BLOGS

Practice Reading Comprehension Questions for CLAT 2026

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PASSAGE

An annual assessment by the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) on the state of groundwater, and its quality, has some worrying portents. First, the number of districts with excessive nitrate in their groundwater has risen from 359 in 2017 to 440 in 2023.

This translates to a little more than half of India's 779 districts having excessive nitrate, or more than 45 mg/L (milligram per litre). There are two major concerns with excess nitrate content: first, methemoglobinemia, or a reduced ability of red blood cells to carry oxygen. This sometimes causes 'Blue Baby Syndrome,' in infants.

The bigger problem is environmental: once nitrates in groundwater rise to the surface and become part of lakes and ponds, algal blooms throttle the health of aquatic ecosystems. What the CGWB found, from analysing 15,239 groundwater samples across the country, was that close to 19.8% samples had nitrates — nitrogen compounds — above safe limits. However, this proportion has not shifted much since 2017, when 21.6% had excessive nitrate (13,028 samples).

Rajasthan, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu reported the largest extent of nitrate contamination, with 49%, 48% and 37% of the samples reporting numbers beyond the limit. Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat have a perennial nitrate problem, primarily from geological factors, with relative levels fairly constant since 2017, the report says.

However regions in central and southern India are reporting a rise, which is a reason for worry. Through the years, several studies have established the correlation between elevated nitrate levels and the practice of intensive agriculture. Other significant chemical contaminants affecting groundwater quality were fluoride and uranium. Fluoride concentrations exceeding the permissible limit were "a major concern" in Rajasthan, Haryana, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

The report drew attention to the fact that States with over-exploited groundwater blocks — where extraction is more than replenishment — were more likely to have excessive chemical contaminants. Overall, the country's degree of groundwater extraction is 60.4%, or roughly the same as it has been since 2009.

About 73% of the blocks analysed for groundwater levels are in the 'safe' zone, meaning that they are replenished enough to compensate for the water drawn out. While it is a good sign that India now has a robust, scientific system of assessment to monitor the health of groundwater blocks annually, efforts are lacking in getting States to act on these findings. There needs to be more concerted awareness programmes led by the highest levels of leadership to contain the crisis.

Source: **https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/%E2%80%8Bwater-woes-on-the-state-of-indias-groundwater/article69058025.ece**

1. What is the primary concern highlighted in the passage regarding groundwater in India?

A) Overuse of groundwater for industrial purposes
B) Rising levels of nitrate contamination
C) Depletion of surface water sources
D) Declining agricultural productivity

Correct Answer: B) Rising levels of nitrate contamination
Explanation: The passage primarily discusses the rise in nitrate contamination levels in groundwater and its associated health and environmental concerns.

2. According to the passage, what is the health impact of excessive nitrate consumption?

A) Anaemia in adults
B) Kidney failure in the elderly
C) Blue Baby Syndrome in infants
D) Skin disorders in all age groups

Correct Answer: C) Blue Baby Syndrome in infants
Explanation: The passage mentions that excessive nitrate consumption can lead to methemoglobinemia, commonly known as 'Blue Baby Syndrome.'

3. What environmental issue is caused by nitrate contamination in surface water bodies?

A) Increased water salinity

B) Eutrophication and algal blooms

C) Decline in fish population due to toxic waste

D) Groundwater depletion

Correct Answer: B) Eutrophication and algal blooms

Explanation: The passage explains that nitrates in surface water promote algal blooms, harming aquatic ecosystems.

4. Which phrase from the passage best describes the condition of India's groundwater blocks?

A) "Overwhelmingly over-exploited"

B) "Replenished enough to compensate"

C) "On the brink of crisis"

D) "Increasingly hazardous"

Correct Answer: B) "Replenished enough to compensate"

Explanation: The passage mentions that 73% of groundwater blocks are in the 'safe' zone, meaning they are adequately replenished.

5. Which of the following can be inferred about agricultural practices in India from the passage?

A) They are a primary source of groundwater contamination.

B) They rely on advanced irrigation techniques.

C) They have significantly reduced nitrate usage.

D) They are unrelated to groundwater quality issues.

Correct Answer: A) They are a primary source of groundwater contamination.

Explanation: The passage establishes a correlation between intensive agricultural practices and elevated nitrate levels in groundwater.

6. Why is nitrate contamination in groundwater a "perennial problem" in some states?

A) Due to over-irrigation

B) Due to urbanisation

C) Due to natural geological factors

D) Due to excessive industrialisation

Correct Answer: C) Due to natural geological factors

Explanation: The passage notes that states like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat face perennial nitrate problems primarily because of geological factors.

7. Which of the following best summarises the author's concern about the CGWB's annual assessment?

A) It lacks scientific rigor.

B) It highlights problems but lacks actionable outcomes.

C) It focuses too much on urban areas.

D) It overstates the extent of groundwater contamination.

Correct Answer: B) It highlights problems but lacks actionable outcomes.

Explanation: The passage emphasizes the lack of state-level action and awareness despite the CGWB's scientific assessments.

8.What does the phrase "throttle the health of aquatic ecosystems" mean in the passage?

A) To improve the balance of aquatic life

B) To harm or reduce the vitality of aquatic ecosystems

C) To neutralise the effects of contamination

D) To create sustainable ecosystems

Correct Answer: B) To harm or reduce the vitality of aquatic ecosystems

Explanation: In the context of the passage, "throttle" implies choking or severely damaging aquatic ecosystems due to algal blooms.

9. Which word in the passage is closest in meaning to "excessive"?

A) Perennial

B) Elevated

C) Robust

D) Significant

Correct Answer: B) Elevated

Explanation: The word "elevated" is used in the passage to describe nitrate levels exceeding safe limits, synonymous with "excessive."

10. What criticism does the author make regarding the government's response to groundwater contamination?

A) There are insufficient funds for monitoring groundwater quality.

B) Efforts are lacking in creating awareness and taking action.

C) Scientific studies are rarely conducted.

D) The government focuses too much on urban water issues.

Correct Answer: B) Efforts are lacking in creating awareness and taking action.

Explanation: The author criticizes the lack of follow-up action and awareness programmes by the government despite robust scientific assessments.