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1. Bar Council of India's Jurisdiction over Law Students

GS Paper: GS-II – Polity & Governance

Why in News?

- The Supreme Court ruled that the Bar Council of India (BCI) and State Bar Councils lack statutory jurisdiction to discipline or penalise law students.
- The ruling followed BCI's attempt to initiate action against NALSAR students who had protested against inviting the Chief Justice of India as chief guest at their convocation.
- The Court held that disciplinary matters concerning students fall within the domain of the universities in which they are enrolled.

Supreme Court's Key Observations

- The Advocates Act, 1961 does not expressly or impliedly confer disciplinary or punitive powers over law students on the BCI or State Bar Councils.
- The BCI's disciplinary powers under the Advocates Act operate in relation to advocates enrolled under the statutory framework, and not law students merely pursuing legal education.
- Law student → University's disciplinary jurisdiction
- Enrolled advocate → BCI/State Bar Council's statutory disciplinary framework
- The Court emphasised that statutory bodies must exercise powers within the limits prescribed by law.
- It also sought to prevent arbitrary institutional action that could create a "chilling effect" on legitimate dissent.

Fundamental Rights & Dissent

- **Article 19(1)(a):** Protects freedom of speech and expression, including the expression of dissent.
- **Article 19(1)(b):** Protects peaceful assembly, subject to constitutionally permissible restrictions.
- Student dissent is an important component of democratic and academic culture; however, constitutional protection does not extend to unlawful or violent conduct.
- The case highlights the need to balance institutional discipline with constitutional freedoms.

Governance Significance

- **Rule of Law:** Statutory and regulatory bodies cannot exercise powers beyond their legal mandate.
- **Institutional restraint:** Regulatory authority must be exercised according to the enabling legislation.

- **University autonomy:** Student discipline primarily remains within the institutional framework of universities.
- **Accountability:** Judicial review can check regulatory overreach and protect individuals from action by authorities lacking jurisdiction.
- BCI, as a statutory body under the Advocates Act, 1961, has responsibilities relating to regulation of the legal profession and standards of legal education, but these do not automatically confer disciplinary jurisdiction over students.

Way Forward

- Regulatory bodies must clearly distinguish between their statutory functions and areas falling outside their jurisdiction.
- Universities should adopt fair, transparent and proportionate disciplinary mechanisms while safeguarding legitimate constitutional dissent.
- The judgment reinforces the constitutional principle that power must remain within the boundaries of law.
- By protecting legitimate dissent while recognising the need for lawful institutional discipline, it strengthens the combined values of Rule of Law, constitutional freedoms and institutional restraint.

2. Youth Power: An Emerging Electoral Force in India

GS Paper: GS-II – Polity & Governance

Why in News?

- Growing political and institutional attention towards India's youth, particularly on issues of education, employment, skills and political participation.
- Nearly 65% of India's population is below 35 years, giving youth considerable demographic and electoral significance.
- However, youth have not yet emerged as a consolidated electoral bloc, unlike caste, community or gender-based voting groups.

Youth as an Electoral Force

- About 23% of India's electorate belongs to the 18–29 age group, giving young voters substantial potential to influence electoral outcomes.
- Youth voting preferences remain heterogeneous, shaped by employment, education, caste, community, gender, region and local issues.
- Unlike traditional vote aggregators, youth identity has not yet translated into a stable electoral bloc.
- Recent youth mobilisation indicates growing political awareness, but its conversion into sustained electoral preferences remains uncertain.

Significance

- **Democratic participation:** Greater youth engagement can strengthen informed citizenship and electoral participation.
- **Policy responsiveness:** A politically active youth population can push issues such as employment, education, skills and entrepreneurship higher on the policy agenda.
- **Demographic dividend:** Political empowerment can complement economic empowerment, enabling youth to contribute more effectively to national development.
- **Electoral accountability:** Informed young voters can increase pressure on political parties to offer credible policy solutions rather than short-term promises.

Key Challenges

- **Education–employment mismatch:** Formal qualifications often do not adequately translate into employability or suitable employment.
- **NEET population:** A significant number of young people remain outside education, employment or training, indicating underutilisation of human capital.
- **Skill gaps:** Inadequate industry exposure and practical training hinder the transition from education to employment.
- **Heterogeneous aspirations:** Youth concerns differ considerably across States, regions and socio-economic groups, making collective political mobilisation difficult.
- **Competing identities:** Caste, community, gender and regional identities continue to influence electoral behaviour and often subsume a broader “youth identity”.
- **Digital engagement vs electoral participation:** High engagement with political content on digital platforms does not necessarily translate into informed voting or sustained political participation.

Government Response

- **NEP 2020:** Emphasises multidisciplinary education, skills, innovation and employability.
- **MY Bharat:** Promotes youth volunteering, leadership, experiential learning and civic participation.
- **ECI initiatives:** Electoral literacy programmes seek to promote informed and participatory voting among young citizens.

Way Forward

- Shift from viewing youth merely as beneficiaries of welfare and development programmes to recognising them as active participants in policymaking and democratic institutions.
- Bridge the education–skills–employment gap while creating greater avenues for meaningful youth representation and civic participation.

3. Strengthening Newborn Care: Hospital Plus Home

GS Paper: GS-II – Social Justice & Health

Why in News?

- Three newborns died in a fire at the Sick Newborn Care Unit (SNCU) of Amravati District Women's Hospital, Maharashtra, on August 24, 2026, highlighting recurring concerns over safety and capacity in neonatal-care facilities.
- The incident underscores the need to move beyond merely increasing institutional deliveries towards ensuring quality, safe and continuous newborn care.

Systemic Challenges in Newborn Care

- **Overcrowding:** Rising institutional deliveries and referrals of high-risk births are increasing pressure on SNCUs.
- **Infrastructure & safety risks:** Fire hazards, electrical faults, unreliable oxygen/electricity systems and inadequate emergency preparedness can endanger critically ill newborns.
- **Staffing gaps:** Inadequate nurse-to-newborn ratios and shortages of trained personnel can compromise quality of care.
- **Infection risks:** Overcrowding and weak infection-prevention practices can increase hospital-acquired infections.
- **Referral burden:** Peripheral facilities often refer premature, low-birth-weight and sick newborns to already-stretched specialised units.

Hospital Plus Home Approach

- **Facility-Based Newborn Care (FBNC):** Newborn Care Corners, Newborn Stabilization Units and SNCUs provide specialised care according to the severity of illness.
- **Home-Based Newborn Care (HBNC):** ASHAs undertake home visits, promote breastfeeding and warmth, identify danger signs and facilitate timely referrals.
- **Gadchiroli model:** Community health workers demonstrated the potential of home-based neonatal care through early identification of infections, breastfeeding support and maintenance of warmth, contributing to reduced neonatal mortality.
- **Complementary approach:** HBNC complements, rather than substitutes, facility-based neonatal care; newborns with serious complications require immediate specialised treatment.

Policy Significance

- Institutional delivery is a means, not an end: Increased access to health facilities must be accompanied by adequate staffing, equipment, infection control and patient safety.
- India's institutional delivery rate has risen substantially, but access without quality of care does not guarantee better neonatal outcomes.
- A continuum of care linking hospital, community and home can improve efficiency and reduce avoidable pressure on specialised facilities.

Way Forward

- Strengthen SNCUs with adequate staff, functional equipment, reliable oxygen and power backup, infection-control systems and mandatory fire/electrical safety audits and evacuation drills.
- Scale up HBNC through ASHAs, supported by training, supervision, timely referral systems and post-discharge follow-up.

4. India and Regional Multilateralism: Strengthening SCO Engagement

GS Paper: GS-II – International Relations

Why in News?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, as the organisation marked 25 years of its existence.
- The summit provided India an opportunity to strengthen engagement with Russia, China, Iran, Central Asian countries and Pakistan amid geopolitical and economic uncertainties.
- India used the platform to emphasise counter-terrorism, regional stability, connectivity and economic cooperation.



About SCO

- The SCO is a Eurasian regional organisation established in 2001, evolving from the Shanghai Five mechanism.
- It comprises 10 members, including India, China, Russia, Pakistan, Iran and the four Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, along with Belarus.
- Its broad focus includes regional security, counter-terrorism, economic cooperation and connectivity.
- India became a full member in 2017, providing it a platform to engage with major Eurasian powers and Central Asia.

India's Key Priorities

- **Counter-terrorism:** India called for dismantling terrorist financing, recruitment, radicalisation and safe havens, while opposing double standards in combating terrorism.
- **Central Asia outreach:** India seeks stronger cooperation in trade, critical minerals, tourism, energy and connectivity.
- **Economic & energy security:** Geopolitical conflicts and disruptions to energy and transport routes highlight the need for diversified partnerships.
- **Multilateral consensus:** India seeks constructive outcomes in the SCO and other regional groupings despite divergent member interests.

Significance for India

- **Strategic autonomy:** SCO enables India to engage simultaneously with competing major powers without joining exclusive geopolitical blocs.
- **Connectivity & markets:** Greater engagement can improve India's access to Central Asian markets and resources.
- **Energy & critical minerals:** Cooperation with resource-rich Eurasian states can strengthen India's supply-chain resilience.
- **Security cooperation:** The platform facilitates dialogue on terrorism, extremism, organised crime and regional instability.

Challenges

- **Divergent interests:** Rivalries among major members can make consensus difficult.
- **India–Pakistan tensions:** Bilateral disputes can constrain security cooperation.
- **China's influence:** China's economic and strategic dominance in Central Asia presents a challenge to India's regional outreach.
- **Connectivity constraints:** Limited direct land connectivity reduces India's economic engagement with Central Asia.

Way Forward

- Pursue issue-based and outcome-oriented cooperation while preserving strategic autonomy.
- Strengthen India's economic, energy, connectivity and security partnerships with Central Asia and use regional platforms such as the SCO to advance shared interests.

5. India–Belgium: Deepening Defence and Strategic Partnership

GS Paper: GS-II – International Relations | GS-III – Defence & Security

Why in News?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Belgian Prime Minister Bart De Wever held bilateral talks to strengthen defence, security and economic cooperation.
- The two sides signed three government-level agreements covering defence cooperation, defence-industry collaboration, and cooperation against transnational organised crime and cybercrime.
- India announced the appointment of a Defence Attaché in Brussels and both sides agreed to establish a fast trade mechanism and work towards doubling bilateral trade in five years.



Defence & Security Cooperation

- **Defence industrial partnership:** Cooperation envisages greater interaction between Indian and Belgian defence industries, including potential joint production and manufacturing in India.
- **Technology & indigenisation:** Defence collaboration can promote technology absorption, domestic manufacturing and defence supply-chain resilience.
- **Capacity building:** Cooperation includes defence dialogue, high-level exchanges, training and institutional capacity building.
- **Maritime security:** Both sides emphasised secure and uninterrupted maritime routes, contributing to cooperation on a rules-based maritime order and freedom of navigation.

- **Counter-terrorism & cybercrime:** The two countries will strengthen cooperation against transnational organised crime, cybercrime and terrorism.

Strategic Significance for India

- **European gateway:** Belgium's position as a major diplomatic and institutional hub, including Brussels-based EU and NATO institutions, can facilitate India's engagement with European security and policy frameworks.
- **EU-India partnership:** Stronger bilateral ties can complement the broader India-EU Strategic Partnership in trade, technology, defence and security.
- **Defence diversification:** Belgium can contribute to India's effort to diversify defence partnerships and reduce vulnerabilities in critical supply chains.
- **Strategic autonomy:** Deeper engagement with European partners supports India's policy of multi-alignment and strategic autonomy.

Economic Dimension

- **Diamond trade:** Antwerp is a major global diamond-trading centre, while India is a leading hub for diamond cutting and polishing, creating scope for deeper cooperation in the gems and jewellery sector.
- **Trade facilitation:** The proposed fast trade mechanism can help address trade and investment issues and strengthen bilateral economic engagement.
- **Emerging sectors:** Greater cooperation can expand opportunities in defence technology, advanced manufacturing and innovation.

Way Forward

- Convert defence agreements into concrete co-production, technology-transfer and joint-development projects with greater private-sector participation.
- Deepen cooperation in maritime security, cyber security, counter-terrorism, critical technologies and resilient supply chains, while strengthening the wider India-EU partnership.

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