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TODAY'S ANALYSIS

(29 March 2025)

TOPICS TO BE COVERED

- JAPAN'S CONCERNS WRT SENKAKU ISLAND
- SAMAGRA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN
- SECTION 44(3) OF DIGITAL PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION ACT?
- MCQs

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JAPAN'S CONCERNS WRT SENKAKU ISLAND

- **Incident:** Japan raised concerns over the longest intrusion by Chinese Coast Guard ships near the Senkaku Islands.
 - **Duration:** Chinese ships stayed in Japan's waters for 92 hours, leaving on March 24, 2025.
 - **Escalation:** Japan's Foreign Minister called the situation "clearly escalating" due to the increasing frequency of Chinese ships in Japanese waters since March 21, 2025.



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DIPLOMATIC REACTIONS

- **Japan's Response:** Japan raised concerns during a meeting between Japanese and Chinese Foreign Ministers on March 22, 2025.
 - The meeting was friendly but Japan criticized the timing of the intrusion as “regrettable.”
- **Opposition Criticism:** Japanese lawmakers criticized the intrusion, calling it “extremely inappropriate.”

GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT

- **Senkaku Islands Dispute:**
 - Known as **Diaoyu** (China) and **Diaoyutai** (Taiwan).
 - Uninhabited but important for **fishing, oil, and shipping lanes**.
 - Japan administers them, but **China** and **Taiwan** also claim ownership.
- **U.S. Involvement:** The dispute is central to tensions between **China** and the **U.S.**, with Japan being a U.S. ally.
- **Japan's Position:**
 - Japan maintains no agreement with China on shelving the issue.

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- Japan remains firm, handling the situation with “resolute and calm” determination despite growing tensions.

KEY FACTS ABOUT SENKAKU ISLAND

- **Location:** East China Sea, 90 nautical miles from Japan's Yaeyama Islands, 120 nautical miles from Taiwan.
- **Other Names:** Diaoyu (China), Diaoyutai (Taiwan), Pinnacle Islands (international).
- **Geography:** Includes Uotsuri Island, Kuba Island, Taisho Island (total land: 6.3 square km).
- **History:** Japan incorporated them in 1895, and they are part of Ishigaki, Okinawa Prefecture.

Ongoing Dispute: Territorial Claims: Disputed between Japan, China, and Taiwan, driven by historical, political, and resource-related factors.

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SAMAGRA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN

Recommendation: A Parliamentary Standing Committee has asked the **Ministry of Education** to fix problems with **West Bengal, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu** about the delay in releasing funds for the **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)** program.

Amount Due: The total amount owed is over **₹4,000 crore**, with specific amounts of ₹1,000 crore for West Bengal, ₹859.63 crore for Kerala, and ₹2,152 crore for Tamil Nadu.

Report Date: The committee presented the report in the Rajya Sabha on March 26, 2025.

KEY ISSUES RAISED

- **Tamil Nadu and Fund Stoppage:** The issue with Tamil Nadu is about stopping SSA funds after the state refused to follow the three-language rule under the National Education Policy (NEP) and did not agree to the PM-SHRI school program.
- **Committee's Concern:** The committee is worried about the delay in releasing SSA funds to states that have not agreed to the PM-SHRI program, especially since the amounts are large.

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COMMITTEE'S OBSERVATION

- **PM SHRI vs SSA:** The committee pointed out that 33 out of 36 states and union territories have signed up for the PM SHRI program and are using it to improve schools based on NEP. However, the committee believes that SSA is an older program and should not be delayed just because another program is not being followed.
- **Right to Education (RTE) Act:** SSA is directly related to the Right to Education Act, which ensures free education for children aged 6-14 years. The committee stressed that SSA should not be skipped because of policies like NEP since SSA ensures the right to education.

IMPACT OF FUND WITHHOLDING

- **Educational Issues:** Delaying SSA funds has caused problems in states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal, which are known for their good educational results. These states have a higher enrollment rate than the national average.
- **Teacher Salaries and School Maintenance:** Due to the delay in funds, states have had to use their own money to pay teachers, provide teacher training, and maintain schools.

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- **FY 2024-25 Allocation:** Tamil Nadu was supposed to receive ₹3,586 crore for SSA in 2024-25, with ₹2,152 crore coming from the central government. Since the funds were not released, it has affected teacher salaries and resources, especially in rural areas.

COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee recommended that the Ministry of Education should release the pending SSA funds to Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal as soon as possible to prevent problems with teacher salaries, school facilities, and teacher training.

- **Reevaluation of Funding:** The committee also asked the Ministry to reassess how SSA funds are given out to make sure no state is treated unfairly for not adopting NEP 2020 or the PM SHRI program.

WHAT IS PM SHREE SCHEME?

- **Objective:** The PM SHRI (PM Schools for Rising India) scheme was started under NEP 2020 to set up 14,500 model schools focusing on:
 - All-round education (learning through experience and questions).
 - Skills for the 21st century.
 - Environment-friendly buildings (green designs, water conservation, recycling).
 - Competency-based assessments instead of rote memorization.

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KEY FEATURES

- Improved infrastructure: Labs, libraries, and art rooms.
- Use of technology: Smart classrooms and digital learning tools.
- Holistic learning: Play-based learning for young kids and flexible teaching methods.
- Regular checks: A framework to maintain high school standards.

Budget: The total budget for the scheme is ₹27,360 crore over 5 years (2022-2027), with ₹18,128 crore coming from the central government.

WHAT IS SAMAGRA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN?

- **Purpose:** SSA is a central government program aimed at providing quality education from preschool to higher secondary levels.
- **Focus Areas:**
 - Developing school infrastructure.
 - Teacher training and hiring.
 - Improving learning outcomes.
 - Providing inclusive education for disadvantaged groups.
- **Connection to RTE Act:** SSA supports the Right to Education (RTE) Act, which guarantees free education for children aged 6-14 years.

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SECTION 44(3) OF DIGITAL PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION ACT, 2023 (DPDP ACT)

- Some sections of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDP Act) of 2023 have sparked significant debates, especially regarding its **effects on the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005.**
- A central issue is **Section 44(3) of the DPDP Act**, which has raised concerns about how it might limit public access to information and affect transparency.

ABOUT DPDP ACT, 2023

- **Background:** The Supreme Court, in its 2017 decision in the *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy vs. Union of India* case, declared the right to privacy a fundamental right under the Indian Constitution. Building on this, India introduced the **DPDP Act in 2023** to protect personal data in the digital age.
- **Purpose:** The DPDP Act aims to regulate the processing of digital personal data while balancing privacy rights with the need for lawful data processing.
- **Overlap with RTI Act:** However, some provisions of the DPDP Act overlap with the **RTI Act**, raising concerns about **limiting access to public information that is essential for accountability and transparency.**

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KEY FEATURES OF DPDP ACT, 2023

- **Applicability:**

- The DPDP Act applies to **all digital and non-digital personal data** processed within India, and to data collected outside India if the data involves offering goods or services in India.
- Data of Indian citizens processed abroad is also covered by the DPDP Act.

- **Informed Consent:**

- Personal data can only be processed **with the consent of the individual** (Data Principal).
- Consent can be withdrawn at any time, and processing must be for lawful purposes only.

- **Data Protection Board of India (DPBI):**

- The DPBI is a body established by the central government.
- It is responsible for monitoring compliance with the law, imposing penalties for violations, handling complaints, and resolving disputes related to data breaches.

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- **Rights and Duties of Data Principals:**

- Individuals (Data Principals) have the right to:

- Request information on the processing of their data.
- Correct or erase their data.
- File grievances in case of violations of their data rights.
- Nominate a person to exercise their rights in the event of death or incapacity.

- **Obligations of Data Fiduciaries:**

- Data Fiduciaries (like businesses or government bodies handling personal data) are required to:

- Ensure data accuracy and implement reasonable security measures.
- Notify the DPBI and affected individuals in case of data breaches.
- Erase personal data once its purpose is fulfilled or when retention is no longer necessary for legal purposes.

- **Significant Data Fiduciaries (SDFs):**

- The government may classify certain data fiduciaries as "Significant Data Fiduciaries" (SDFs) based on the volume, sensitivity, and impact of the data they handle.

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- SDFs must follow stricter rules, including appointing a Data Protection Officer and conducting regular audits.

SECTION 44(3) OF DPDP ACT, 2023

- **Amendment to RTI Act:** Section 44(3) of the DPDP Act modifies **Section 8(1)(j)** of the RTI Act, which deals with the disclosure of personal information under the Right to Information framework.
 - **Original Section 8(1)(j):** Under the RTI Act, personal information could only be withheld if it was unrelated to the public interest or would cause unwarranted privacy invasion, unless the larger public interest justified its disclosure.
 - **Amended Section 8(1)(j)** (after the DPDP Act): The modification **removes the "larger public interest"** clause and broadly exempts all personal information from disclosure under RTI, even if disclosing it could serve the public interest.

KEY CONCERNS

- **Reduction in Public Accountability:** Section 44(3) could restrict citizens' ability to access important information about public servants, which is crucial for ensuring transparency, reducing corruption, and maintaining public trust.

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- **Overuse of Privacy Protection Argument:** The broad exemptions for personal data could be used to shield critical information from public scrutiny, even when it's relevant for public interest, such as in cases of corruption or public misconduct.
- **Impact on Democracy:** The changes to the RTI Act threaten to weaken the ability of citizens to engage in informed decision-making and hold the government accountable, both of which are foundational to a functioning democracy.

RIGHT TO INFORMATION ACT, 2005

The RTI Act was enacted to allow citizens to request information from government bodies and promote transparency in governance.

- **Key Features:**
 - Covers all public authorities, including central, state, and local governments, except for certain exempted organizations (e.g., security agencies).
 - **Public Information Officers (PIOs):** PIOs must respond to RTI requests within 30 days.
 - **Exemptions:** Some information, like national security data or personal privacy, is exempt from disclosure.

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- **Appeals:** If an RTI request is denied, citizens can appeal to the Central/State Information Commissions.
- **Penalties:** Public officials can be fined for failing to provide information without valid reasons.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- **Public Consultation:**

- A broader public consultation process is needed to discuss how Section 44(3) affects the RTI Act.
- This will ensure diverse perspectives are considered, including those of legal experts, RTI activists, and civil society groups.

- **Strengthening Oversight Mechanisms:**

- Strong oversight mechanisms are necessary to prevent the misuse of personal data exemptions and to ensure public access to information is not unduly restricted.

- **Clear Guidelines for Information Disclosure:**

- Clear and comprehensive guidelines should be developed for when public interest outweighs privacy concerns.

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- International standards, like those in the **EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**, offer useful examples for balancing these competing interests.
- **Periodic Review of DPDP Act:**
 - A periodic review of the DPDP Act's impact on the RTI Act should be conducted. This will ensure that any amendments or changes to the law do not unjustifiably limit public access to essential information.
- **Promoting Digital Literacy and Awareness:**
 - Public education campaigns are needed to raise awareness about citizen rights under both the RTI and DPDP Acts.
 - Other countries, like **Australia**, have implemented similar campaigns to help citizens understand their rights under privacy and freedom of information laws.

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MCQs

1. In which sea is the Senkaku Island located?

- (A) East China Sea
- (B) South China Sea
- (C) Sea of Japan
- (D) Okhotsk Sea

Ans. (A)

2. Consider the following statements wrt Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) & mark the correct one:

- 1. SSA ensures Right to Education.
- 2. SSA focuses on developing school infra apart from other focus areas.

- (A) Only 1
- (B) Only 2
- (C) Both 1 & 2
- (D) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans. (C)

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3. Consider the following statements wrt PM SHRI & mark the correct one:

1. The scheme was started under NEP 2020.
2. It focuses on experiential learning.
3. It aims to create green buildings.

- (A) Only 1
(B) Only 1 & 2
(C) Only 2 & 3
(D) All of the above



Ans. (D)

4. Consider the following statements wrt DPDP Act, 2023 and mark the correct one:

1. It is applicable to digital & non digital data.
2. Data of Indian citizens processed abroad is not covered by the DPDP Act.

- (A) Only 1
(B) Only 2
(C) Both 1 & 2
(D) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans. (A)

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