

**ANSWER KEY — 30 MAY 2026**

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
B	C	A	C	B	B	C	B	C	B
Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20
B	C	A	C	B	C	A	B	C	C
Q21	Q22	Q23	Q24	Q25	Q26	Q27	Q28	Q29	Q30
B	C	B	B	C	B	C	B	C	B

RC PASSAGES

**Q1 B**  
The opening paragraph states that polymetallic nodules are rich in manganese, nickel, cobalt and copper, metals 'central to the batteries that power electric vehicles and store renewable energy'. The passage does not connect them to steel and cement, pharmaceuticals or semiconductors. The value of the nodules is therefore tied specifically to battery and energy-storage applications, making 'batteries for electric vehicles and renewable energy storage' the correct answer drawn directly from the text.

**Q2 C**  
The passage states that the International Seabed Authority governs mineral activity 'in this region, designated the common heritage of mankind' — the international seabed area beyond any nation's coastline and jurisdiction. The phrase is not applied to coastal waters of member states, terrestrial reserves or the atmosphere. Therefore 'the international seabed area beyond national jurisdiction' correctly identifies what the phrase describes, as the third option states.

**Q3 A**  
The author identifies a 'procedural tension' arising from a treaty clause that allowed a sponsoring state to trigger a two-year deadline, after which applications might be considered 'even without a finalised code'. The tension is thus between the prospect of mining applications proceeding and the absence of a completed mining code. The other options — unfunded Authority, ignored licences or no legal mandate — are not supported by the text. Hence the first option is correct.

**Q4 C**  
Throughout, the author foregrounds scientific uncertainty — the deep ocean is 'among the least understood ecosystems', consequences are 'simply unknown', and costs 'may be irreversible' — and sympathetically reports calls for a precautionary pause. This signals a cautious stance emphasising uncertainty and irreversibility, rather than enthusiasm, indifference or dismissal of environmental concern. Therefore 'cautious, emphasising scientific uncertainty and irreversibility' best describes the author's attitude, the third option.

**Q5 B**  
The closing line about 'future generations who cannot vote' caps a discussion of who bears the long-term costs of mining decisions, underscoring that those most affected have no voice in present choices — a classic difficulty of commons governance. It is not a literal proposal about voting age, the Authority's electoral procedures or coastal demographics. Therefore the line highlights the difficulty of representing those who bear future costs, making the second option correct.

**Q6 B**  
The passage explains that platform workers are 'economically dependent on the platform, which sets prices and can deactivate them at will, yet they are formally treated as independent contractors'. This mismatch between economic dependence and formal classification is precisely the 'profound ambiguity about status'. The other options — refusing to register, working for governments or only seasonally — are not stated. Hence the second option captures the ambiguity correctly.

**Q7 C**  
The second paragraph sets out the traditional binary: a worker is 'either an employee... or one is self-employed', with the associated package of rights turning on that classification. The passage does not frame the binary as skilled/unskilled, permanent/temporary or formal/informal. Therefore the legal binary described is 'employee' versus 'self-employed', making the third option the correct reading of the text.

**Q8 B**  
The passage praises India's response as innovative precisely because it 'sidesteps the sterile debate over whether platform workers are really employees and instead attaches benefits to the work itself', creating a distinct legal category for gig and platform workers. It does not ban gig work, classify all such workers as full employees, or leave them outside any law. Therefore the second option correctly describes the legislative response.

**Q9 C**

Among the 'hard questions' of implementation, the passage explicitly asks 'how should contributions be calculated when a worker toggles between several apps?' — the difficulty of apportioning welfare-fund contributions across multiple platforms. A shortage of riders, lack of smartphones and excessive minimum wages are not mentioned. Therefore calculating contributions across several apps is the identified challenge, making the third option correct.

**Q10 B**

The final sentence speaks of extending 'the security of the old industrial bargain' to new forms of work, where 'the old industrial bargain' refers to the bundle of protections — minimum wages, leave, provident fund, security against dismissal — historically tied to stable factory-style employment. It does not denote a trade treaty, commodity prices or a defunct statute. Therefore the second option correctly interprets the phrase.

## CR PASSAGES

**Q11 B**

A strengthening question seeks the option that best supports criminalisation. The supporters' core claim is that existing defamation and obscenity laws capture deepfakes only 'awkwardly and after the fact'. Evidence that those laws have repeatedly failed to give victims timely relief directly bolsters the need for a bespoke offence. Cheaper technology, legitimate artistic uses and mere debate elsewhere do not strengthen the case as squarely. Hence the second option is correct.

**Q12 C**

The cautious camp's principal objection, stated in the third paragraph, is that 'a poorly drafted offence could sweep in satire, parody, political commentary and legitimate artistic uses, chilling protected speech'. Cost of drafting, reducing deepfakes to zero, or applying only to public figures are not the central worry. Therefore the objection that the offence might sweep in protected speech such as satire and political commentary is correct, the third option.

**Q13 A**

Deterrence presupposes that would-be wrongdoers can actually be identified and threatened with punishment; otherwise a criminal prohibition deters no one. The cautious camp in fact challenges this assumption by noting the 'practical impossibility of identifying anonymous creators operating across borders'. The supporters' deterrence argument therefore rests on the assumption that offenders can be identified and meaningfully threatened, making the first option the correct unstated premise.

**Q14 C**

Those urging caution argue that 'enforcement effort might be better spent on rapid takedown obligations for platforms and on civil remedies that compensate victims'. They do not propose banning artificial intelligence, lowering the standard of proof in all criminal trials, or abolishing defamation law. Therefore the cautious camp would direct effort at rapid platform takedown duties and civil remedies for victims, making the third option correct.

**Q15 B**

The final paragraph frames the choice as between 'a new prohibition that expresses moral clarity but may overreach' and 'incremental adaptation of existing tools that is narrower but perhaps slower and less visible'. This is a contrast between a bold but possibly over-broad new offence and a narrower refinement of current law — not regulation versus deregulation, a jurisdictional question, or a legal-systems comparison. Hence the second option correctly states the dilemma.

**Q16 C**

Advocates present congestion as a case where drivers ignore the social cost they impose — delay, pollution, wasted fuel — which is the textbook definition of a negative externality, correctable by a price (the charge) that internalises that cost. It is not described as a natural monopoly, an unpriceable public good, or a progressive tax base. Therefore the rationale treats congestion as a negative externality that pricing can correct, making the third option correct.

**Q17 A**

A weakening question seeks the option that undermines the advocates' case. Advocates assume drivers can shift to public transport. If, in the target cities, public transport is unavailable on most routes commuters use, the charge cannot nudge people onto alternatives and merely penalises them — directly undercutting the policy's logic. Preference for comfort, revenue raised, or foreign success do not weaken the case as sharply. Hence the first option is correct.

**Q18 B**

The sceptics call the flat charge 'regressive' because it 'barely registers for the wealthy but bites hard on the lower-middle-class commuter', i.e., it imposes a proportionally heavier burden on those with lower incomes. It is not described as inflation-indexed, limited to luxury vehicles, or collected annually. Therefore the regressivity lies in the proportionally heavier burden on lower-income commuters, making the second option correct.

**Q19 C**

The 'sequencing argument' is summarised as: 'invest first in transit, and congestion may ease without coercion' — that is, build transit capacity before charging drivers off the roads. It is not about raising charges gradually, the order of installing cameras and exemptions, or measuring congestion first. Therefore the sequencing argument holds that transit capacity should be built before drivers are charged off the roads, making the third option correct.

**Q20 C**

The closing paragraph states that one's verdict 'depends on whether one trusts the state to recycle the revenue fairly and to build the promised infrastructure'. The decisive factor is thus trust in the state's fair use of revenue and delivery of transit — not the exact rupee value of the charge, the number of cameras, or foreign success. Hence the third option correctly identifies what the verdict ultimately turns on.

## SECTION C — RAPID-FIRE GK &amp; CURRENT AFFAIRS

**Q21 B**

The International Seabed Authority is established under and operates pursuant to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which designates the international seabed area as the common heritage of mankind. The Paris Agreement and Kyoto Protocol concern climate change, and the Antarctic Treaty governs Antarctica. Therefore the ISA operates under UNCLOS, making the second option correct.

**Q22 C**

India's social-security provisions for gig and platform workers are consolidated in the Code on Social Security, 2020, one of the four labour codes, which for the first time defines and brings these workers within a welfare framework. The Industrial Disputes Act, the Factories Act and the Trade Unions Act are older statutes that do not create the gig-worker category. Therefore the Code on Social Security, 2020 is correct, the third option.

**Q23 B**

PM<sub>2.5</sub> denotes fine particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter of less than 2.5 micrometres — small enough to penetrate deep into the lungs and bloodstream, which is why it is a key air-quality indicator. The figure refers to micrometres, not millimetres or nanometres, and 25 micrometres is far larger than the defining threshold. Therefore PM<sub>2.5</sub> refers to particles smaller than 2.5 micrometres, making the second option correct.

**Q24 B**

Central-zone congestion charging is most famously associated with London, which introduced its scheme in 2003, and Singapore, a pioneer of road pricing from the 1970s. Tokyo, Seoul, Paris, Berlin, New York and Chicago are not the standard early examples cited for congestion pricing. Therefore London and Singapore are the cities most associated with early congestion charging, making the second option correct.

**Q25 C**

In economics, an externality is a cost or benefit of an activity that falls on a third party who is not part of the transaction, such as pollution imposed on bystanders. It is not a tax on imports (a tariff), a subsidy to exporters, or a nation's external debt. Therefore an externality is a cost or benefit affecting a third party not involved in the transaction, making the third option correct.

**Q26 B**

In logic, a premise is a statement offered as a reason or evidence in support of a conclusion; the conclusion is the claim the argument ultimately seeks to establish, while the premises are the supporting steps that lead to it. A premise is therefore not the final claim being argued for, not an irrelevant aside, and not a rhetorical question. The correct definition is 'a statement offered in support of a conclusion', which is the second option.

**Q27 C**

An ad hominem fallacy attacks the person advancing an argument rather than engaging with the argument itself. A straw man misrepresents an opponent's position to refute it more easily, a slippery slope claims one step leads inevitably to extreme consequences, and a false dichotomy presents only two options when more exist. Therefore attacking the person rather than the argument is the ad hominem fallacy, making the third option correct.

**Q28 B**

India's National Air Quality Index is administered by the Central Pollution Control Board, the statutory body under the Ministry of Environment responsible for monitoring and reporting ambient air quality. The India Meteorological Department handles weather, NITI Aayog is a policy think-tank, and the Bureau of Indian Standards sets product standards. Therefore the CPCB administers the National Air Quality Index, making the second option correct.

**Q29 C**

The passage and general earth science locate polymetallic nodules on the abyssal plains of the deep-ocean seabed, lying directly on the sediment surface far below the reach of sunlight and well beyond the continental shelves. They are not found on shelf beaches, in Himalayan riverbeds, or on the surface of glaciers, all of which are shallow or terrestrial environments. Therefore polymetallic nodules occur primarily on the deep-ocean seabed, making the third option correct.

**Q30 B**

A moratorium is a temporary suspension or prohibition of an activity, often imposed pending further study or negotiation, as with the proposed pause on deep-sea mining. It is not a permanent treaty ban, a financial penalty, or a binding arbitration award. Therefore the best definition is 'a temporary prohibition or suspension of an activity', making the second option correct.