

Daily Reading Comprehension & Critical Reasoning

Two RC passages (English-as-Language) and two CR passages (Argumentation). Read each carefully and answer based on what is stated or implied.
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PASSAGE 1 (RC) — THE NEW POLITICS OF INDIAN TAX REFORM (ECONOMY / PUBLIC POLICY)

Q1-5

READ CAREFULLY AND ANSWER Q1-5 BASED ONLY ON THE PASSAGE.

Indian tax reform has been declared 'imminent' for at least three decades. The Direct Tax Code, drafted in 2009 and tabled in various iterations since, is the most prominent example: a comprehensive rewrite of the income-tax statute that has remained perpetually almost-passed. The Goods and Services Tax, by contrast, was passed in 2017 — but observers who believed that a single GST would simplify the tax landscape have had to absorb a continuous accretion of rate slabs, exemptions, classifications and Central-State carve-outs that have produced a system at least as complex as the patchwork it replaced.

The deeper question is why reform that ENJOYS WIDE APPARENT SUPPORT — from industry, from international agencies, from policy economists — fails so reliably. The standard answer is institutional veto: the Council of States, the Federal Council, individual State Governments, trade associations and the bar of tax practitioners each hold a small veto over the reform package, and the cumulative effect is paralysis. This is part of the story but only part. The deeper story is DISTRIBUTIONAL.

Every tax reform has winners and losers. A simpler tax system redistributes power from the constituency that BENEFITS from complexity — primarily tax practitioners, but also large firms with the staff to game it — toward the constituency that pays the compliance tax of complexity, which is small business and the salaried individual. The latter constituency is large but diffuse; the former is small but organised. In the absence of a political force willing to act on behalf of the diffuse beneficiaries, the organised losers successfully block reform. This is not a coordination failure of stupidity; it is a coordination failure of unequal political weight.

What might unblock the deadlock? Two paths suggest themselves. The first is procedural — designing tax-reform proposals as PACKAGES that compensate the organised losers with transitional measures. The second is technocratic — placing reform inside an autonomous tax administration with operational authority insulated from year-to-year political pressure. Neither is novel; both have been attempted with uneven success. The real precondition, however, is electoral: a Government willing to spend political capital on a reform whose beneficiaries will not credit them for years. India has not yet produced such a Government for tax.

1. What is the PRIMARY function of the third paragraph in the structure of the passage?

- A. To deepen the explanation by introducing the DISTRIBUTIONAL story (organised losers vs diffuse beneficiaries) as the underlying cause that the institutional-veto account misses
- B. To restate the institutional-veto thesis from paragraph 2
- C. To recommend a specific reform package
- D. To criticise tax practitioners personally

2. If a future government proposed a tax-reform package that explicitly compensated tax practitioners and large firms with transitional measures, which of the author's claims would this MOST DIRECTLY engage?

- A. The claim that the GST has produced a complex system
- B. The claim that the Direct Tax Code has remained unpassed since 2009
- C. The first procedural path the author identifies — designing reform as a package that compensates organised losers — which the proposal would test in practice
- D. The claim that India has not produced a Government willing to spend political capital

3. The author's tone toward the institutional-veto thesis is BEST described as:

- A. Conceding but qualified — the author calls it 'part of the story but only part', accepting its descriptive accuracy while claiming it misses the deeper distributional dynamic
- B. Wholly dismissive — the author treats it as worthless
- C. Indifferent — the author has no view
- D. Uncritically endorsing — the author adopts it as the full explanation

4. In context, the phrase 'a coordination failure of unequal political weight' MOST NEARLY conveys that:

- A. Politicians weigh constituencies by their physical size
- B. Reform fails not because the relevant constituencies are stupid but because the politically organised losers can outweigh the politically diffuse winners in shaping outcomes
- C. Coordination is impossible in democracies
- D. The constituencies cannot communicate with each other

5. Which of the following INFERENCES is BEST supported by the passage's account of the GST experience?

- A. The GST should be replaced by a State-by-State sales tax
- B. Even reforms that PASS may, through incremental accretion, end up reproducing the complexity they were intended to remove — so passage alone is not sufficient for genuine simplification
- C. The GST will be fully repealed within five years
- D. The GST has reduced tax-collection efficiency

PASSAGE 2 (RC) — THE FUTURE OF INDIAN ENGLISH IN A MULTILINGUAL REPUBLIC (LINGUISTICS / SOCIETY) Q6-10

READ CAREFULLY AND ANSWER Q6-10 BASED ONLY ON THE PASSAGE.

Indian English — the variety of English used in India for administration, education, commerce and an increasingly visible body of literature — is now spoken or read with proficiency by an estimated 120 million Indians. By that count alone India ranks among the largest English-using populations in the world. Yet 'Indian English' is not a uniform variety; it is a continuum that runs from the nearly-British register of pre-Independence elite institutions, through the tradesman's English of urban commerce, to the diaspora-influenced varieties of younger speakers who have grown up with American streaming content. The interesting question is not whether Indian English will SURVIVE — it manifestly will — but what shape it will take.

Two competing pressures are operative. The first is STANDARDISATION, driven by examination boards, by professional communications training, and by the requirement that international transactions be conducted in a register intelligible across borders. This pressure pulls Indian English toward a relatively conservative norm — close to British English in syntax, with a small set of Indian lexical items integrated where convenient.

The second pressure is INDIGENISATION. As more Indians acquire English in fundamentally Indian school environments, with Indian teachers, in Indian linguistic surroundings, the language naturally assimilates features of the substrate languages of its speakers — tense and aspect distinctions from Hindi or Telugu, idiom from Tamil or Bengali, vocabulary from Marathi or Gujarati. Some of these features (the use of 'isn't it?' as a universal tag question; the perfective 'I have done it yesterday'; the lexical doubling of 'like-like' for emphasis) are already accepted as standard within India even as they remain non-standard internationally.

The eventual outcome is unlikely to be a victory for either pressure. The likeliest trajectory is a STRATIFICATION — an internationally-intelligible Indian English for cross-border commerce and academic publication, AND an indigenised Indian English for domestic communication, advertising, popular media and creative literature. These will not be different languages but different registers of the same language, and competent Indian English speakers will move between them as they already move between formal and informal Hindi or Tamil. The literary consequence is intriguing: the Indian English novel of 2050 may read very differently from the international Indian English textbook of the same year, and both may be read by the same people, in the same week, with no sense of contradiction.

6. What is the author's PRIMARY THESIS about the future shape of Indian English?

- A. Indian English will most likely STRATIFY into an internationally-intelligible register and an indigenised domestic register, with bilingual competence in both
- B. Indian English will converge entirely on British English
- C. Indian English will be replaced by Hindi by 2050
- D. Indian English will collapse under indigenisation

7. The author's use of 'isn't it?' as a tag question, the perfective 'I have done it yesterday', and the doubling 'like-like' is intended to:

- A. Suggest that these features will disappear under standardisation pressure
- B. Provide concrete EXAMPLES of indigenisation already accepted as standard within India even though they remain non-standard internationally
- C. Argue that Indian English is grammatically incorrect
- D. Mock Indian English speakers

8. Which of the following analogies in another linguistic context would be MOST APT for the stratification the author predicts?

- A. English and French, which are entirely separate languages
- B. Latin and Italian, where the older language is dead and the modern is alive
- C. British English and Cockney, where one is a class dialect of the other
- D. Standard Modern Arabic and the various colloquial Arabics, where speakers move between a high register for formal and cross-regional communication and a colloquial register for domestic life

9. Which of the following, if newly established, would MOST DIRECTLY UNDERMINE the author's prediction of stratification?

- A. Evidence that the Indian English novel is read internationally
- B. Evidence that Indian English speakers consistently FAIL to maintain register distinctions in practice — that the indigenised features systematically bleed into formal cross-border communications, and the international register fails to take hold inside Indian domestic communication
- C. Evidence that the diaspora prefers American English
- D. Evidence that English is taught in more Indian schools than ever

10. The author's overall stance on the two pressures of standardisation and indigenisation is BEST described as:

- A. BOTH pressures will be accommodated through register stratification — competent speakers will move fluidly between an internationally-intelligible and an indigenised register
- B. Stratification will favour standardisation entirely
- C. Both pressures will fail and Indian English will splinter into mutually unintelligible varieties
- D. Stratification will favour indigenisation entirely

PASSAGE 3 (CR) — SHOULD INDIA ADOPT A UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME? (ECONOMICS / PUBLIC POLICY)

Q11–15

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q11–15.

The proposal under consideration is narrow. India should pilot, in two large States chosen for diverse economic profiles, a UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME (UBI) of approximately ₹1,500 per adult per month, funded through reallocation of existing food, fertiliser and fuel subsidies and through modest fiscal reform. The pilot would run for five years; outcomes on labour-force participation, school attendance, women's economic agency and small-business formation would be evaluated against matched control districts.

Three observations support the proposal. First, the Indian state's existing welfare apparatus is exceptionally LEAKY. Studies by the Public Distribution System and by recent CAG audits suggest that between thirty and forty per cent of fuel and food subsidies fail to reach the intended beneficiaries. Direct cash transfers, by contrast, have shown leakage rates in the low single digits where digital infrastructure and Aadhaar verification are functional. The redistributive efficiency of UBI is thus measurably higher than the in-kind alternatives.

Second, a small UBI does not crowd out productive work. The most frequently cited apprehension — that recipients will withdraw from the labour force — is contradicted by the principal field studies in comparable contexts (Banerjee et al. on Kenya; the SEWA pilot in Madhya Pradesh in 2011–13). Recipients of small basic transfers showed no measurable decline in labour-force participation; in several cases participation rose, since the transfer enabled investment in tools, transport and skills that had been credit-constrained.

Third, UBI delivered without conditions reduces the discretionary power of local administrators. The capacity of a tehsildar to withhold a benefit on flimsy paperwork is the most significant operational tax on India's poor. Removing the discretion is a reform of governance, not just of social policy.

An honest engagement with the proposal must acknowledge two objections. The fiscal-cost objection is overstated: at ₹1,500 per adult, the proposal costs roughly 1.5 per cent of GDP — within the envelope freed by phasing the named subsidies. The inflation-pass-through objection deserves more careful empirical engagement and is the principal reason for piloting BEFORE national rollout. Piloting is precisely how that question gets answered.

11. Which is the MAIN CONCLUSION of the argument?

- A. UBI is unworkable in any developing economy
- B. India should PILOT a UBI of about ₹1,500 per adult per month in two large diverse States, funded by reallocating named subsidies, with rigorous five-year evaluation against control districts
- C. All existing subsidies should be retained without change
- D. India should immediately implement UBI nationwide

12. Which of the following would MOST SUBSTANTIALLY WEAKEN the author's second observation (that small UBI does not crowd out work)?

- A. Rigorous evidence from a comparable South-Asian middle-income context that small unconditional transfers of approximately ₹1,500 per adult per month produced sustained reductions in labour-force participation across multiple studies, with effects concentrated in the same demographic groups the proposal targets
- B. Evidence that the SEWA pilot in Madhya Pradesh ended in 2013
- C. Evidence that some Indian States have higher unemployment than others
- D. Evidence that some Kenyan recipients prefer cash to in-kind transfers

13. Which UNSTATED ASSUMPTION is most central to the author's first observation (about leakage rates)?

- A. The Comptroller and Auditor General audits are infallible
- B. All Indian beneficiaries hold smartphones
- C. The DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND AADHAAR VERIFICATION will function reliably across the proposed pilot States, since the cited low-leakage figures depend on that condition being met
- D. The Public Distribution System will be abolished entirely

14. The function of the FOURTH paragraph (on discretionary power) in the overall argument is to:

- A. Add a GOVERNANCE-REFORM dimension to the social-policy case — broadening the argument from leakage and labour to the political economy of discretion
- B. Argue for the abolition of the tehsildar position
- C. Replace the proposal with a different policy
- D. Provide an emotional appeal independent of the policy case

15. The author's response to the fiscal-cost objection is BEST characterised as:

- A. A dismissal of the objection without engagement
- B. A specific quantitative claim — that the cost is approximately 1.5% of GDP, within the envelope freed by phasing the named subsidies — combined with the claim that the inflation-pass-through is what the pilot is designed to test
- C. A constitutional argument under the Directive Principles
- D. An emotional appeal to fairness

PASSAGE 4 (CR) — THE CASE FOR LATERAL ENTRY INTO THE INDIAN CIVIL SERVICES (GOVERNANCE / REFORM)

Q16–20

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q16–20.

The Indian Administrative Service has, since Independence, been recruited almost exclusively through the Union Public Service Commission's competitive examination, taken at age 21-30. Officers rotate through generalist postings — first in their cadre State, then increasingly at the Centre — and reach senior policy positions in their fifties. The argument here is that this single recruitment channel has produced a senior administration with serious knowledge gaps in technical sectors (regulation of digital markets, capital markets, advanced biotechnology, climate science, semiconductor policy) and that the gap is best addressed by LATERAL ENTRY: domain experts brought in mid-career, on contract, into senior positions formerly reserved for IAS officers.

The standard objection treats lateral entry as a violation of merit. The reply is that 'merit' is a contested concept here. The UPSC examination measures generalist intellectual capability under examination conditions at age 21-30. This is one form of merit; it is not the only form, and it is markedly distant from the merit relevant for, say, regulation of an algorithmic-trading platform or design of a national semiconductor policy. Lateral entry is not the ABANDONMENT of merit; it is the recognition that merit is plural.

A more substantial objection turns on incentive distortion. If lateral entry becomes a routine route into senior positions, IAS officers may exit the service early to seek private-sector experience that re-qualifies them for re-entry, weakening cadre stability and the institutional memory the service depends on. This concern deserves engagement. The best response is calibration — lateral entry can be capped at a small fraction of senior positions (say, ten per cent) and limited to roles where domain expertise is demonstrably scarce, with explicit safeguards against re-entry after IAS exit.

The most serious objection is constitutional. Article 320 entrusts all-India service recruitment to the UPSC, and any large lateral-entry programme that bypasses that body raises a serious procedural question. The reply is procedural: lateral entry positions can be created through UPSC-administered selection committees with domain-expert participation, preserving constitutional form while achieving substantive expertise. This is more cumbersome than a ministerial nomination but it is the constitutionally clean path.

16. What is the MAIN CONCLUSION of the argument?

- A. Lateral entry of mid-career domain experts into senior positions should be calibrated, capped, and constitutionally compliant — addressing demonstrable knowledge gaps in technical sectors WITHOUT large-scale displacement of the existing recruitment channel
- B. The UPSC examination should be made harder
- C. All senior policy positions should be filled by domain experts only
- D. The IAS should be abolished

17. Which PRINCIPLE, if accepted, would BEST defend the author's claim that 'merit is plural'?

- A. Merit is whatever the UPSC examination measures
- B. Merit cannot be measured at all
- C. Merit is irrelevant in modern governance
- D. Merit is the capacity, under appropriate examination conditions, that BEST PREDICTS performance in the role — and different roles may legitimately require different aptitude profiles, so a single recruitment route may capture only one form of merit

18. The author's response to the incentive-distortion objection (that IAS officers may exit early) is BEST characterised as:

- A. An outright rejection of the objection
- B. A dismissal of cadre stability as unimportant
- C. An emotional appeal to public service
- D. A CALIBRATION move — accepting the objection's force and proposing specific safeguards (small percentage cap, scarcity-restricted use, anti-re-entry protections) that defuse the worst version of the concern while preserving the policy

19. Which COUNTER-EXAMPLE, if rigorously documented, would MOST SUBSTANTIALLY WEAKEN the author's calibration response?

- A. Evidence that IAS officers are well-respected internationally
- B. Evidence that lateral-entry programmes in comparable common-law democracies, even when calibrated to small percentage caps with scarcity restrictions and anti-re-entry safeguards, have systematically produced cadre destabilisation, early exits, and erosion of institutional memory within five years
- C. Evidence that lateral entry is unpopular within the IAS
- D. Evidence that some IAS officers also have technical degrees

20. The author's discussion of Article 320 in the final paragraph functions in the argument as:

- A. An aside unrelated to the policy case
- B. A factual claim about the history of the UPSC
- C. An ENGAGEMENT WITH THE MOST SERIOUS OBJECTION — the constitutional one — coupled with a procedural reply (UPSC-administered domain-expert committees) that preserves constitutional form while achieving substantive expertise
- D. An argument that Article 320 should be repealed

SECTION C — RAPID-FIRE GK & CURRENT AFFAIRS

Q21–26 · 6 Marks

Standalone questions on current affairs, static GK, vocabulary in context and idiom usage. No passage required.

21. In the 2025 ruling in *Re: Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955*, the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court of India:

- A. Struck down Section 6A as unconstitutional
- B. Upheld the validity of Section 6A by a 4:1 majority, holding that the provision (which sets out citizenship rules for migrants from Bangladesh into Assam) is constitutionally valid
- C. Referred the matter back to Parliament for fresh legislation
- D. Postponed adjudication indefinitely

22. Choose the word CLOSEST in meaning to: 'lugubrious'.

- A. Mournful
- B. Ambiguous
- C. Talkative
- D. Cheerful

23. The idiom 'to play devil's advocate' MOST NEARLY means:

- A. To work as a defence lawyer
- B. To deceive by pretending to support someone
- C. To argue a position one does not necessarily hold, in order to test its strength or expose weaknesses in the opposing view
- D. To argue dishonestly in favour of a wrong-doer

24. Which of the following amendments to the Constitution does NOT require ratification by at least one-half of the State legislatures under the proviso to Article 368(2)?

- A. An amendment altering the representation of States in Parliament
- B. An amendment changing the manner of election of the President under Article 54
- C. An amendment introducing a new fundamental duty under Article 51A
- D. An amendment to the entries of the Seventh Schedule that affects the legislative competence of the States

25. The official currency of Vietnam is the:

- A. Ringgit
- B. Dong
- C. Kyat
- D. Baht

26. At the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, India's overall medal tally was:

- A. 2 gold, 0 silver, 4 bronze (6 total)
- B. 1 gold, 2 silver, 4 bronze (7 total)
- C. 1 gold, 1 silver, 5 bronze (7 total)
- D. 0 gold, 1 silver, 5 bronze (6 total)