

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) – CARBON-CAPTURE LIMITS IN INDUSTRIAL INDIA (CLIMATE / POLICY)

Q1-5

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

Carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS) is frequently invoked in Indian climate policy as a silver bullet that will permit the country to continue burning coal while still meeting its Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement. The technology, in principle, removes carbon dioxide from a flue-gas stream before it escapes to the atmosphere, compresses it, and either pipes it to deep saline aquifers for permanent storage or sells it to industries that can use it as feedstock. India's hard-to-abate sectors — steel, cement, fertilisers and refineries — together account for nearly a quarter of national emissions, and decarbonising them through renewables alone is technically impossible. CCUS therefore appears to fill a real gap.

The reality on the ground is more sobering. Capture-ready coal plants in India remain pilot-scale: the country has only a handful of operational facilities, none larger than a tenth of a million tonnes of CO₂ a year. By contrast, a single large coal plant in Singrauli or Korba emits around fifteen million tonnes annually. Scaling capture to the level required would consume a substantial fraction of the plant's own electricity output, raising the levelised cost of power by an estimated thirty to sixty percent. Storage geology adds another layer of difficulty: India lacks the proven saline aquifer formations that the United States, Norway and Canada have used for utility-scale storage. Indian basins remain largely uncharacterised, and any storage deployment would require years of seismic surveying before injection could begin.

The utilisation pathway is sometimes presented as a substitute. Captured CO₂ can in principle be used to make urea, methanol or building aggregates. But these markets are small relative to the volumes that need to be sequestered: India's entire annual methanol demand could absorb less than two percent of a single coal plant's emissions. Without permanent geological storage, CCUS reduces to a delayed-emission scheme, not a removal one.

Critics therefore argue that uncritical reliance on CCUS in Indian climate plans risks crowding out investment in proven mitigation pathways — solar, wind, demand-side efficiency, electrified industrial heat — that have already crossed cost parity with fossil generation. A more honest framing would treat CCUS as a residual instrument for genuinely irreducible emissions in a small set of industries, not as a licence to extend the life of the coal fleet.

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

- A. CCUS is technically infeasible anywhere in the world.
- B. CCUS may have a narrow role in India for irreducible emissions, but it cannot justify extending the coal fleet's life.
- C. Indian climate policy should abandon CCUS research altogether.
- D. Renewables are technically capable of decarbonising every industrial sector in India.

2. The author's tone throughout the passage may BEST be described as:

- A. Polemical and dismissive of any role for CCUS.
- B. Critically realist — acknowledging the gap CCUS could fill while questioning current claims.
- C. Enthusiastically supportive of accelerated CCUS deployment.
- D. Neutrally descriptive, taking no position on the policy question.

3. Which of the following, if true, would MOST WEAKEN the author's claim that CCUS in India is currently overstated?

- A. A new pilot project in Gujarat has demonstrated capture at one-tenth the levelised cost increase the passage cites.
- B. Methanol demand in India is projected to grow at 4% annually.
- C. The Government of India has reaffirmed its 2070 net-zero target.
- D. A new coal plant has been commissioned in Korba.

4. In the passage, the phrase delayed-emission scheme, not a removal one is used to MOST DIRECTLY criticise:

- A. Geological storage in saline aquifers.
- B. Solar and wind investment.
- C. CO₂ utilisation pathways that do not permanently sequester carbon.
- D. The Paris Agreement framework itself.

5. It can be inferred from the passage that the author would MOST likely support:

- A. Subsidising new CCUS-equipped coal plants at scale.
- B. Treating CCUS as a residual tool while prioritising renewables and electrification.
- C. Abandoning India's Nationally Determined Contributions altogether.
- D. Banning all coal-fired generation by 2030.

PASSAGE 2 (RC) – THE DECLINE OF CURSIVE WRITING IN SCHOOLS (EDUCATION / COGNITION)

Q6-10

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

When India's Central Board of Secondary Education quietly relaxed its handwriting norms in the late 2010s, allowing students to choose between print and cursive script in board examinations, few observers treated the change as significant. Cursive, after all, looked like a relic of the fountain-pen era, irrelevant in classrooms where eight-year-olds were already typing assignments on tablets. A decade later, however, a small but growing literature in cognitive science is asking whether something important was lost when schools stopped insisting on joined-up writing.

The argument is not nostalgic. Studies using functional neuroimaging suggest that the act of forming letters by hand — and particularly the continuous, motor-planned strokes that cursive demands — activates regions of the brain associated with reading, sequencing and memory consolidation in ways that typing does not. Children who learn to write by hand recognise letters faster, retain spelling patterns longer, and produce more sophisticated written compositions than those who learn primarily through keyboard input. The effect appears strongest in the earliest years of literacy, when the brain is mapping visual symbols onto motor routines.

Defenders of the move away from cursive point out that the world outside school is overwhelmingly typed. Lawyers file pleadings electronically, doctors write prescriptions on hospital management systems, journalists compose on laptops. Teaching cursive, they argue, is teaching a skill that no employer will ever assess. They also note that for a substantial minority of children — those with dyspraxia, dysgraphia or fine-motor difficulties — the demand to produce neat cursive can be a source of lasting humiliation that drives them away from writing altogether.

The truth probably lies in a more nuanced position than either camp has so far conceded. Cursive is not necessary for adult life, but the process of acquiring it may, for typical learners, produce cognitive benefits that print writing alone does not deliver. A defensible policy might retain cursive instruction in the early primary years as a developmental tool, while not penalising students who continue to print in later examinations. Treating the matter as a binary — abolish or restore — risks losing the developmental value of handwriting without securing any clear pedagogical gain.

6. The main idea of the passage is BEST captured by which statement?

- A. Cursive writing should be made compulsory in all board examinations.
- B. Typing is cognitively superior to handwriting in every dimension.
- C. Cursive may not be needed for adult life, but learning it may yield developmental benefits worth preserving in early schooling.
- D. Indian schools should ban tablets in the primary years.

7. In the third paragraph, the author refers to children with dyspraxia and dysgraphia MAINLY to:

- A. Argue that all children should be exempted from handwriting.
- B. Present a legitimate counter-argument that cursive instruction can harm a substantial minority of learners.
- C. Suggest that such conditions are caused by handwriting drills.
- D. Show that the cognitive benefits of handwriting are illusory.

8. The word relic, as used in the first paragraph, most nearly means:

- A. Treasure
- B. Survival from an earlier era
- C. Modern innovation
- D. Religious artefact

9. Which of the following, if true, would MOST STRENGTHEN the author's position?

- A. A longitudinal Indian study finds that children taught cursive in classes 1-3 outperform peers on reading comprehension at age 10.
- B. A survey shows that 90% of Indian adults never write in cursive.
- C. Tablet ownership among Indian school-children has doubled since 2020.
- D. CBSE has further relaxed its handwriting norms in 2024.

10. Which of the following BEST describes the author's overall stance?

- A. A categorical demand to restore cursive in all classes.
- B. Outright endorsement of the shift to typing.
- C. A measured middle position that distinguishes the developmental value of learning cursive from its adult utility.
- D. Indifference to the question.

PASSAGE 3 (CR) — SHOULD INDIA BAN SINGLE-USE PLASTICS NATIONALLY BY 2028? (ENVIRONMENT / POLICY)

Q11-15

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q11-15.

India already prohibits a defined list of nineteen single-use plastic items, but enforcement has been patchy and the underlying production economy has barely shifted. A coalition of environment ministries from twelve states has now proposed a national hard ban on all single-use plastic packaging, cutlery and films, to take effect from 1 April 2028, with manufacturing licences withdrawn from any unit that continues production beyond that date.

Proponents argue that the case for the hard ban is overwhelming. India generates roughly 3.5 million tonnes of plastic waste each year. A substantial fraction leaks into rivers and ultimately the Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea. Microplastics now appear in Indian salt, in placental tissue, and in the digestive tracts of freshwater fish across the Ganga basin. Voluntary corporate commitments to recycled content have produced negligible movement: the country's recycling rate, once one is honest about open-burning and dumping, hovers around 30 percent. Worse, the existing item-by-item ban is gamed routinely; manufacturers simply re-label a product or marginally alter its specification to escape the prohibition list. Only a categorical ban with the threat of licence withdrawal can break this pattern of regulatory arbitrage.

Critics raise three sets of concerns. First, employment: the Indian plastics-conversion industry employs an estimated four million people, many in the informal sector. A hard ban without a substitution roadmap will collapse livelihoods well before alternatives are scaled. Second, alternatives: viable substitutes for many film and packaging uses — particularly in food preservation, vaccine cold chains and water-sachet distribution to low-income consumers — do not yet exist at price points competitive with plastic. Third, leakage: a domestic ban will not eliminate informal smuggling from neighbouring states and informal economies, but it will hand market share to less-regulated competitors.

The proponents reply that the 2028 timeline is precisely calibrated to address these objections. Three years is enough to scale compostable alternatives, transition workers through skill upgrades, and provide carve-outs for medical packaging where no substitute is yet certified. They argue that delay only deepens the ecological debt, and that no transition has ever been costless. The question, then, is not whether to ban, but whether to ban under conditions that protect the displaced. The proposal is now before the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change for a final view.

11. Which of the following BEST states the main conclusion of the proponents in the passage?

- A. India should abandon all attempts to regulate plastic.
- B. India should impose a categorical national ban on single-use plastics by 1 April 2028, with licence withdrawal as the enforcement tool.
- C. The current item-by-item ban is adequate and merely needs better state-level enforcement.
- D. All plastic recycling should be made compulsory before 2028.

12. Which of the following is an unstated assumption on which the proponents' argument MOST CRUCIALLY depends?

- A. That voluntary corporate commitments have produced significant change.
- B. That a credible threat of licence withdrawal can be operationalised by the regulator, and that alternatives can in fact be scaled in the three-year window.
- C. That plastics employ no workers in the informal sector.
- D. That plastic pollution is confined to coastal areas alone.

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

- A. Microplastics have been detected in groundwater samples in Punjab.
- B. Independent technological assessments confirm that no compostable alternative for vaccine-cold-chain film will be commercially viable before 2032.
- C. The Ministry has cleared a new grant for compostable-packaging start-ups.
- D. Twelve more states have endorsed the proposal.

14. Which of the following, if true, would MOST STRENGTHEN the proponents' position?

- A. A pilot ban in three districts has demonstrated a 70% drop in plastic waste with negligible employment loss because retraining grants were deployed in parallel.
- B. A leading consumer-goods company has voluntarily withdrawn one product line.
- C. Open burning of plastics has been declared an offence under the Air Act.
- D. The Bay of Bengal contains more plastic debris than the Arabian Sea.

15. The reasoning in the second paragraph (regulatory arbitrage) is MOST analogous to which of the following?

- A. A speed-limit law that is enforced by averaging speeds across a stretch rather than spot-checking, because spot-checks let drivers slow down only at the camera.
- B. A school dress code that mandates white shirts only.
- C. A tax on cigarettes that raises revenue.
- D. A traffic signal that switches every 90 seconds regardless of traffic.

PASSAGE 4 (CR) – SHOULD FOREIGN LAW FIRMS BE ALLOWED TO PRACTISE IN INDIA? (LEGAL PROFESSION / POLICY)

Q16–20

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q16–20.

In March 2023 the Bar Council of India notified rules permitting foreign law firms and foreign lawyers to register and practise in India in a strictly defined non-litigious zone: advisory work on foreign law, international law and on commercial transactions on a reciprocal basis. The rules expressly bar foreign firms from appearing before Indian courts or advising on Indian law. The move ended nearly two decades of regulatory ambiguity following the Bombay High Court's decision in *Lawyers Collective* (2009) and the Supreme Court's affirmation in *Bar Council of India v. A.K. Balaji* (2018), both of which had read the Advocates Act 1961 as excluding foreign firms from Indian legal practice.

Proponents of further liberalisation argue that the cautious 2023 rules have not gone far enough. Cross-border deal volume out of India crossed USD 130 billion last year; Indian companies routinely require legal advice that integrates Indian corporate law with English contract law, New York securities law and Singapore arbitration practice. Forcing clients to retain two separate firms, one Indian and one foreign, is inefficient and raises transaction costs. Indian firms themselves, the argument goes, would benefit from the competitive pressure: their service quality and technology adoption would rise to international standards, and the most able Indian lawyers would no longer need to emigrate to find front-line international work.

Opponents respond that the Indian Bar is not yet ready for full liberalisation. Indian firms, even the largest, are an order of magnitude smaller than the Magic Circle and Wall Street giants; opening Indian commercial law work to direct competition would result not in a fair contest but in the absorption of Indian talent into the local offices of foreign firms, leaving domestic firms unable to retain partners. The concern is structural, not protectionist. A second concern is regulatory: foreign firms answer to their home-jurisdiction bar associations on questions of conflict, confidentiality and money-laundering; the Bar Council of India lacks both the resources and the extra-territorial reach to discipline them effectively. Third, opponents argue that the analogy with cross-border deal flow is overstated; the truly international transactions are a small share of Indian legal demand, and the broader market remains domestic litigation, regulatory practice and dispute resolution where foreign firms add little value.

The two sides therefore disagree less about whether some opening is desirable than about the pace and the architecture of the regulatory regime that should accompany it.

16. Which of the following BEST captures the proponents' main conclusion?

- A. Foreign law firms should be barred entirely from Indian practice.
- B. The 2023 cautious opening should be expanded; further liberalisation will benefit Indian clients and improve the domestic profession.
- C. The Advocates Act 1961 should be repealed.
- D. Indian lawyers should emigrate.

17. Which of the following is an unstated assumption on which the opponents' STRUCTURAL concern MOST DIRECTLY rests?

- A. That foreign firms have no interest in India.
- B. That given a free choice of employer, the most able Indian lawyers would prefer the Indian offices of foreign firms over Indian domestic firms.
- C. That Indian courts will refuse to recognise foreign firms.
- D. That cross-border deal flow will decline.

18. Which of the following, if true, would MOST WEAKEN the proponents' argument?

- A. Independent surveys of in-house counsel at Indian listed companies show no meaningful efficiency loss from retaining separate Indian and foreign counsel for cross-border deals.
- B. The Magic Circle has opened a Singapore office.
- C. Indian law firms have grown headcount by 12% in the last year.
- D. The Bar Council of India has issued new advertising guidelines.

19. Which of the following, if true, would MOST STRENGTHEN the opponents' regulatory concern?

- A. A foreign firm's Mumbai office was recently disciplined by its home-jurisdiction bar for a conflict that the Indian regulator could not have detected or enforced against.
- B. The Bar Council of India has expanded its disciplinary committee.
- C. Indian arbitration awards have risen in number.
- D. The 2023 rules already require reciprocity.

20. Which of the following is the BEST description of the FLAW (if any) in the opponents' third argument (that international transactions are a small share)?

- A. It conflates the share of a market with the marginal value generated in that share, ignoring that the few international deals may produce disproportionate revenue and prestige.
- B. It relies on a contradiction internal to the 2023 rules.
- C. It assumes that all litigation is domestic.
- D. There is no flaw; the argument is logically airtight.

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 of the following capitals does NOT lie on the bank of a river?

- A. Patna (Ganga)
- B. Lucknow (Gomti)
- C. Bengaluru (Cauvery)
- D. Vijayawada (Krishna)

22. The 2024 Nobel Prize in Physics was awarded for foundational work in:

- A. Black-hole thermodynamics
- B. Machine learning with artificial neural networks
- C. Quantum entanglement
- D. Topological materials

23. Which Indian state launched the country's first dedicated AI policy framework for schools in 2025?

- A. Karnataka
- B. Telangana
- C. Tamil Nadu
- D. Maharashtra

24. Choose the SYNONYM of the word PERSPICACIOUS.

- A. Stubborn
- B. Shrewd
- C. Cowardly
- D. Indifferent

25. Choose the ANTONYM of the word EPHEMERAL.

- A. Brief
- B. Long-lasting
- C. Visible
- D. Repetitive

26. Identify the meaning of the idiom: To bell the cat.

- A. To do something pointless
- B. To undertake a risky task for the benefit of others
- C. To exaggerate a story
- D. To remain silent in a meeting

27. The landmark case which laid down the basic structure doctrine of the Indian Constitution was:

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

28. The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 replaced which earlier statute?

- A. The Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973
- B. The Indian Penal Code, 1860
- C. The Indian Evidence Act, 1872
- D. The Code of Civil Procedure, 1908

29. Which Article of the Indian Constitution provides for the protection of life and personal liberty?

- A. Article 14
- B. Article 19
- C. Article 21
- D. Article 32

30. The Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission of India must have held office as:

- A. Chief Justice or Judge of the Supreme Court of India
- B. Attorney-General of India
- C. Speaker of the Lok Sabha
- D. Vice-President of India