BLOGS

Passages to Practice Reading Comprehension for LSAT

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Given below are two passages to practice reading comprehension for LSAT and other law entrance examinations.

Passage 1

TV journalist Arnab Goswami's arrest on specious abetment to suicide charges follows a pattern of journalists being victimised by increasingly autocratic governments. The existence of draconian laws and their maximalist use by vested political interests currently, under the idiom of populist governance that is in vogue, has ominous implications. The hollowing out of dissent and press freedoms across many parts of India knows no political or ideological divide today. Parties across the board are guilty of executive overreach, wantonly abusing every amenable law.

No less disconcerting is the incarceration of Malayalam journalist Siddique Kappan on sedition and UAPA charges after being arrested on his way to Hathras a month ago. In Goswami's case, the inconclusive abetment to suicide charge has been wielded just as it was against Rhea Chakraborty and Shashi Tharoor earlier. The Mental Healthcare Act 2017 presumes a person attempting suicide is under "severe stress". Given this statutory admission of a person's extremely fragile mental state of mind while attempting suicide, pinning responsibility for one person's suicide on another is heavily problematic.

Attempts in some quarters to posit Goswami's current plight to his hyper-nationalist views that recklessly undermined others' free speech and liberties aren't helpful at all. The defence of civil liberties cannot descend into whataboutery. Defending the free speech rights of those spouting the most disagreeable opinions isn't just a **lofty** principle in the Voltairean mould. It is also about safeguarding our own self-interest against excessive state action that can recoil tomorrow on anyone: activists, journalists, minorities, politicians who happen to be in the opposition, even ordinary citizens expressing opinions on social media.

The state's power of arrest is a law and order tool to be exercised with the greatest circumspection. Often, arrests are made in cases not requiring custodial interrogation or charges bearing no connection to an offence get piled on, merely to deny bail. Cases abound of pre-trial and under-trial prisoners languishing needlessly in jail during the pendency of the trial. Emergency and "informal emergency" find frequent mention in the political discourse, yet no side while holding public office shelves the draconian laws or the unbridled power to arrest and jail without bail, or initiates police reforms. The spectre of "political prisoners" does great —(1)— to the memory of the freedom struggle and ideals so eloquently expressed in the Constitution's Preamble. Those leveraging democracy and its institutions like media while in opposition at the state or national level must also tolerate them when in office.

Source

Questions

1. As per the passage, the extreme use of draconian laws with vested political interest has

- Threatening consequences
- Unfair consequences
- Unending Problems
- All of the above

1. As per the passage, which of the following statement is not true?

- Arnab Goswami has hyper-nationalist views.
- Abetment to suicide charge was wielded against Rhea Chakraborty and Shashi Tharoor
- There is no legislation for mental health in India
- None of the above

1. The word in bold in the passage means

- High
- Strong
- Short
- None of the above

1. The least suited word for (1) is

- Harm
- Injury
- Disservice
- Favour

1. The state has the power to arrest but

- It should be used with great caution
- It should not be used against minorities
- It should not be used against women
- Both (b) and (c)

Passage 2

Granting relief to a Delhi-based woman summoned for questioning by Kolkata police over a social media post that attracted an FIR, the SC underscored that it exists to protect ordinary citizens from harassment by the state. The court, rightly, structured the “chilling message” sent when police in various cities resort to the similar summoning of people from across the country. The current mood across governments of “You want the freedom of speech, we will teach you a lesson” was certainly not what our freedom fighters or Constitution drafters had in mind. Yet, political dissent and activism facing pushback in the form of misguided IPC, NSA, UAPA cases are increasingly being reported.

In the present case, the woman had allegedly criticised the state government for non-enforcement of lockdown norms, with respect to a particular community in a Kolkata locality. Police responded by booking her for inciting hatred against the community under IPC. Instead of the woman being dragged to Kolkata, police now have the option of visiting her in Delhi to question her. The irony of ordinary citizens being subjected to so much harassment for criticism of authorities is hard to miss.

The police harassment indicates a maximalist approach gaining favour with authorities. The rise of populist netas claiming to speak for ordinary people but with no tolerance when people actually do speak up, and whose —(1)—- of dissent is facilitated by the existence of many draconian laws, is an unfortunate contemporary phenomenon. Strong institutions, especially constitutional and lower courts, can become the **bulwark** within the state apparatus against such executive

overreach. This places great responsibility on India's judiciary to act promptly on rights violations.

Quashing a sedition case against a journalist who accused the Uttarakhand CM of corruption, the Uttarakhand HC said: "Unless public functionaries are criticised, democracy cannot be strengthened … if dissent is suppressed under the sedition law, it would make democracy weak. Criticising the government can never be sedition." Despite this being the settled law on sedition, police are keener to follow political diktats rather than umpteen judicial pronouncements quashing sedition cases as well as narrowly restricting its interpretation. The time has come for the Supreme Court to re-examine whether the colonial-era sedition law is compatible with constitutional freedoms, given its frequent abuse.

Source

Questions

1. Which statement is not true as per the passage?

- The idea of Freedom of Speech was different in the minds of the Constitution drafters than in the mind of the current Governments.
- The idea of Freedom of Speech was the same in the minds of the Constitution drafters and the mind of the current Governments.
- Harassment by Police is an extremist approach.
- None of the above.

1. Which of the following observation has not been made by the High Court of Uttarakhand

- Criticism of Public Institutions is important for Democracy
- Dissent should not be suppressed under the sedition law
- Sedition cannot be equated with criticism of Government
- None of these

1. The word in bold in the passage refers to

- A defensive wall
- Shock
- Way
- None of the above

1. The least suited word for (1) is

- Repression
- Suppression
- Aiding
- Quashing

Answers

Passage 1

1. (a)
2. (c)
3. (a)
4. (d)
5. (a)

Passage 2

1. (b)
2. (d)
3. (a)
4. (c)