

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) — TROPICAL CYCLONES AND THE NORTH INDIAN OCEAN (CLIMATE / SCIENCE / Q1-5)

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

The North Indian Ocean — comprising the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal — has long been considered a comparatively quiet basin in the global cyclone atlas. Of the roughly eighty named tropical cyclones the planet records in an average year, the North Indian Ocean accounts for fewer than seven. Yet a string of recent events has obliged climatologists to revise the basin's reputation. Cyclone Tauktae in May 2021, Cyclone Biparjoy in June 2023, and the unusually long-lived Cyclone Asna in August 2024 all formed in the Arabian Sea, a sub-basin that historically generated barely a fifth of the region's storms. Modellers now report that the Arabian Sea is warming at nearly twice the rate of the Bay of Bengal, and that the upper-ocean heat content available to a developing low-pressure system is rising sharply.

The consequence is not merely an increase in storm frequency, but a documented intensification of the storms that do form. Cyclones over the Arabian Sea are reaching higher peak intensities and remaining in the 'severe cyclonic storm' category for longer fractions of their lifespan than at any time in the satellite record. India's coastal economic geography — Mumbai's port traffic, the Gujarat petroleum corridor, the Kerala fisheries — was built on the older statistical baseline. The newer baseline implies that infrastructure designed for a once-in-fifty-year storm is now being asked to endure a once-in-twenty-year storm.

The policy response has been uneven. The India Meteorological Department's track forecasts have grown markedly more accurate; the standard error on a 24-hour forecast has fallen by roughly forty per cent over the past decade. Evacuation logistics, refined over successive landfalls in Odisha and Andhra Pradesh, are now studied internationally as a template. What has lagged is the longer-horizon work of climate-proofing assets: hardening port infrastructure, redesigning storm drains, relocating informal settlements out of inundation zones. Forecasting can shave the death toll; only adaptation can shave the damage bill, which has climbed faster than GDP in every cyclone-exposed coastal state over the past decade.

1. The author's principal contention in the passage is that:

- A. India's evacuation logistics during cyclone landfalls are now studied as a global template.
- B. A warming Arabian Sea is changing India's western-coast cyclone risk faster than adaptation infrastructure is being upgraded.
- C. Improved IMD forecasts have rendered most modern Indian infrastructure outdated and now require immediate, complete redesign for coming decades.
- D. Climate change is producing more named cyclones globally each year, requiring more port capacity.

2. As used in the third paragraph of the passage, the phrase 'climate-proofing assets' most nearly means:

- A. Redesigning and hardening physical infrastructure to remain functional under future climate stresses.
- B. Insuring physical assets against direct climate-related losses through commercial insurance.
- C. Auditing existing assets to verify carbon emissions are within national contribution targets.
- D. Relocating financial assets to cooler regions of the country to insulate them from climate disruption.

3. It can be inferred from the passage that, historically, the Arabian Sea:

- A. Produced cyclones of higher peak intensity than those produced by the Bay of Bengal.
- B. Was warming at approximately the same rate as the Bay of Bengal historically.
- C. Did not produce tropical cyclones at all; its first named storm was Cyclone Tauktae in 2021.
- D. Contributed a smaller share of the basin's tropical cyclones than the Bay of Bengal.

4. Which of the following statements, if true, would MOST WEAKEN the author's argument that the changing cyclone risk profile is outpacing adaptation?

- A. Cyclone Asna in August 2024 was the longest-lived Arabian Sea cyclone on record.
- B. The IMD's 24-hour standard error has fallen by about forty per cent over the past decade.
- C. Mumbai, Surat, and Kochi have completed multi-billion-rupee port-hardening calibrated to the newer baseline.
- D. The number of named cyclones globally has not changed materially over the past three decades.

5. The tone of the author in the passage is best described as:

- A. Analytical and concerned, presenting scientific consensus alongside a measured critique of policy.
- B. Alarmist and polemical, calling for radical political intervention against incumbent governments.
- C. Detached and statistical, listing storm names and forecast errors without interpretation.
- D. Optimistic and reassuring, suggesting evacuation logistics have solved the cyclone-risk problem.

PASSAGE 2 (RC) — THE QUIET REVIVAL OF THE INDIAN HANDLOOM (CULTURE / ECONOMICS) Q6-10

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

For a decade after liberalisation, the prognosis for the Indian handloom looked grim. The 1996 Abid Hussain Committee had warned that competition from cheaper, faster powerlooms would steadily erode the handloom weaver's market. Throughout the 2000s the official census of weavers shrank, cooperatives folded, and master craftsmen migrated to the cities to drive autos and stitch garments in factories. By the time the National Handloom Day was instituted in 2015, the sector seemed to be receiving last rites rather than a revival.

A decade later, a less obvious story has been unfolding. The handloom sector still employs roughly thirty-five lakh people directly — the second-largest source of rural non-farm livelihood after agriculture — and the median age of a weaver, which had risen alarmingly to over fifty in 2011, has fallen back into the late thirties. Three forces explain the turn. First, e-commerce dissolved the geographic ceiling that had trapped weavers in price-taking relationships with local middlemen; a Banarasi weaver can now reach a buyer in Sweden as easily as one in Sasaram, and capture a much larger share of the final price. Second, a new generation of urban Indian consumers, more conscious of provenance and authenticity, has been willing to pay a premium for the handloom label, particularly for occasion wear. Third, a clutch of state-backed and private platforms — from Tamil Nadu's Co-optex to private aggregators like Okhai and GoCoop — have shortened the chain between weaver and end-buyer, taking a thinner margin and reinvesting in design support.

The revival is not yet complete. Powerloom mis-labelling — fabric woven on power looms but sold as 'handloom' — remains the sector's most persistent threat, undercutting the very premium that consumers are paying. The Handloom Mark, introduced as a guarantee of authenticity, is enforced unevenly. Wage levels remain below the prevailing minimum wage in many clusters, particularly for the underpaid female weavers who outnumber men. Yet the trajectory has decisively reversed. The handloom was, for many years, an industry treated as if it deserved a museum. It now appears to deserve a market.

6. Which of the following best captures the central argument of the passage?

- A. The Indian handloom is now the largest source of rural non-farm livelihood, overtaking agriculture.
- B. The Handloom Mark must be enforced more strictly across every cluster to eliminate powerloom mis-labelling.
- C. Contrary to a grim prognosis, the Indian handloom has been revived by e-commerce, conscious consumption, and aggregators.
- D. Tamil Nadu's Co-optex has been the single most important force behind the handloom revival of the past decade.

7. Which of the following is NOT cited in the passage as a force behind the handloom's recent revival?

- A. Dissolution of the geographic ceiling on weavers' markets through e-commerce platforms.
- B. A protective customs duty on cheaper imported powerloom fabric to insulate the domestic weaver.
- C. A shift in urban consumption towards provenance-conscious buying, especially for occasion wear.
- D. Aggregator platforms, both state-backed and private, that have shortened the weaver-buyer chain.

8. The author's reference to the median age of a weaver having 'fallen back into the late thirties' is used in the passage to:

- A. Indicate that younger people are again entering the trade, suggesting the demographic decline has been arrested.
- B. Imply that older master weavers have been forcibly retired by cooperatives to make room for younger entrants.
- C. Establish that wage levels have risen materially above the prevailing minimum wage across most clusters.
- D. Suggest that National Handloom Day instituted in 2015 was the single most important driver of the shift.

9. Which of the following statements, if true, would MOST STRENGTHEN the author's claim that aggregator platforms have been an important driver of the revival?

- A. The Handloom Mark is enforced more uniformly across states today than in its early years.
- B. A growing share of urban consumers prefer cotton over synthetic fabric for everyday clothing.
- C. The median age of a weaver fell from over fifty in 2011 to the late thirties in the recent census.
- D. Weavers on Co-optex, Okhai, GoCoop captured 62% of final retail price in 2024 vs 28% in 2014.

10. As used in the closing line of the passage, the contrast between 'a museum' and 'a market' is best understood as:

- A. A literal contrast between museum buildings and market buildings used to display handloom in past and present.
- B. A figurative contrast between treating handloom as a heritage curiosity and treating it as a commercial sector.
- C. A criticism of museums for failing to display handloom products and an exhortation that they should now stock it.
- D. A neutral observation that handloom is now equally popular in museum gift shops and in regular retail markets.

PASSAGE 3 (CR) — SHOULD INDIA ADOPT A STATUTORY FOUR-DAY WORK WEEK? (LABOUR / POLICY) Q11-15

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q11-15.

Proponents of a statutory four-day work week — typically defined as a 32-hour week with no reduction in pay — argue from a small but growing body of trial evidence. The 2022 UK pilot involving 61 firms reported that 92 per cent of participating employers continued the arrangement after the trial, citing stable or improved productivity, reduced employee burnout, and lower attrition. Subsequent pilots in Iceland, Spain, and Portugal report broadly similar findings. The case for India, the proponents argue, is even stronger: Indian white-collar workers report some of the highest burnout rates globally, presenteeism is rampant, and India's services exports — increasingly knowledge-intensive — depend more on cognitive sharpness than on hours logged. Shifting from a 48-hour to a 32-hour statutory cap, the argument runs, would force employers to invest in process discipline that is currently substituted for by long hours.

The argument, however, treats Indian labour as if it were homogeneous. The trial evidence on which it rests is drawn almost entirely from knowledge-economy workers in firms with high pre-existing productivity slack. Indian employment is dominated by manufacturing, construction, retail, and agriculture, where output is closely tied to hours worked and where margins are too thin to absorb a 33 per cent compression in input hours at constant wages. A statutory mandate would either force these sectors to reduce wages — defeating the policy's central promise — or trigger informal-sector workarounds in which workers continue 48-hour weeks off the books, exactly as has occurred with maximum-hour caps that already exist on paper.

There is a further difficulty. The pilots that the proponents cite were voluntary self-selected experiments. The firms that volunteered were precisely those that calculated, ex ante, that they could absorb the compression. Generalising from a self-selected sample to the entire labour force is a basic methodological error. A statutory four-day work week may well be a worthwhile policy in some sectors. But the case for a single, country-wide statutory cap rests on evidence that does not, in fact, exist.

11. Which of the following is the principal CONCLUSION of the author's argument?

- A. The available trial evidence does not support a single country-wide 32-hour statutory cap for India.
- B. Knowledge-economy workers in India would benefit substantially from a shift to a 32-hour statutory cap.
- C. The UK, Iceland, and Spain pilots all reported broadly similar productivity findings in participating firms.
- D. Existing maximum-hour caps in India have repeatedly triggered informal-sector workarounds in employment.

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

- A. Burnout among Indian white-collar workers is materially higher than burnout among similarly-employed workers in the UK, Iceland, Spain, and Portugal taken together over the relevant trial period.
- B. Indian services exports are growing at a faster annual rate than manufacturing exports on official data.
- C. Manufacturing, construction, retail, and agriculture account for a sufficiently large share of Indian employment that knowledge-worker policy cannot speak for the whole country.
- D. The 92% UK continuation rate was identical to the continuation rates in Iceland, Spain, Portugal pilots.

13. Which of the following, if true, would MOST WEAKEN the author's argument?

- A. A subsequent UK pilot found smaller thinner-margin firms reported an even higher continuation rate.
- B. Indian white-collar workers report some of the highest burnout rates globally, especially in IT, banking, consulting.
- C. Indian services exports have grown rapidly and now account for a record share of total Indian exports.
- D. A randomised trial of 400 Indian firms in manufacturing, retail, agriculture found a 32-hour week produced stable output without wage cuts.

14. Which of the following BEST describes the author's principal objection to the proponents' use of the UK, Iceland, Spain, and Portugal pilots?

- A. The pilots reported only short-term productivity outcomes; longer-term outcomes may differ on the same firms.
- B. The participating firms were self-selected; generalising from them to the entire labour force is a basic methodological error.
- C. The pilots were conducted in countries with materially lower starting hour caps than India and so cannot transfer.
- D. The pilots failed to control for sectoral composition; each covered firms from a different mix of sectors.

15. Which of the following is a FLAW in the author's argument?

- A. The author moves from 'evidence is insufficient' to the broader 'policy is unworkable in every Indian sector'.
- B. The author contradicts himself by both relying on and rejecting the same pilot evidence in consecutive sentences.
- C. The author concedes the four-day week may be worthwhile in some sectors, which undermines the rest of his argument.
- D. The author uses an analogy with existing maximum-hour caps in India, which is irrelevant to the proposed 32-hour cap.

PASSAGE 4 (CR) — SHOULD THE SUPREME COURT MANDATORILY LIVESTREAM ALL CONSTITUTION BENCH HEARINGS? (LAW / TRANSPARENCY)

Q16–20

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q16–20.

In Swapnil Tripathi v. Supreme Court of India (2018), the Supreme Court of India held that the right of access to live court proceedings is part of the right of access to justice under Article 21. The Court began livestreaming Constitution Bench hearings selectively from September 2022, and has since beamed a growing number of matters — Article 370, same-sex marriage, electoral bonds, sub-classification of Scheduled Castes — on a publicly accessible YouTube channel. A proposal now under consideration would convert the present selective practice into a mandatory rule: every Constitution Bench hearing would be livestreamed unless the Court records reasons in writing for excluding the public.

The case for a mandatory rule is straightforward. Constitution Bench matters decide the basic structure of the Republic — federalism, fundamental rights, the contours of equality. The reasoning that produces those decisions belongs to the public, not the legal profession alone. The Court's own writing in Swapnil Tripathi treated openness as the default; the present selective practice has inverted the default into discretion. Mandating livestreaming would, additionally, discipline both Bench and Bar — oral arguments will be tighter, dilatory adjournments harder, and judgments more carefully reasoned, knowing the entire arc is on the record. The fear that sensitive matters might be exposed is met by the proposed carve-out for written reasons: courts already routinely close hearings for in-camera matrimonial and child-protection cases, and the same framework would apply.

The difficulty with this argument is that it treats the Supreme Court as if it were a single uniform institution. A Constitution Bench docket today contains, side by side, a constitutional challenge to a marriage law, a sensitive review of foreign-relations records, and a pending criminal appeal in which a minor is named. The judicial calculus on closure differs across these matters in ways that an across-the-board rule, even one with a written-reasons exception, will not capture cleanly. Writing reasons for closure on every contested matter would, in practice, add weeks to already-delayed Constitution Bench proceedings — a price the proponents do not, in their enthusiasm for transparency, openly acknowledge.

16. Which of the following is the principal CONCLUSION of the author's argument?

- A. Selective livestreaming has, in practice, inverted the openness default laid down in Swapnil Tripathi.
- B. Constitution Bench matters decide basic structure of the Republic, so their reasoning belongs to the public.
- C. Livestreaming proceedings produces tighter oral arguments, fewer dilatory adjournments, and reasoned judgments.
- D. The proposed across-the-board livestreaming rule will not cleanly capture variation in judicial calculus across matters.

17. Which of the following is an UNSTATED ASSUMPTION on which the proponents' case for the mandatory rule depends?

- A. Constitution Bench matters decide basic structure of the Republic, including federalism and fundamental rights.
- B. Cases warranting in-camera proceedings can be reliably identified and the necessary written reasons produced without material delay.
- C. The Supreme Court began livestreaming Constitution Bench hearings selectively from September 2022 on YouTube.
- D. The proposed rule contains a carve-out under which the Court may exclude the public if it records written reasons.

18. Which of the following, if true, would MOST WEAKEN the author's argument against the mandatory rule?

- A. A 2024 study found average time taken to dispose of a Constitution Bench matter rose materially after 2022.
- B. Studies of Indian high courts show judges delivering more reasoned written orders also meet prescribed timelines.
- C. Empirical data from Brazil and the UK show a written-reasons carve-out adds less than three days per closure on average.
- D. The Supreme Court already conducts in-camera proceedings in matrimonial and child-protection cases with written reasons.

19. The author's reference to 'a sensitive review of foreign-relations records' and 'a pending criminal appeal in which a minor is named' principally functions to:

- A. Illustrate the heterogeneity of Constitution Bench matters in support of the claim that an across-the-board mandate is too blunt.
- B. Argue that the Supreme Court has neglected foreign-relations matters and juvenile criminal appeals on its Constitution Bench docket.
- C. Suggest that the Supreme Court should set up a separate dedicated bench for sensitive matters away from the Constitution Bench.
- D. Imply that the Supreme Court has taken on too many sensitive matters on its Constitution Bench docket and should restrict it.

20. Which of the following BEST describes the author's overall position?

- A. The author favours abolishing livestreaming of Supreme Court proceedings entirely on the ground that openness hinders reasoning.
- B. The author favours the selective livestreaming status quo on the ground that the Court should retain unfettered discretion.
- C. The author accepts the proponents' openness premise but argues the proposed across-the-board mandate is too blunt to handle docket heterogeneity.
- D. The author rejects the Swapnil Tripathi precedent entirely on the ground that Article 21 has no application to court-access questions.

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. The 2024 Booker Prize was awarded to Samantha Harvey for which novel?

- A. Prophet Song
- B. Orbital
- C. The Bee Sting
- D. North Woods

22. The procedure for the removal of a judge of the Supreme Court of India is laid down in:

- A. Article 61 (impeachment)
- B. Article 122
- C. Article 124
- D. Article 226

23. The RBI's Monetary Policy Committee, as constituted under the RBI Act, 1934, consists of how many members?

- A. Six members, with the RBI Governor as ex-officio chairperson.
- B. Four members, with the RBI Governor as ex-officio chairperson.
- C. Eight members, with the Union Finance Minister as ex-officio chairperson.
- D. Five members, with the Deputy Governor (Monetary Policy) as chairperson.

24. In the sentence 'The judge's pronouncement was unequivocal,' the word 'unequivocal' most nearly means:

- A. Conditional (dependent)
- B. Vague
- C. Unambiguous
- D. Lengthy

25. The idiom 'to bury the hatchet' most nearly means:

- A. To plant evidence at a crime scene to mislead investigators.
- B. To pretend that a serious past dispute never occurred at all.
- C. To formally end a quarrel and make peace between hostile parties.
- D. To make a sudden, unprovoked attack on a previously friendly party.

26. Which of the following pairs of country and currency is INCORRECTLY matched?

- A. Vietnam — Dong
- B. Indonesia — Riyal
- C. Thailand — Baht
- D. Malaysia — Ringgit

27. The author of the 2024 non-fiction book 'Why Bharat Matters' on India's foreign-policy doctrine is:

- A. S. Jaishankar
- B. Shashi Tharoor
- C. Ramachandra Guha
- D. Shivshankar Menon

28. Article 368 of the Constitution of India deals with:

- A. The procedure for the impeachment of the President of India.
- B. Financial relations between the Union and the States.
- C. The power of Parliament to amend the Constitution and the procedure for amendments.
- D. The original jurisdiction of the Supreme Court in Union-State disputes.

29. The Tropic of Cancer passes through which of the following Indian states?

- A. Bihar
- B. Tamil Nadu (southern state)
- C. Punjab
- D. Madhya Pradesh

30. The headquarters of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) is located in:

- A. Paris, France
- B. Gurugram, India
- C. Nairobi, Kenya
- D. Abu Dhabi, UAE