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1. The world's 1st conversational AI with emotional intelligence from Hume

Why in News?

Artificial Intelligence is doing wonders. From turning text prompts to images with Dall.E to turning them into entire videos with Sora, some of AI's latest achievements push the envelope of plausibility. But not everyone is worried about just generating content, some innovators are using the technology to create great companions. The "intelligent and kind" chatbot Pi from Inflection AI is one of them.

Now, Hume, a New York-based research lab and technology company, has introduced what can be called the 'first conversational AI with emotional intelligence'.



What is an AI with emotional intelligence?

To put this into perspective, all recent AI apps follow instructions. Now, imagine if they could also understand the user's feelings and the meanings behind their words. This is what Hume's new AI voice interface does. The company claims that it is building empathic AI that could

'serve human well-being' through an application programming interface (API) that can interpret emotional expressions and come up with empathic responses.

How can it be used?

Perhaps, the most standout feature of Hume's conversational AI technology is its integration capability, rather than being just a solitary application. Based on the claims, it seems the technology may revolutionise several fields by powering applications with humanlike interactions.

Potential future uses include AI assistants who can converse in a humanlike manner, customer support agents who can provide a more natural and relatable service, and therapists adept at comprehending a wide range of human emotions and thoughts.

About Hume AI

The company believes that its mission is to ensure that AI is built to serve human goals and emotional well-being. The company is named after the late Scottish philosopher and historian David Hume. "Hume argues that emotions drive choice and well-being. At Hume AI, we take this as a guiding principle behind ethical AI: in order to serve our preferences, algorithms should be guided by our emotions," reads the bio of the company.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express

2. Jacob Zuma banned from running in South Africa elections

Why in News?

South Africa's Election Commission recently barred former President Jacob Zuma from contesting in the country's upcoming polls in May.

While the commission did not provide a specific reason for the decision, it is likely to do with Zuma's 2021 conviction and imprisonment. South Africa's constitution does not allow an individual convicted for more than a year to hold public office. Zuma now has until April 2 to appeal against his ineligibility.



Why is the ban a big deal?

The African National Congress (ANC) came to power in 1994, on the back of its struggle against apartheid. Much like the Indian National Congress in the 1950-60s, it has had a strong stranglehold over South African politics since then.

While ANC's popularity has waned in recent years, it has still managed to maintain an over 50 per cent voteshare every national election. Jacob Zuma, and his new uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) party, however, are poised to change that. MK party is getting more popular among people at cost of ANC.

Who is Jacob Zuma?

Zuma, 81, served as modern South Africa's fourth president, from 2009 to 2018. In his youth, as a member of the ANC, he fought to end the apartheid, and was even imprisoned in Robben Island with other anti-apartheid leaders, such as Nelson Mandela.

He served as deputy president of South Africa from 1999 to 2005, under Thabo Mbeki, Mandela's successor to the presidency. However, he was dismissed after receiving dubious payments in connection to a high-profile arms deal. He was also acquitted on rape charges in a very public trial in 2006.

Nonetheless, Zuma, in 2007 managed to win over the ANC's left-wing coalition and was elected president in 2009. Multiple criminal charges against him were formally withdrawn the very same week. While Zuma did win some acclaim for his populist policies which especially appealed to South Africa's poorest, his two-term presidency was marred by allegations of corruption and wrongdoing.

By 2016, allegations emerged that Zuma had allowed the Gupta family to acquire immense influence over his administration. The Gupta family was a wealthy Indian-origin business family, with interests ranging from IT and engineering, to mining, real estate, and leisure.

Having cultivated a relationship with Zuma since 2003, the Guptas held sway at all levels of South African government and public life under Zuma, in what was described by many observers as a "state capture".

Under mounting pressure, and a looming no confidence vote (the fifth that he would face) Zuma resigned in 2017. His successor, current President Cyril Ramaphosa, effectively sidelined him from the ANC. In 2021, Zuma was arrested and sentenced to 15 months in prison for refusing to appear in court during a corruption inquiry. His arrest sparked riots which ended up killing around 300 people. Zuma was eventually released after a couple of months on medical parole.

In December 2023, while still technically an ANC member, he founded the MK party, named after ANC's former military wing. Zuma still sees himself as the true heir to the anti-apartheid movement's revolutionary roots. The ANC has since suspended Zuma.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Issues

Source: Indian Express

3. State of employment in India: What a new report says about youths and women, concerns and caution

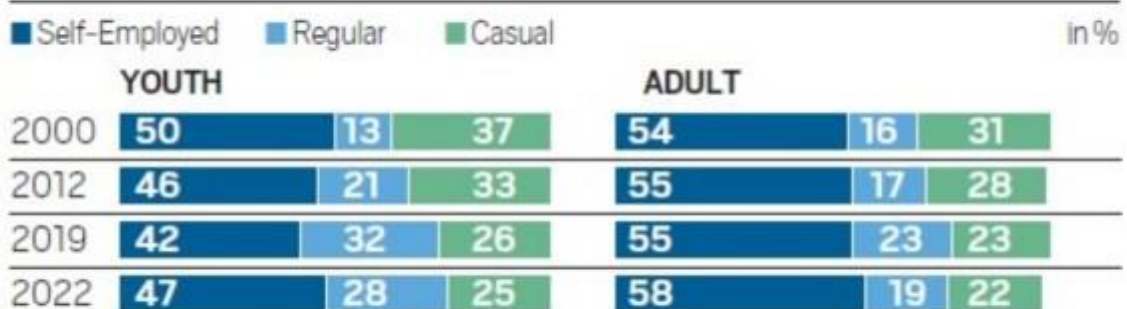
Why in news?

The India Employment Report 2024, prepared jointly by the Institute of Human Development (IHD) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), and released on March 26, revolves around “youth employment, education and skills.” It has analysed trends and patterns of the Indian labour market for two decades, including the COVID-19 years, and listed the “emerging characteristics of the employment challenges now confronting the economy as well as the impact of growth on employment.”

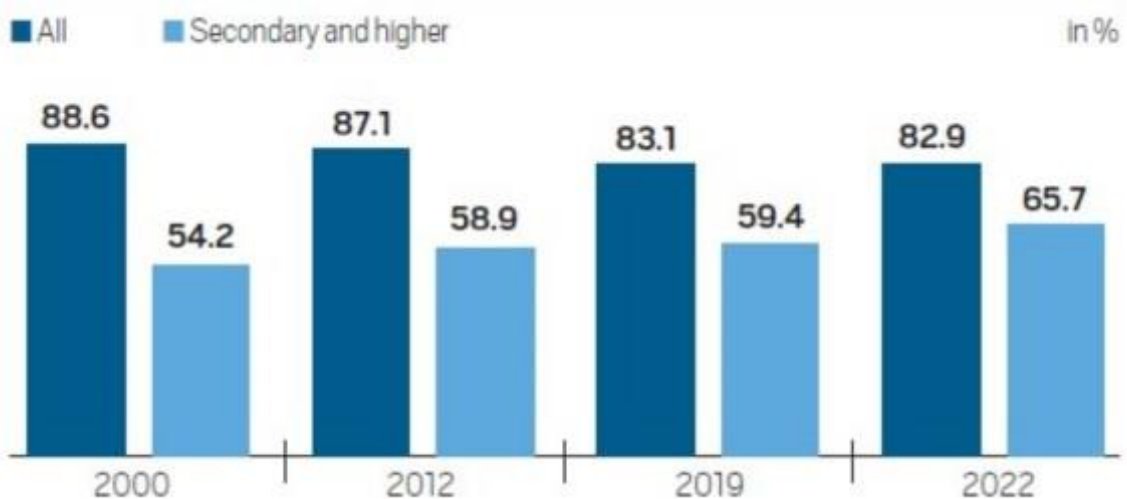
The big picture

The report has flagged concerns about poor employment conditions: the slow transition to non-farm employment has reversed; women largely account for the increase in self-employment and unpaid family work; youth employment is of poorer quality than employment for adults; wages and earnings are stagnant or declining.

STATUS OF EMPLOYMENT (UPSS) OF YOUTHS AND ADULTS



SHARE OF UNEMPLOYED EDUCATED YOUTHS (SECONDARY OR HIGHER) IN TOTAL UNEMPLOYED PERSONS (UPSS)



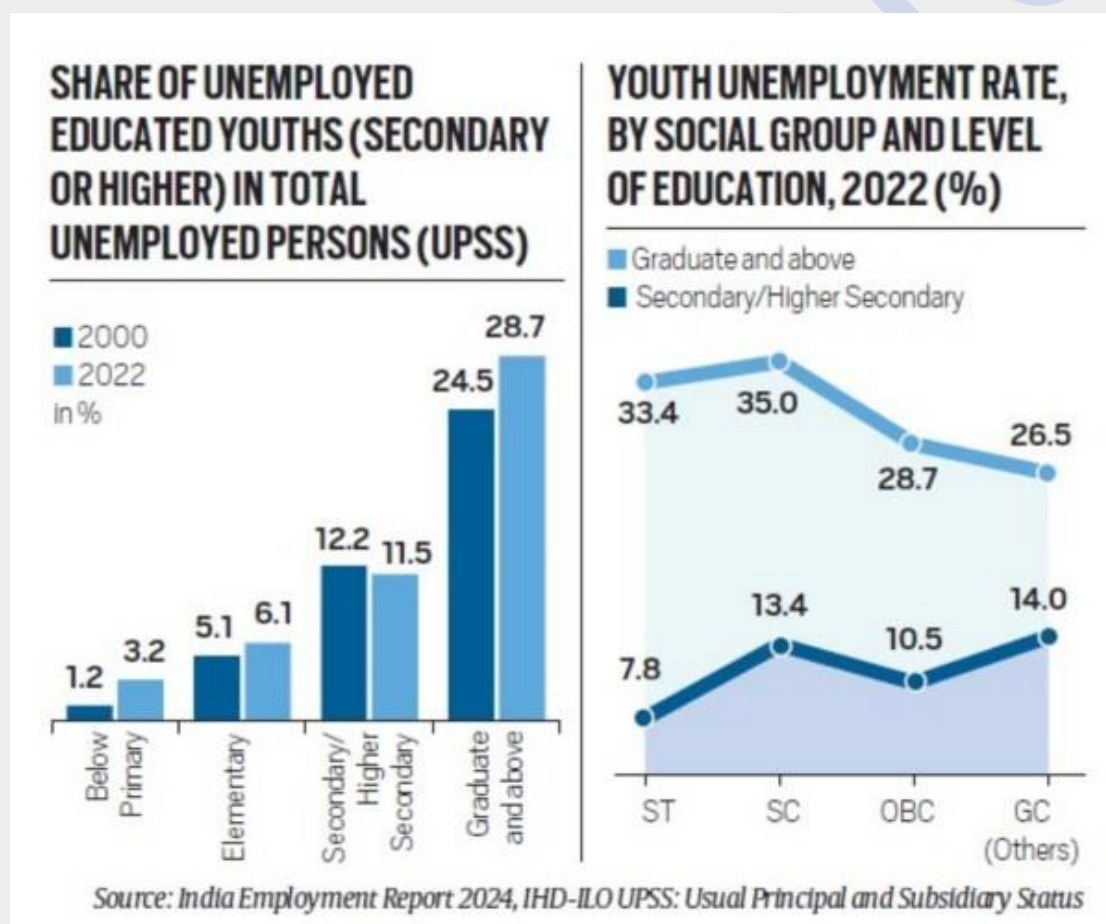
State wise performance

The 'employment condition index' has improved between 2004-05 and 2021-22. But some states — Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand, and UP — have remained at the bottom throughout this period, while some others — Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Telangana, Uttarakhand, and Gujarat — have stayed at the top.

Employment quality

Informal employment has risen — around half the jobs in the formal sector are of an informal nature. Self-employment and unpaid family work has also increased, especially for women. Almost 82% of the workforce is engaged in the informal sector, and nearly 90% is informally employed, the report said.

Self-employment remains the primary source of employment — 55.8% in 2022. Casual and regular employment accounted for 22.7% and 21.5% respectively.



The share of self-employment remained almost stable around 52% between 2000 and 2019, while regular employment increased by almost 10 percentage points, to 23.8% from 14.2%. This reversed by 2022, with self-employment increasing to 55.8%, while the share of regular employment declined to 21.5%. Casual employment consistently declined to 22.7% in 2022 from 33.3% in 2000.

Regular employment is generally seen as providing better-quality jobs due to the regularity of employment and associated social security benefits, while casual work is linked with relatively poor-quality jobs due to its irregular nature and lower daily earnings.

Participation of women

The female labour force participation rate (LFPR) in India remains among the world's lowest. Female LFPR declined by 14.4 percentage points (compared to 8.1 percentage points for males) between 2000 and 2019. The trend reversed thereafter, with female LFPR rising by 8.3 percentage points (compared to 1.7 percentage points for male LFPR) between 2019 and 2022.

There is a considerable gender gap — women's LFPR (32.8%) in 2022 was 2.3 times lower than men's (77.2%). India's low LFPR is largely attributed to the low female LFPR, which was much lower than the world average of 47.3% in 2022, but higher than the South Asian average of 24.8%, as per ILO data.

Structural transformation

There has been a reversal of the slow transition towards non-farm employment after 2018-19. The share of agriculture in total employment fell to around 42% in 2019 from 60% in 2000. This shift was largely absorbed by construction and services, the share of which in total employment increased to 32% in 2019 from 23% in 2000. The share of manufacturing in employment has remained almost stagnant at 12-14%.

Since 2018-19, this slow transition has stagnated or reversed with the rise in the share of agricultural employment.

Youth employment

There has been a rise in youth employment, but the quality of work remains a concern, especially for qualified young workers.

Youth employment and underemployment increased between 2000 and 2019 but declined during the pandemic years. However, unemployment among youths, especially those with secondary-level or higher education, has intensified over time.

In 2022, the share of unemployed youths in the total unemployed population was 82.9%. The share of educated youths among all unemployed people also increased to 65.7% in 2022 from 54.2% in 2000.

The unemployment rate among youths was six times greater for those who had completed secondary education or higher (18.4%) and nine times higher for graduates (29.1%) than for persons who could not read or write (3.4%) in 2022. This was higher among educated young women (21.4%) than men (17.5%), especially among female graduates (34.5%), compared to men (26.4%).

The unemployment rate among educated youths grew to 30.8% in 2019 from 23.9% in 2000, but fell to 18.4% in 2022.

The way forward

- There are five key policy areas for further action: promoting job creation; improving employment quality; addressing labour market inequalities; strengthening skills and active labour market policies; and bridging the knowledge deficits on labour market patterns and youth employment.
- The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) could have an impact on employment, the report said, noting that the outsourcing industry in India could be disrupted because some back-office tasks would be taken over by AI.
- Investment and regulations are required in the emerging care and digital economies, which could be an important source of productive employment. The lack of job security, irregular wages, and uncertain employment status for workers pose significant challenges for gig or platform work.
- Economic policies are required to boost productive non-farm employment, especially in the manufacturing sector, with India likely to add 7-8 million youths annually to the labour force during the next decade.
- More support needs to be provided to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, especially by providing tools such as digitalisation and AI and a cluster-based approach to manufacturing.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Economics

Source: Indian Express