

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) – ASSISTED EVOLUTION OF CORAL REEFS (SCIENCE / ENVIRONMENT)

Q1-5

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

For most of the last century, coral reef conservation was an exercise in restraint. The dominant prescription was to protect the conditions corals had always known — clean water, low sediment loads, intact food webs — and let evolution, working over geological time, do the rest. That doctrine of preservation is being quietly displaced by a far more interventionist programme called 'assisted evolution.' Pioneered by reef scientists in Australia, the Caribbean and increasingly in the Indo-Pacific, assisted evolution attempts to accelerate the corals' own adaptive capacity by selectively breeding heat-tolerant colonies, by inoculating juvenile corals with hardier strains of their symbiotic algae, and, in the most ambitious experiments, by transplanting populations across latitudes so that genes pre-adapted to warmer waters reach the cooler reefs of the future.

The scientific rationale is grimly straightforward. Mass bleaching events, once decadal anomalies, are now occurring on most major reef systems every three to five years. The interval between bleaching episodes has fallen below the regenerative cycle of slow-growing corals such as Acropora, and reefs are losing biomass faster than they can replace it. Conservationists who once treated human intervention as anathema concede that, without active assistance, many reef systems will simply not survive the present century.

Yet assisted evolution sits uneasily within the older conservation ethic. Critics warn of unintended ecological consequences — the displacement of native genotypes by introduced ones, the homogenisation of reef communities, the silent loss of the very diversity the programme purports to save. Defenders reply that the counterfactual is not pristine reefs but dead reefs, and that the precautionary principle, applied symmetrically, equally condemns inaction.

What is striking, perhaps, is how completely the debate has moved past the threshold question of whether to intervene. The contest now is over methods, scales and governance. Reef restoration has, in less than a decade, become a domain of applied evolutionary engineering — a quiet revolution in the way humans propose to manage the planet's living systems.

1. Which of the following BEST captures the central idea of the passage?

- A. Assisted evolution is a controversial but increasingly accepted intervention to help coral reefs survive accelerating climate stress.
- B. Coral reefs are being destroyed by sediment loading and overfishing in equal measure.
- C. Australian scientists invented assisted evolution and the rest of the world is yet to follow.
- D. Conservationists must abandon the precautionary principle to save coral reefs.

2. In the context of the passage, the word 'anathema' (paragraph 2) most nearly means:

- A. A holy ritual
- B. Something abhorrent or strongly forbidden
- C. A scientific hypothesis
- D. A common practice

3. Which of the following can be inferred from the passage?

- A. Slow-growing corals like Acropora are bleaching faster than they can regenerate.
- B. All reef scientists support transplanting corals across latitudes.
- C. Coral bleaching events now occur exclusively in the Indo-Pacific.
- D. The precautionary principle uniquely supports inaction over intervention.

4. The author's tone in the passage can best be described as:

- A. Scornful and dismissive
- B. Measured and analytical
- C. Triumphant and celebratory
- D. Anxious and alarmist

5. Which of the following, if true, would MOST weaken the case for assisted evolution as presented in the passage?

- A. Long-term field trials show that introduced heat-tolerant coral genotypes outcompete and eliminate native genotypes, causing a net collapse in reef genetic diversity within a decade.
- B. Mass bleaching events in the Caribbean are now occurring every six years rather than every five.
- C. Reef restoration has become a recognised domain of applied science with formal training programmes.
- D. Some indigenous coastal communities are sceptical of all forms of scientific reef management.

PASSAGE 2 (RC) – GI TAGS AND THE REVIVAL OF INDIAN FOLK ART (CULTURE / LAW)

Q6-10

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

Until the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 came into force in September 2003, India's vast inheritance of regional handicrafts — Madhubani painting from Mithila, Kanchipuram silks from Tamil Nadu, Pochampally ikat from Telangana, Tanjore paintings from the deep south — enjoyed cultural prestige but almost no legal protection against imitation. Mass-produced lookalikes from distant factories captured the lion's share of the urban gift market; artisan communities, lacking any enforceable claim over the names of their own crafts, watched their margins evaporate.

The Geographical Indication (GI) mechanism, modelled on the European system that protects Champagne, Roquefort and Parma ham, was designed to change that economics. A GI tag links a product to a defined geographical origin and to the particular skills, methods and natural inputs that origin entails. Once registered, the name can be used only by producers from the demarcated region who follow the prescribed processes. Imitators may still make similar products, but they may not call them by the protected name.

The Indian experience over two decades has been mixed but increasingly encouraging. Early registrations were dominated by agricultural products — Darjeeling tea, Basmati rice, Nagpur orange. Handicrafts followed more slowly, in part because the legal documentation required to identify producer groups and process specifications was unfamiliar to artisan collectives. The pace has, however, quickened markedly since 2017, with state governments themselves filing applications on behalf of clusters. As of early 2026, more than 600 GI tags stand registered in India, well over half of them for handicrafts and handlooms.

The more interesting question is whether registration translates into earnings for the artisan. Studies of Madhubani and Pochampally suggest that producer prices rise meaningfully only when GI protection is combined with branding, e-commerce access and rigorous enforcement against counterfeits. The tag, in other words, is a necessary but not a sufficient condition. The legal scaffold exists; what the next decade must deliver is the commercial discipline to use it.

6. Which of the following BEST summarises the central argument of the passage?

- A. GI registration in India provides necessary legal protection to traditional handicrafts but realises commercial value only when paired with branding and enforcement.
- B. GI registration in India has uniformly raised artisan incomes since 2003.
- C. European GI systems are unsuitable for Indian conditions.
- D. Handicrafts cannot be protected by intellectual property law.

7. Which of the following statements is best supported by the passage?

- A. GI registration prevents any producer outside the demarcated region from making similar products.
- B. GI registration prevents outside producers from using the protected name, though similar products may still be made.
- C. GI registration is restricted to agricultural goods under Indian law.
- D. GI registration automatically guarantees a price premium for artisans.

8. Which of the following can be inferred from the passage?

- A. More than half of all GI tags registered in India by early 2026 are for handicrafts and handlooms.
- B. Madhubani painters have never received any benefit from GI registration.
- C. Indian artisan collectives were the first applicants for GI registration in the country.
- D. Imitation of Indian handicrafts is now legally impossible.

9. The author's tone in the final paragraph can best be described as:

- A. Pessimistic and resigned
- B. Cautiously optimistic and prescriptive
- C. Sharply critical of the GI Act
- D. Indifferent to the artisans' fate

10. Which of the following, if true, would MOST strengthen the author's main claim?

- A. An impact study finds that Pochampally weavers who combined GI registration with a state-supported branding portal saw producer prices rise 40% over five years, while unbranded GI holders saw no significant gain.
- B. European Champagne producers have enjoyed steady price premiums for decades.
- C. The number of GI registrations in India crossed 600 in early 2026.
- D. Some artisan collectives find legal documentation procedurally burdensome.

PASSAGE 3 (CR) – COMPULSORY VOTING IN INDIA (CONSTITUTIONAL / POLICY ARGUMENTATION)

Q11–15

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q11–15.

India should make voting in general and state elections legally compulsory for all enrolled citizens. The current voluntary system produces voter turnouts that, while respectable by global standards, routinely leave a third of the electorate silent. That silence is not evenly distributed. Successive National Election Studies have shown that urban middle-class voters, young first-time voters, and migrant workers are systematically under-represented at the booth. The legislatures we elect, therefore, do not actually represent the preferences of a majority of citizens but of a self-selecting subset of them — overwhelmingly older, more rural, and more partisan than the population at large. Compulsion would correct this distortion.

The Australian experience supplies a working template. In that country, voting has been mandatory at federal elections since 1924; the penalty for non-attendance is a small administrative fine, easily waived for medical or logistical reasons. Australian turnout consistently exceeds 90%, against a global democratic average of about 65%. Public deliberation in Australia is, by general consent, more representative of the median voter; political parties spend less effort 'mobilising the base' and more effort persuading the centre.

Critics object that compulsory voting infringes the negative liberty of the citizen — the freedom not to participate. This objection misreads the nature of democratic citizenship. Voting is not merely a private preference; it is the constitutive act of a republic. We compel jury duty, tax filing, and attendance at school for analogous reasons: certain duties are constitutive of the political community itself. A modest civic obligation to register a preference — including, importantly, the preference 'None of the Above' — is no greater an infringement than these established compulsions.

A fine of ₹500, waivable on stated grounds, would suffice to shift behaviour without becoming punitive. India should therefore amend the Representation of the People Act, 1951 to introduce mandatory voting, beginning with general elections from the next cycle.

11. Which of the following BEST states the main conclusion of the argument?

- A. India should legally mandate voting in general and state elections, enforced by a modest waivable fine.
- B. The Australian voting system is the best in the world.
- C. Jury duty and tax filing are unjustified intrusions on liberty.
- D. Indian voter turnout is the lowest among major democracies.

12. Which of the following is an UNSTATED assumption on which the argument depends?

- A. A small administrative fine is sufficient to materially change voting behaviour in India.
- B. Australia's electoral system is identical to India's.
- C. All Indian citizens currently support compulsory voting.
- D. Migrant workers vote at higher rates than rural voters in India.

13. Which of the following, if true, would MOST weaken the argument?

- A. An empirical study of jurisdictions that introduced compulsory voting between 2000 and 2024 finds no statistically significant shift in the demographic composition of voters or in policy outputs over a decade.
- B. Australian elections were held in 1922 before compulsory voting was introduced.
- C. Some Australian voters object to the small administrative fine for non-voting.
- D. Indian electoral rolls are updated every five years.

14. Which of the following, if true, would MOST strengthen the argument?

- A. Independent post-election surveys in Brazil and Belgium show that the introduction of compulsory voting raised turnout among under-represented groups by 25-30 percentage points and produced policy platforms more closely tracking median-voter preferences.
- B. Australia introduced compulsory voting in 1924.
- C. India's voter turnout in the most recent general election was 67%.
- D. Compulsory school attendance has been the law in India since 2009.

15. The author's reply to the 'negative liberty' objection rests on which of the following analogies?

- A. Voting is analogous to other constitutive civic duties such as jury duty, tax filing and school attendance, which the state legitimately compels.
- B. Voting is analogous to consumer choice in a free market.
- C. Voting is analogous to religious worship, which the state cannot regulate.
- D. Voting is analogous to military service, which is voluntary in India.

PASSAGE 4 (CR) – CARBON TAX VS CAP-AND-TRADE FOR INDIA (CLIMATE POLICY ARGUMENTATION)

Q16–20

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q16–20.

India is now drafting the architecture of a national carbon-pricing regime. The two contending designs — a carbon tax that fixes the price per tonne of CO₂ emitted, and a cap-and-trade system that fixes the aggregate quantity of permissible emissions and lets the market discover the price — are routinely treated by commentators as economically equivalent. In the Indian context they are not. India should adopt a carbon tax, not a cap-and-trade scheme.

The first reason is administrative. A carbon tax piggybacks on the existing GST and excise machinery: the rate is set, the assessee is identified, the revenue flows. A cap-and-trade scheme requires the State to establish, monitor and enforce an entirely new market — measurement, reporting and verification of every covered installation, a registry of allowances, an auction platform, secondary trading rules, and an enforcement body capable of detecting fraudulent reporting. India's regulatory bandwidth, already stretched across competition, securities and data-protection regimes, is poorly placed to absorb a further first-of-its-kind market.

The second reason is price predictability. Indian manufacturers need a known and stable carbon-cost trajectory to make ten-year capital decisions on cement kilns, blast furnaces and chemicals plants. A tax — published, indexed to inflation and announced years in advance — supplies that certainty. Cap-and-trade prices, by contrast, are notoriously volatile: the EU Emissions Trading System saw prices collapse from €30 to under €5 within eighteen months in 2011-2012 because of an unexpected recession. Volatility of that magnitude is fatal to long-cycle Indian industrial investment.

The third reason is revenue use. A tax produces a predictable revenue stream that can be hypothecated, in part, to the just-transition support that the coal-belt states will need over the next two decades. Cap-and-trade revenue depends on allowance auctions, which depend on the price, which is volatile — a poor foundation for committed welfare expenditure.

The theoretical equivalence of the two instruments breaks down under Indian administrative and industrial conditions. A carbon tax is the right instrument for India in this decade.

16. Which of the following BEST states the main conclusion of the argument?

- A. A carbon tax, not a cap-and-trade scheme, is the appropriate carbon-pricing instrument for India in the present decade.
- B. Cap-and-trade systems are inherently bad.
- C. India should not adopt any form of carbon pricing.
- D. The EU Emissions Trading System failed because of a recession.

17. Which of the following is an UNSTATED assumption on which the argument depends?

- A. The administrative cost of running a cap-and-trade market in India would materially exceed that of administering a carbon tax.
- B. All Indian industries currently emit at the same intensity.
- C. Cap-and-trade has never worked in any jurisdiction.
- D. GST revenues have grown every year since 2017.

18. Which of the following, if true, would MOST weaken the argument?

- A. A rigorous comparative impact assessment by an independent panel finds that India's revenue authorities would face higher administrative costs running a carbon tax than running a cap-and-trade scheme, owing to evasion risks across India's large informal industrial sector.
- B. The EU Emissions Trading System recovered to €80 per tonne by 2023.
- C. Cement kilns have an investment cycle of about fifteen years.
- D. GST collections crossed ₹2 lakh crore in a single month in 2024.

19. Which of the following, if true, would MOST strengthen the argument?

- A. Long-run data from twelve jurisdictions show that countries adopting carbon taxes maintained more stable industrial investment trajectories and lower regulatory compliance costs than comparable countries adopting cap-and-trade schemes over a fifteen-year window.
- B. Some EU member states have switched from cap-and-trade to a hybrid carbon-price floor.
- C. India's regulatory institutions handled the GST rollout in 2017.
- D. Coal-belt states such as Jharkhand have rising unemployment.

20. The 2011-2012 European Emissions Trading System price collapse is cited by the author to support which claim?

- A. Cap-and-trade prices are volatile in ways that undermine long-cycle industrial investment decisions.
- B. Cap-and-trade revenues are easy to hypothecate to welfare expenditure.
- C. Carbon taxes have historically been ineffective in the European Union.
- D. Recessions always produce lower carbon emissions.

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

21. Which body, established by the Reserve Bank of India in April 2026, is mandated to oversee the orderly rollout of the Central Bank Digital Currency (e₹) across retail banking?

- A. Digital Currency Management Council
- B. CBDC Implementation Committee
- C. Payment Systems Oversight Board
- D. Digital Rupee Authority of India

22. The 2026 Commonwealth Games are scheduled to be held in which city?

- A. Birmingham
- B. Victoria
- C. Glasgow
- D. Hamilton

23. Choose the word MOST NEARLY OPPOSITE in meaning to 'TACITURN':

- A. Reserved
- B. Voluble
- C. Sombre
- D. Reticent

24. Identify the meaning of the idiom: 'to throw in the towel'.

- A. To celebrate a victory
- B. To admit defeat and give up
- C. To do something unexpected
- D. To wash one's hands of responsibility

25. Which Article of the Constitution provides for the establishment of the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India?

- A. Article 124
- B. Article 148
- C. Article 280
- D. Article 324

26. The landmark judgment Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan (1997) laid down guidelines on:

- A. Police custodial procedures
- B. Sexual harassment of women at the workplace
- C. Right to clean environment
- D. Right to education for children

27. The novel 'Midnight's Children', which won the Booker Prize and the 'Booker of Bookers', was written by:

- A. Arundhati Roy
- B. Salman Rushdie
- C. V. S. Naipaul
- D. Amitav Ghosh

28. Choose the SYNONYM of 'EPHEMERAL':

- A. Eternal
- B. Transient
- C. Stubborn
- D. Sacred

29. Which Indian state was awarded the 'Best Performing State' under the Aspirational Districts Programme in the NITI Aayog rankings released in 2026?

- A. Uttar Pradesh
- B. Odisha
- C. Madhya Pradesh
- D. Jharkhand

30. The 'BIMSTEC' grouping does NOT include which one of the following countries?

- A. Bhutan
- B. Myanmar
- C. Pakistan
- D. Sri Lanka