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# Passage-Based Questions on Legal Reasoning for CLAT UG [Part 24]

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## Passage 1 (P.1)

The Official Secrets Act, 1923 is concerned with spying, wrongful communication of official information, communication with foreign agents, and related duties about information that may affect the safety or interests of the State.

The statute does not treat secrecy as a decorative label attached only to obviously sensitive files. It treats secrecy as a legal duty that can attach to office, access, possession, and context. A document may seem small, dull, or harmless if read alone, but the law is less interested in how innocent it looks in isolation than in what it becomes when joined with other information, where it came from, and who had access to it.

That is why an ex-employee who says, “I no longer work there, so I can speak freely,” may be wrong from the law’s point of view. The obligation may survive the end of employment more easily than the person expects. A person who handled official records cannot necessarily cleanly separate himself from the duty that came with them just because he later became a private citizen.

The law also does not permit a person to convert a private conviction about the public good into a licence for disclosure. A person may believe that exposing internal inefficiency is noble, or that a journalist’s request makes the communication socially useful, but the statute asks whether the communication was authorised and whether the duty of secrecy was broken.

The same caution applies to information that becomes dangerous only when read together. A route note, a movement schedule, a sketch, a photograph, or a list of timings may look ordinary in pieces, yet the statute looks at whether the information could be useful to an enemy or prejudicial to State interests when understood as a whole.

The law also treats foreign-agent communication as legally relevant in proving prohibited purpose. The point is not that everyone who talks carelessly has committed espionage. The point is that secrecy law pays attention to relationship, context, and purpose rather than relying only on the appearance of the document.

A final feature of the statute is that it does not leave people free to remain passive when they know an offence is afoot. The duty to give information about certain offences shows that the law expects more than silence when the danger is known. That makes the statute different from a vague social expectation of caution. It is a legal structure that reaches communication, possession, concealment, and failure to inform, all in the service of State security.

**1. A former government clerk copies a file containing internal route timings and sends it to a reporter, saying he has resigned and wants the public to know how badly the office functions. What is the best legal conclusion from the passage?**

a. resignation removes every secrecy duty immediately

b. motive alone makes the disclosure lawful

c. the communication may still violate secrecy law despite the resignation and motive

d. only the reporter can be liable, not the sender

**2. A document seems harmless by itself, but when it is read with a photograph and a movement schedule, it reveals a pattern of official activity. Which principle best fits the passage?**

a. harmless documents can never fall under secrecy law

b. only documents stamped “secret” are covered

c. context can turn ordinary items into protected information

d. once copied, a document loses legal character

**3. A retired employee keeps office papers at home and later hands them to a neighbour who asks out of curiosity. The passage suggests that?**

a. possession after retirement can never matter

b. retention and later sharing can still trigger the secrecy framework

c. curiosity by the receiver removes all legal concern

d. private possession always defeats official secrecy

**4. A person has been seen in repeated contact with someone suspected of acting for a foreign power, and the information found with him includes office notes and code-like references. Which response best matches the passage?**

a. foreign-agent contact may be relevant evidence of a prohibited purpose

b. contact with foreigners is always lawful if no money changes hands

c. only direct spying counts, not communication

d. the law ignores the source of the information if it is copied

**5. A witness knows that a person is about to disclose protected information to a newspaper but says nothing to the police or empowered officer. Which principle is most consistent with the passage?**

a. silence is always safe if one is not directly involved

b. there may be a statutory duty to give information about the offence

c. only government servants can ever have a duty to report

d. a witness can never be required to speak

## Passage 2 (P.2)

The Petroleum Act, 1934 controls the import, transport, storage, production, refining, and blending of petroleum. It also makes a careful distinction between ordinary handling and handling that requires a licence. That distinction is not based simply on whether the person means well, or whether the storage looks harmless, or whether the petroleum is being kept only for convenience. It turns on the kind of petroleum, the quantity held, the manner in which it is kept, and the statutory exemptions that the Act itself creates. Some small quantities of Class A, Class B, and Class C petroleum can move without a licence, but only within tightly defined thresholds and conditions. The law therefore ties legality to quantity and compliance, not to the owner's private belief that the storage is safe enough.

The thresholds matter because the Act does not treat every litre alike. A small quantity of Class A petroleum not intended for sale may move without a licence only within the statutory limit. Class B and Class C petroleum also have their own quantity thresholds and container conditions. The Act does not say that a person may store "almost" the permitted amount and still call it exemption. Nor does it allow large drums to be broken into paperwork fragments while the actual possession remains over the line. In other words, the law cares about actual possession at the relevant place and the relevant kind of petroleum, not merely about how the owner describes the arrangement.

The Act also recognises practical exemptions. Petroleum in a fuel tank incorporated into a conveyance, or a small additional quantity used for motive power, may be treated differently. Railway administration acting as carrier is also not in the same position as an ordinary private transporter. These exemptions, however, are not invitations to use petroleum casually. They exist because the Act already knows that some forms of transport and storage are part of daily life and should not be paralysed by licensing. But even there, the law asks for obedience to the relevant conditions. Exemption is not the same as absence of structure.

The larger principle is that petroleum law works by class, quantity, receptacle, purpose, and compliance. A person cannot assume that being careful is the same as being lawful. The statutory line is sharper than private common sense, and the Act expects the line to be respected.

**6. A trader keeps 40 litres of Class A petroleum in his store room, says it is not for sale, and claims that because the amount is small he does not need a licence. Which is the best conclusion?**

a. no licence is needed because Class A is always exempt in small quantities

b. a licence may still be required because the quantity exceeds the small-Class-A limit

c. the storage is lawful if the trader is careful

d. the storage is lawful if the petroleum is not sold

**7. A warehouse stores 2,400 litres of Class B petroleum in two separate drums, each of 1,500 litres capacity. The owner says the total is below the limit, so the Act should not apply. The best answer is?**

a. the owner is safe because the total quantity is under the limit

b. the exemption may fail because the container condition is also relevant

c. Class B petroleum is always exempt if it is industrially useful

d. the drums do not matter if the owner has no bad intent

**8. A railway administration transports petroleum as a carrier and follows the relevant transport law. It has no separate petroleum licence. Which principle fits best?**

a. the administration is automatically in breach because transport always needs a licence

b. the statute recognises a specific exemption for railway administration acting as carrier

c. the exemption applies only to private trucks

d. the exemption applies only when the petroleum is Class A

**9. A person keeps 120 litres of Class A petroleum for motive power in a vehicle, even though the fuel tank itself is properly incorporated. The passage most strongly suggests that?**

a. the entire quantity is always exempt

b. the extra quantity may exceed the statutory exemption for motive power use

c. motive power automatically legalises all storage

d. vehicle use removes all licensing rules

**10. A company stores 46,000 litres of Class C petroleum and argues that because it is close to the threshold, the law should be flexible. Which principle best matches the passage?**

a. near-miss quantities are treated the same as compliant quantities

b. actual thresholds matter, so exceeding them can defeat the exemption

c. Class C is freely storable in any amount

d. the law cares only if the petroleum is sold at retail

## Passage 3 (P.3)

The Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 2016 establishes a national standards body for standardisation, conformity assessment, and quality assurance. Its structure is not merely about encouraging good products in a loose sense. It creates a system where notified goods, articles, processes, systems, or services may have to conform to a standard, and where the Standard Mark becomes legally significant. In some cases, the Central Government can direct compulsory use of the Standard Mark where public interest, safety, environmental protection, prevention of unfair trade practices, or national security justifies it. The law therefore treats standards as a legal discipline, not a marketing suggestion.

Once the law moves into that space, a manufacturer or seller cannot claim that a product is “basically compliant” and therefore good enough. If the law requires a Standard Mark, the mark must come from a valid licence or certificate of conformity, and the goods must actually conform to the relevant standard. Recognised testing and marking centres also have duties: they may apply the mark only after accurately determining conformity, and they cannot use it on goods that do not conform. The statute is not impressed by appearance, packaging, or confident advertising. It prefers verification.

The Act also forbids a person from making public claims that goods conform to Indian standards without following the proper route. That means a seller cannot simply print certainty onto an advertisement and hope the label substitutes for legality. Nor can a business escape by using a colourable imitation of the Standard Mark. The law treats that as a serious matter because standards are meant to reassure the public on the basis of genuine conformity, not simulated conformity.

The same structure also places duties on sellers and distributors to ensure that the goods carrying the mark are obtained from the proper certified source. The burden is therefore not only on the manufacturer; it runs through the chain. The deeper principle is simple: once standards become compulsory, the law cares about truth in conformity. A mark without conformity is not compliance. A claim without licence is not authority. And a seller who turns the Standard Mark into a decorative promise rather than a verified assurance risks crossing from regulation into contravention.

**11. A manufacturer sells a notified product carrying the Standard Mark but does so without a valid licence or certificate of conformity. Which principle best applies?**

a. the mark is enough if the product is popular

b. the sale may still violate the Act because the mark must rest on lawful certification

c. the licence is unnecessary once the product is packaged well

d. only the testing centre, not the seller, can be questioned

**12. A recognised testing centre affixes the Standard Mark on goods even though it has not accurately determined that they conform to the relevant standard. The best conclusion is?**

a. the centre is safe because it is recognised

b. recognition does not permit marking non-conforming goods

c. the centre can ignore conformity if the buyer approves

d. the mark is valid once the goods are expensive

**13. A company publishes an advertisement saying its goods conform to an Indian standard, but it has not obtained a proper licence or certification route. Which is the best response?**

a. the ad is harmless if the goods look good

b. public claims of conformity must follow the statutory route

c. advertising cures the absence of certification

d. the claim is valid if the company believes it is true

**14. A seller buys goods from an intermediary and argues that he is not responsible because he never himself applied the Standard Mark. The passage suggests that?**

a. the seller’s duty may still include ensuring that the goods came from a certified body or licence holder

b. the seller is never responsible if he did not print the mark

c. the law applies only to manufacturers

d. the invoice alone makes the goods compliant

**15. A jewellery seller uses a colourable imitation of the Hallmark on articles that do not conform to the relevant standard. Which principle most closely fits the passage?**

a. colourable imitation is harmless if the seller is famous

b. the statute treats imitation without conformity as a serious contravention

c. imitation becomes legal if the item is precious

d. the mark is decorative unless the government says otherwise

## Answers

1. C – The passage says retirement does not automatically erase the duty and motive does not legalise unauthorised disclosure.
2. C – The Act looks at context; ordinary-looking pieces can become protected when read together.
3. B – Retention and later sharing can still matter under the secrecy framework.
4. A – Foreign-agent communication can be relevant evidence of a prohibited purpose.
5. B – The passage notes a duty to give information about offences.
6. B – The 30-litre Class A limit matters, so 40 litres goes beyond the no-licence allowance.
7. B – Class B exemption depends on both quantity and receptacle conditions; an overlarge drum defeats the easy exemption.
8. B – The Act specifically exempts railway administration acting as carrier.

9. B – The extra quantity can exceed the motive-power exemption, so the exemption may fail.
10. B – The Act works by actual thresholds; being close is not the same as complying.
11. B – The passage says the mark must come from a valid licence or certificate of conformity.
12. B – Recognition does not permit affixing the mark unless conformity is actually determined.
13. B – The law forbids public claims of conformity without the proper route.
14. A – The passage says sellers and distributors must ensure the goods came from a certified body or licence holder.
15. B. The statute treats colourable imitation and non-conformity as serious contravention.