

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 REINVENTION OF INDIAN RAILWAYS — SEMI-HIGH-SPEED CORRIDORS Q1-5

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

For the better part of the past century, the Indian Railways have been simultaneously the country's most democratic mode of long-distance transport and a slow-moving monument to deferred modernisation. Average commercial speeds on the Mail and Express network hovered around 50–55 km/h, frozen in place by mixed traffic on a single set of tracks, antique signalling and the political impossibility of withdrawing stops at lightly-used stations. The arrival, since 2019, of the indigenously designed Vande Bharat train-sets has been the first credible challenge to that inertia, but their real significance is structural rather than cosmetic.

The Vande Bharat is, by international standards, only a semi-high-speed product: its sanctioned maximum is 160 km/h and its end-to-end commercial average is closer to 85 km/h. What it has done, however, is force a quiet rebuild of the underlying infrastructure. Rolling stock that can sustain 130 km/h cannot run reliably on the older fish-plated tracks. Trackbeds along the Delhi–Varanasi and Delhi–Vaishno Devi Katra corridors have therefore been re-laid with long-welded rail and concrete sleepers, the level-crossings eliminated, the overhead equipment regulated for higher currents and the signalling shifted, in phases, to the indigenously developed Kavach automatic train protection system.

Critics argue that the resulting product is an expensive sop to a small segment of business and leisure travellers who could, in any event, have flown. The reply from the Railway Board is twofold. First, the corridors that have been rebuilt for semi-high-speed running also carry an upgraded freight schedule, since the same track quality and the same Kavach protection now permit longer trains to run faster without dwell-time penalties at marginal stations. Second, the per-passenger-kilometre energy footprint of an electrified train-set, even at 130 km/h, is roughly a third of a domestic short-haul flight on the same origin–destination pair.

The deeper question is whether the political economy of the Railways can sustain the rolling-stock and the rebuild together. Each new Vande Bharat displaces an older Shatabdi or Jan Shatabdi, and its higher fares displace at least some of the captive lower-class passenger base. Whether the country accepts a faster but more selective network, or insists on the older universal-access compromise, is now a question that the next decade, rather than the next quarter, will have to answer for itself.

1. According to the passage, what is the principal structural significance of the Vande Bharat train-sets?

- A. They run at the highest commercial speeds achieved by any train operating anywhere in the South Asian region.
- B. They have forced a quiet rebuild of trackbeds, signalling and overhead equipment along their route corridors.
- C. They have replaced every Shatabdi service on the Indian Railways network as part of a fleet modernisation drive.
- D. They have eliminated freight congestion across the entire Indian Railways network in a single sweeping reform.

2. Which of the following is NOT mentioned by the passage as a change made along the Delhi–Varanasi and Katra corridors?

- A. Re-laying of trackbeds with long-welded rail and modern concrete sleepers on the affected sections under the facts presented in the question.
- B. Conversion of all intermediate stations into automated unstaffed halts as part of the recent modernisation drive.
- C. Elimination of level-crossings along the route to support the higher operating speeds being targeted under the facts presented in the question.
- D. Phased adoption of the indigenously developed Kavach automatic train protection signalling system under the facts presented in the question.

3. What is the second reply given by the Railway Board to the criticism that the corridors only serve a small segment of travellers?

- A. Indian Railways have agreed to absorb every fare differential on the corridor through a direct passenger subsidy under the facts presented in the question.
- B. Vande Bharat fare is identical to the older Shatabdi fare on the same corridor, ensuring affordability for all classes under the facts presented in the question.
- C. Per-passenger-kilometre energy footprint of an electrified train-set is around a third of a short-haul flight on the same pair.
- D. Government has separately committed to building parallel low-fare overnight services on every upgraded corridor route under the facts presented in the question.

4. Which of the following best captures the 'deeper question' the passage flags at its close?

- A. Whether the country will continue to subsidise diesel locomotives on lightly-used branch lines for ten more years under the facts presented in the question.
- B. Whether the country accepts a faster but more selective network or insists on the older universal-access compromise.
- C. Whether the Kavach system should be replaced by an imported European train protection system in the next decade under the facts presented in the question.
- D. Whether the Vande Bharat platform can be exported to South Asian neighbours over the next decade of operations under the facts presented in the question.

5. Which of the following is the most accurate description of the passage's overall stance?

- A. Wholly celebratory of the Vande Bharat programme without any reservation about its long-term sustainability under the facts presented in the question.
- B. Balanced; recognises the structural rebuild value while flagging the political-economy trade-off for the next decade.
- C. Critical of the programme as a wasteful subsidy that should be withdrawn at the earliest available opportunity under the facts presented in the question.
- D. Strictly technical; concerned only with the engineering of the trackbed and not with passenger fares at all under the facts presented in the question.

PASSAGE 2 (RC) — THE ETHICS OF HUMAN-AI CO-AUTHORSHIP IN SCIENTIFIC PUBLISHING

Q6-10

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

In the first quarter of 2025 the publishing arms of three of the world's largest scientific societies issued near-identical position statements on the use of large language models in research papers. Each declared, in slightly different words, that an artificial intelligence system cannot be listed as an author of a peer-reviewed scientific article. The reasoning offered was always the same: authorship implies accountability for the integrity of the work, and an AI system can neither sign a conflict-of-interest declaration nor respond to a post-publication query from a reader.

What the statements did not settle, however, was what counts as 'use' of an AI system. A handful of journals require the disclosure of any model invoked during drafting, including for grammar polishing. Others draw the line at substantive contribution to the prose, leaving the threshold to the authors' good faith. A still smaller group demands the disclosure only of AI-generated figures, tables or code, on the view that prose is the easiest part of a paper for the human authors to verify themselves.

The difficulty is that the very capabilities the policies are trying to fence in are evolving faster than the policies themselves. Domain-specific scientific models can now draft passable literature reviews, suggest experimental designs, and even propose mechanistic hypotheses that a human author would have taken weeks of reading to reach. A young researcher who refuses to use such a model is, in effect, racing against peers who do, on an uneven track. A young researcher who uses it without disclosure breaches the new policies; one who discloses fully may, in the present climate, see her work treated as less original.

There is, finally, the harder problem of the model's own training data. If the model has been trained, as most have, on a corpus that includes the very journals in which the paper will appear, then the line between 'inspired by' and 'derived from' becomes almost impossible to draw with confidence. A handful of scholars have proposed a sui generis 'AI-assisted' label, separate from 'author', to be applied to any paper above a defined threshold of model involvement. Whether such a label, once attached, would carry stigma or simply become the new default is, like much else in this debate, a question that the citation indices of the next five years will have to answer.

6. Which of the following best summarises the common reasoning given by the three position statements?

- A. Artificial intelligence systems lack the technical sophistication to draft a peer-reviewed paper without any human input at all under the facts presented in the question.
- B. Artificial intelligence systems are commercial products and so their inclusion as authors would create a conflict of interest under the facts presented in the question.
- C. Authorship implies accountability for integrity, which an AI system cannot provide through declarations or post-publication replies.
- D. Scientific societies have an internal rule that has historically restricted authorship to citizens of member countries only under the facts presented in the question.

7. What policy variation does the passage describe across different journals on the use of AI?

- A. All journals now require disclosure of any AI involvement, however trivial, including grammar polishing on the same facts under the facts presented in the question.
- B. All journals have collectively delegated AI-disclosure policy to the national science academy of the corresponding author's country under the facts presented in the question.
- C. Some require disclosure of any model use; others only of substantive contribution; a smaller group only of AI-generated figures or code.
- D. All journals presently refuse to publish any paper that has had any contact with a large language model whatsoever under the facts presented in the question.

8. What is the dilemma the passage attributes to the young researcher?

- A. Researcher who refuses to use AI races on an uneven track; full disclosure may be read as a signal of reduced originality.
- B. Researcher must choose between an academic career and a more lucrative position in the private artificial intelligence industry.
- C. Researcher must publish her work first in a preprint server and only later submit it to a peer-reviewed journal for review.
- D. Researcher must obtain explicit informed consent from each AI model's developer before drafting any portion of her paper under the facts presented in the question.

9. Which of the following is the deeper, harder problem flagged at the close of the passage?

- A. Whether peer reviewers themselves can be permitted to use large language models when drafting their own review reports.
- B. Whether universities can afford the licensing fees for commercial scientific large language models on their library budgets.
- C. Whether the model has been trained on the same journals, blurring the line between 'inspired by' and 'derived from'.
- D. Whether AI-generated figures can be reliably distinguished from human-drawn figures by an automated detection tool under the facts presented in the question.

10. What is the proposal a small group of scholars has put forward, according to the passage?

- A. Sui generis 'AI-assisted' label, separate from 'author', for any paper above a defined threshold of model involvement.
- B. Complete prohibition on the use of any artificial intelligence system at any stage of any scientific manuscript whatsoever.
- C. Mandatory two-year embargo on the publication of any AI-assisted paper while the relevant policy is being further developed.
- D. Compulsory retraining of every large language model on a corpus drawn only from openly licensed scientific publications.

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q11-15.

Argument in favour of the ban: India already prohibits the display of political content on television and in print newspapers during the 48 hours that precede the close of polling, a window the Representation of the People Act describes as the 'silence period'. The original rationale, that voters should have a quiet space in which to compose their final preferences free of last-minute persuasion, is no less valid in 2026 than it was in 1996. If anything, it is more pressing. Television and print are linear, broadly visible to everyone and easily audited by the Election Commission. Social media is, by contrast, micro-targeted, ephemeral, often pseudonymous and extraordinarily difficult to audit in real time. A last-minute viral clip can shift a marginal constituency before any fact-checker has had time to read it. Extending the silence period to social media is therefore not a new restriction but the simple application of an existing principle to a new and more dangerous medium.

Moreover, the major social platforms already maintain political-advertising libraries and they already operate election-window 'cool-off' regimes in several mature democracies. The technical capability exists; what is missing is the legal trigger. A binding 48-hour pre-poll window in India would close the loophole without any new infrastructure.

Argument against the ban: A blanket pre-poll ban on social media is qualitatively different from the existing television and print restriction. Television advertising is a one-way broadcast; political content on social media is, in large part, organic speech by ordinary citizens. To prohibit advertising while permitting unpaid posts is not technically meaningful, because the same political message can be amplified through co-ordinated networks of unpaid sharers and become functionally indistinguishable from a paid advertisement.

Enforcement is, further, riddled with edge cases. Should a candidate's own organic social-media post during the silence period count as 'advertising'? Should the algorithmic recommendation of an older political video count? Should diaspora accounts based outside Indian jurisdiction be liable for content that an Indian voter sees during the silence period? Without clear answers to these questions, a 48-hour pre-poll ban would be selectively enforced, with party affiliation of the offender becoming the most reliable predictor of whether enforcement actually follows. The silence period might survive in name; it would die in practice.

11. Which of the following best states the principal premise of the argument in favour of the ban?

- A. International peer pressure from established mature democracies has forced the introduction of the binding 48-hour window.
- B. Social media has been the cause of every recent election upset in every major democracy across the globe under the facts presented in the question.
- C. Election Commission will only act once an absolute majority of registered Indian voters formally petitions it for action.
- D. Silence-period rationale, already applied to television and print, applies a fortiori to micro-targeted social media.

12. Which of the following, if true, would MOST weaken the argument in favour of the ban?

- A. Voter-turnout in India has been consistently rising election after election, hitting record highs in the most recent general elections under the facts presented in the question.
- B. Election Commission has lately recruited a large number of additional officers to monitor pre-poll advertising in real time under the facts presented in the question.
- C. Major social-media platforms are now reporting record advertising revenues from political campaigns in every electoral cycle under the facts presented in the question.
- D. Empirical studies show pre-poll voters are settled at least 72 hours before polling, with paid social-media ads in 48-hour window having no measurable swing effect.

13. Which of the following is an unstated assumption of the argument AGAINST the ban?

- A. Coordinated unpaid sharers can in practice amplify a political message to a degree comparable to paid advertising spend.
- B. Election Commission of India is independent of the political-party affiliation of the central government for the time being.
- C. Social-media platforms will refuse, on principle, to cooperate with any pre-poll restriction the Indian government may impose.
- D. Voters in India routinely cast their final preferences only after viewing political advertising in the silence period itself.

14. Which of the following best summarises the 'edge cases' raised by the argument against the ban?

- A. Whether the silence period should also extend, by analogy, to all paid television and print advertising on the same logic.
- B. Whether candidates' organic posts, algorithmic recommendations and diaspora accounts would be covered by the ban.
- C. Whether the Election Commission has the budget to monitor each constituency on the last day before the actual polling.
- D. Whether the polling day itself should be moved forward by 48 hours to make the silence period legally redundant in practice.

15. Which of the following would MOST strengthen the argument against the ban?

- A. Data showing that selective enforcement of comparable social-media bans in other democracies has tracked the ruling party's interest.
- B. Data showing that social-media platforms have agreed in writing to cooperate fully with any Indian pre-poll silence period under the facts presented in the question.
- C. Data showing that paid social-media political advertising spend in India fell sharply in the last general election cycle under the facts presented in the question.
- D. Data showing that previous pre-poll silence-period rules on television have been enforced even-handedly across all political parties.

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q16-20.

Argument for permitting payment: India's demand for fresh frozen plasma and for plasma-derived medicines (immunoglobulin, albumin, clotting factors) has grown faster than its voluntary, unpaid donation base. The country currently imports a significant fraction of its plasma-derived therapies, at hard-currency cost, from jurisdictions which themselves permit paid donation. To insist, at home, on a purely altruistic system while quietly relying on a foreign paid one is a hypocrisy that costs Indian patients money and time. A regulated payment regime, with a modest standardised honorarium, donor health screening and a binding inter-donation interval, would expand supply, reduce import dependence, and bring the activity within a transparent legal framework rather than leaving it to grey-market intermediaries.

Further, plasma donation is not the same as whole-blood donation. Plasma regenerates rapidly, and reputable jurisdictions allow donation every two weeks without measurable harm to the donor. The objection that payment 'commodifies the body' is, in this narrow context, more rhetorical than empirical: the donor walks out, an hour later, with the same body she walked in with.

Argument against permitting payment: A payment regime, however well-designed, predictably draws its donors disproportionately from those for whom the honorarium is materially attractive — that is, the poor. International evidence from paid plasma centres documents a donor base concentrated in low-income neighbourhoods, with anecdotes of the same donor returning at the maximum permitted frequency for years. Even if the medical harm at the individual donation is small, the cumulative effect over a decade is not well-studied, and the costs are borne overwhelmingly by those least able to advocate for themselves.

More fundamentally, the introduction of payment does not merely add a new source of plasma to the existing voluntary pool; it tends to crowd out voluntary donation by reframing the activity as a transaction rather than a civic gift. Once that reframing has taken hold, restoring a primarily voluntary system becomes politically and practically very difficult. The right policy response to a plasma shortfall is therefore not the introduction of payment, but the expansion of voluntary infrastructure, recognition of donors and reciprocal arrangements with hospitals — measures that, taken seriously, have been shown to lift donation rates substantially without recourse to a market.

16. Which of the following best captures the hypocrisy charge made in the argument for permitting payment?

- A. Indian plasma donors receive no recognition at all while foreign donors receive lavish public honours from their respective states.
- B. India publicly subsidises plasma medicines while privately selling them at full hard-currency commercial cost to patients.
- C. Indian hospitals routinely charge patients full commercial cost for plasma that was originally donated free by Indian citizens.
- D. India refuses payment at home but relies on paid plasma imports from jurisdictions which themselves permit payment.

17. Which of the following is an unstated assumption of the argument for permitting payment?

- A. Indian patients can in fact afford the imported plasma-derived therapies at hard-currency price without state subsidy support under the facts presented in the question.
- B. Indian Council of Medical Research has formally and publicly endorsed the principle of paid plasma donation in policy terms under the facts presented in the question.
- C. Voluntary donation alone could fully meet the present and projected demand if the country merely waited for some more years under the facts presented in the question.
- D. Regulated honorarium, screening and inter-donation interval would in practice be enforced rigorously enough to protect donor health.

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

- A. Several European jurisdictions have lately introduced symbolic non-monetary tokens of recognition for unpaid plasma donors under the facts presented in the question.
- B. Voluntary blood-bank donation rates in India have continued to rise modestly each year over the past five years across the country under the facts presented in the question.
- C. The Indian Red Cross has launched a fresh nation-wide awareness campaign to promote voluntary plasma donation this year under the facts presented in the question.
- D. A peer-reviewed 15-year cohort study of a regulated paid plasma centre finds no measurable adverse health outcome among repeat donors.

19. Which of the following best describes the 'crowding-out' concern raised in the argument against payment?

- A. Payment regimes attract international donors and so displace domestic donors who would otherwise have come forward voluntarily.
- B. Introduction of payment reframes the activity as a transaction and tends to crowd out the existing voluntary donation pool.
- C. Payment regimes attract commercial intermediaries who lobby successfully to shut down all parallel voluntary collection drives.
- D. Payment regimes raise the per-unit cost of plasma so high that voluntary plasma is no longer accepted at any public hospital.

20. Which of the following, if true, would MOST strengthen the argument for permitting payment?

- A. Major Indian hospital chains have publicly committed to absorbing the cost of imported plasma without passing it on to the patient on the assumption that no other condition intervenes.
- B. Voluntary plasma collections have plateaued for a decade, while a regulated paid programme in a comparable middle-income country lifted supply by 60% within three years without adverse donor outcomes.
- C. Indian customs duties on imported plasma-derived therapies have lately been reduced as part of a broader trade-liberalisation package, assuming all stated constraints continue to hold.
- D. International plasma prices have fallen sharply in the past year due to a surplus produced by paid-donation jurisdictions in Europe, based strictly on the data provided above.

SECTION C — RAPID-FIRE GK & CURRENT AFFAIRS

Q21–32 · 12 Marks

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

21. In May 2026, the Reserve Bank of India announced a reduction in the policy repo rate. What was the revised repo rate following that decision?

- A. 6.25% as the revised repo rate after the May 2026 announcement
- B. 6.00% as the revised repo rate after the May 2026 announcement
- C. 5.50% as the revised repo rate after the May 2026 announcement
- D. 5.75% as the revised repo rate after the May 2026 announcement

22. Which Indian city hosted the 2026 World Economic Forum (WEF) Country Strategy Dialogue on India in May 2026?

- A. New Delhi as the host city of the May 2026 dialogue
- B. Bengaluru as the host city of the May 2026 dialogue
- C. Mumbai as the host city of the May 2026 dialogue under the facts presented in the question
- D. Hyderabad as the host city of the May 2026 dialogue

23. The 'Operation Sindoor' covert action, which received extensive media coverage during May 2026, was conducted by which Indian agency?

- A. An operation by the Directorate of Enforcement alone
- B. An operation by the Central Bureau of Investigation alone
- C. An operation by the National Investigation Agency alone
- D. A coordinated operation by the Indian Armed Forces

24. Choose the option that is closest in meaning to the underlined idiom: 'The minister's promise of a swift inquiry turned out to be a damp squib.'

- A. A risky announcement that produced an unintended legal consequence.
- B. A modest announcement that produced an unexpectedly fine result under the facts presented in the question.
- C. A grand announcement that produced a wholly disappointing result.
- D. A repeated announcement that finally produced the expected result.

25. Select the word most NEARLY OPPOSITE in meaning to the word 'EPHEMERAL':

- A. Fleeting, as the word most nearly opposite in meaning under the facts presented in the question
- B. Permanent, as the word most nearly opposite in meaning
- C. Brief, as the word most nearly opposite in meaning under the facts presented in the question
- D. Transient, as the word most nearly opposite in meaning

26. Choose the option that best fills the blank: 'Despite the witness's evident discomfort, the cross-examination was conducted with such _____ that no objection could be raised.'

- A. frivolity, befitting a court of record on the same facts
- B. alacrity, befitting a court of record on the same facts
- C. obstinacy, befitting a court of record on the same facts
- D. decorum, befitting a court of record on the same facts

27. Under the Constitution of India, which Article provides for the procedure for the impeachment of the President of India?

- A. Article 61 of the Constitution of India
- B. Article 56 of the Constitution of India
- C. Article 72 of the Constitution of India
- D. Article 74 of the Constitution of India

28. The Directive Principles of State Policy are contained in which Part of the Constitution of India?

- A. Part IVA of the Constitution of India
- B. Part III of the Constitution of India
- C. Part IV of the Constitution of India
- D. Part V of the Constitution of India, on the same set of facts and applying ordinary tortious principles

29. The Right to Privacy was unanimously recognised as a fundamental right by a 9-judge Bench of the Supreme Court in which leading 2017 decision?

- A. K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India in the year 2017
- B. Shreya Singhal v. Union of India in the year 2015
- C. Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India in the year 1978
- D. Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India in the year 2018

30. The 'Quad' grouping, which has held leader-level summits in recent years, consists of which four countries?

- A. India, Russia, Japan and the United States as Quad members
- B. India, Australia, Japan and the United Kingdom as Quad members
- C. India, China, Japan and the United States as Quad members
- D. India, Australia, Japan and the United States as Quad members

31. Which Schedule of the Constitution of India contains the provisions relating to the administration and control of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes (other than the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram)?

- A. Eighth Schedule
- B. Sixth Schedule
- C. Seventh Schedule
- D. Fifth Schedule

32. Pick the option that best completes the sentence: 'The judgment was so meticulously reasoned that even the dissenting counsel found it _____ to identify a flaw in its logic.'

- A. arduous
- B. facile
- C. trivial
- D. redundant