

1. Read the following passage & answer the questions that follow:

When the dry season returns, the Amazon forest will burn again, as it does every year. But this time promises to be different...Deforestation is increasing at an alarming pace. It has grown by 94 percent since August 2019, compared with the previous year's rate, which had been the highest in a decade. Unlike drier areas in Australia, the rainforest can't catch on fire unless humans cut trees down. The Amazon is being devastated on an industrial scale, and for what? Criminal groups are targeting public lands for low-productivity cattle ranching and mining. Illegal land-grabbing schemes destroy biodiversity and the potentials of bio economies, enriching well-connected individuals...

Many in Brazil's elites accepted a Faustian bargain: So long as the government's economic agenda remains friendly, they look the other way. Now, with all eyes on the pandemic crises, the Amazon and its Indigenous groups face existential threats, while criminals act as if they have permission to plunder. Oversight and fines for infractions have declined substantially. Ricardo Salles, the environment minister, fired a director in an enforcement role after he carried out an operation to dismantle illegal mining. The federal government has kept key positions vacant and proposed huge budget cuts to environmental agencies, undermining fire prevention, monitoring and control. The president and his allies support a bill that provides further incentives to deforestation, allowing land grabbers to gain ownership of public lands, including Indigenous territories.

Scientists agree that we are nearing a tipping point in deforestation that will lead to the Amazon's "savannization." This would have dire consequences not only for the forest, but also for Brazil's agriculture, urban water and energy supplies, and global temperatures. The ecological and socio-economic impacts are unfathomable, and they include the threat of zoonotic diseases. There is already evidence connecting the destruction of wetlands and rainforest to drought in the São Paulo metropolitan region, halfway across the continent.

If we lose the Amazon, it won't be for a lack of alternatives. Brazil has the know-how to turn this around. Marina Silva, the minister of environment between 2003 and 2008, worked to drastically reduce the rate of deforestation, which at the time was even higher. International organizations and investors need to use their leverage and pressure counterparts in Brazil... Brazil's congressional leaders have been responsive to threats of sanctions, boycotts and disinvestment. If our current crises do not instill a sense of responsibility and calls to action, then we can expect what feels like a slow-burn apocalypse to get much worse.

The future of the forest's biodiversity depends on its human diversity. Demarcated Indigenous lands and extractive reserves, where local communities engage in sustainable and often traditional economic activities, have proved to be effective against the illegal destruction of the forest. That is one reason President Bolsonaro and his allies are working so hard to erode Indigenous rights. And contrary to what many might think, the forest has sustained complex societies without being destroyed. Millions of people inhabited the Amazonian basin before Europeans arrived...

The present moment should serve as an alert to the fragility of so much of what we take for granted. No matter what, the Amazon will burn again. But we should avoid at all costs having to find out what it would be like to live [on a] planet without it. If we maintain course, it is a matter of time. Working to avoid the destruction of the world's greatest rainforest by criminals and the ideologues that empower them should be low-hanging fruit. While we still can.

1. What is the key conclusion of this passage?

- (1) The world has to band together to stop the Amazon rainforests from being destroyed.
- (2) Destroying the Amazon rainforest will end up destroying the world slowly.
- (3) The Brazilian politicians are destroying the Amazon rainforest and indigenous people.
- (4) Brazilian politicians are destroying the Amazon rainforest, and the indigenous people are paying the price.

2. What is the "Faustian bargain" that Brazil's elites have accepted?

- (1) They are choosing short term prosperity from mining and cattle ranching.
- (2) They are choosing economic development over the environment.
- (3) They are choosing locals and Europeans over indigenous people, who have lived in these lands for centuries.
- (4) They are turning a blind eye to the plight of the rainforest and indigenous peoples.

3. How can the rest of the world prevent deforestation in Brazil?

- (1) Global organisations can negotiate with the Brazilian government to stop illegal activities.
- (2) The world can coerce the Brazilian government to leave the rainforest in the control of the indigenous peoples.
- (3) Corporations can threaten Brazil with sanctions or reduction of investment if they continue destroying the forests.
- (4) Global organisations must utilise the existing know-how from Marina Silva as well as indigenous natives.

4. Which of the following will the author agree with?

- (1) Brazil was a peaceful place before the Europeans inhabited it.
- (2) Brazilian politicians and elites stand to gain from deforestation, and have always supported it.
- (3) The destruction of the Amazon will lead to drought and disease.
- (4) Brazilian politicians and elites have destroyed over 90% of the Amazon.

2. Read the following passage & answer the questions that follow:

Ophir Harpaz just wanted to get a good deal on a flight to London. She was on travel website OneTravel, scouring various options for her trip. As she browsed, she noticed a seemingly helpful prompt: “38 people are looking at this flight”. A nudge that implied the flight might soon get booked up, or perhaps that the price of a seat would rise as they [become] scarcer... As Harpaz looked at that number, “38 people”, she began to feel sceptical. Were 38 people really looking at that budget flight to London at the same exact moment? Being a cyber-security researcher, she was familiar with web code so she decided to examine how OneTravel displayed its web pages. After a little bit of digging, she made a startling discovery – the number wasn’t genuine. The OneTravel web page she was browsing was simply designed to claim that between 28 and 45 people were viewing a flight at any given moment. The exact figure was chosen at random...

Similar code has been found on other websites. Subscription deals were listed on [websites with a notification that the last time someone bought a package was mere minutes or seconds ago have code choosing a random number] for these statements...

When online retailers use web design and verbal nudges to guide customers towards clicking something or making a particular decision, they are deploying what have become known as “dark patterns”. The term was coined by design consultant Harry Brignull about 10 years ago. While some might be subtle – a pre-ticked checkbox on a form signing you up to a newsletter during registration, for example – others are “intended to gaslight the consumer”, says Brignull... [Arvind Narayanan, associate professor at Princeton published research which showed] that in a sample of 11,000 retail websites, about 11%, contained dark patterns. Of those dark patterns, 234 were found to be deceptive. “Perhaps the biggest harm from dark patterns is a loss of trust in the online environment and a degradation of our online experience,” says Narayanan... It’s a common marketing tactic to use nudges – subtle cues or indirect suggestions – to steer decision-making in a particular way. In this case, by displaying prompts such as “X many people are viewing this product!” or “Y many minutes remain until the price increases!”, firms are tapping into “social proof”, or our tendency to mimic the behaviour of groups of people...

Because they erode trust, says Narayanan, “dark patterns are like pollution, which is why we can’t rely on individual apps and websites to regulate themselves.” [Brignull says] drafting codes of ethics for web designers won’t work – designers could be asked to bend the truth by their bosses and therefore may exert little ethical control. He argues that deceptions will become more common unless society takes a tougher stance against them. “I think really what we need is good regulation and we need a regulatory system that moves as fast as the internet does,” he says. Harpaz says she would like to see the public become more aware of these online sales tactics... “I think it’s just important that people are aware of such things,” she says. “This is something that should be talked about.”

1. Which of the following comes closest to what Harry Brignull means by “gaslight the consumer”?

- (1) Manipulate consumers into making decisions that the retailers want.
- (2) Making consumers buy without making price comparisons.
- (3) Torching the usual common sense displayed by consumers.
- (4) Using fake numbers and illicit online sales tactics to drive online sales.

2. All of the following can be definitely inferred from the passage EXCEPT:

- (1) Dark patterns typically escalate beyond developers' control.
- (2) It is possible to find websites that are using dark patterns.
- (3) Customers have been manipulated by sellers earlier as well.
- (4) People tend to buy products if they see that others are also interested in the same item.

3. Which of the following is given as an issue with dark patterns?

- (1) They manipulate consumers into buying expensive products.
- (2) They are currently being used by almost 2% of websites.
- (3) They use random numbers to befuddle consumers.
- (4) They tend to spoil consumer experience.

4. Why does the author feel that web developers cannot curb dark patterns?

- (1) They are motivated to increase online sales and hence might not make strictly ethical decisions.
- (2) They might not have complete authority in ethical decision-making.
- (3) They might get strong-armed by their superiors to bend the truth.
- (4) Web-developers do not have the awareness to make the right ethical decisions.

3. Read the following passage & answer the questions that follow:

[CAT 2020, Slot 1]

Few realise that the government of China, governing an empire of some 60 million people during the Tang dynasty (618–907), implemented a complex financial system that recognised grain, coins and textiles as money. . . . Coins did have certain advantages: they were durable, recognisable and provided a convenient medium of exchange, especially for smaller transactions. However, there were also disadvantages. A continuing shortage of copper meant that government mints could not produce enough coins for the entire empire, to the extent that for most of the dynasty’s history, coins constituted only a tenth of the money supply. One of the main objections to calls for taxes to be paid in coin was that peasant producers who could weave cloth or grow grain – the other two major currencies of the Tang – would not be able to produce coins, and therefore would not be able to pay their taxes. . . .

As coins had advantages and disadvantages, so too did textiles. If in circulation for a long period of time, they could show signs of wear and tear. Stained, faded and torn bolts of textiles had less value than a brand new bolt. Furthermore, a full bolt had a particular value. If consumers cut textiles into smaller pieces to buy or sell something worth less than a full bolt, that, too, greatly lessened the value of the textiles. Unlike coins, textiles could not be used for small transactions; as [an official] noted, textiles could not “be exchanged by the foot and the inch” . . .

But textiles had some advantages over coins. For a start, textile production was widespread and there were fewer problems with the supply of textiles. For large transactions, textiles weighed less than their equivalent in coins since a string of coins . . . could weigh as much as 4 kg. Furthermore, the dimensions of a bolt of silk held remarkably steady from the third to the tenth century: 56 cm wide and 12 m long . . . The values of different textiles were also more stable than the fluctuating values of coins. . . .

The government also required the use of textiles for large transactions. Coins, on the other hand, were better suited for smaller transactions, and possibly, given the costs of transporting coins, for a more local usage. Grain, because it rotted easily, was not used nearly as much as coins and textiles, but taxpayers were required to pay grain to the government as a share of their annual tax obligations, and official salaries were expressed in weights of grain. . . .

In actuality, our own currency system today has some similarities even as it is changing in front of our eyes. . . . We have cash – coins for small transactions like paying for parking at a meter, and banknotes for other items; cheques and debit/credit cards for other, often larger, types of payments. At the same time, we are shifting to electronic banking and making payments online. Some young people never use cash [and] do not know how to write a cheque . . .

1. In the context of the passage, which one of the following can be inferred with regard to the use of currency during the Tang era?

- (1) Currency usage was similar to that of modern times.
- (2) Currency that deteriorated easily was not used for official work.
- (3) Copper coins were more valuable and durable than textiles.
- (4) Grains were the most used currency because of government requirements.

2. According to the passage, the modern currency system shares all the following features with that of the Tang, EXCEPT that:

- (1) It uses different materials as currency.
- (2) Its currencies fluctuate in value over time.
- (3) It uses different currencies for different situations.
- (4) It is undergoing transformation.

3. When discussing textiles as currency in the Tang period, the author uses the words “steady” and “stable” to indicate all of the following EXCEPT:

- (1) Reliable supply.
- (2) Reliable measurements.
- (3) Reliable quality.
- (4) Reliable transportation.

4. During the Tang period, which one of the following would not be an economically sound decision for a small purchase in the local market that is worth one-eighth of a bolt of cloth?

- (1) Cutting one-eighth of the fabric from a new bolt to pay the amount.
- (2) Making the payment with the appropriate weight of grain.
- (3) Using coins issued by the government to make the payment.
- (4) Paying with a faded bolt of cloth that has approximately the same value.