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Current Affairs - 26 September 2024

JOBS OF THE FUTURE REQUIRE UPSKILLING WORKERS

Context

- **India's employment landscape presents a complex mix of optimistic projections and alarming realities** as various reports offer contrasting perspectives on job growth, reflecting underlying structural issues in the labour market.
- **The challenge of employment generation is multifaceted**, impacted by labour market rigidities, skill gaps, and the changing nature of technology.
- **Amid conflicting trends in employment growth, it is important to explore the current employment trends, key challenges, and potential solutions for bridging the employment deficit** in the country.

Necessary Steps to Address the Employment Deficit: Policy Recommendations

- **Promoting Labour-Intensive Industrialisation**
 - To address the employment shortfall, **India must prioritise sectors that are capable of absorbing large numbers of workers.**
 - Sectors such as food processing, textiles, and apparel are highly labour-intensive and have strong inter-sectoral linkages with agriculture and other manufacturing industries.
- **Enhancing Competitiveness in Technology-Intensive Sectors**
 - While promoting labour-intensive industries is essential, **India must also invest in technology-driven sectors to remain competitive in the global market.**
 - Technology-intensive sectors such as chemicals, pharmaceuticals, electronics, and motor vehicles **have the potential to generate high-value jobs** and expand India's export capabilities.
 - To unlock the potential of these sectors, **India must implement a differentiated incentive system that supports both employment generation and capital investments.**

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- **Educational and Skilling Reforms: The Foundation for Future Jobs**
 - The country's education system currently falls short of industry requirements, leading many young Indians to pursue multiple degrees from lower-quality institutions.
 - Despite rising enrolment rates, the quality of education remains inadequate, creating a mismatch between the skills provided by educational institutions and the needs of the labour market.
 - Vocational training programs and skill development initiatives must be expanded to equip graduates with the skills required in the modern economy.
 - Without these reforms, India will continue to face a shortage of employable talent, hindering the country's ability to generate jobs.
- **Need for Improved Coordination**
 - The contrasting reports from different agencies raise questions about the quality and transparency of employment data in India.
 - This issue is not merely academic; accurate data is essential for policymakers to make informed decisions about labour market interventions.
 - The National Statistical Commission (NSC) needs to play a more proactive role in resolving these discrepancies by standardising definitions of employment and unemployment across agencies.

Conclusion

- The conflicting data on employment growth further complicates the situation, underscoring the need for improved coordination and transparency in labour market reporting.
 - To tackle the employment deficit, India must pursue a balanced strategy that promotes both labour-intensive industrialisation and the growth of technology-driven sectors and substantial educational and skilling reforms are needed to prepare the workforce for the demands of the modern economy.
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UNIFIED LOGISTICS INTERFACE PLATFORM (ULIP)



Recently, NICDC Logistics Data Services Ltd. (NLDSL) announces the launch of Unified Logistics Interface Platform Hackathon 2.0.

Hackathon 2.0 is a competitive event, aimed at fostering innovation and developing digital solutions to tackle pressing challenges in the logistics industry.

- It invites **developers, start-ups, and industry players** to come together.
- The focus of this year's hackathon is on addressing key logistics challenges such as **sustainability, complex supply chain processes, unified documentation, and multimodal logistics optimization.**

About Unified Logistics Interface Platform:

- ULIP is a digital gateway that **allows industry players to access logistics-related datasets from various Government systems through API-based integration.**
 - Currently, the platform integrates with **37 systems from 10 ministries via 118 APIs, covering over 1800 data fields.**
- It was launched by the Prime Minister as **part of the 'National Logistics Policy (NLP)' on September 17, 2022.**

Objectives:

- To create a nationwide **single window logistics platform** for end-to-end visibility.
- To develop a logistics gateway by **integrating information available with various Govt. agencies across the value chain.**
- To provide visibility for optimal usage of various modes of transportation.



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- To provide data which can be utilized by the stakeholders for simplification of complicated processes like compliance, document filing, certifications, and approvals.
- To offer a platform for data exchange among government and private entities who are directly or indirectly involved in the Indian Logistics ecosystem.

ASIA POWER INDEX



India ranked third in the annual Asia Power Index, released by an Australian think tank.

- It was launched by the **Lowy Institute in 2018**.
- It is an annual measure of power dynamics in the Asia-Pacific region.
- It evaluates **27 countries across the Asia-Pacific**, examining their ability to shape and respond to the external environment.
- The Index focuses on both the **material capabilities** of states and the **influence they exert** on the international stage.
- The 2024 edition offers one of the most comprehensive assessments of power distribution in the region to date. Timor-Leste has been included for the first time, reflecting its growing importance in Southeast Asia.
- It index is divided into **resource-based** and **influence-based determinants**
- **Resource-Based Determinants:**
 - **Economic Capability:** The core economic strength of a country, measured through indicators like **GDP at purchasing power parity (PPP)**, technological sophistication, and global economic connectivity.
 - **Military Capability:** Evaluates conventional military strength based on defense spending, armed forces, weapon systems, and signature capabilities like long-range power projection.



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- **Resilience:** The internal capacity to deter threats to state stability, including institutional robustness, geopolitical security, and resource security.
 - **Future Resources:** Forecasts the future distribution of resources, including economic, military, and demographic factors projected for 2035.
 - **Influence-Based Determinants:**
 - **Economic Relationships:** The capacity to exercise leverage through trade, investment, and economic diplomacy.
 - **Defense Networks:** The strength of alliances and partnerships, measured through military cooperation and arms transfers.
 - **Diplomatic Influence:** The extent of a country's diplomatic reach, participation in multilateral forums, and foreign policy ambition.
 - **Cultural Influence:** The ability to shape international public opinion through cultural exports, media, and people-to-people ties.
 - A country's overall power score is derived from a weighted average of these eight measures, encompassing 131 individual indicators.
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INDIA - CHINA RELATIONS

- India - China ties are troubled by -
 - **An unsettled border, an unequal trade relationship, China's strategic ties to Pakistan, and**
 - A broadening political-strategic disagreement over each other's perceived **rightful place in Asia and beyond.**
- The relationship has suffered from a **lack of strategic trust** since a June 2020 border clash (in the Galwan valley).
 - This undermined the letter and spirit of the border-management regime that had been patiently negotiated, designed and agreed to over a generation.
- **The war in Ukraine has brought China closer to Russia,** India's historic defence partner.



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- **The decline in relations is evident** by the Chinese President declining to attend the 2023 G-20 summit in New Delhi and the Indian PM's lack of attendance at the 2024 SCO summit in Kazakhstan.

Efforts to Break the Deadlock in the India - China Relations and Way Ahead:

- **Resolution of disengagement problems through strategic communication:**

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 - After a hiatus of over two years, their top national-security officials met in 2022, 2023 and July 2024.
 - As a result, the two neighbours have **resolved 75% of "disengagement problems"** in eastern Ladakh.

- Friction points such as **Galwan Valley, north and south banks of Pangong Tso and the Gogra-Hot Springs area** have been resolved to some extent with the creation of **buffer zones** along the LAC.
- However, **legacy issues of Depsang Plains and Demchok** (pre-dating the current ongoing military standoff) remains.
- As a result, troops deployed at the Depsang Plains were **blocked from accessing** their patrol points in an area called the **Y junction**.
- **Deployment of troops through intensified diplomatic and military talks:**
 - The delegation for the **31st Working Mechanism for Consultation & Coordination** on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) discussed the issue of deployment of troops along the LAC in eastern Ladakh.
 - **The 22nd round of military talks** between India and China at the **Corps Commanders' level** may set the time frame of the deployment of troops from either side based on the mutual agreement reached.

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- This might help the Indian troops **regain access to some of the patrolling points along the LAC.**
 - Irrespective of any deployment change, the border infrastructure development along the entire LAC will continue as per plans.
 - **Way Ahead:**
 - As the India - China relationship is **key to Asia's future** and will influence not just the continent but the entire world, there is the avoid any further tensions which could distract them from their peaceful rise.
 - **One possible route is to establish new confidence-building measures.**
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PROJECT CHEETAH

About Project Cheetah:

- Project Cheetah, launched to reintroduce the African sub-species of cheetahs in India, completed two years on September 17.
- The project has two primary objectives:
 - To establish a stable, breeding population of cheetahs in central India and
 - To use cheetahs as an **umbrella species** to restore open ecosystems such as scrubs, savannahs, grasslands, and degraded forests.
- This was the **world's first inter-continental large wild carnivore translocation project.**
 - The cheetah was declared extinct in India in 1952, making it the only large wild mammalian species to go extinct since India's independence.
- **Funding:** Funded by **Project Tiger** and the **Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management & Planning Authority (CAMPA)**
- While the project has seen marginal successes, significant challenges remain, raising questions about its long-term outlook.

Status of Cheetah Reintroduction:



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- The project began with the translocation of African cheetahs from **Namibia** and **South Africa** to **Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh**, in two batches of eight and twelve cheetahs.
- Initially, the cheetahs were kept in soft-release enclosures called bomas, where they adapted to the local environment and hunted live prey. Mating within this cohort led to the birth of 17 cubs.
- However, the **survival rate has been a concern**.
- Of the 20 translocated cheetahs, eight (40%) have died due to various reasons, including injuries during mating and infections caused by tick infestations under their radio collars.
- Of the 17 cubs born, five (29%) have also perished.
- **Currently, 24 cheetahs (12 adults and 12 cubs) survive**, with the next batch of 6-8 cheetahs expected to be translocated to **Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary** in Madhya Pradesh.

Conclusion:

- Project Cheetah has made some progress in reintroducing cheetahs to India, but it faces numerous challenges, including prey scarcity, delayed releases, and the need for large-scale landscape conservation.
- Moving forward, effective management, transparency, and enhanced conservation efforts will be crucial in ensuring the long-term success of the project and the sustainable revival of cheetah populations in India.



WHAT IS THE MINERALS SECURITY FINANCE NETWORK?

Recently, India has officially joined the US-led Minerals Security Finance Network.

It is a new initiative emerging from the **Minerals Security Partnership (MSP)**.

- It is aimed at strengthening global cooperation in securing **critical mineral supply chains**.



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- The network brings together institutions from the **Indo-Pacific region** and Europe, promoting cooperation, **information exchange**, and **co-financing**.
- **Member countries:** The partnership includes **13 countries** and the **European Commission**.
 - These are the United States of America, Australia, Canada, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the European Union (represented by the European Commission).
- **Significance to India:** It helps India in diversifying and securing its supply of critical minerals from nations like Argentina, Chile, Australia, and select African countries. Kazakhstan, in Central Asia, is also being explored as a **potential source for India's mineral requirements**.

Key facts about the Minerals Security Partnership

- It is a framework established by the **US in 2022**.
 - It is an ambitious new initiative to **bolster critical mineral supply** chains, announced by the United States (US) and key partner countries in June 2022.
 - The goal of the alliance is to ensure that critical minerals are produced, processed, and recycled in a manner that supports the ability of countries to realise the full economic development benefit of their geological endowments.
 - The focus of the grouping would be on the supply chains of minerals such as Cobalt, Nickel, Lithium and also the 17 “rare earth” minerals.
 - **India** was inducted to the MSP in **June 2023**.
 - **Significance of Critical minerals:** These minerals are vital for the production of renewable **energy technologies** such as **electric vehicle batteries**, solar panels, and wind turbines, have become essential components of the global shift towards clean energy.
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