## 1. Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023 vs. Freedom of the Press

**Context**: The **Digital News Publishers Association (DNPA)** has challenged provisions of the **DPDP Act, 2023** and **DPDP Rules, 2025** in the Supreme Court, citing grave threats to journalistic freedom.

**Core Legal Issues & Arguments**:

**Lack of Journalistic Exemption**: Unlike global data privacy frameworks, the DPDP Act does not exempt newsgathering or journalistic data processing. Reporters, editors, and whistleblowers must issue notices and obtain prior, verifiable consent, and remain subject to data erasure demands.

**Executive Requisition Powers (Section 36 & Rule 23)**: Allows the Central Government to demand any data from data fiduciaries or intermediaries without requiring prior judicial oversight, necessity checks, or notice to affected individuals. Publishers argue this endangers confidential journalistic sources.

**Dilution of Right to Information (RTI)**: **Section 44(3)** of the DPDP Act amends **Section 8(1)(j)** of the RTI Act, 2005, creating a blanket exemption against disclosing any "personal information", severely hampering investigative reporting and public transparency.

**Constitutional Grounds**: Violates **Article 19(1)(a)** (Freedom of Speech and Expression) and **Article 14** (Right to Equality), and contravenes the proportionality standards established in K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017).

## 2. Higher Education Governance: Mental Health Norms & Reservation Deficits

**Context**: RTI disclosures highlighted severe shortfalls in student mental health care and faculty diversity compliance across prominent Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs).

**UGC Mental Health Staffing Norms**:

**Recommended Ratio**: The University Grants Commission (UGC) mandates **1 mental health professional for every 500 students**.

**Actual Ground Reality**: Most examined IITs fail this benchmark significantly—IIT (BHU) Varanasi operates at a 1:4,750 ratio, IIT-Kharagpur at 1:1,136, and IIT-Roorkee at 1:1,317. **IIT-Ropar** was the only institute found compliant.

**Impact**: Deficits coincide with high student distress and suicide records (e.g., 10 suicides at IIT-Kharagpur in 5 years).

**Faculty Reservation Gaps**:

**Statutory Mandates**: Statutory quotas require **15% for Scheduled Castes (SC)**, **7.5% for Scheduled Tribes (ST)**, and **27% for Other Backward Classes (OBC)** in faculty recruitment.

**Compliance Shortfall**: ST faculty representation remains severely depressed across most surveyed IITs (ranging between **0.2% and 2.1%**). Only IIT-Ropar met the mandated SC (15%) and ST (8.6%) faculty shares.

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## 3. Section 12(1)(c) of RTE Act: Access vs. Social Inclusion

**Context**: Studies evaluate the operational performance of **Section 12(1)(c)** of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009.

**Key Insights**:

- **Mandate**: Reserves a **25% classroom quota** in non-aided private schools for children from disadvantaged groups and weaker sections, benefiting ~50 lakh children nationally.
- **Inclusion Deficit**: Physical entry has not automatically translated into **social integration**. Quota students frequently face organic social segregation, peer alienation, and a "**deficit lens**" from undertrained teachers.
- **Policy Gap**: India lacks a formal **metric/benchmark** to evaluate and enforce classroom inclusion, leaving social integration to individual school initiatives.

**Constitutional Provision**: RTE Act implements **Article 21A** (inserted via the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002), complemented by Fundamental Duty **Article 51A(k)**.

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## 4. Sports Governance: India's Shift to Efficiency at 2026 Asian Para Games

**Context**: India achieved its best-ever performance at the 2026 Asian Para Games in Aichi-Nagoya, finishing **4th overall with 114 medals** (30 Gold, 35 Silver, 49 Bronze).

**Efficiency Metrics**:

- **Smaller Squad, Higher Yield**: India fielded **168 athletes** (compared to 309 at Hangzhou 2022), generating **68 medals per 100 athletes**—nearly doubling its historical conversion rate.

**Gender Parity**: Women athletes won 36 medals (10 Golds), achieving a conversion rate of **64 medals per 100 athletes**, effectively bridging the performance gap with men (66 per 100).

**Core Engine & Expansion**: Para-athletics provided over half the tally (65 medals), while swimming (11 medals), archery, table tennis, and shooting showed sharp gains.

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## 3 Economy, Environment, Infrastructure & Security

### 5. Cybersecurity in Critical Information Infrastructure (CII) & Supply Chain Risks

**Context**: A dark-web leak of nearly 19,000 files associated with the **Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project (KKNPP)** highlighted critical vulnerabilities in peripheral third-party contractors and cloud data centers.

**Anatomy of the Risk**:

While air-gapped reactor control systems remained untouched, engineering drawings and supplier data hosted on contractor servers (Reliance Infrastructure / Yotta data center) were compromised via ransomware.

**Precedent**: Follows the 2019 **Dtrack malware** infection on KKNPP's administrative network.

**Governance Gaps**:

**IT Act, 2000 (Section 70A)**: Authorizes the National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC) to protect "protected systems", but obligations bind only the primary operator, creating a blind spot across contractors and suppliers.

**DPDP Act Exclusions**: Technical designs and non-personal engineering files fall outside data protection regulations.

**Recommended Framework**: Adopt **Zero-Trust Architecture**, enforce security obligations down the supply chain via procurement contracts, mandate red-team audits, and streamline governance between CERT-In and NCIIPC.

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## 6. Power Sector Dynamics: Solar Glut, Grid Mismatch & Energy Storage

**Context**: India's power sector has transformed from a structural power deficit to experiencing a **daytime solar power surplus** alongside **night-time peak deficits**.

**Grid Balancing Challenges**:

**Solar Curtailment**: Daytime solar supply exceeds peak demand; grid operators reduce thermal plant output to their **minimum technical load** and back down (curtail) solar output, wasting clean energy.

**Night Deficits**: Evening peak loads (driven by air conditioning and lower hydro availability) require rapid thermal ramping, accelerating equipment degradation.

**Key Solutions**:

**Long-Duration Energy Storage**: Rapid scaling of **Pumped Storage Hydropower (PSH)** and **Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS)**.

**Grid Infrastructure**: Strengthening transmission via **Green Energy Corridors**, expanding smart grids under the **Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS)** (~₹3 lakh crore), and Viability Gap Funding (VGF) for BESS.

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## 7. Biofuel Policy: E100 Emission Rules & Ethanol Blending Pathways

**Context**: The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) amended **Rules 115 and 115E** of the **Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989**, formally recognizing **E100** (100% pure ethanol) alongside **E85** for compliant vehicles.

**Key Regulations**:

- **Flex-Fuel Vehicles (FFVs)**: Pure ethanol or high-blend usage is permitted strictly in vehicles specifically certified as FFVs by Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs). Standard E10/E20 vehicles cannot use E85/E100 without modification.
- **Certification Path**: Provides OEMs with legal pathways for type-approval of dedicated FFVs.

**Ethanol Blending Program (EBP) & Challenges**:

- **Blending Target**: E20 became the default petrol blend in April 2025.
- **Food vs. Fuel Dilemma**: Grain-based feedstock accounts for ~72% of ethanol blending. In 2024–25, 5.2 million tonnes of FCI rice were allocated for ethanol.
- **Biofuel Generations**: **1G** (first generation: edible crops/sugarcane/grains), **2G** (agricultural residue/stubbles), **3G** (algae), and **4G** (advanced synthetic/biochemical).

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## MCQs

**Q1. With reference to Cybersecurity governance in India, consider the following statements:**

Under Section 70A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, the National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC) is designated as the national nodal agency for critical information infrastructure protection.

Mandatory cybersecurity incident reporting within a specified timeframe is enforced by CERT-In across all organizations.

The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 automatically regulates and penalizes breaches involving non-personal engineering drawings of critical nuclear installations.

Which of the statements given above are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

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**Q2. Consider the following statements regarding the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989 amendments for ethanol-blended fuels:**

Standard vehicles manufactured to run on E10 or E20 petrol blends are legally permitted and engine-compatible to switch directly to E85 fuel.

The recent amendment to Rule 115 and Rule 115E introduces emission standards and testing provisions for E100 (pure ethanol) fuel.

E100 fuel can be utilized in any petrol vehicle provided the owner obtains a compliance certificate from an authorized testing center.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

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**Q3. With reference to the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023, consider the following provisions:**

Section 36 empowers the Central Government to call for information from any data fiduciary or intermediary.

The DPDP Act explicitly exempts journalistic activities and news publishing entities from notice and consent obligations.

Section 44(3) of the DPDP Act amends the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005 to exempt all personal information from public disclosure under Section 8(1)(j).

Which of the statements given above are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 1 and 3 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

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**Q4. In the context of India's power grid, what does the term "Minimum Technical Load" refer to?**

(a) The minimum amount of renewable power that a state distribution company must purchase under Renewable Purchase Obligations (RPO).
(b) The lowest operational power output at which a thermal power plant can safely operate without shutting down.
(c) The baseline electricity consumption requirement of critical infrastructure during national grid emergencies.
(d) The minimum battery storage capacity mandated for grid-connected solar parks.

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**Q5. Consider the following statements regarding higher education institutions in India:**

The University Grants Commission (UGC) guidelines recommend at least one mental health counsellor for every 500 students in higher education institutions.

The Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Teachers' Cadre) Act mandates 15% reservation for Scheduled Castes and 7.5% for Scheduled Tribes in faculty appointments.

RTI data indicates that all older Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) currently comply with the UGC recommended counsellor-to-student ratio.

Which of the statements given above are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

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**Q6. With reference to Section 12(1)(c) of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009, consider the following statements:**

It mandates a minimum 25% quota in entry-level classes of non-aided private schools for children from disadvantaged and weaker sections.

The RTE Act was enacted to give effect to Article 21A of the Constitution of India.

The Act sets mandatory institutional metrics and benchmarks for evaluating social integration and classroom inclusion in private schools.

Which of the statements given above are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

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**Q7. With reference to Biofuel Generations, match Column I with Column II:**

| Column I (Biofuel Generation) | Column II (Primary Feedstock) |
|---|---|
| A. 1st Generation (1G) | 1. Microalgae and photosynthetic organisms |
| B. 2nd Generation (2G) | 2. Sugarcane juice, corn, and edible food grains |
| C. 3rd Generation (3G) | 3. Agricultural crop residues, bagasse, and stubble |

Select the correct code: (a) A-2, B-3, C-1
(b) A-3, B-2, C-1
(c) A-2, B-1, C-3
(d) A-1, B-3, C-2

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**Q8. India's performance at the 2026 Asian Para Games in Aichi-Nagoya is best characterized by which of the following trends?**

(a) Winning fewer medals despite sending the largest-ever contingent in India's sporting history.
(b) Achieving a record medal tally with a significantly smaller squad size compared to previous editions.
(c) Dominating team events like rowing and canoeing while securing zero medals in individual track events.
(d) Experiencing a widening performance gap between male and female athletes in medal conversion rates.

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**Q9. Which of the following constitutional provisions specifically deals with the Right to Privacy as interpreted by the Supreme Court in K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017)?**

(a) Article 19(1)(g)
(b) Article 21
(c) Article 30
(d) Article 300A

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**Q10. Which of the following initiatives support the integration of renewable energy into India's national power grid?**

Green Energy Corridors

Viability Gap Funding (VGF) for Battery Energy Storage Systems

Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS)

Select the correct answer using the code given below: (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

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**Q11. Consider the following statements regarding the Ethanol Blending Program (EBP) in India:**

Under the EBP, grain-based feedstocks currently supply a major share of ethanol blending in India.

Flex-fuel vehicles (FFVs) are designed to run exclusively on 100% bio-ethanol and cannot operate on pure petrol.

The National Policy on Biofuels allows the diversion of surplus food grains for ethanol production with government authorization.

Which of the statements given above are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 1 and 3 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

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**Q12. What primary vulnerability in critical infrastructure protection was highlighted by the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant cybersecurity breach?**

(a) Direct physical intrusion into the reactor containment building.
(b) Cyber risks and data leaks originating from third-party contractors and external data centers in the supply chain.
(c) Compromise of air-gapped nuclear reactor safety shutdown systems over public internet networks.
(d) Failure of satellite-based communication systems operated by ISRO.

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**Q13. With reference to the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009, consider the following:**

Article 51A(k) was added as a Fundamental Duty by the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act.

The RTE Act applies to children in the age group of 6 to 14 years.

Private unaided minority educational institutions are required to provide 25% quota under Section 12(1)(c).

Which of the statements given above are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

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**Q14. In the context of grid management, why does a daytime solar generation surplus pose an operational challenge for coal-fired power plants?**

(a) It causes immediate physical corrosion of boiler tubes due to excess voltage.
(b) Frequent ramping up and down of thermal units to accommodate solar variations causes mechanical wear and thermal fatigue.
(c) It forces coal plants to burn high-ash domestic coal instead of imported coal.
(d) It permanently reduces the calorific value of coal stockpiles.

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**Q15. Consider the following statements regarding the National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC):**

It was created under Section 70A of the Information Technology Act, 2000.

It operates under the administrative control of the Ministry of Culture.

It designates specific computer resources as "Protected Systems" to enforce special security controls.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 1 and 3 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

## Answer Key & Explanations

| Question | Correct Answer |
|---|---|
| Q1 | (a) |
| Q2 | (b) |
| Q3 | (b) |
| Q4 | (b) |
| Q5 | (a) |
| Q6 | (a) |
| Q7 | (a) |
| Q8 | (b) |
| Q9 | (b) |

| | |
|---|---|
| Q10 | (d) |
| Q11 | (b) |
| Q12 | (b) |
| Q13 | (a) |
| Q14 | (b) |
| Q15 | (b) |

## Detailed Explanations

**Q1 Explanation: (a)**

**Statement 1 is correct**: NCIIPC was established under Section 70A of the IT Act, 2000 as the national nodal agency for CII protection.

**Statement 2 is correct**: CERT-In mandated prompt cybersecurity incident reporting in 2022.

**Statement 3 is incorrect**: The DPDP Act, 2023 applies to personal data and does not cover non-personal technical engineering drawings or CAD files.

**Q2 Explanation: (b)**

**Statement 1 is incorrect**: MoRTH clarified that vehicles built for E10 or E20 blends are not suitable for E85 or E100 without design modifications.

**Statement 2 is correct**: The amendment modifies Rules 115 and 115E to include standards and testing protocols for E100 alongside E85.

**Statement 3 is incorrect**: E85/E100 can only be used in vehicles specifically designed and certified by OEMs as flex-fuel vehicles.

**Q3 Explanation: (b)**

**Statement 1 is correct**: Section 36 (read with Rule 23) gives the Centre broad power to call for information from data fiduciaries or intermediaries.

**Statement 2 is incorrect**: The DPDP Act contains no journalistic exemption, requiring newsrooms to comply with standard consent and notice requirements.

**Statement 3 is correct**: Section 44(3) amends Section 8(1)(j) of the RTI Act to bar disclosure of all personal information.

**Q4 Explanation: (b)**

**Minimum Technical Load** refers to the lowest operational output level at which a thermal coal unit can safely run without tripping or sustaining flame instability. During peak solar hours, coal plants are turned down to this load to absorb solar power.

**Q5 Explanation: (a)**

**Statement 1 is correct**: UGC guidelines recommend 1 mental health professional per 500 students.

**Statement 2 is correct**: Faculty reservation mandates 15% SC and 7.5% ST.

**Statement 3 is incorrect**: RTI data showed almost all surveyed IITs (except IIT-Ropar) fall far short of the UGC ratio.

**Q6 Explanation: (a)**

**Statement 1 is correct**: Section 12(1)(c) mandates a 25% quota in non-aided private schools.

**Statement 2 is correct**: The RTE Act implements Article 21A (86th Amendment).

**Statement 3 is incorrect**: A key criticism highlighted in the source is that India lacks a formal metric or benchmark to track classroom inclusion.

**Q7 Explanation: (a)**

**1G (First Generation)**: Uses edible food sources like sugarcane juice, corn, and food grains.

**2G (Second Generation)**: Uses non-edible agricultural residue like crop stubble and bagasse.

**3G (Third Generation)**: Uses microalgae.

**Q8 Explanation: (b)**

India won a record **114 medals** at Aichi-Nagoya with a squad of **168 athletes**, nearly half the size of its 309-member contingent at Hangzhou 2022, doubling its medals-per-athlete efficiency.

**Q9 Explanation: (b)**

In K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017), a 9-judge Bench held that the Right to Privacy is a Fundamental Right protected under **Article 21** (Life and Personal Liberty).

**Q10 Explanation: (d)**

All three are key government initiatives supporting renewable energy integration into the national power grid: Green Energy Corridors, VGF for Battery Storage, and RDSS for distribution smart grid infrastructure.

**Q11 Explanation: (b)**

**Statement 1 is correct**: Grain-based ethanol supplies ~72% of blending supply in India.

**Statement 2 is incorrect**: Flex-fuel vehicles (FFVs) can run on petrol, ethanol blends, or 100% pure ethanol.

**Statement 3 is correct**: The National Policy on Biofuels allows utilizing damaged food grains and surplus FCI stocks for ethanol production.

**Q12 Explanation: (b)**

The Kudankulam breach occurred on third-party contractor servers (Reliance Infrastructure/Yotta data center) hosting non-nuclear technical drawings, illustrating supply chain cyber vulnerability.

**Q13 Explanation: (a)**

**Statement 1 is correct**: Article 51A(k) was added by the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002.

**Statement 2 is correct**: RTE covers children aged 6 to 14 years.

**Statement 3 is incorrect**: Unaided minority educational institutions are exempt from Section 12(1)(c) mandates as per Supreme Court rulings (Pramati Educational Trust).

**Q14 Explanation: (b)**

Ramping coal thermal units up and down repeatedly to offset intermittent daytime solar power causes severe mechanical wear, thermal fatigue, and reduces equipment lifespan.

**Q15 Explanation: (b)**

**Statement 1 is correct**: Created under Section 70A of the IT Act, 2000.

**Statement 2 is incorrect**: NCIIPC operates under the National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO) / PMO framework, not the Ministry of Culture.

**Statement 3 is correct**: NCIIPC designates computer resources as "Protected Systems".