

TODAY'S NEWS

Two States

Elections in Haryana and Jammu & Kashmir are of great import

Around 1.5 billion people in Haryana and Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) are set to vote in the upcoming elections. The Haryana Legislative Assembly election is scheduled for September 18, while the J&K Legislative Assembly election is scheduled for October 1. The elections are of great importance as they will determine the political future of these two states. Haryana is a state with a long history of political instability, and J&K is a state with a long history of conflict. The elections will be a test for the Election Commission of India, which will be responsible for ensuring that the elections are held in a free and fair manner. The results of the elections will have a significant impact on the political landscape of India.

The **upcoming Assembly elections** in Haryana and Jammu & Kashmir (J&K), scheduled between September 18 and October 1, will be the first in J&K since it lost statehood in 2019. The elections, seen as a test for the Election Commission of India, will assess India's democratic institutions. Results will be declared on October 4.

In J&K, a successful election could be a key step in restoring a stable political process, while in Haryana, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is trying to manage discontent, with the Congress hoping to benefit from anti-incumbency.

These elections are crucial as they will impact national political dynamics ahead of the 2024 general elections.

Back from the brink

Sri Lanka has returned to normalcy after the 2022 economic crisis

Sri Lanka has returned to normalcy after the 2022 economic crisis. The country has seen a return to stability and growth, with the government implementing various measures to address the economic challenges. The 2022 economic crisis was a major setback for Sri Lanka, but the country has managed to overcome it and is now on a path to recovery. The government has implemented various measures to stabilize the economy, including currency devaluation and interest rate hikes. The country has also received international assistance, which has helped it to overcome the crisis. The return to normalcy is a positive sign for Sri Lanka, and it shows that the country has the resilience to overcome major challenges.

Sri Lanka's upcoming **presidential election** on September 21 has drawn a record **39 candidates**, signaling a return to normalcy after the **2022 economic crisis**. Incumbent President **Ranil Wickremesinghe**, running as an **independent**, seeks re-election, focusing on his efforts to **stabilize** the country. Key contenders include **Sajith Premadasa**, **Anura Kumara Dissanayake**, and **Namal Rajapaksa**.

The country has been slowly recovering from **economic collapse**, with **IMF assistance** and **debt restructuring** efforts.

The election's outcome could influence the **restoration of provincial councils**, crucial for local governance and **democracy**, which have been inactive for years.

New migrant realities in Karnataka's gig sector

Providers of home delivery services have been working with a prominent home delivery services company in Bengaluru, as a result of the new migrant realities in Karnataka's gig sector. The company has been facing challenges in finding enough workers to meet the demand for home delivery services. The new migrant realities have led to a shortage of workers, which has affected the company's ability to provide timely delivery services. The company is now working with various stakeholders to address the issue and ensure that it can continue to provide quality services to its customers.



Shilpa Shetty

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The article **discusses** the challenges faced by **migrant gig workers** in Bengaluru, particularly in the context of a proposed **quota-for-local Bill** by the Karnataka government.

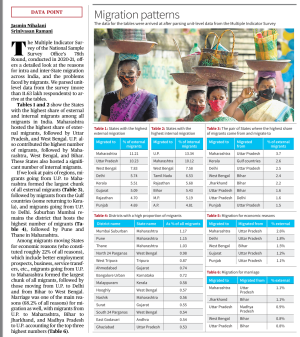
Migrants have increasingly entered the city's booming **gig economy**, working for platforms like **Uber**, **Swiggy**, and **Zomato**. Many migrants face higher risks of **exploitation** due to lack of local support and limited job options, unlike locals who can switch to part-time or better-paying jobs.

The **quota-for-local Bill** could exacerbate these challenges by restricting migrant access to formal sector jobs, making their situation even more precarious.

The article highlights that the **real issue** is the **exploitation of gig workers**, not just competition between locals and migrants.

A snapshot of migration in India

Migrants going from Uttar Pradesh to Maharashtra formed the largest chunk of all external migrants



The National Sample Survey Office's **78th Round Multiple Indicator Survey (2020-21)** reveals migration patterns in India.

Key findings include:

- **Maharashtra** has the highest share of **external migrants**, followed by **Uttar Pradesh** and **West Bengal**. Uttar Pradesh also leads in the number of **migrants** overall.
- Major migration flows include U.P. to Maharashtra, U.P. to Delhi, and Gulf returnees to **Kerala**.
- **Suburban Mumbai** hosts the highest number of migrants, followed by **Pune** and **Thane**.
- **Economic reasons** account for about **22%** of migration, with **U.P. to Maharashtra** being the **largest** flow for economic reasons. Migration for **marriage** is the **leading reason**, with significant movements from U.P. to Maharashtra and Bihar to Jharkhand.

The construction worker conundrum

The lack of proper data and the absence of registration of workers are challenges



Syed Mohammed

During the mornings, the labour addas (informal job markets) where labourers hope to get hired for a day of Hyderabad are filled with young men. Speaking in Bengali, Odia, Hindi, and other languages, they hope to get hired by supervisors of construction sites. Babul Shaik, a mason, arrived five years ago from a village in Malkajgiri district of West Bengal. "I had to look for work because I have no land, and no property except a small house that my father built," he says. "I live in a room with four others from my village. In the morning, I walk to the Zehra Nagar labour adda, which is near our room. I mostly do plastering work and make ₹1,000-1,200 a day."

At an under-construction site, Laxmi, 30, from Chhatisgarh, works as a helper. "I work from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. or even 7 p.m. I carry material (cement and sand amalgam) into bathrooms, and throw debris out. I get paid ₹500-600 a day," she says. At larger construction sites, a contractor is entrusted to source migrant labourers. "Most of the larger projects are in West Hyderabad, and around the IT Corridor. It is better to work here than live under tarpaulin sheets at smaller sites," says a property consultant who deals with large construction firms.

Informal sector workers' rights bodies such as India Labour Line have identified 220 labour addas spread across the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation limits. These are frequented by migrants from

Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Odisha, and Jharkhand. About 100 to 1,200 workers go to these addas looking for work every day.

While there is no conclusive data on migrant workers in Telangana, the number was estimated to be around 8 lakh-10 lakh before the pandemic. More than 44 lakh informal sector workers are registered on the eShram portal in Telangana. In the construction sector, an official data set for Hyderabad district shows that 22,934 male and 4,457 female workers are registered. The Telangana Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board (TBOCWB), a state-run body that looks into the well-being of workers, says the number of workers is 15,06,171.

The problem is that a vast majority of the workers, including construction workers, are not registered," says Brother Varghese Theekkanath, director of the Monfort Social Institute. The lack of registration means that these workers do not get access to welfare schemes. This includes compensation for accidental deaths, suffering disability while working at construction sites, and natural deaths.

TBOCWB Secretary and Chief Executive Officer E. Gangadhar says in the last 10 years, the Board has paid accidental death claims of 76 lakh each to 5,231 individuals, who are the relatives of the workers who died; 75 lakh to each of the 603 individuals who sustained disabilities; and also registered 3,959 cases of hospitalisation.

However, the issue of tracking migrant workers remains. "The over 15 lakh who have been registered are mostly

construction workers from Telangana (and not from other States)," Gangadhar says. He adds that the Labour Department has conducted campaigns in the past to educate workers about the importance of registering with the Board.

It is important to note that the TBOCWB is supposed to comprise two members representing building workers and two others representing employers. However, at present, the first two posts are vacant.

In 2022, the Bharat Rashtra Samithi had announced that 95% jobs in government departments, agencies, and corporations would be reserved for locals. This move was not extended to the private sector.

Sources say a large share of migrant workers are unaware of both the eShram portal and TBOCWB. Also, the registration process could prove difficult. "They have to apply for registration at the MeeSeva (a centre where a host of government services are available). For this they have to take a day off, as they cannot leave the site midway. This means losing out on daily wages," says an expert who studies informal sector workers.

Both Shaik and Laxmi are unaware of schemes for construction workers.

"Workers don't know what schemes are available for them," says U. Lingaiah, State Coordinator, India Labourline, which works with workers of the informal sector. "In July last year, there were two accidental deaths of construction workers – one from U.P. and the other from Odisha – in Madhapur. We managed to get ₹5 lakh each for their families from building owners. These were not registered workers."

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The article highlights the **challenging conditions faced by migrant construction workers** in Hyderabad, who seek daily labor through informal job markets.

Key points include:

1. **Living Conditions:** Workers work long hours at construction sites, often under difficult conditions and with minimal pay.
2. **Informal Job Markets:** Labour *addas* in Hyderabad serve as hubs for workers from various states looking for daily employment.
3. **Registration and Welfare:** Many workers are not registered with the Telangana Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board (TBOCWB), limiting their access to welfare schemes such as compensation for accidents and disabilities.
4. **Government and Private Sector Issues:** While there are government initiatives to support workers, many are unaware of these due to difficulties in the registration process and lack of outreach. The **Bharat Rashtra Samithi's** policy on job reservations **does not cover the private sector**, which affects migrant workers.
5. **Need for Improvement:** There is a **pressing need for better tracking, registration, and awareness efforts** to ensure that migrant workers receive the benefits and protections they are entitled to.

About Bharat Rashtra Samithi Job Reservation Policy

Aspect	Details
Policy Name	Local Job Reservation Policy
Announced Year	2022
Reservation Percentage	95%
Applicable Sectors	Government departments, agencies, and corporations
Exclusion	Private sector jobs not included
Objective	To prioritize local residents for government job opportunities and reduce local unemployment
Impact	Benefits local job seekers in the government sector; does not address issues for migrant workers in the private sector

Practice Mains Question

Q. Discuss the impact of increasing migrant labour on local employment and socio-economic conditions in a state. How do demands for state-specific employment quotas influence the integration and treatment of migrant workers?

Q. Migrant labor is a critical driver of economic growth, providing essential workforce contributions that support the prosperity of entire regions. Restricting their participation can impede productivity and stifle economic progress.

Practice Prelims Question

Q. The proposed 'quota-for-local' Bill in Karnataka aims to:

- (a) Reduce inter-State migration.
- (b) Provide more job opportunities for locals in the formal sector.
- (c) Prevent gig workers from working full time.
- (d) Ensure that all workers are paid a fair wage.

Answer: (b) Provide more job opportunities for locals in the formal sector

Explanation: The quota-for-local Bill aims to reserve jobs for locals in the formal sector, particularly in industries and sectors that can offer stable employment, potentially limiting opportunities for migrants in these roles.

Q. According to the National Sample Survey Office's 78th Round Multiple Indicator Survey (2020-21), which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. **Maharashtra** hosts the highest share of external migrants in India.
2. **Uttar Pradesh** contributes the highest number of internal migrants.
3. Migration for economic reasons constitutes less than 10% of all migration.
4. **Suburban Mumbai** has the highest number of migrants among Indian districts.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

- a) 1, 2, and 3
- b) 1, 2, and 4
- c) 1 and 4
- d) 2 and 3

Answer: b) 1, 2, and 4

Explanation:

1. **Maharashtra hosts the highest share of external migrants in India:** Correct. The data indicates that Maharashtra has the highest share of external migrants, including those from various states and the Gulf countries.
2. **Uttar Pradesh contributes the highest number of internal migrants:** Correct. Uttar Pradesh is a major source of internal migrants, with significant migration occurring to other states like Maharashtra and Delhi.
3. **Migration for economic reasons constitutes less than 10% of all migration:** Incorrect. Economic reasons, including better employment prospects and business opportunities, account for about 22% of all migration, not less than 10%.
4. **Suburban Mumbai has the highest number of migrants among Indian districts:** Correct. Suburban Mumbai is the district with the highest number of migrants, followed by Pune and Thane.

Deep Dive into the Concept

Aspect	Internal Migration	External Migration
Definition	Movement within the same country, from one region to another	Movement from one country to another
Example	Moving from Uttar Pradesh to Maharashtra	An Indian moving to the United States
Reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Economic opportunities• Education• Family• Urbanization	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employment• Education• Refugee status• Family reunification
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demographic shifts• Regional development and disparities• Local job markets and housing demands	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Global labor market and remittances• Bilateral relations between countries• Labor markets and economies of both home and host countries

fMRI may reveal depression 'subtypes' and treatments that could work



A recent study published in *Nature Medicine* identifies **six unique subtypes of depression** based on distinct **brain activity patterns**. This approach aims to improve treatment by predicting which **antidepressants or therapies** may be effective for each subtype.

The research, led by Dr. Leonardo Tozzi, uses **fMRI data** and **machine learning** to create these subtypes. The study found that three of the six subtypes can predict positive responses to specific treatments.

The next step is to develop targeted treatments for all subtypes. This will involve further trials to confirm the effectiveness of tailored therapies for each subtype of depression.

Deep Dive into the Concept

Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI)

Aspect	Description
Blood Flow Detection	When a specific part of the brain is active, it requires more oxygen . This increased demand causes more blood flow to that region.
Real-Time Monitoring	fMRI captures these changes in real-time , allowing researchers to observe which brain areas are engaged during different tasks or responses to stimuli.
Applications	Research: Helps in studying brain functions and understanding neurological and psychological conditions. Clinical Use: Assists in diagnosing and guiding treatment approaches for various brain-related issues.

WHAT IS IT?

Blue moon: a baleful sequela?

Vasudevan Mukundh

The blue moon is a common example of an invented tradition — something someone has claimed is an old, time-honoured practice but which was in fact invented more recently. A second full moon in a single month is usually called a blue moon. But there are other ways in which the moon can be blue, such as literally.

For example, on April 5, 1815, Mt. Tambora in contemporary Indonesia produced the most powerful volcanic eruption in recorded history. The previous year, the Mayon volcano had erupted powerfully in the Philippines.

The effects of these volcanoes, combined with other climatic factors, lowered the temperature of the earth by 0.4-0.7 °C in 1816, producing what has since been called the "year without summer". The dust and other small particles lingering in the air could have caused the moon to look blue, as indicated by a description in the poem *Alastor*, written by Percy Bysshe Shelley that fateful year. After the Krakatau caldera exploded in 1883, the Royal Society in London recorded that the moon appeared blue, and the Sun a shade of green, in many



A blue moon rises above the Apollo Temple of ancient Corinth, Greece, on August 30, 2023. AFP

parts of the world. The use of 'blue moon' as a metaphor for a long period of time emerged in the early 1820s, and its use to describe the second full moon of a month came about in a farmers' almanac published in the U.S. in 1937. August 2023 had such a blue moon.

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A "blue moon" typically refers to the **second full moon** in a single month, but the term also historically described actual **blue-hued moons** caused by **volcanic eruptions**, such as those in **1815** and **1883**, which released particles that altered the moon's colour.

The metaphorical use of "blue moon" to denote a **rare event** began in the early **1820s**, and its current definition as the second full moon in a month was popularized by a **1937 U.S. farmers' almanac**.

Hasina's exit and India's hour of reckoning

A resolution spearheaded by students succeeded in toppling an increasingly authoritarian regime that had been in power for 15 years. What began as a protest against a quota system evolved into a nationwide movement that led to the ouster of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh's longest-serving political leader.

THE CASE

Sheikh Hasina

Prime Minister of Bangladesh

Hasina's exit and India's hour of reckoning

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Protest Origins and Escalation

- **Initial Cause:** Student-led protests began over a controversial job quota system reinstated by the High Court, reserving 30% of civil service posts for freedom fighters' descendants.
- **Escalation:** Protests intensified after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's derogatory comments (protesters as the “children of *Razakars*”) and violent actions by her supporters. The unrest led to nationwide demonstrations and severe casualties.

Government Response and Outcome

- **Government Actions:** Hasina's government initially tried to quell protests through internet shutdowns and violent crackdowns. The situation worsened with the involvement of the Bangladesh Chhatra League, further fuelling the movement.
- **Ouster of Hasina:** By August 5, massive public demonstrations led to Hasina's resignation. The movement, which expanded beyond the quota issue to demand broader political change,

successfully toppled her 15-year rule.

Impact and International Reaction

- **Domestic Impact:** The movement exposed issues of authoritarianism, corruption, and suppression of dissent within Bangladesh's political system.
- **International and Indian Response:** India's response was criticized for ignoring human rights abuses and seeming to support Hasina's narrative. This stance affected India's diplomatic relations with Bangladesh.

Future Implications

- **Political Transition:** Bangladesh faces significant challenges as it transitions to interim leadership under Prof. Yunus. The country's path forward will involve addressing democratic principles and governance issues.
- **India's Takeaway:** The crisis underscores the importance for India to engage with the broader Bangladeshi populace rather than focusing solely on individual leaders or parties.



His like was the cynosure of all eyes

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Topic

Details

Word: Duffer

Word: Cynosure

Phrase: Make Much Of

Meaning: Initially referred to a cheat selling counterfeit goods. Now means a person who is dull or not skilled.
Origin: Scottish 'duffar' meaning 'dull' or 'stupid'.
Usage: - Someone bad at games (e.g., a poor golfer).
 - Historically, referred to a naïve buyer of counterfeit goods.
Example: "All the candidates we interviewed this morning were duffers."

Pronunciation: 'SY-ne-sure' (stress on the first syllable).
Meaning: - Something or someone that attracts attention.
 - Originally, a reference to Ursa Minor or the North Star.
Usage: - "Tendulkar was the cynosure of all eyes."
 - "The spotless life of my uncle remains the cynosure for many of us."

Meaning: To give something a lot of importance or attention.
Usage: "Please don't make too much of the help we gave you."

Kolkata port's direct China service is a hit



Within 10 minutes

Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, Kolkata, (SMP Kolkata) says it has received overwhelming response for the direct weekly shipping service to China, which reduced cost and transit time. SMP Kolkata's China shipping service was inaugurated in July in alliance with container shipping line Pacific International Lines. The direct call vessels from China have arrived fully loaded. Every week there is one vessel calling at Kolkata from China. The impact from China and the Far East markets has been robust and we expect this to continue. SMP Kolkata's Chairman Sandeep Kumar said. "The direct calling from China or the Far East has significantly reduced the transit time from 45 to 15 days (lead time) in China to discharge at Kolkata," Kumar said. The maiden voyage culminated at the Kolkata Dock System in July 2024. SMP Kolkata, formerly known as Kolkata Port Trust, comprises two dock systems - Kolkata Dock System and Kolkata Dock Complex (KDC). The China-Kolkata service has three dedicated vessels - Sun Xia, Sun Rukun and Sun Rukun - each with an average payload load of 622 TEUs, specially tailored to navigate lower draft conditions. The weekly service aims at aiding the burgeoning trade across West Bengal, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, and the north-east, as well as Nepal and Bhutan. The vessels will carry largely containerised plastics, machinery and finished goods. (The writer is with The Hindu newspaper)

Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, Kolkata (SMP Kolkata) has received an enthusiastic response to its new **direct weekly shipping service to China**, which commenced in **July** in partnership with **Pacific International Lines**.

This service has significantly cut **costs** and reduced **transit time** from **45 days** to **15 days** for shipments between China and Kolkata. All vessels on this route have arrived **fully loaded**, reflecting robust **import activity** from China and the Far East.

The service features three dedicated vessels—**Kota Ria, Kota Rukun, and Kota Rakyat**—each capable of handling an average of **622 TEUs**. It primarily transports **plastics, machinery, and finished goods**.

This direct route supports trade across **West Bengal, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, and the North-East of India**, as well as **Nepal and Bhutan**.

Beware of deceptive dark patterns in influencing consumer's product choice

Dark commercial patterns are business practices exploiting elements of digital choice architecture, in particular to influence user interfaces that affect or impact consumer autonomy, decision making or choice. Marketers designers need to be aware of how best to ensure ethical design.



What are dark patterns? Dark patterns are design elements that manipulate users into making choices they might not otherwise make. They are often used to increase sales or gather more data. Examples include: **Interface Interference**: Using contrasting colors to highlight certain choices. **Confirm Shaming**: Using guilt-inducing language to pressure users into confirming actions. **Basket Sneaking**: Adding unwanted items to the user's cart without explicit consent. **Privacy Deception**: Forcing users to share more data. **Drip Pricing**: Gradually revealing additional fees. **Subscription Trap**: Leading users into recurring subscriptions without clear information.

A **recent report** by the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) and Parallel, a product design studio, highlights the prevalence of **deceptive patterns** in leading Indian apps. The study analyzed 12,000 screens across 53 apps from various industries, identifying the use of 12 different deceptive practices designed to impair user autonomy and decision-making.

Key Deceptive Patterns Identified:

- 1. Interface Interference:** Over 45% of apps use contrasting colours to highlight certain choices, potentially guiding users towards specific options.
- 2. Confirm Shaming:** Apps use guilt-inducing language to pressure users into confirming actions, e.g., offering choices like "Upgrade now" versus "I don't want a smarter software."

- 3. Basket Sneaking:** Unwanted items, such as default donations, are added to the user's cart without explicit consent.

Other identified patterns include **Privacy Deception** (forcing users to share more data), **Drip Pricing** (gradually revealing additional fees), and the **Subscription Trap** (leading users into recurring subscriptions without clear information).

The report **underscores the need for ethical design** in digital interfaces and encourages marketers to study ASCI's guidelines and tools like the Conscious Patterns website to avoid deceptive practices.



A worrying rise of dodgy doctors

A Telugu film actress's Botox treatment went awry when administered by a **dentist posing as a dermatologist**, leading to the closure of the clinic by the **Telangana Medical Council (TGMC)**. This incident prompted TGMC to investigate over **40 skin and cosmetic centers**, uncovering multiple **unqualified practitioners** and **illegal operations**. The TGMC has since been cracking down on **medical malpractice**, filing over **300 FIRs** against unqualified doctors, and addressing gaps in **rural healthcare** where quacks exploit the lack of proper medical facilities. The TGMC's efforts **underscore the critical need** for maintaining high **medical standards** and protecting **public health**.



In Jharia, Jharkhand, about **100,000 families** live in peril due to **underground coal fires** that cause smoke and structural damage to homes. The fires, a result of old, unregulated mining, have led to health issues and displacement.

Despite **government promises**, relocation efforts have been slow and hampered by issues such as **illegal mining** and **encroachments**.

The Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL) has spent over ₹2,000 crore on firefighting measures, but the situation remains dire, with only a fraction of families being relocated to safer areas.

"News Highlights: Key Updates in Brief"

- The **Supreme Court** has taken **suo motu cognizance** of the **rape** and **murder** of a doctor at a **Kolkata hospital**, leading to a **CBI investigation** and widespread calls for enhanced **safety measures** for **healthcare professionals**.
- **Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim** is set to visit **Delhi** to sign agreements and discuss a multi-sectoral cooperation agenda, with no confirmation on whether the issue of **Islamic preacher Zakir Naik's** extradition will be raised.
- The **Madhya Pradesh** government has formed a committee led by the Additional Chief Secretary (Home) **to tackle the issue of stray cattle** on major highways, with a 15-day special campaign planned for the Gwalior-Chambal region to mitigate accident risks.
- On the eve of **Raksha Bandhan**, **Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren** launched the **Jharkhand Mukhyamantri Maiyan Samman Yojana (JMMSY)**, transferring ₹1,000 each to 81,000 women's bank accounts. The scheme provides ₹1,000 monthly to women aged 21-50 from **BPL families**. Soren also inaugurated 215 schemes worth ₹105.80 crore and announced an increased **agriculture loan waiver** of up to ₹2 lakh.
- **Kerala Gramin Bank** deducted **loan EMI** from the accounts of **Chooralmala landslide survivors** despite the State government's advice against such deductions. The controversy arose after the government deposited financial aid into the survivors' accounts. The **Chief Minister's Office** has asked the district administration to report on the issue, and banks have been instructed to refund any deducted amounts.
- **Director-General of Indian Coast Guard Rakesh Pal** passed away from a **cardiac arrest** in Chennai. He collapsed at the airport while meeting Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, was briefly revived at the hospital, but succumbed later.
- The 10th edition of **Exercise Mitra Shakti**, running from August 12-25 in Sri Lanka, features Indian and Sri Lankan Armies deploying canines like Zac, a Belgian Malinois, to enhance joint counter-insurgency capabilities.
- Nepal's new Foreign Minister **Arzu Deuba Rana** has begun a five-day visit to India to discuss strengthening bilateral ties and cooperation with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar.
- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated a new **Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC)** in **Chennai**, along with a **Regional Marine Pollution Response Centre (RMPRC)** and a **Coast Guard Air Enclave** in **Puducherry**, enhancing maritime rescue and pollution response capabilities on India's east coast.

- Indian Railways will develop a **master clock system** to synchronize time across its network, aiming to address issues in accident investigations caused by time mismatches. The system will replace the current manual time-setting by stationmasters and ensure uniform time for train operations and management. The **prototype** is expected to be demonstrated by **October 2**, with time sourced from NAVIC or the **National Physical Laboratories**.
- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar visited **Kuwait**, meeting Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmed Abdullah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah to discuss enhancing bilateral ties and economic cooperation. This visit follows a recent tragedy in Kuwait where 45 Indians died in a fire.
- The **FSSAI** has launched a project to **assess microplastic contamination** in food, aiming to develop and validate methods for detecting micro and nano-plastics and to assess their **prevalence** and **exposure levels** in India.
- **Nearly 12%** of **Indian spice samples** tested failed to meet **quality and safety standards**, following contamination concerns that led several countries to impose stricter controls on **MDH** and **Everest** brands. The **FSSAI** found that **474 out of 4,054 samples** did not meet the required standards, though it did not provide brand-specific details.
- The **Shiveluch volcano** in Russia's **Kamchatka Peninsula** erupted, emitting ash plumes **5 km** into the sky and briefly causing a **"code red" warning** for aircraft. This eruption followed a **7.0 magnitude earthquake** off Kamchatka's east coast on Sunday.
- Poland is addressing a **toxic golden algae** outbreak in the Oder river system by using **hydrogen peroxide** to reduce algae levels by over 90%. Despite these efforts, **77 tonnes of fish** have died in recent weeks, and the algae risk remains high. The growth of golden algae is primarily caused by **saline water** from mining activities. Poland is planning to build **desalination installations** to tackle the problem.
- A **UN task force** has reported **soaring child malnutrition** in **Yemen**, with a **34% increase** in acute malnutrition among children under five, affecting over **600,000** children, driven by **conflict, disease outbreaks, food insecurity**, and **economic decline**. Some areas are now experiencing **"extremely critical"** levels of malnutrition for the first time.

"Amidst the complexities of progress and the shadows of exploitation, our greatest challenge lies in ensuring that every individual's right to safety and dignity is upheld, whether in the face of environmental hazards or the deceit of unqualified practices."

Practice Prelims Question

1. Who is the current Prime Minister of Malaysia who is scheduled to visit India for a three-day visit to enhance trade, strategic ties, and people-to-people links?

- A. Mahathir Mohammad
- B. Anwar Ibrahim
- C. Najib Razak
- D. Hishammuddin Hussein

Answer: B. Anwar Ibrahim

Explanation: Anwar Ibrahim is the current Prime Minister of Malaysia who is scheduled to visit India to discuss and enhance multi-sectoral cooperation.

2. Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding the Jharkhand Mukhyamantri Maiyan Samman Yojana (JMMSY) launched by Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren?

- 1. The scheme provides a monthly aid of ₹1,000 to women aged 21-50 from families living below the poverty line.
- 2. The total annual financial assistance under the scheme is ₹12,000 per eligible woman.
- 3. The scheme was inaugurated on the occasion of **Diwali**.
- 4. The scheme is part of a broader initiative that also includes waiving agriculture loans up to ₹2 lakh.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 1, 2, and 4 only
- c) 2 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2, 3, and 4

Answer: b) 1, 2, and 4 only

Explanation:

- 1. **Correct:** The Jharkhand Mukhyamantri Maiyan Samman Yojana (JMMSY) provides a monthly aid of ₹1,000 to women aged 21-50 from families living below the poverty line.
- 2. **Correct:** The total annual financial assistance under the scheme amounts to ₹12,000 per eligible woman, given ₹1,000 per month.
- 3. **Incorrect:** The scheme was launched on the occasion of **Raksha Bandhan**, not Diwali.
- 4. **Correct:** The scheme is part of a broader initiative that includes waiving agriculture loans up to ₹2 lakh.

3. Who was the Director-General of the Indian Coast Guard who recently passed away due to a cardiac arrest in Chennai?

1. Rakesh Pal
2. Rajesh Kumar
3. A. K. Sharma
4. Arun Kumar

Answer: Rakesh Pal

Explanation: Rakesh Pal, the Director-General of the Indian Coast Guard, passed away due to a cardiac arrest in Chennai while participating in an official function.

4. The 10th edition of Exercise Mitra Shakti is being conducted between which two countries?

- A) India and Bangladesh
- B) India and Pakistan
- C) India and Sri Lanka
- D) India and Nepal

Answer: C) India and Sri Lanka

Explanation: The 10th edition of Exercise Mitra Shakti, held from August 12-25, involves joint military exercises between the Indian Army and the Sri Lankan Army.

5. Which canine, deployed by the Indian Army, is participating in the 10th edition of Exercise Mitra Shakti held from August 12-25 in Sri Lanka?

- A) Max
- B) Rocky
- C) Zac
- D) Duke

Answer: C) Zac

Explanation: The 10th edition of Exercise Mitra Shakti involves deploying canines, with the Indian Army fielding Zac, a Belgian Malinois trained in various tactical operations.

6. Which of the following facilities was inaugurated by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in Chennai?

1. Regional Marine Pollution Response Centre (RMPRC)
2. Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC)
3. Coast Guard Air Enclave
4. All of the above

Answer: 4. All of the above

Explanation:

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated several key facilities in Chennai:

- **Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC):** This new centre will enhance coordination for rescuing mariners and fishermen in distress at sea, equipped with advanced distress monitoring and communication systems.
- **Regional Marine Pollution Response Centre (RMPRC):** Located at the Chennai Port, this is the first facility of its kind in the Indian Ocean Region for coordinating responses to marine pollution.
- **Coast Guard Air Enclave:** Situated in Puducherry, this facility includes Chetak and Advanced Light Helicopter Squadrons for maritime patrol, search and rescue operations, and support for Coast Guard ships at sea.

7. The term "blue moon" has been used historically to describe both a rare event and a specific astronomical phenomenon. Which of the following statements is true regarding the term "blue moon"?

1. It traditionally refers to the second full moon in a single month.
2. It was first used to describe the blue hue of the moon caused by volcanic eruptions in the 19th century.
3. The current definition of a blue moon as the second full moon in a month was popularized by a 1937 U.S. farmers' almanac.
4. All of the above.

Answer: 4. All of the above.

Explanation:

- The term "blue moon" traditionally refers to the second full moon in a single month.
- Historically, it also described the blue hue of the moon caused by volcanic eruptions, such as those in 1815 and 1883.
- The metaphorical use of "blue moon" to denote a rare event began in the early 1820s, and its current definition as the second full moon in a month was popularized by a 1937 U.S. farmers' almanac.

8. Consider the following statements:

1. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina referred to the student protesters as the "children of Razakars" during the protests against the quota system in Bangladesh.
2. Razakars were collaborators with Indian forces during the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh.
3. The derogatory comments by Sheikh Hasina were made in the context of the nationwide protests that led to her ouster.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- A) 1 and 2 only
- B) 1 and 3 only
- C) 2 and 3 only
- D) 1, 2, and 3

Answer: B) 1 and 3 only

Explanation:

1. **Correct** - Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina referred to the student protesters as the “children of Razakars” during the protests against the quota system. This statement inflamed the situation and worsened tensions.
2. **Incorrect** - The Razakars were collaborators with Pakistani forces during the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh, not Indian forces.
3. **Correct** - The derogatory comments by Sheikh Hasina were made in the context of the nationwide protests that eventually led to her ouster.

9. Which Indian port inaugurated a direct weekly shipping service to China in July 2024, reducing transit time from 45 days to 15 days?

- A) Mumbai Port
- B) Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, Kolkata
- C) Chennai Port
- D) Visakhapatnam Port

Answer: B) Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, Kolkata

10. What is the significance of the vessels Kota Ria, Kota Rukun, and Kota Rakyat in relation to Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port?

- A) They are the names of the ports that will receive shipments from China.
- B) They are the three dedicated vessels operating on the China-Calcutta service.
- C) They are the names of the container shipping lines partnering with SMP Kolkata.
- D) They are the newly inaugurated dock systems at SMP Kolkata.

Answer: B) They are the three dedicated vessels operating on the China-Calcutta service.

11. Recently in the news, drip pricing refers to a practice where:

- A) A higher fee is disclosed only at the end of the purchase process, leading to a final price that is significantly higher than the initial offer.
- B) Additional costs are added to a consumer's cart without explicit consent, requiring them to manually remove unwanted items.
- C) Contrasting colors are used to highlight certain options while hiding others, thereby influencing user choices subliminally.
- D) Consumers are pressured into confirming a decision through guilt or social pressure, influencing their choice.

Answer: A)

Explanation:

Drip pricing refers to a deceptive pricing strategy where additional fees or costs are revealed incrementally throughout the purchase process, rather than being disclosed upfront. This practice can lead to consumers being surprised by a significantly higher final price than initially advertised. It impacts purchasing decisions by obscuring the total cost until later in the transaction, which can manipulate consumers into completing the purchase despite the higher-than-expected final cost.

12. Which of the following volcanoes in Russia's Kamchatka Peninsula recently erupted, causing a "code red" warning for aircraft and occurring shortly after a 7.0 magnitude earthquake?

- A) Klyuchevskaya Sopka
- B) Shiveluch
- C) Bezymianny
- D) Karymsky

Answer: B) Shiveluch

Explanation:

The Shiveluch volcano, one of Russia's most active volcanoes, recently erupted, sending plumes of ash 5 km into the sky and triggering a "code red" warning for aircraft. This eruption occurred shortly after a 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck off Kamchatka's east coast. The other volcanoes listed (Klyuchevskaya Sopka, Bezymianny, and Karymsky) are also located in the Kamchatka Peninsula but were not involved in this recent event.

13. Recently, Poland has taken measures to combat the spread of toxic golden algae in the Oder river system. What method has been used to reduce the algae levels, and what are the primary causes of the algae growth?

- A) Chlorine treatment; industrial discharge
- B) Hydrogen peroxide; saline water from mining activities
- C) Ozone treatment; agricultural runoff
- D) Ultraviolet light; wastewater discharge

Answer: B) Hydrogen peroxide; saline water from mining activities

Explanation: Poland has used **hydrogen peroxide** to reduce golden algae levels by over 90%. The primary cause of the algae growth is **saline water** discharged by the mining industry.

14. Which river's tributary system is currently being treated with hydrogen peroxide to manage toxic golden algae?

- A) Vistula River
- B) Danube River
- C) Oder River
- D) Elbe River

Answer: C) Oder River

Explanation: The **Oder River's** tributary system is being treated with **hydrogen peroxide** to address the issue of toxic **golden algae**.

"Understanding current affairs is crucial for UPSC/ State PSC preparation, as it bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application, ensuring that candidates are well- informed, relevant, and capable of making insightful analyses on contemporary issues."
