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Headlines:

- India–China Push for Progress on Border Delimitation
- India's Youth Crisis: Beyond Examination Reforms
- Judicial Appointments: Need for Greater Transparency in Collegium
- India's Space Sector: From Mission Success to Commercial Reliability
- Youth Vote and Its Electoral Impact



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1. India-China Push for Progress on Border Delimitation

GS – II: International Relations, GS Paper III: Border management, national security

Why in News?

- India and China held the 25th round of Special Representatives (SR) talks in Beijing, led by NSA Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.
- The talks focused on boundary delimitation, border management, peace and tranquillity along the LAC, and broader bilateral relations.

Key Developments

- **Boundary delimitation:** Both sides discussed ways to advance negotiations, though specific LAC sectors being considered were not disclosed.
- **Early-harvest mechanism:** An Expert Group under the WMCC was agreed upon to explore early boundary-delimitation outcomes in selected areas.
- **Border management:** Emphasis was placed on strengthening communication mechanisms and preventing misunderstanding, miscalculation and escalation along the LAC.
- **Guiding principles:** Both sides reaffirmed the 2005 Political Guiding Principles and commitment to a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable boundary solution.



Significance

- **Institutionalised engagement:** Resumption and continuation of SR talks strengthens diplomatic mechanisms for managing the boundary dispute.
- **Stability first:** The immediate focus is on institutionalising border stability rather than seeking an immediate comprehensive settlement.
- **Gradual normalisation:** India described bilateral ties as “steadily returning to normalcy” following the October 2024 Modi–Xi meeting.

- **BRICS context:** Stable border conditions can create a favourable diplomatic environment for leader-level engagement ahead of the BRICS Summit in New Delhi.

Challenges

- Unresolved boundary dispute and differing perceptions of the LAC.
- Structural differences and continuing strategic competition.
- Risk of military incidents and miscalculation despite improved communication.
- Balancing engagement with China alongside India's strategic partnerships and security interests.

Way Forward

- **Sustained dialogue:** Maintain regular diplomatic and military-level engagement.
- **Operationalise early harvest:** Translate existing understandings into time-bound outcomes in selected sectors.
- **Confidence-building:** Strengthen protocols and communication channels to prevent border escalation.
- **Phased delimitation:** Pursue a sector-wise, mutually acceptable approach towards boundary settlement.
- **Pragmatic cooperation:** Expand areas of convergence while managing persistent strategic differences.

2. India's Youth Crisis: Beyond Examination Reforms

GS Paper III: Employment, manufacturing, investment, inclusive growth and demographic dividend.

Why in News?

- Recent youth protests over competitive-examination reforms have highlighted deeper concerns surrounding coaching costs, access to quality education and employment opportunities.
- The issue underlines a broader challenge of converting India's young population into a productive demographic dividend.

Core Issue

- **Two-sided youth crisis:** Young people face both the struggle to secure jobs and a shortage of quality, formal and well-paying jobs.
- **Coaching burden:** Private coaching constitutes a rising share of household education expenditure, increasing financial pressure on families.
- **Limited quality seats:** Intense competition for medical and engineering seats reflects the inadequate availability of high-quality professional education.

- **Weak employment outcomes:** Among graduates aged 15–29, only around 26% were in regular salaried employment, while about 4% had salaried jobs with contracts and social security.

Structural Causes

- **Manufacturing constraint:** Manufacturing's share remains around one-sixth of GVA, limiting its potential to generate large-scale, productive employment.
- **Weak private investment:** Corporate investment reportedly declined from 17.3% of GDP in 2007–08 to 10.3% in 2024–25, constraining employment creation.
- **Skill–job mismatch:** Educational qualifications do not consistently translate into industry-relevant skills and stable employment.
- **Quality deficit:** A large proportion of young workers lack formal contracts, social security and stable career progression.

Way Forward

- **Employment-oriented industrialisation:** Promote labour-intensive manufacturing and strengthen MSMEs.
- **Productive public investment:** Expand infrastructure and industrial capacity to crowd in private investment.
- **Export competitiveness:** Support industries through productivity and export performance rather than prolonged protection.
- **Education reform:** Expand quality higher-education capacity alongside examination reforms.
- **Human capital:** Align education, skilling and industry requirements to convert the demographic dividend into productive employment.
- **Formalisation:** Promote jobs offering contracts, social security and career progression.

3. Judicial Appointments: Need for Greater Transparency in Collegium

GS – II: Polity and Constitution

Why in News?

- Supreme Court Justice Ujjal Bhuyan has called for greater transparency in the Collegium system, highlighting concerns over limited disclosure of reasons behind judicial appointments.
- The debate underscores the need to balance judicial independence, transparency, accountability and public confidence.

Constitutional & Legal Framework

- **Articles 124 & 217:** Provide for appointment of judges to the Supreme Court and High Courts respectively; the Collegium evolved through judicial interpretation.
- **First Judges Case (1981):** Favoured executive primacy in judicial appointments.
- **Second Judges Case (1993):** Established judicial primacy and evolved the Collegium mechanism.
- **Third Judges Case (1998):** Clarified the Collegium system, comprising the CJI and four senior-most Supreme Court judges.
- **NJAC:** The 99th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2014 sought to replace the Collegium with the National Judicial Appointments Commission; the Supreme Court struck it down in 2015, holding that it threatened judicial independence.

Key Concerns

- **Opacity:** Limited disclosure of selection criteria, evaluation methodology and reasons can weaken institutional accountability.
- **Perception of favouritism:** Lack of objective criteria can fuel concerns regarding familial or professional influence in appointments.
- **Lack of diversity:** Greater representation of women, first-generation lawyers and diverse professional backgrounds remains desirable.
- **Accountability-independence balance:** Judicial independence should not translate into complete institutional opacity.
- **Public confidence:** Transparent and reasoned processes can strengthen the legitimacy of the judiciary.

Way Forward

- **Transparent criteria:** Publish broad eligibility and assessment parameters while protecting sensitive information.
- **Reasoned recommendations:** Provide institutional reasons for selections without compromising confidential integrity inputs.
- **Consistent disclosure:** Establish predictable standards for publishing Collegium decisions.
- **Independent oversight:** Explore mechanisms that enhance transparency and accountability without enabling executive dominance.
- **Greater diversity:** Encourage wider representation across gender, professional background and regions.

4. India's Space Sector: From Mission Success to Commercial Reliability

GS – III: Space Technology

Why in News?

- On National Space Day, renewed attention has been drawn to strengthening India's space-startup ecosystem and building a reliable, high-frequency and commercially competitive launch sector.
- India's space ambitions are increasingly shifting from mission achievements towards a globally competitive space economy.

Private Space Sector

- **Emerging ecosystem:** Start-ups such as Pixxel and Digantara reflect growing private participation in satellites and space-data services.
- **Global competition:** International launch providers highlight the need for India to improve launch reliability, frequency and cost competitiveness.
- **Investment potential:** A dependable launch ecosystem can attract private capital, skilled talent, global customers and high-tech manufacturing.

Institutional Enablers

- **IN-SPACe:** Facilitate private-sector access to space infrastructure, technology and regulatory clearances.
- **ISRO:** Focus on advanced R&D, strategic missions and technology development while enabling wider industrial participation.
- **NSIL:** Strengthen the commercialisation and market-oriented delivery of India's space capabilities.

Strategic Significance

- Strengthens strategic autonomy in communications, navigation, Earth observation and defence.
- Supports disaster management, agriculture, weather forecasting and climate monitoring.
- Enhances India's resilience in critical space-based infrastructure and services.

Economic Opportunities

- **Upstream ecosystem:** Expand domestic capabilities in components, propulsion, testing and launch infrastructure.
- **Downstream applications:** Scale satellite communications, Earth observation, navigation and space-based services.
- **Employment & investment:** A competitive space economy can generate high-skilled jobs, private investment and technology-intensive manufacturing.

- **Global market share:** Improved cost and reliability can help India capture a larger share of the global commercial space market.

Key Concerns

- **Low launch frequency:** India reportedly conducted only 5 launches in 2025 against a projected 30, limiting economies of scale and operational learning.
- **High launch costs:** A cited study estimated India's cost of placing a kilogram into Low Earth Orbit (LEO) at around \$13,302 in 2025, higher than several major space powers.
- **Capacity constraints:** Heavy satellites beyond domestic launch capacity may require foreign launch services.
- **Reliability gap:** Low launch frequency can constrain India's ability to establish a strong record of cost efficiency, reliability and timely delivery.

Way Forward

- **Increase launch cadence:** Build capacity for regular and predictable launches.
- **Cost competitiveness:** Scale production and advance reusable launch technologies.
- **Private participation:** Improve access to infrastructure, technology and financing.
- **Manufacturing ecosystem:** Develop resilient domestic supply chains for critical space components.
- **Reliability-first approach:** Prioritise consistent mission success, safety and timely delivery.

5. Youth Vote and Its Electoral Impact

GS Paper II: Elections, electoral participation, voter behaviour, democratic participation and Election Commission

Why in News?

- Recent youth-led protests and electoral developments have renewed attention on the political participation and electoral influence of young voters.
- Lokniti-CSDS data highlights significant variations in youth turnout and party preferences across States, age groups and election cycles.

Youth Electoral Participation

- **Turnout gap:** In the 2024 Lok Sabha election, turnout among 18–21-year-olds was about 6 percentage points below the overall average.
- **State variation:** In Bihar, only around 41% of 18–21-year-olds voted, compared with overall turnout of 67.3%; youth turnout in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal was around 90% or higher in the cited data.

- **Age variation:** Participation differs between 18–21, 22–25 and older youth groups, indicating diverse electoral engagement.

Is There a “Youth Vote”?

- **Fragmented electorate:** Youth preferences differ by age, State, political context and election cycle, making the “youth vote” a fluid rather than fixed bloc.
- **Dynamic preferences:** Young voters may shift substantially between elections or support emerging political formations.
- **Independent choices:** Young voters do not necessarily support the winning party or alliance, demonstrating that they are not uniformly pro-incumbency or anti-incumbency.

Electoral Impact

- **Political change:** Youth preferences have contributed to electoral shifts in States such as Punjab and Delhi, where younger voters strongly supported emerging political alternatives.
- **New political constituencies:** Concentrated youth support can provide momentum to newer parties and influence electoral strategies.
- **Democratic renewal:** Greater youth participation can strengthen representative democracy and bring issues such as employment, education, governance and social mobility into electoral discourse.

Challenges

- **Uneven participation:** Large inter-State differences make youth mobilisation difficult to generalise.
- **Political volatility:** Youth preferences can shift sharply between elections.
- **Digital influence:** Social media can intensify political mobilisation but also facilitate misinformation and polarisation.
- **First-time voter gap:** Converting political interest into sustained electoral participation remains a challenge.

Way Forward

- **Electoral literacy:** Strengthen voter education through schools, colleges and Electoral Literacy Clubs.
- **Easy registration:** Simplify first-time voter registration and improve awareness of electoral procedures.
- **Media literacy:** Promote fact-checking and informed political participation in the digital sphere.
- **Youth engagement:** Create greater avenues for young citizens to participate in public consultations, civic initiatives and local governance.