

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 VANISHING GLACIERS OF THE HIMALAYAS (SCIENCE / ENVIRONMENT)

Q1-5

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

The Himalayan cryosphere — the great frozen reservoir stretching from the Hindu Kush in the west to the eastern ranges of Arunachal Pradesh — is melting at a pace that has unsettled even seasoned glaciologists. Satellite data assembled by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) suggest that the region has lost roughly forty percent of its ice mass since the 1970s, with the rate of loss accelerating sharply after 2010. A glacier that retreated by a few metres a year in the previous century now retreats by tens of metres, and in some catchments by more than a hundred. The drivers are familiar — rising global temperatures, the deposition of black carbon from regional combustion, and shifts in monsoon dynamics — but their combined effect on the so-called Third Pole has proved more nonlinear than early models predicted.

The immediate consequence is paradoxical. As ice melts, rivers swell. The Indus, the Ganga and the Brahmaputra, all of which draw a substantial fraction of their dry-season flow from glacial melt, are likely to see increased discharge for several decades before the trend reverses. Hydrologists describe this as 'peak water' — a counterfeit abundance that masks the eventual decline. Once a glacier shrinks past a certain threshold, its capacity to release meltwater in the lean summer months collapses, and the downstream basins face acute scarcity in precisely the season when demand is highest.

Glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs) are the second-order risk. Meltwater pools behind unstable moraine dams; when those dams fail, the released wave can devastate valleys hundreds of kilometres downstream. The 2023 South Lhonak Lake event in Sikkim, which destroyed a major hydropower facility and killed scores of residents, was a grim demonstration. Mapping exercises now identify over two hundred and fifty potentially dangerous lakes across the Indian Himalayas, but early-warning infrastructure remains sparse.

Mitigation conversations have therefore widened. Cutting greenhouse-gas emissions is the long-horizon answer, but black-carbon reductions — through cleaner cookstoves, tighter diesel norms and curbs on agricultural burning — offer faster, regional relief because soot accelerates melt by darkening ice surfaces. Adaptation, meanwhile, demands hydropower redesign, basin-scale water-sharing compacts and the relocation of vulnerable mountain communities. Whether the political will exists to act before peak water yields to the long descent is, as ever, the open question.

1. The term 'peak water', as used in the passage, most nearly refers to:

- A. The moment when river discharge is at its lowest during the dry season
- B. A temporary phase of elevated river flow caused by accelerated glacial melt that precedes long-term scarcity
- C. The maximum capacity of a hydropower reservoir during the monsoon
- D. The annual peak of water demand in agricultural valleys downstream

2. The author would most likely agree with which of the following propositions?

- A. Greenhouse-gas mitigation is the only intervention that can address Himalayan glacier loss
- B. Black-carbon reduction offers a faster regional pathway to slow melt and should complement long-term climate action
- C. Glacial lake outburst floods are an exaggerated risk that does not warrant infrastructure investment
- D. Increased river discharge from melting glaciers should be welcomed as a permanent gain for downstream agriculture

3. Which of the following best describes the author's tone in the passage?

- A. Polemical and accusatory
- B. Sober, evidence-led and quietly alarmed
- C. Detached and indifferent
- D. Celebratory and optimistic

4. The passage's reference to the 2023 South Lhonak Lake event is intended primarily to:

- A. Demonstrate the success of Indian early-warning systems
- B. Illustrate the destructive potential of glacial lake outburst floods and the inadequacy of existing safeguards
- C. Argue against the construction of any hydropower facility in the Himalayas
- D. Suggest that GLOFs are a recent and isolated phenomenon

5. Which of the following, if true, would most WEAKEN the author's concerns about long-term water scarcity in Himalayan-fed basins?

- A. ICIMOD has revised upward its estimate of ice loss since 1970
- B. New evidence shows that monsoon rainfall is expected to increase substantially in the affected basins, more than compensating for lost glacial meltwater in the dry season
- C. Black-carbon deposition continues to accelerate in the Hindu Kush
- D. Hydropower companies have refused to redesign their facilities

PASSAGE 2 (RC) — TRANSLATION AS CULTURAL NEGOTIATION (LITERATURE / SOCIETY)

Q6-10

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

For much of the modern era, translation was treated as a quiet, faintly mechanical craft — a service rendered to a 'real' author by a craftsman whose virtue lay in self-effacement. The translator, in this view, was a window: best when invisible. Recent decades have unsettled that complacency. The publication boom in Indian-language fiction in English, the global success of works like Geetanjali Shree's 'Tomb of Sand' translated by Daisy Rockwell, and the steady appearance of small presses dedicated to literature in translation have all conspired to push the translator from the margin to the frontispiece. A translator's name is now often printed on the cover. Awards committees, once content to honour only the source author, now share their laurels.

The shift is more than ceremonial. It reflects an intellectual reorientation. Translation, scholars argue, is not the transfer of meaning from one container to another but a negotiation across asymmetrical cultural worlds. Every choice — a register, a colloquial substitution, a footnote suppressed or retained — is a small act of interpretation. To translate the word 'dharma' as 'duty' is to make a claim about its conceptual neighbourhood that 'religion' or 'law' would not. The translator, in short, is an author of a particular kind: a co-author who must inhabit two literary traditions at once.

This recognition has political consequences. Power flows unevenly through languages. English, as the world's dominant literary lingua franca, exerts a gravitational pull that can flatten the textures of source texts written in Bengali, Tamil, Malayalam or Marathi. A translation that smooths every cultural unfamiliarity into legible English risks performing a kind of erasure. The opposite extreme — a translation so dense with untranslated terms and italicised foreignness that it becomes an exhibit rather than a book — risks exoticisation. Between these poles, the contemporary translator must navigate.

The Indian-language scene illustrates the stakes vividly. A young translator working from Bhojpuri or Santhali must decide whether to render proverbial speech into rough English equivalents or to preserve the cadence and explain it. Each choice carries an ideological weight. The translator is no longer the absent servant; she is, as several recent prefaces remind us, a citizen of two republics, owing something to both and apologising to neither.

6. The author's central claim in this passage is that:

- A. Translation is a faintly mechanical craft best performed invisibly
- B. Translators are now correctly understood as co-authors engaged in cultural negotiation rather than as invisible servants
- C. English is the only viable language for international literary success
- D. Indian-language literature cannot survive without translation into English

7. In context, the word 'gravitational' (in 'gravitational pull that can flatten the textures of source texts') most nearly means:

- A. Physical attraction between massive bodies
- B. A dominant influence that draws texts toward conformity with the dominant language's conventions
- C. A literal increase in linguistic density
- D. A neutral pull without consequence

8. The author's reference to translating 'dharma' as 'duty' versus 'religion' or 'law' is meant to illustrate that:

- A. Sanskrit terms have no English equivalents
- B. Translation choices carry interpretive weight and reshape the conceptual neighbourhood of a word
- C. English is incapable of rendering Indian philosophical concepts
- D. Translators must always retain Sanskrit terms untranslated

9. Which of the following best captures the author's attitude toward the two extremes — over-smoothing and exoticisation — described in the passage?

- A. Both are equally acceptable depending on commercial requirements
- B. Both pose distinct ethical risks, and the translator must navigate between them
- C. Over-smoothing is harmless; exoticisation alone is problematic
- D. Exoticisation should always be preferred to preserve cultural specificity

10. Which of the following, if true, would most STRENGTHEN the author's view that translation has become a recognised form of co-authorship?

- A. Major international literary prizes have begun awarding equal prize money to translator and source author
- B. Translators continue to be paid less than original authors in most jurisdictions
- C. Most translations are still published without the translator's name on the cover
- D. Readers report a preference for unmediated access to source-language texts

PASSAGE 3 (CR) — SHOULD INDIA MANDATE A CASTE CENSUS IN THE 2027 ROUND? (PUBLIC POLICY)

Q11–15

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q11–15.

The decennial Census, deferred since 2021, is now scheduled for 2027. A renewed and intensifying debate concerns whether it should enumerate every caste below the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes categories — that is, whether it should include a full count of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and the dozens of sub-groups within them. Proponents argue that contemporary affirmative-action policy is built on a statistical foundation last refreshed in 1931. Without granular data, reservation benefits cannot be rationally allocated, and the long-suspected over-representation of dominant OBC sub-groups within the 27% quota cannot be corrected. Bihar's State-level caste enumeration in 2023 and Karnataka's earlier socio-economic survey are cited as proofs of concept: each disclosed sub-group distributions sharply at variance with received political wisdom and triggered demands for sub-quotas.

Opponents object on two grounds. First, they say, a caste census institutionalises caste at the very moment the Republic should be moving away from it; counting is recognition, and recognition entrenches identity. Second, they doubt whether the State has either the administrative capacity to collect reliable caste data across 1.4 billion people — caste self-identification is fluid, names overlap across regions, and contested classifications would generate litigation for a decade — or the political will to act on findings that may upset existing electoral coalitions.

The proponents reply that the argument from 'institutionalisation' is question-begging: caste is already institutionalised in admissions, public employment and welfare; the choice is between caste-blind policy that perpetuates the status quo and caste-conscious policy that can be calibrated. They further note that the Constitution's promise of substantive equality under Article 14, the directive principle of Article 46, and the Supreme Court's repeated insistence on quantifiable data (Indra Sawhney, M. Nagaraj, Jaishri Patil) all push toward enumeration. Without it, the courts will keep striking down quotas for want of empirical basis, even where the underlying social fact of disadvantage is undeniable.

The conclusion, the proponents argue, follows: India should mandate a comprehensive caste enumeration in the 2027 Census.

11. Which of the following best states the MAIN CONCLUSION of the proponents' argument as presented above?

- A. Bihar's 2023 caste enumeration was a flawed exercise that should not be replicated
- B. India should mandate a comprehensive caste enumeration in the 2027 Census
- C. Reservation policy should be abolished in favour of caste-blind welfare
- D. The Supreme Court has wrongly insisted on quantifiable data for caste-based quotas

12. Which of the following is an UNSTATED ASSUMPTION on which the proponents' argument depends?

- A. Reservation policy cannot be rationally allocated without granular sub-group data
- B. The 1931 Census enumerated caste at the sub-group level
- C. Counting a social category is necessary and useful for designing redistributive policy in respect of it
- D. Bihar and Karnataka are politically representative of the rest of India

13. Which of the following, if true, would most WEAKEN the proponents' argument?

- A. Bihar's 2023 enumeration disclosed sub-group distributions at variance with prior assumptions
- B. Robust independent research has demonstrated that high-quality caste data can be reliably collected through a sample-based National Sample Survey at less than 5% of the cost of a full census, with no loss of statistical power for policy design
- C. The Supreme Court continues to require quantifiable data to sustain caste-based quotas
- D. Article 46 of the Constitution directs the State to protect weaker sections

14. Which of the following, if true, would most STRENGTHEN the proponents' argument?

- A. Independent post-survey audits of Bihar's 2023 enumeration found that the data, when applied to existing reservation rules, would correct documented over-representation of dominant OBC sub-groups and improve targeting of the most marginalised, without generating any significant litigation
- B. Caste self-identification is fluid and contested
- C. The cost of a full caste enumeration would exceed ₹15,000 crore
- D. Some States have refused to publish their internal caste surveys

15. The opponents' argument that 'counting is recognition, and recognition entrenches identity' is best characterised as:

- A. A valid empirical observation supported by data from comparative jurisdictions
- B. A normative claim that does not address the proponents' point that caste is already institutionalised in policy and the choice is between blind and calibrated approaches
- C. A logical contradiction internal to the proponents' position
- D. A factual error about the operation of the Census

PASSAGE 4 (CR) – SHOULD CRYPTOCURRENCIES BE RECOGNISED AS LEGAL TENDER? (ECONOMICS / REGULATION)

Q16–20

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q16–20.

El Salvador's 2021 decision to accept Bitcoin as legal tender alongside the US dollar — and its quiet partial reversal in 2024 — has revived a question that policymakers in larger economies have so far ducked: should a sovereign State recognise a privately issued cryptocurrency as legal tender, that is, as money that creditors are obliged to accept in satisfaction of debts? Advocates argue that legal-tender status would compress remittance costs for diaspora-heavy economies (Bitcoin transfers are cheaper than Western Union); deepen financial inclusion for the unbanked; insulate citizens against inflationary domestic currencies; and signal the State's openness to monetary innovation in a digital age. They point to the falling volatility of major cryptocurrencies as institutional adoption widens, and to the maturation of custody and settlement infrastructure.

Opponents reply that the case rests on serial confusions. Legal tender is a specific juridical concept: it obliges the creditor to accept the instrument. A cryptocurrency, however well it functions as a speculative asset or a payment rail, is unsuitable for this role for three interlocking reasons. First, monetary sovereignty: the State must control the unit of account if it is to conduct counter-cyclical monetary policy; outsourcing this to a privately issued, supply-fixed asset surrenders that tool. Second, financial stability: cryptocurrency prices remain orders of magnitude more volatile than even weak fiat currencies; pricing salaries, mortgages or pensions in Bitcoin imports that volatility into household balance sheets. Third, illicit-finance exposure: pseudonymity, however technically constrained by exchange-level KYC, complicates anti-money-laundering enforcement and sanctions compliance.

The opponents go further. The very benefits the advocates trumpet, they say, can be obtained more safely through a sovereign-issued Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) — programmable, traceable and stable, with none of the volatility or sovereignty costs. India's e-rupee pilot, Brazil's Drex and the digital yuan are precisely such efforts. Why import the risks of a privately issued asset when the policy goals can be served by a public one?

The opponents therefore conclude: India should not recognise any privately issued cryptocurrency as legal tender; it should instead expand its CBDC and regulate cryptocurrencies as taxable assets rather than as money.

16. Which of the following is the MAIN CONCLUSION of the opponents' argument?

- A. Cryptocurrency adoption has matured globally and India is lagging behind
- B. India should not recognise any privately issued cryptocurrency as legal tender; it should expand its CBDC and regulate cryptocurrencies as taxable assets
- C. Central Bank Digital Currencies are technologically inferior to Bitcoin
- D. El Salvador's 2021 decision was a complete success that should be replicated

17. The opponents' argument from 'monetary sovereignty' rests on which UNSTATED ASSUMPTION?

- A. Counter-cyclical monetary policy is a useful and important policy tool that the State should be able to deploy
- B. Cryptocurrencies have a fixed supply
- C. Private actors are inherently untrustworthy
- D. El Salvador is a small economy

18. Which of the following, if true, would most **STRENGTHEN** the opponents' conclusion?

- A. Recent peer-reviewed cross-country studies show that economies adopting privately issued cryptocurrencies as legal tender experience significantly higher household balance-sheet volatility and reduced effectiveness of monetary transmission, with no corresponding gains in financial inclusion that a well-designed CBDC could not also deliver
- B. Some major cryptocurrencies have shown reduced volatility in the most recent quarter
- C. Bitcoin transaction fees are lower than Western Union remittance fees
- D. India's CBDC pilot has experienced technical glitches in some districts

19. Which of the following, if true, would most **WEAKEN** the opponents' conclusion?

- A. El Salvador's 2024 reversal cited fiscal stress
- B. Robust empirical evidence emerges that a CBDC cannot in fact deliver financial inclusion to the unbanked at scale (because it requires smartphone and Aadhaar penetration that does not exist in target populations), whereas a regulated private cryptocurrency, accepted as legal tender, demonstrably can — without producing the volatility opponents fear
- C. Cryptocurrencies remain volatile in absolute terms
- D. The Reserve Bank of India has warned against private cryptocurrencies

20. The opponents' use of the CBDC comparison to argue that 'the policy goals can be served by a public one' is best characterised as which type of reasoning?

- A. Begging the question — they assume what they need to prove
- B. Argument by analogy combined with a public-versus-private substitutability claim
- C. A purely emotional appeal without analytical structure
- D. A formal logical fallacy of affirming the consequent

SECTION C — RAPID-FIRE GK & CURRENT AFFAIRS

Q21-30 · 10 Marks

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

21. Which State of India is the largest producer of coffee?

- A. Kerala
- B. Tamil Nadu
- C. Karnataka
- D. Andhra Pradesh

22. The 'Bharat Ratna' was first conferred in which year?

- A. 1950
- B. 1952
- C. 1954
- D. 1956

23. Which Indian city hosted the 2023 G20 Leaders' Summit?

- A. Mumbai
- B. Bengaluru
- C. New Delhi
- D. Hyderabad

24. Choose the word that is most nearly **OPPOSITE** in meaning to 'EPHEMERAL':

- A. Transient
- B. Enduring
- C. Fragile
- D. Sudden

25. Choose the **SYNONYM** of the word 'OBFUSCATE':

- A. Clarify
- B. Confuse
- C. Simplify
- D. Reveal

26. The idiom 'to bell the cat' most nearly means:

- A. To take a foolish risk for no reward
- B. To take on a dangerous or difficult task for the benefit of others
- C. To irritate a person in authority
- D. To celebrate a small victory loudly

27. The 'Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations' was adopted in which year?

- A. 1958
- B. 1961
- C. 1963
- D. 1969

28. Article 32 of the Constitution of India, which guarantees the right to constitutional remedies, was famously described by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar as:

- A. The cornerstone of judicial review
- B. The heart and soul of the Constitution
- C. The very life of the Constitution
- D. The conscience of the Constitution

29. Which of the following landmark cases established the 'basic structure doctrine'?

- A. Golak Nath v. State of Punjab (1967)
- B. Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala (1973)
- C. Minerva Mills v. Union of India (1980)
- D. Indira Nehru Gandhi v. Raj Narain (1975)

30. The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023 replaced which earlier statute?

- A. The Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973
- B. The Indian Evidence Act, 1872
- C. The Indian Penal Code, 1860
- D. The Indian Contract Act, 1872