BLOGS

Reading Comprehension Questions for CLAT 2026

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PASSAGE

With four deaths so far, the coal mining tragedy in Assam's Dima Hasao district has revived a long-standing debate on the hazardous nature of rat-hole coal mining in India. As opposed to modern coal mining, which is mechanised, the 'rat-hole' points to the crude and antiquated technique of employing people, and even children, to burrow into the ground to scoop out the underground coal.

Depending on the depths that they plumb, the odds are high that their pickaxes will often unleash a torrent of water from a hidden aquifer that can suddenly inundate the excavated tunnel — as it is suspected to have happened at Dima Hasao.

Because such accidents have recurred over the decades, along with the attendant health and environmental hazards, this mode of mining was banned by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) in 2014. The use of proper geological surveys and appropriate machinery would have made the mine economically unviable.

The Assam Chief Minister has stated that the mine appeared to be "prime facie... illegal" and one abandoned by the State's Mines and Minerals Department. If that is the case, it reflects poorly on the State administration that such mines can be exploited by unscrupulous elements with such ease, despite the ban.

Surely, this is only a fraction of the unregulated mining that actually goes on.

The Supreme Court of India, in 2019, had asked whether it was possible for such mining to continue without the "connivance" of officials, when it was examining the rescue of 15 miners trapped in a rat-hole mine in the East Jaintia Hills in December 2018.

A report submitted by a monitoring committee set up by the NGT observed that despite the ban, the demand for coal to power cement manufacturing and thermal power plants in the northeast had sustained and supported rat-hole coal mining.

On the other hand, when convenient, State authorities have sought out and even felicitated rat-hole miners, some from Assam, as in 2023, when they were called in as a last resort after advanced machinery and the expertise of professional geologists and earth scientists had failed to rescue 41 construction workers trapped in the large, over-ground Silkiyara tunnel in Uttarkashi.

The Dima Hasao operation too, like others, will end and the net success or failure of saving those trapped will induce a familiar amnesia that will be broken only by the next accident. Until decisive action to puncture the economics of rat-hole mining is taken, India is only burrowing the way to another tragedy.

Source: **https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/burrow-tragedy-on-the-coal-mining-tragedy-in-assams-dima-hasao/article69101103.ece**

1. What does the term “rat-hole mining” signify in the passage?

Answer: C
Explanation: The passage describes rat-hole mining as a crude and antiquated method where people, including children, manually burrow into the ground to extract coal.

2. Why was rat-hole mining banned by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) in 2014?

A) Because it was economically unviable
B) Due to frequent accidents and environmental hazards
C) As it was outdated and lacked efficiency
D) Because it required excessive government intervention

Answer: B
Explanation: The passage states that rat-hole mining was banned due to recurrent accidents, health issues, and environmental hazards associated with it.

3. What is the main cause of accidents in rat-hole mining, as highlighted in the passage?

A) Explosions caused by poor handling of equipment
B) Collapse of tunnel roofs due to poor construction
C) Sudden flooding from hidden aquifers

D) Lack of proper ventilation in the mines

Answer: C

Explanation: The passage mentions that pickaxes often release water from hidden aquifers, leading to sudden flooding in the tunnels.

4. According to the passage, what role does the demand for coal play in sustaining rat-hole mining?

A) It has decreased significantly due to the ban

B) It has no impact on the continuation of mining

C) It sustains and supports illegal mining practices

D) It encourages the use of advanced technology

Answer: C

Explanation: The passage states that the demand for coal, especially for cement manufacturing and thermal power plants, sustains and supports rat-hole mining despite the ban.

5. What does the phrase “familiar amnesia” in the passage suggest?

A) A consistent effort to remember past mining accidents

B) The public and authorities quickly forgetting mining accidents

C) A state of confusion regarding mining regulations

D) A deliberate refusal to act against illegal mining

Answer: B

Explanation: The phrase “familiar amnesia” implies that society and authorities forget about mining tragedies until the next accident occurs.

6. What action does the author suggest is necessary to prevent future tragedies?

A) Increased mining operations

B) Promoting traditional mining methods

C) Decisive action to disrupt the economics of rat-hole mining

D) Encouraging the demand for more coal

Answer: C

Explanation: The author emphasizes that unless the economics of rat-hole mining are disrupted, such tragedies will continue.

7. What is the author's tone in the passage?

A) Optimistic and hopeful

B) Critical and concerned

C) Indifferent and neutral

D) Encouraging and persuasive

Answer: B

Explanation: The author adopts a critical and concerned tone, highlighting the dangers and negligence surrounding rat-hole mining.

8. What overarching theme does the passage address?

A) The economic viability of traditional mining methods

B) The need for technological advancement in mining

C) The social, environmental, and regulatory issues of illegal mining

D) The benefits of coal mining for local economies

Answer: C

Explanation: The passage focuses on the hazardous nature, environmental consequences, and regulatory challenges associated with illegal rat-hole mining.

9. What is the meaning of the word "connivance" as used in the passage?

A) Approval

B) Collaboration in wrongdoing

C) Ignorance

D) Resistance

Answer: B

Explanation: "Connivance" in the passage refers to the cooperation or secret involvement of officials in illegal mining activities.

10. Which word is the opposite in meaning to "antiquated," as used in the passage?

A) Modern

B) Obsolete

C) Ancient

D) Traditional

Answer: A

Explanation: “Antiquated” refers to something old-fashioned or outdated. The opposite would be “modern.”