

## Hey Smart Scoopers

Hope you had a great week!

This time, we've lined up five scoops that travel from the world of workers and big global deals to clever wordplay and a fun brain teaser at the end.

Here are your fresh picks for the week:

Scoop 1: The story of India's Gig Workers: Their fight for fair work (I)

Scoop 2: The story of India's Gig Workers: Their fight for fair work (II)

Scoop 3: Level up your vocabulary: Discovering the hidden meaning

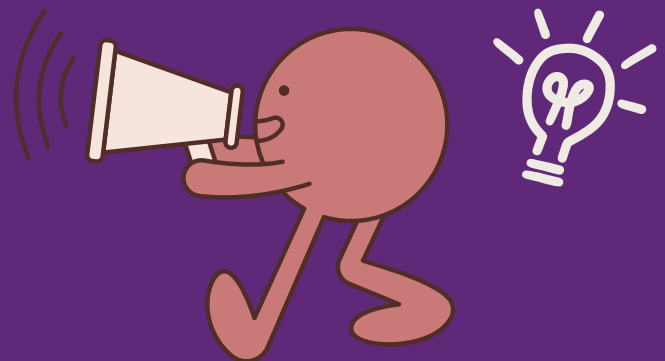
Scoop 4: Mother of all deals: India-EU FTA Explained

Scoop 5: Puzzle For The Week: Mr. Puffer's Cigarettes

Dig in and enjoy!

Happy Reading,  
The SmartScoop Team

Our mascot, Blurt  
will follow us  
along the way.




Blurt /blurt/  
noun:

A loud, round, super-curious character who just can't keep a fact in.

## THEIR FIGHT FOR FAIR WORK

Have you ever ordered food or school supplies on an app and seen them arrive almost instantly? It feels like magic, but behind that speed are real people who ride through traffic, rain, and heat to deliver them. Recently, thousands of these workers went on strike to say that things need to change!



Gig workers in India began a series of strikes\* in late December 2025 to draw attention to unsafe working conditions, sudden penalties, and lack of basic protections. The protests also raised concerns about risky practices like the 10-minute delivery model. This movement continued with a nationwide strike on January 26, 2026, bringing attention to the challenges faced by gig workers across the country.



\*to refuse to continue working because of an argument with an employer about working conditions, pay levels, or job losses

### Who Are Gig Workers?

Unlike regular employees who work fixed hours at one company, gig workers take on temporary jobs through apps. They're called "gig" workers because they do short "gigs" or tasks like delivering food or driving passengers around or providing at home salon services. Gig workers (like delivery riders for Zomato, Swiggy, Urban company or Blinkit) use apps to find "gigs" or small tasks. They get paid per delivery or per task, rather than a steady wage. They use their own bikes and fuel. They are often called delivery "partners" instead of employees facing them outside the scope of labor law\* protections.

\*Labour law is a set of rules that protect workers and make sure employers treat them fairly, for example by setting rules about pay, working hours, and safety at work.



### Why Did They Strike? The Main Problems

#### The "10-Minute" Pressure

One of the biggest issues is Quick Commerce, apps promise to deliver in just 10 minutes. Workers say this forces them to drive too fast, weave through traffic, and skip traffic rules which is dangerous for their safety. Following the protests, from 14 January, 2026 the Indian government has asked all quick-commerce platforms to drop the controversial "10-minute delivery" branding. However, workers complain that they are still expected to deliver in 10-minutes.



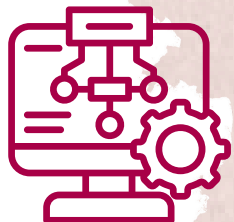
#### Legal Recognition



Gig workers want to be officially recognised as "workers" under India's labour laws instead of being treated as delivery partners or contractors. India's labour laws have historically focused on protecting full-time employees. Gig work, being a relatively new phenomenon, fell outside this framework. The gig workers say this change would allow them to receive basic benefits that regular employees get, such as health insurance, sick leave, and protection if they are injured on the job.

#### "Algorithm" as Bosses

Gig workers don't have a human boss they can talk to if something goes wrong. Instead, an algorithm (a computer program) decides which orders they get. If a worker gets a low rating from a customer, even if it wasn't their fault, the app might "block" their ID. This is called arbitrary deactivation, and it means the worker suddenly loses their job with no one to appeal to.

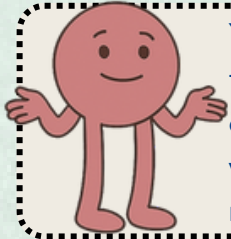


## THEIR FIGHT FOR FAIR WORK



The story of gig worker strikes in India is still developing. As the gig economy continues to grow, the question remains: can we create a system where everyone benefits: workers, consumers, and companies?

## DISCOVERING THE HIDDEN MEANING



You probably already toss around words like “cool,” “sus,” “vibe,” and “low-key” with your friends. But English also has some interesting phrases that look simple and mean something completely different. These are called idioms or metaphors, and using them makes you sound way more sophisticated. Let’s explore a few of these “hidden meaning” words that can help make your speaking and writing more fun!

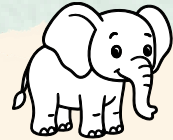
**Red Herring**

**The Literal Meaning:** A smelly, salted fish that is slowly smoked until it turns red.

**The Real Meaning:** A false clue or a distraction used to lead someone away from the truth.

**The Backstory:** Legend has it that people used to drag smelly fish across a trail to distract hunting dogs and throw them off the scent.

**How to use it:** The character in the black hoodie was just a red herring; the real thief was actually the gardener!

**White Elephant**

**The Literal Meaning:** A rare, snowy-colored elephant.

**The Real Meaning:** Something that costs a lot of money to keep, but is totally useless and hard to get rid of.

**The Backstory:** In ancient Thailand, if a King was mad at you, he’d gift a white elephant. Since white elephants were sacred, you couldn’t make them work, but you had to spend a fortune feeding them. It was a “gift” meant to ruin you :(

**How to use it:** That old computer of my grandpa in the corner, is a white elephant. It takes up space and doesn’t even turn on.

**Pyrrhic Victory**

**The Literal Meaning:** A win named after a Greek King named Pyrrhus.

**The Real Meaning:** A victory that isn’t worth it because you lost too much to get it.

**The Backstory:** King Pyrrhus defeated the Romans in a big battle, but he lost almost his entire army doing it. He famously said, “One more victory like this and I’m finished!”

**How to use it:** Winning the argument with my best friend was a pyrrhic victory; I proved I was right, but now she won’t talk to me.

**Achilles' Heel**

**The Literal Meaning:** The back part of a Greek hero's foot.

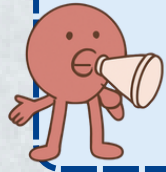
**The Real Meaning:** A small but fatal weakness in an otherwise strong person or plan.

**The Backstory:** When Achilles was a baby, his mom dipped him in magic water to make him invincible. But she held him by his heel, so that one spot stayed “normal.” Eventually, he was defeated by an arrow to....you guessed it, his heel.

**How to use it:** The soccer team is amazing at scoring goals, but their slow defense is their Achilles’ heel.

## INDIA-EU FREE TRADE AGREEMENT (FTA) EXPLAINED

India and the European Union (EU) just made a huge trade deal on January 27, 2026! India and the European Union (EU) have finally agreed on a big trade deal called a **Free Trade Agreement (FTA)**. This has been in the works for nearly 20 years. The talks about the India-EU trade deal started in 2007, but for a long time, nothing much happened. Then in 2022, after the war in Ukraine began and the US started raising trade taxes, India and Europe decided to hurry up and finish the deal



**Word Bank: Friendly definitions for tricky words :**

**EU (European Union):** The EU is like a club of 27 European countries that work together. Think of countries like Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and others. Together, they're massive - they represent about 25% of the world's economy

**Economy:** is the giant system of how people make, spend, and move money around. It includes jobs, money, shops, factories, and services like schools and hospitals etc

**Tariff:** A tax a government puts on goods coming into a country to make them more expensive and protect local businesses.



Left to right, European Council President Antonio Costa, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen

**What is this Free Trade Agreement anyway?**

Imagine you want to buy something from another country, but there's a special tax (called a "tariff") that makes it super expensive. This deal removes most of those taxes between India and the EU, making things much cheaper.

Let me explain with some examples

European cars currently have a 110% tax in India, but this will gradually drop to just 10%. So if a European car costs ₹10 lakhs, you'd pay ₹21 lakhs with the old tax, but this will get much less in the future! India will nearly eliminate taxes of up to 44% on machinery, 22% on chemicals, and 11% on medicines. European products like wine, olive oil, and chocolates will get easier access to India.

### Why Does This Matter?

This deal covers nearly two billion people and almost a quarter of global economy. That's huge!

More jobs! India is great at making clothes, jewelry, and medicines. Now, Indian companies can sell these to Europe without paying extra taxes.

This is really important because the US recently put heavy taxes on Indian goods, so India needed other places to sell things

More choices for Indian shoppers: you'll get access to more European products at better prices

That's why leaders are calling it "Mother Of All Deals!"

## MR. PUFFER'S CIGARETTES

Mr. Puffer



Mr. Puffer, a heavy smoker for many years, finally decided to stop smoking altogether. "I'll finish the twenty-seven cigarettes I have left," he said to himself, "and never smoke another one."

It was Mr. Puffer's practice to smoke exactly two-thirds of each cigarette. It did not take him long to discover that with the aid of some cellophane tape he could stick three butts together to make a new cigarette. With 27 cigarettes on hand, how many cigarettes can he smoke before he gives up smoking forever?

PS: Mr. Puffer after his last cigarette, never smoked again; he failed to recover from the strength of his final puff :(

**SOLUTION**

After smoking the 27 cigarettes, Mr. Puffer patched together the butts to make 9 more. These 9 cigarettes left enough butts for 3 more smokes; then with the 3 final butts he made one final cigarette. Total: 40 cigarettes.

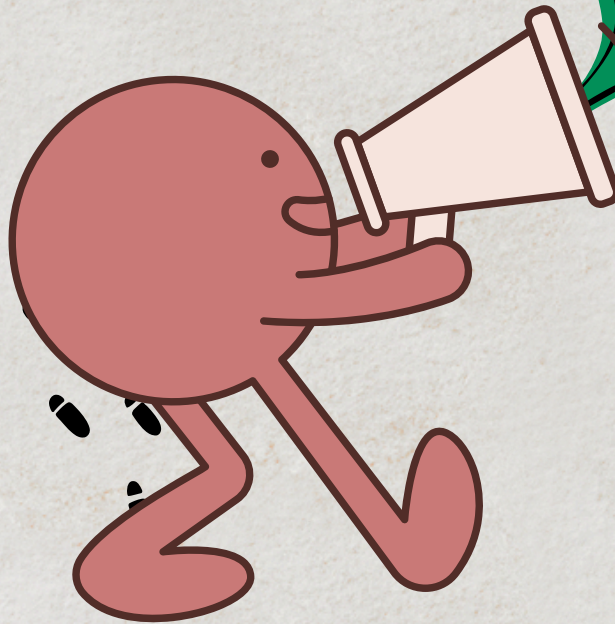
Blurt's  
Giggle for the week

The English word with the  
highest number of definitions, is

"RUN,"

645 distinct usages!

run a race, run a business,  
run out of milk, and more...



That's all for this week folks! Until next time, keep your  
brain gears turning!

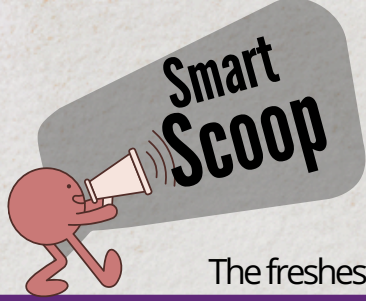


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Write to us here:

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We'd love to hear from you! Mostly Blurt tbh..



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