A touchstone of risk: On the rescue efforts in the Silkyara tunnel in Uttarkashi

Extra precautions must be **in place** while **carving** through mountains

Sunday went by, and while a day of rest for many, it **marked** two weeks since 41 construction workers, building a tunnel as part of an **ambitious** road **widening** project, got trapped inside. There is a massive rescue operation **under way**. When reports of the **mishap** first came in, nothing in the **preliminary assessment** by state authorities suggested that this would be such a **drawn-out** and challenging exercise. The Silkyara Bend Tunnel is a part of the Char Dham Pariyojana (project) in Uttarakhand that aims to improve connectivity to the religious **pilgrimage** sites of Gangotri, Yamnotri, Kedarnath, and Badrinath. The trapped workers were extending National Highway 134 to cut travel time by an hour. Now, hundreds of hours have been spent in what so far appears to be a **slapdash** rescue operation. The **entrapped** workers and their families are undergoing extreme **psychological stress**. **In hindsight**, all this suggests that this was a project that **ought** not **to** have **commenced** in the first place.

Even prior to this mishap, environmentalists, scientists, and local residents had raised concerns about the Char Dham Pariyojana. The **project**, which involves widening 900 km of roads via tunnels, **culverts**, by-passes and bridges, **has** long been criticised because it involves carving through Himalayan mountains in ways that greatly increase the chances of **landslides** and **associated** disasters. While the project was finally approved by the Supreme Court, in the interests of "national security", the government adopted the unusual measure of avoiding a **comprehensive environment impact assessment** (EIA) of the Char Dham Pariyojana by breaking it up into smaller, independent **ventures**. The **peril** of doing so is **precisely** what has **unfolded**: that the **risks** involved in engineering projects, in **fragile** ecosystems, **are** not properly **accounted for**. This is certainly not to suggest that engineering projects in the Himalayas are in principle **flawed**. The smoother roadways and newer economic opportunities that they may bring are **worthwhile** considerations and it is precisely to **weigh** the risks **against** the benefits that the EIA exists. Despite several **instances** of roads being **washed away** and dams breached, there is still the lack of an awareness that infrastructure development in fragile terrain requires much greater **scrutiny**, **expertise** and project-monitoring skills — and therefore much higher costs — than similar exercises in the plains and cities. The Silkyara tunnel disaster must serve as a touchstone against which future projects will be **evaluated**.   **[Practice Exercise]**

- **Ought to** (modal verb) – Should, must, need to, is expected to, is required to करना चाहिए
- **Commence** (verb) – Begin, start, initiate, launch, inaugurate प्रारंभ करना
- Red/blue coloring of words in the sentence indicates subject verb relationship; where 'red' denotes 'subject' and 'blue' denotes 'verb'.

Vocabulary

1. **Touchstone** (noun) – Criterion, benchmark, standard, measure, yardstick मापदंड

2. **In place** (phrase) – Established, set up, in effect, operational, functioning स्थापित

3. **Carve** (verb) – Sculpt, chisel, shape, etch, engrave खोदना

4. **Mark** (verb) – Indicate, denote, signify, represent, symbolize संकेत करना

5. **Ambitious** (adjective) – Aspiring, driven, determined, enterprising, zealous महत्वाकांक्षी

6. **Widening** (adjective) – Expanding, broadening, enlarging, extending, stretching विस्तार करना

7. **Under way** (adjective) – In progress, ongoing, happening, occurring, underway चल रहा है

8. **Mishap** (noun) – Accident, misfortune, catastrophe, disaster, tragedy दुर्घटना

9. **Preliminary** (adjective) – Initial, introductory, preparatory, preliminary, first प्रारंभिक

10. **Assessment** (noun) – Evaluation, appraisal, analysis, judgment, estimation मूल्यांकन

11. **Drawn-out** (adjective) – Prolonged, extended, lengthy, protracted, long-drawn लंबा खींचा हुआ

12. **Pilgrimage** (noun) – Religious journey, holy trip, sacred expedition, spiritual voyage, devotional journey तीर्थयात्रा

13. **Slapdash** (adjective) – Careless, hasty, sloppy, hurried, rushed लापरवाह

14. **Entrapped** (adjective) – Trapped, caught, ensnared, captured, confined फंसा हुआ

15. **Psychological** (adjective) – Mental, cognitive, emotional, psychological, intellectual मानसिक

16. **Stress** (noun) – Pressure, strain, tension, anxiety, distress तनाव

17. **In hindsight** (phrase) – In retrospect, looking back, after the fact, upon reflection, retrospectively पीछे मुड़कर देखने पर

18. **Culvert** (noun) – Drain, conduit, channel, duct, watercourse नाली

19. **Landslide** (noun) – Rockslide, mudslide, avalanche, earthfall, earth slip भूस्खलन

20. **Associated** (adjective) – Related, connected, linked, affiliated, correlated संबंधित

21. **Comprehensive** (adjective) – Thorough, all-inclusive, extensive, complete, exhaustive व्यापक

22. **Environment impact assessment** (EIA) (noun) – a tool used to assess the positive and negative environmental, economic, and social impacts of a project.

23. **Venture** (noun) – Project, enterprise, undertaking, initiative, endeavor उद्यम

24. **Peril** (noun) – Danger, risk, hazard, jeopardy, threat खतरा

25. **Precisely** (adverb) – Exactly, accurately, specifically, clearly, definitely ठीक

26. **Unfold** (verb) – Develop, unravel, reveal, emerge, transpire प्रकट करना

27. **Fragile** (adjective) – Delicate, frail, brittle, breakable, weak नाजुक

28. **Account for** (phrasal verb) – be responsible for के लिये उत्तरदयी होना

29. **Flawed** (adjective) – Defective, imperfect, faulty, blemished, flawed दोषपूर्ण

30. **Worthwhile** (adjective) – Valuable, useful, beneficial, meaningful, significant महत्वपूर्ण

31. **Weigh against** (phrasal verb) – Compare with, balance, contrast, juxtapose, evaluate against तुलना करना

32. **Instance** (noun) – Example, case, occurrence, incident, illustration उदाहरण

33. **Wash away** (phrasal verb) – Erode, sweep away, remove, eliminate, cleanse बहा ले जाना

34. **Scrutiny** (noun) – Examination, inspection, analysis, review, observation जांच

35. **Expertise** (noun) – Skill, proficiency, mastery, knowledge, competence विशेषज्ञता

36. **Evaluate** (verb) – Assess, judge, appraise, analyze, rate मूल्यांकन करना

Summary of the Editorial

1. The incident occurred two weeks ago on a Sunday, trapping 41 construction workers inside a tunnel part of a road widening project.

2. The Silkyara Bend Tunnel is part of the Char Dham Pariyojana in Uttarakhand, aimed at improving connectivity to religious pilgrimage sites.

3. Workers were extending National Highway 134 to reduce travel time, but the rescue operation has now consumed hundreds of hours.

4. The trapped workers and their families are experiencing extreme psychological stress.

5. In hindsight, the editorial suggests the project should not have commenced due to its high risk.

6. Environmentalists, scientists, and locals had previously raised concerns about the Char Dham Pariyojana.

7. The project involves widening 900 km of roads through Himalayan mountains, increasing the risk of landslides and disasters.

8. The Supreme Court approved the project citing "national security," but a comprehensive environmental impact assessment (EIA) was avoided.

9. The government divided the project into smaller ventures, leading to inadequate risk assessment in the fragile ecosystem.

10. The editorial acknowledges the potential benefits of engineering projects in the Himalayas, such as smoother roadways and economic opportunities.

11. The EIA's role is to balance risks against benefits, which was not adequately done in this case.

12. There is a lack of awareness regarding the need for greater scrutiny and expertise in infrastructure development in fragile terrains.

13. Such projects in fragile areas require higher costs due to the need for enhanced project-monitoring skills.

14. The disaster at the Silkyara tunnel underscores the inadequacies in current practices of infrastructure development in sensitive areas.

15. The incident should serve as a benchmark for evaluating future projects in similar environments.

Practice Exercise: SSC Pattern Based

1. **What is the tone of the line "The Silkyara Bend Tunnel is a part of the Char Dham Pariyojana (project) in Uttarakhand that aims to improve connectivity to the religious pilgrimage sites of Gangotri, Yamnotri, Kedarnath, and Badrinath."?** **[Editorial Page]**
   A. Optimistic
   B. Critical
   C. Neutral
   D. Pessimistic

2. **What is the main theme of the passage?**
   A. The importance of religious pilgrimage in Uttarakhand
   B. The challenges and risks of infrastructure development in fragile ecosystems
   C. The efficiency of government rescue operations
   D. The impact of road widening on travel time

3. **Which of the following inferences can be drawn about the state authorities' initial response to the Silkyara tunnel incident?**
   A. The state authorities were well-prepared for the complexity of the rescue operation.
   B. The state authorities underestimated the severity and duration of the rescue efforts.
   C. The state authorities believed the workers were not in immediate danger.
   D. The state authorities had a fully developed rescue plan in place from the start.

4. **Based on the passage, what can be inferred about the impact of the Silkyara tunnel project on the workers and their families?**
   A. The project has been a source of stable employment and economic growth for the workers and their families.
   B. The project has caused minimal disruption to the lives of the workers and their families.
   C. The project has led to significant psychological stress for the trapped workers and their families.
   D. The project has improved the living standards of the workers and their families.

5. **Based on the passage, what is the primary concern associated with the Char Dham Pariyojana project?**
   A. The project is solely focused on economic development without considering environmental impacts.
   B. The Supreme Court's approval of the project disregards national security concerns.
   C. The project increases the risk of landslides due to the nature of construction in the Himalayas.
   D. The project's fragmentation into smaller ventures is aimed at enhancing project efficiency.

6. **What unusual measure did the government adopt for the Char Dham Pariyojana that is criticized in the passage?**
   A. The government conducted a comprehensive environment impact assessment (EIA) before ap proving the project.
   B. The government approved the project without a comprehensive EIA by dividing it into smaller, independent ventures.
   C. The project was halted due to the Supreme Court's concerns about environmental impact.

D. The government increased the project's budget to ensure better safety and environmental standards.

7. **Choose the synonym for 'mishap' as mentioned in the passage?**
   A. Success
   B. Accident
   C. Attainment
   D. Feat

8. **Identify the antonym of 'fragile' in the context of the passage?**
   A. Delicate
   B. Sturdy
   C. Weak
   D. Sensitive

9. **Select the option that expresses the given sentence in passive voice.**
   Austin kept the cake in the refrigerator.
   A. The cake is kept in the refrigerator by Austin.
   B. The cake was kept in the refrigerator by Austin.
   C. The cake was being kept by Austin in the refrigerator.
   D. The cake was kept in the Austin by the refrigerator.

10. **Select the option that will improve the underlined part of the following sentence.**
    The new employee was quickly promoted **due to their hard work and dedication.**
    A. due to his hard work and dedication
    B. due to the hard work and dedication of him
    C. due to hard work and dedication
    D. due to giving hard work and showing dedication

11. **Sentences of a paragraph are given below in jumbled order. Select the option that arranges the sentences in the correct order to form a meaningful and coherent paragraph**.
    A. The nation has flourished a lot in many areas during last seven decades.
    B. The truth is perhaps partial neglect and insignificant place given in the budgetary allocations by the ruling governments
    C. But the biggest ever challenges of healthcare and education are still not achieved in their true sense.
    D. Specific reasons are partially known and the rest is speculation about
       A. A, C, B, D
       B. D, A, B, C
       C. A, C, D, B
       D. D, A, C, B

12. Select the most appropriate **ANTONYM** of the underlined word.
    Measures **adopted** by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and supported by the UN have been described as a 'game changer' for future Olympic events in terms of driving sustainability in sport and fighting climate change.
    A. rejected
    B. headed

C. established

D. Inducted

13. **Select the meaningful and correctly spelt word from the given options to fill in the blank.**

The most _____ creature, as far as Amit is concerned, is a walrus.

A. dispecable

B. despicable

C. deliberate

D. Desietful

14. **The following sentence has been split into four segments. Identify the segment that contains a grammatical error.**

I am / walking in the / Cross Road Garden / since morning.

A. Cross Road Garden

B. since morning

C. walking in the

D. I am

15. **Select the option that expresses the given sentence in positive degree of comparison.**

He was greater than any other physiologist of the century.

A. All other physiologists were as great as him.

B. He was the greatest physiologist of all.

C. He as a physiologist in the country was among the greatest people.

D. No other physiologist of the century was as great as he was.

16. Select the most appropriate **synonym** of the underlined word in the given sentence.

Specify the issue of feminism in your own words.

A. brief

B. refute

C. criticise

D. Define

17. **Select the most appropriate meaning of the given idiom.**

Forty winks

A. A small talk

B. A precarious situation

C. A short nap

D. An opportunity in hand

18. Select the most appropriate **ANTONYM** of the given word.

Inept

A. Adorable

B. Kind

C. Skilful

D. Elegant

19. **Select the option that expresses the given sentence in passive voice.**

The peon will post the letter.

A. The letter has been posted by the peon.

B.   The letter would have been posted by the peon.

C.   The letter will be posted by the peon.

D.   The letter is being posted by the peon

20. Select the most appropriate **ANTONYM** of the word given in brackets to fill in the blank.

The smell of _____ (formerly) brewed coffee wafted through the air, beckoning him to start his day.

A.   hitherto

B.   quickly

C.   preserved

D.   Subsequently

Comprehension:

In the following passage, some words have been deleted. Read the passage carefully and select the most appropriate option to fill in each blank.

Seasonal winds are a natural phenomenon that _____1_____ weather patterns acrossthe globe. These winds are caused by the sun's unequal heating of the earth's surface, which creates differences in temperature and pressure between different regions. The movement of air from high-pressure areas to low-pressure areas causes seasonal winds to form, and their direction and intensity _____2_____ depending on the region and season. One of the most significant seasonal winds is the monsoon, which affects large parts of South Asia during the summer months. This wind system brings much-needed rain to the region, but it can also cause flooding and landslides, leading to loss of life and property damage. Other seasonal winds include the harmattan in West Africa, which is a dry, dusty wind that blows from the Sahara Desert towards the Atlantic coast, and the mistral in southern France, which is a strong, cold wind that blows down the Rhone Valley towards the Mediterranean. Seasonal winds can have a significant _____3_____ on agriculture, particularly in regions where rainfall is limited. Farmers rely on the monsoon or other seasonal winds in these areas to bring moisture to their crops. However, changes in wind patterns due to climate change can _____4_____ these seasonal rains, leading to crop failures and food shortages.

Overall, seasonal winds are a vital part of the earth's weather system, and their effects are _____5_____ across the globe.

21. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 1.**

A.   affects

B.   calculates

C.   collides

D.   Exaggerates

22. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 2.**

A.   fluctuate

B.   transform

C.   mutate

D.   Vary

23. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 3.**

A.   opportunity

B. blame

C. outcome

D. Impact

24. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 4.**

A. align

B. corrupt

C. neglect

D. Disrupt

25. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 5.**

A. overlooked

B. furnished

C. assumed

D. felt

Answers

1. C	2. B	3. B	4. C	5. C	6. B	7. B	8. B	9. B	10. A	11.C	12.A
13. B	14.D	15.D	16.D	17.C	18.C	19.C	20.D	21.A	22.D	23.D	24.D
25. D										**[Practice Exercise]**	

Explanations

1. **C) Neutral**
The tone of the specified line is neutral. It simply states a fact about the Silkyara Bend Tunnel being part of the Char Dham Pariyojana in Uttarakhand, with the aim to improve connectivity to various pilgrimage sites. There is no evident emotion, criticism, or optimism in this line; it serves as an informative statement without any subjective or emotional undertone.

2. **B) The challenges and risks of infrastructure development in fragile ecosystems**
The main theme of the passage is the challenges and risks associated with infrastructure development in fragile ecosystems, as exemplified by the Silkyara tunnel disaster. The passage highlights the complexities and dangers of undertaking large engineering projects like the Char Dham Pariyojana in the Himalayas, emphasizing the environmental concerns, the lack of comprehensive impact assessments, and the repercussions of such projects, particularly in terms of safety and environmental stability.

3. **B) The state authorities underestimated the severity and duration of the rescue efforts.**
The passage indicates that the initial assessment by state authorities did not foresee the rescue operation being so prolonged and challenging. This suggests that they underestimated the severity and complexity of the situation, leading to a longer than expected rescue effort.

4. **C) The project has led to significant psychological stress for the trapped workers and their families.**
The passage mentions that the trapped workers and their families are undergoing extreme psychological stress due to the mishap in the tunnel. This highlights the negative impact of the project, particularly the incident and the subsequent rescue operation, on their mental well-being.

5. **C) The project increases the risk of landslides due to the nature of construction in the Himalayas.**
The passage highlights the concerns raised about the Char Dham Pariyojana, particularly the increased chances of landslides due to the way the project involves carving through the Himalayan mountains. This option directly reflects the critical issue mentioned in the passage.

6. **B) The government approved the project without a comprehensive EIA by dividing it into smaller, independent ventures.**
The passage explicitly mentions that the government avoided a comprehensive environment impact assessment for the Char Dham Pariyojana by breaking it into smaller, independent projects. This strategy is presented as a point of criticism in the context of the passage.

7. **B) Accident**
'Mishap' refers to an unfortunate accident, which makes 'Accident' its synonym as it too denotes an unplanned, unfortunate event.

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8. **B) Sturdy**

   'Fragile' in the passage refers to something that is easily broken or damaged. 'Sturdy', meaning strong and not easily damaged, serves as its antonym.

9. B) The cake was kept in the refrigerator by Austin

10. A) 'due to their hard work and dedication' के बदले 'due to his hard work and dedication' का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि 'employee' singular है और इसलिए singular pronoun 'his' का उपयोग करना चाहिए।

    - 'due to his hard work and dedication' will be used instead of 'due to their hard work and dedication' because 'employee' is singular and thus the singular pronoun 'his' should be used.

11. C) **A, C, D, B**

    The nation has flourished a lot in many areas during last seven decades. But the biggest ever challenges of healthcare and education are still not achieved in their true sense. Specific reasons are partially known and the rest is speculation about The truth is perhaps partial neglect and insignificant place given in the budgetary allocations by the ruling governments

12. A) **Adopt** (verb) – Accept, assume, approve, espouse, implement, embrace अपनाना

    Antonym: **Reject** (verb) – To refuse to accept, use, or believe. अस्वीकार करना

    - **Head** (verb) – To go in a certain direction, lead. सिरहाना

    - **Established** (verb) – To set up on a firm or permanent basis, founded. स्थापित

    - **Induct** (verb) – To admit formally to a position or organization, initiate. शामिल करना

13. B) **Despicable'** का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि यह वाक्य एक व्यक्ति के लिए अवज्ञा या तिरस्कार की भावना को दर्शाता है। 'Despicable' अवज्ञा या तिरस्कार की भावना को दर्शाने वाला शब्द है, जबकि अन्य विकल्प इस संदर्भ में सही नहीं हैं। इसलिए, 'despicable' सही और सटीक विकल्प होगा।

    - **'Despicable'** should be used because the sentence portrays a sentiment of contempt or disdain for an individual. 'Despicable' is a word that indicates such feelings, while the other options are not appropriate in this context. Hence, 'despicable' would be the correct and precise choice.

14. D) **I am'** के बदले 'I have been' का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि 'since morning' के साथ Present Perfect Continuous tense का इस्तेमाल होता है; जैसे— I have been reading since morning.

    - 'I have been' will be used instead of 'I am' because with 'since morning' we use Present Perfect Continuous tense; Like— I have been reading since morning.

15. D) No other physiologist of the century was as great as he was.

16. D) **Specify** (verb) – To identify clearly and definitely, state, describe, indicate. **विशिष्ट रूप से बताना**

    Synonym: **Define** (verb) – State or describe exactly the nature, scope, or meaning. **परिभाषित करना**

- **Brief** (verb/adjective) – Give essential information to someone, concise, short. **संक्षेप में बताना/संक्षिप्त**
- **Refute** (verb) – Prove (a statement or theory) to be wrong or false; disprove. **खंडन करना**
- **Criticise** (verb) – Indicate the faults of (someone or something) in a disapproving way, evaluate, assess. **आलोचना करना**

17. C) **Forty winks** (idiom) – A short nap **अल्प समय की नींद**

18. C) **Inept** (adjective) – Lacking skill, clumsy, unskilled, incompetent. **अयोग्य**

   Antonym: **Skilful** (adjective) – Having or showing skill, expert, adept, proficient. **कुशल**

- **Adorable** (adjective) – Lovable, charming, delightful, cute. **प्यारा**
- **Kind** (adjective) – Caring, compassionate, considerate, generous. **दयालु**
- **Elegant** (adjective) – Stylish, graceful, refined, sophisticated. **शिष्ट**

19. C) The letter will be posted by the peon.

20. D) **Formerly** (adverb) – In the past, earlier, previously, once, at one time. **पहले**

   Antonym: **Subsequently** (adverb) – Later on, afterward, following, ensuing. **बाद में**

- **Hitherto** (adverb) – Until now, up to this time, so far. **अब तक**
- **Quickly** (adverb) – Swiftly, rapidly, speedily, promptly. **जल्दी**
- **Preserved** (adverb) – To keep safe, maintain, conserve, protect. **संरक्षित**

21. A) **'affects'** का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि "affects" का अर्थ होता है प्रभावित करना। जबकि 'Calculates' का अर्थ होता है गणना करना, 'Collides' का अर्थ होता है टकराना, और 'Exaggerates' का अर्थ है अत्यधिक बढ़ा चढ़ा कर कहना, जो इस संदर्भ में सही नहीं है।

- **affects'** should be used because it means to influence or have an effect on something. Whereas, 'Calculates' means to compute, 'Collides' means to crash into, and 'Exaggerates' implies overstating, which don't fit in this context.

22. D) **Vary'** का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि "Vary" का अर्थ होता है परिवर्तन होना या भिन्न होना। जबकि 'Fluctuate' का अर्थ होता है उतार-चढ़ाव में होना, 'Transform' का अर्थ है पूरी तरह से परिवर्तित हो जाना, और 'Mutate' का अर्थ होता है अचानक परिवर्तन हो जाना, जो इस संदर्भ में सही नहीं है।

- **'Vary'** should be used because it means to change or differ. Whereas, 'Fluctuate' means to rise and fall irregularly, 'Transform' means to change completely, and 'Mutate' implies a sudden change, which don't fit in this context.

23. D) **'Impact'** का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि "impact" का अर्थ होता है प्रभाव या असर। जबकि 'Opportunity' का अर्थ होता है अवसर, 'Blame' का अर्थ है दोष देना, और 'Outcome' का अर्थ है परिणाम, जो इस संदर्भ में सही नहीं है।

- **'Impact'** should be used because it means effect or influence. Whereas, 'Opportunity' means a chance, 'Blame' implies assigning fault, and 'Outcome' means result, which don't fit in this context.

24. D) **'Disrupt'** का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि "disrupt" का अर्थ होता है किसी व्यवस्था, प्रक्रिया, या समन्वय में विघ्न डालना या बाधित करना। जबकि 'Align' का अर्थ है संरेखित करना या समानता लाना, 'Corrupt' का अर्थ है दूषित करना या बिगाड़ना, और 'Neglect' का अर्थ है अवगणना करना या ध्यान नहीं देना, जो इस संदर्भ में सही नहीं है।

- **Disrupt'** should be used because it means to interrupt or hinder a system, process, or coordination. Whereas, 'Align' means to arrange in a straight line or bring into alignment, 'Corrupt' means to spoil or degrade, and 'Neglect' implies ignoring or not paying attention, which don't fit in this context.

25. D) **'Felt'** का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि "felt" का अर्थ होता है अनुभव करना या महसूस करना। जबकि 'Overlooked' का अर्थ है नजरअंदाज करना, 'Furnished' का अर्थ है पूरा करना या सुसज्जित करना, और 'Assumed' का अर्थ है मान लेना या समझ लेना, जो इस संदर्भ में सही नहीं है।

- **'Felt'** should be used because it means to experience or sense something. Whereas, 'Overlooked' means to ignore, 'Furnished' means to provide or equip, and 'Assumed' implies to take for granted or to believe without evidence, which don't fit in this context.