Ambedkar's Prabuddha Bharat are names for a single dream, and Viksit Bharat is the contemporary link in that unbroken chain.

The writer is national vice-president, BJP Youth Wing

Dengue vaccine must complement prevention



RAJIB DASGUPTA

INDIA HAS taken an important step in the fight against dengue. On July 21, the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation granted marketing authorisation to Qdenga, the country's first approved dengue vaccine. It has been approved in 42 countries. Over 24 million doses have been administered worldwide, and it has the WHO's imprimatur.

Dengue, one of the world's fastest-spreading mosquito-borne viral diseases, is caused by four closely related virus types — DENV-1, DENV-2, DENV-3 and DENV-4 — and is transmitted primarily by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito. Clinical trials have shown that Qdenga provides long-lasting protection against all four dengue virus types in people who have had the disease. It has also been shown to protect against DENV-1 and DENV-2 among people who have never had dengue, with particularly strong protection against DENV-2, on which the vaccine is based.

The vaccine is administered in two doses. If the second is delayed, the schedule does not need to be restarted; the missed dose can be given at the earliest opportunity. It is not recommended for children under six because of lower efficacy and the relatively low prevalence of prior dengue infection in that age group. The WHO does not recommend its use beyond 60 years until there is more evidence on safety and efficacy; it should not be administered to pregnant women, women planning pregnancy within one month of vaccination, breastfeeding mothers, immunocompromised individuals, or those receiving immunosuppressive therapies such as chemotherapy or high-dose corticosteroids.

Affordability is likely to determine uptake. At an expected price of Rs 3000-6000 per dose, initial demand is likely to come primarily from the urban middle class. Whether the vaccine should eventually be included in the Universal Immunisation Programme is a complex question. The WHO recommends that countries consider introducing Qdenga into routine immunisation only in areas where dengue transmission is a significant public health threat. Indicators include a dengue seroprevalence exceeding 60 per cent by the age of nine or a mean age of dengue-related hospitalisation below 16 years. India will need robust epidemiological data to determine which regions meet these criteria before considering wider public funding.

Vaccination, however, is only one part of the solution. The same *Aedes* mosquitoes also transmit chikungunya and Zika, making integrated vector management indispensable. Eliminating mosquito breeding sites through better drainage and waste disposal must remain the first line of defence. These efforts should be complemented by biological measures such as larvivorous fish, judicious use of chemical and microbial control methods, stronger coordination across agencies, and sustained community participation. Improving public awareness and health literacy is equally important. Qdenga is a significant addition to India's public health arsenal, but it should complement, not replace, a comprehensive strategy for controlling mosquito-borne diseases.

The writer is chairperson, Centre of Social Medicine and Community Health, JNU

IN GOOD faith

To understand Ravidas, one must revisit the Bhakti movement and the consciousness it produced, which expressed itself not in the language of philosophers but in *lok bhasha*, the language of the people

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Syllabus Mapping

1. **GS Paper:** GS Paper 2 & GS Paper 3

2. **Syllabus Topics:**

1. Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.
2. Science and Technology—developments and their applications in healthcare.
3. Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) and public health governance. (IE PAGE NO 15)



KAMINI WALIA

THE LATEST global study in *The Lancet Public Health* has again highlighted what infectious disease experts in India have known for years: India uses too many broad-spectrum “watch” antibiotics and too few first-line “access” antibiotics. It estimates that India’s antibiotic consumption is higher than the optimal target and that the antibiotic mix is skewed towards drugs that should ideally be reserved for more serious infections.

The tendency to overuse broad-spectrum antibiotics has been documented repeatedly over the past two decades through surveillance studies, hospital audits and national antimicrobial resistance (AMR) programmes. The more important question is why physicians continue to prescribe them.

The answer lies less in irrationality than in the realities of clinical practice. Doctors frequently prescribe antibiotics before a definitive diagnosis is available because patients often present late. Diagnostic facilities are limited or unreliable, and treatment decisions cannot always wait. Similarly, inadequate infection prevention and control in healthcare facilities increases the likelihood of healthcare-associated infections, prompting clinicians to choose broader-spectrum agents from the outset. In other words, antibiotics are often used to compensate for systemic weaknesses.

On antibiotics, problem isn’t just overprescribing

If India wants to reduce inappropriate antibiotic use, it must address these underlying drivers. The first priority is strengthening infection prevention. Better water, sanitation and hygiene, wider use of vaccines, and sustained investment in infection prevention and control programmes in hospitals will reduce the burden of infections that require antibiotics. While initiatives like Kayakalp have improved cleanliness in public hospitals, preventing healthcare-associated infections requires continuous investment in trained infection-control personnel, surveillance systems, antimicrobial stewardship and institutional accountability.

The second priority is strengthening diagnostic capacity. Rational antibiotic prescribing is only possible when clinicians have confidence in laboratory results. India has begun building this through the National Health Mission, Free Diagnostics Service Initiative, National Essential Diagnostics List and expanded lab networks. Improving laboratory quality, accreditation, turnaround time and confidence in microbiology reports is equally important.

Education is central. Clinicians need training in antimicrobial stewardship and evidence-based prescribing. Communities must understand that antibiotics do not treat viral infections

Clinicians need training in antimicrobial stewardship and evidence-based prescribing. Communities must understand that antibiotics do not treat viral infections

It is equally important to recognise that India has not been standing still. Over the past decade, the country has established a National Action Plan on AMR, expanded surveillance through the National Centre for Disease Control and Indian Council of Medical Research, introduced antimicrobial stewardship initiatives, strengthened essential diagnostics, regulated fixed-dose combinations and increased political recognition of AMR as a national priority. These are substantial structural reforms that take years to translate into measurable changes.

A country that accounts for nearly one-fifth of the world’s population and manages one of the largest public health systems cannot transform antibiotic use overnight. Progress should be judged not only by current consumption patterns but also by the strength and direction of ongoing reforms.

International reports are valuable when they stimulate action, but repeating what is already well established adds little unless accompanied by practical solutions. Reducing antimicrobial resistance will not be achieved by asking doctors simply to prescribe fewer antibiotics. This can cost lives. It will be achieved by creating a health system where they can safely prescribe the right antibiotic, for the right patient, at the right time and the country is committed to achieving this.

The writer is senior scientist and programme officer, AMR, ICMR

Syllabus Mapping

1. GS Paper: GS Paper 3

2. Syllabus Topics:

1. Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development.
2. Infrastructure: Energy and logistics.
3. Effects of global geopolitical conflicts on national energy security. (IE PAGE NO16)

As conflict expands to Red Sea, India's crude options



SUKALP SHARMA

THE THEATRE of the West Asia conflict, earlier limited to the Strait of Hormuz from the perspective of India's crude oil imports, has now widened. Last week, the Yemen-based Houthi militia announced it would target Saudi Arabian tankers attempting to cross the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and indeed attacked a few ships.

Like the Strait of Hormuz, the Bab el-Mandeb — which connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea — is another critical chokepoint for global trade, and energy supplies in particular.

Saudi Arabia was using the route to export its oil, including to India, as Strait of Hormuz traffic fell to a trickle. The Houthi impact is already visible, with vessel crossings via Bab el-Mandeb slumping to an average of 31 per day over the past three days from 43 per day in the first half of July, according to S&P Global data from July 27.

The Houthi blockade could delay oil shipments to Asia by forcing tankers to sail through the Suez Canal and then taking the circuitous route around Africa. This would add up to four weeks to the journey, and keep oil prices elevated. This matters for India, which depends on imports to meet over 88% of its oil requirement. But according to analysts, the current risks appear manageable despite the concerns.

The first and the most obvious fall-back for the country is Russian crude, the mainstay of its oil imports. So far, Russian oil appears to be safe from Houthi attacks, as it was in earlier Bab el-Mandeb blockades by the Iran-backed militia.

Russian oil exports are also under pressure amid Ukraine's strikes against energy export infrastructure. But the expectation is that while this may restrict the availability of Moscow's crude, and thus drive up prices, any material impact on India would be limited from a supply security perspective.

The Russian option

As per the predictions, if Russian oil (coming through the Red Sea route) is not affected and the blockade is targeted only

• RUSSIAN OIL FLOWS TO INDIA VIA RED SEA UNAFFECTED SO FAR



Dual chokepoints

- With traffic through the Strait of Hormuz down to a trickle, Saudi Arabia was using the Bab el-Mandeb to export its oil, including to India.
- Now, the Houthi blockade on Saudi-linked shipping and energy supplies would force tankers to sail westward instead, through the Suez Canal, and then taking the circuitous route around Africa.
- The Suez Canal-Red Sea route is also the primary route for Russian oil to reach Indian ports.
- So far, Russian oil appears to be safe from Houthi attacks as it was in earlier Bab el-Mandeb blockades by the Iran-backed militia.
- But Russian exports are also under pressure amid Ukraine's strikes.

against Saudi Arabia, we don't see a very big challenge. We expect the movement of Russian to increase, which would compensate for any loss in Saudi volumes and cover the requirement. But many ifs and buts are still there, so maybe in another week or 10 days' time, there would be more clarity," state-owned Bharat Petroleum's Chairman and Managing Director Sanjay Khanna told *The Indian Express* last week. The Suez Canal-Red Sea route is the primary route for Russian oil to reach Indian ports.

Industry analysts said that if Saudi Arabian oil supplies to India are disrupted, Indian refiners are likely to further increase purchases of Russian oil barrels, while also drawing on commercial crude inventories to bridge temporary supply gaps. Moreover, India's increasingly diversified crude slate — which includes dozens of suppliers from across the world — provides greater flexibility than in previous years, reducing the risk of a severe supply disruption.

"If Red Sea transit remains uninterrupted, Indian refiners retain an important supply buffer through Saudi Arabia's East-West (Yanbu) pipeline, which has recently supplied roughly 300,000–500,000 bpd (barrels per day) of crude. However, if the security situation deteriorates and Red Sea imports become unavailable during August, refiners will need to replace those barrels from

Emergency options, beyond Russia

West Asian crude that can bypass regional chokepoints are practical emergency options for Indian refiners.

There are also options to increase purchases of American and South American oil, but the long voyage times are a challenge.

alternative sources. Indian refiners are likely to increase purchases of Russian spot barrels where available, while also drawing on commercial crude inventories to bridge any temporary supply gaps," said Sumit Ritolia, manager, refining and modelling at commodity market analytics firm Kpler.

Amid the Strait of Hormuz crisis, India's Russian crude imports have increased from around 1 million bpd in February to record highs of about 2.6 million bpd in June, accounting for over 50% of India's overall oil imports. July oil imports from Russia are also tracking at similar levels, as per ship-tracking data. Before the war, over 40% of India's oil imports came from West Asia via the Strait of Hormuz.

According to Ritolia, Russian crude remains India's strongest supply hedge, and imports could potentially rise toward or even above 3 million bpd if market conditions and Russian export availability permit. He added that the situation would become tighter if Red Sea flows are disrupted, but it is unlikely to become critical.

"Russian oil will provide some relief for India and China. Urals was offered at around \$7/barrel discount to Dubai (crude grade) before the latest escalation; those discounts have now disappeared, and Russian barrels are now moving at premiums as Indian refiners compete for supply. However, as India

India faces fresh oil supply risks as the Houthis threaten Saudi shipments via Red Sea. Russian crude and alternative sources could cushion the impact

will try to absorb as much Urals (Russia's flagship crude grade) as possible, its incremental availability is limited as China and Turkey are competing for the same barrels," Abu Dhabi-based energy analyst Natalia Katona told *The Indian Express*.

The risks to Russia's oil exports

According to industry experts and analysts, a key uncertainty from India's point of view is whether Russia can sustain higher export availability, given the impact of continued Ukrainian attacks on parts of its upstream and downstream oil infrastructure.

"While the Strait of Hormuz and Red Sea remain strategically important, the uninterrupted operation of Russian export infrastructure — particularly Black Sea terminals such as Novorossiysk — has become equally, if not more, critical for India's crude supply...any disruption to Saudi exports via the Red Sea would have a relatively smaller impact on India's overall crude availability than a sustained disruption to Russian Black Sea exports," said Ritolia.

Unlike the Red Sea, where some cargoes can be rerouted around Africa, export alternatives for oil exported from Black Sea ports are limited. Any prolonged disruption there could tighten global crude availability, disrupt trade flows, and directly affect India's largest source of imported crude.

According to Katona, the larger immediate concern is Novorossiysk's Sheshkharis terminal, which halted operations last week following Ukrainian attacks on regional oil infrastructure. The terminal is particularly important for India, as of the 1.1 million bpd crude loaded there in June, around 840,000 bpd went to India. Overall, the Novorossiysk complex supplied about 28% of India's Russian crude imports in June.

Russia had recently increased crude exports as Ukrainian attacks sent several refineries offline for repairs, which freed additional barrels for the export market — mainly China and India. In the medium term, the return of the affected Russian refining capacity is also a risk for India, particularly if the Hormuz crisis doesn't abate.

"As more refineries return, fewer barrels will be available for export. Given Russia's recent fuel shortages, Moscow is likely to reduce the record 4.5 million bpd of crude exported in June, of which about 55% went to India. If all major refineries resume normal operations, Russian crude exports could fall by as much as 1 million bpd," said Katona.