



TATHASTU
Institute Of Civil Services

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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TATHASTU
Institute Of Civil Services

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STALIN OFFERS \$1-MN PRIZE FOR DECODING INDUS VALLEY SCRIPT

Stalin offers \$1-mn prize for decoding Indus Valley script

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin announced on Sunday a \$1-million prize for experts or organisations that succeeded in deciphering the scripts of the Indus Valley Civilisation for everyone to understand.

"We are not able to decipher the script of the Indus Valley Civilisation that flourished once. It remains a mystery even after 100 years. Archaeologists, Tamil computer software experts and computer experts across the world have been making efforts to decipher the script. To encourage the research, the government will offer one million dollars," Mr. Stalin said at an event in Chennai to mark the centenary of the discovery of the Indus Valley Civilisation by Sir John Marshall.

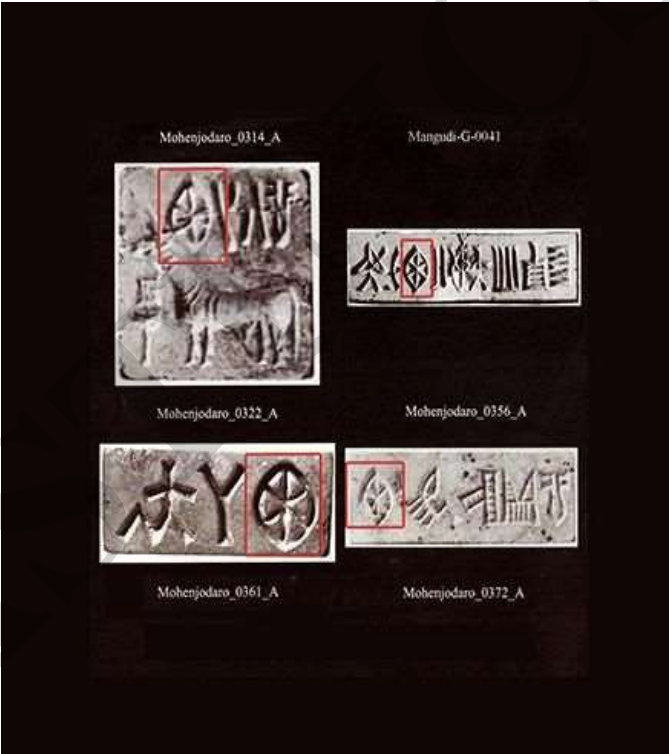
The Chief Minister also



Signs and graffiti excavated from the Mohenjo-daro site. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

announced a ₹2-crore grant for setting up a chair in the name of noted archaeologist and epigraphist Iravatham Mahadevan to continue the research on the Indus Valley Civilisation jointly by the State Department of Archaeology and the Indus Research Centre at the Chennai-based Roja Muthiah Library.

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The Harappan Script:

- ❖ Harappans invented the art of writing, but that has not been deciphered so far.
- ❖ Unlike the Egyptians and Mesopotamians, the Harappans did not write long inscriptions. Most of them are recorded on seals and contain only a few words.





AHEAD OF PM'S PARIS TRIP, RAFALE, SCORPENE DEALS REACH FINAL LEG

- ❖ Two large defence deals between India and France are being finalised, amid expectations that **Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Paris in February** for the **Artificial Intelligence Action Summit**.
 1. **26 Rafale-M fighter jets** for the Indian Navy's aircraft carriers, and
 2. **3 additional Scorpene-class conventional submarines**.

Shopping list

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to be in Paris in February, India is looking to seal arms deals

WHAT THE COUNTRY WANTS?

- 26 Rafale-M fighter jets for the Navy's aircraft carriers
- Three more Scorpene-class conventional submarines
- The two deals are expected to be put before the Cabinet Committee on Security for approval soon

It is just matter of completing the formalities of the acquisition process and we expect that if not this month, next month, hopefully, this [Scorpene submarines] and Rafale-M deals should be signed

Navy chief Admiral **DINESH K. TRIPATHI** in December

India needs the naval version of the Rafale for INS Vikrant

Scorpene-class submarines

- ❖ The **Scorpene-class submarines** are a series of advanced stealth submarines developed by the French company **Naval Group (formerly DCNS)**.
- ❖ These submarines are part of the Indian Navy's modernization program under **Project-75 I**.
- ❖ which involves **indigenous construction in collaboration** with Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL), Mumbai.

NAVAL
GROUP





- ❖ **INS Kalvari** was the first submarine commissioned in December 2017. Other submarines: **INS Khanderi, INS Karanj, INS Vela, INS Vagir, and INS Vagsheer.**
- ❖ Of the six submarines from the earlier contract, five have been inducted.
- ❖ The last one, **Vagsheer, is set to be commissioned** on January 15 in Mumbai,
- ❖ The **present deal** for three Scorpene submarines is a repeat order.



- ❖ **Stealth Capabilities Armament Diesel-Electric Propulsion: Advanced Sonar and Sensors**

Rafale-M

- ❖ **Rafale-M Fighter Jets**
 - The **Rafale-M** is a carrier-based multirole fighter jet developed by **Dassault Aviation** of France.
 - It is a naval variant of the **Rafale** series.
 - The Rafale-M is for the **INS Vikrant**, our first indigenously built aircraft carrier.





NO SECRET AFFAIR: DELIBERATIONS ON DRAFT DIGITAL PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION RULES MUST BE OPEN

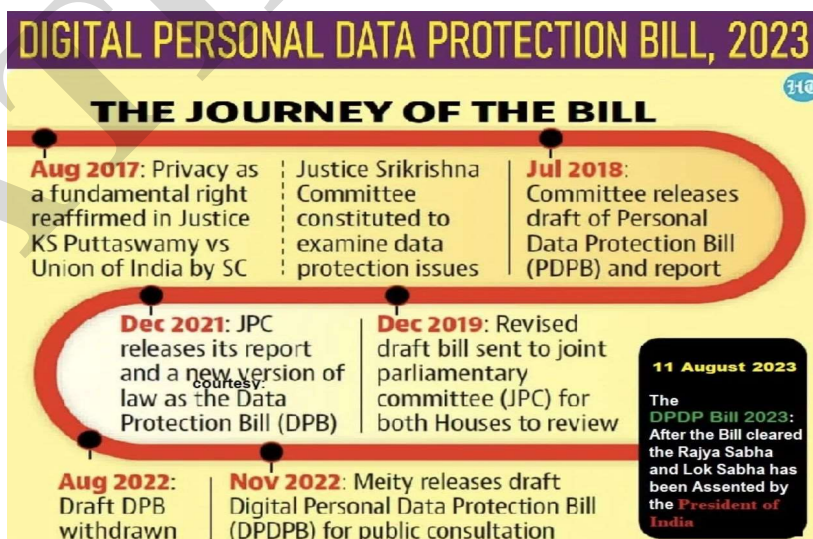
No secret affair

Deliberations on draft Digital Personal Data Protection Rules must be open

The draft Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025, is a long overdue advance in the direction of enforcing the fundamental right to informational privacy for Indians, affirmed by the Supreme Court of India in the landmark case, *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy vs. Union of India* (2017). The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, which these draft rules seek to enforce, was passed in Parliament over a year ago. This seven-year wait has most likely not been without costs for the privacy of the data of Indians, as it coincided with a period that saw a rapid growth in digitisation. The proposed rules offer direction on how online services will be required to: communicate the purposes of their data collection to users; safeguard children’s data online; establish the Data Protection Board of India (DPBI); set the standards for government agencies to follow to be exempt from the Act’s provisions, and spell out the procedures to be observed if personal data is breached by a data fiduciary. The concerns regarding the proposed DPBI’s institutional design have not been resolved by these proposed Rules, and it may not be realistic to expect such an outcome from subordinate legislation.

It is regrettable that the government continues to cloak the rule-making process of a critical policy such as this in secrecy. Since the Justice B.N. Srikrishna committee was convened to draft the first Bill for data protection, the government has consistently declined to place recommendations from stakeholders in the public domain, and has foreclosed such disclosure for these draft rules as well. For legislation where the stakes are high for individual users as well as for large technology firms, an open deliberative process is essential. It can only be facilitated when industry associations and the general public can find equal footing by being equal participants with transparency into each other’s viewpoints during the consultation process. In the short and medium term, it is essential for the government to proceed with these principles in mind, while never departing from the key aims of any data protection law: minimising data collection, promoting disclosures, penalising neglect in protecting user data, and discouraging surveillance practices, both by the private sector and the government. This process must also play out in a timely fashion, as Indians have been waiting far too long to finally obtain the rights that were affirmed for them in 2017. Else, people’s confidence in the government’s seriousness about protecting their data from government agencies as well as private enterprises would be shaken.

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Draft Digital Personal Data Protection Rules

- ❖ The proposed rules offer direction on how online services will be required to:
 - communicate the **purposes of their data collection** to users;
 - **safeguard children's data online**;
 - establish the **Data Protection Board of India (DPBI)**;
 - set the standards for **government agencies** to follow **to be exempt** from the Act's provisions,
 - and spell out the **procedures to be observed if personal data is breached by a data fiduciary**.

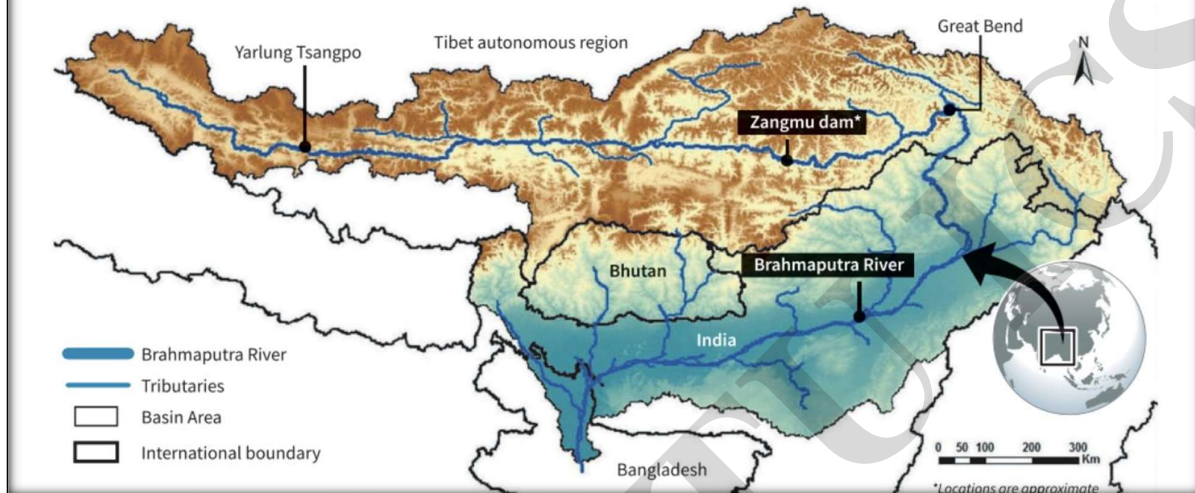


- ❖ The **concerns** regarding the **proposed DPBI's institutional design** have not been resolved by these proposed Rules, and it may not be realistic to expect such an outcome from subordinate legislation.
- ❖ The government has kept the rule-making process for the data protection policy largely secret, declining to share stakeholder recommendations publicly since the Justice B.N. Srikrishna committee drafted the first Bill.
- ❖ The **government must focus on key goals of data protection: limiting data collection, increasing transparency, penalizing lapses in protecting user data**, and curbing surveillance by both private and public entities. Timely action is critical, as the prolonged delay risks undermining public trust in the government's commitment to safeguarding personal data.

IMPLICATIONS OF CHINA'S MEGA-DAM PROJECT

Taming the 'rogue' river

The Brahmaputra is a transboundary Himalayan river basin spanning four riparian countries. This map shows its flow from the Tibetan Autonomous Region in China through Bhutan and India into Bangladesh.



The story so far:

- ❖ **Medog dam project**
 - The ambitious plan to build a **mega-hydropower dam across the Brahmaputra at the Great Bend region** in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) in **China** got its approval on December 25, 2024.
 - **India, Bhutan and Bangladesh** will have **serious downstream implications** of this **60 GW hyper-dam built upstream by China**.
- ❖ The Brahmaputra is a transboundary Himalayan river basin spanning four riparian countries.
- ❖ **China is the uppermost riparian nation** with the river system originating in the TAR, where it is known as the **Yarlung Zangbo (or Tsangpo)**.
- ❖ India and Bhutan are lower riparian nations in relation to China and middle riparian countries in relation to Bangladesh.

Is the Brahmaputra river basin trapped within nation-states?

- ❖ The Brahmaputra river system **has been the site of planned and ongoing mega-dams projects** by China, India and Bhutan, **all contributing to an intense geopolitical power projection** in the river basin.
- ❖ Mega-dams on rivers systems are **seen as important sovereignty markers; symbols of nation-state control over natural features**.
- ❖ Highly dramatised terms such as **'water wars'** are **part of the geopolitical vocabulary** and **upstream hydropower dams are viewed as 'water bombs'** by lower riparian nations, as in the case of the **Medog dam project**.



What are the risks for communities inhabiting the Brahmaputra river basin?

- ❖ The **perennial flow of the Brahmaputra** in downstream areas in India and Bangladesh **depends on the flow of the Yarlung Zangbo**.
- ❖ The **blocking of that perennial flow**, will have **catastrophic consequences on surface water levels**, and to overall monsoon patterns and **groundwater systems of the river basin**.
- ❖ This **will affect downstream agrarian communities** and the **sensitive ecology of the overall Himalayan bioregion/ecoregion**.

What explains the hydropower dam-building race in the Brahmaputra river basin?

- ❖ **Face-off: At Great Bend** while India has also announced its largest dam project, **at Upper Siang**.
- ❖ **Bhutan has been planning and building several medium to small dams**, which have raised concerns in downstream India and Bangladesh.
- ❖ The **land boundary dispute between China and India is weaved into the intense securitisation of the Brahmaputra river basin**, which makes it an **active site for strategic posturing** by both countries.
- ❖ A **bioregional/ecoregional frame of protecting the Himalayas may help desecuritize Brahmaputra river basin**.

What next?

- ❖ The book *Rivers of the Asian Highlands* highlights the **ecological and climatic significance of Himalayan river systems** and **critiques narrow technocratic approaches like mega-dams**.
- ❖ It emphasizes that **dams disrupt natural river cycles, harm biodiversity, and increase risks like Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs)**, as seen in the recent Sikkim disaster.
- ❖ **China's Medog dam project on the Yarlung Zangbo (Brahmaputra) exemplifies this approach**, with historical context underscoring the **seismic risks in the region**.
- ❖ While China's dams aim to control perceived "rogue rivers," **India should adopt a leadership role in regional water management by avoiding similar destructive strategies**.
- ❖ **Reactive dam-building could turn the fragile Himalayan ecosystem into a disaster-prone area**.





FOUR-LANE BANIHAL BYPASS OPENS IN J&K'S RAMBAN



Banihal bypass opens in J&K's Ramban

- ❖ Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari announced the completion of the 2.35-km Banihal bypass in Jammu and Kashmir's Ramban district.
- ❖ The bypass enhances regional connectivity, reduces congestion, and improves travel time for both tourists and defense vehicles heading to the Kashmir Valley. It also boosts national security logistics and tourism potential in the area.
- ❖ NH-44, India's longest highway, connects Srinagar to Kanyakumari. The Centre has upgraded the
- ❖ Jammu-Srinagar stretch to reduce travel time from nine to six hours, making it an all-weather route.





PYQs

Q.1 Consider the following statements about the Harappan writing system:

1. The Harappans invented the art of writing, but their script has not been deciphered yet.
2. Harappan inscriptions are generally long and detailed, similar to those of Egyptians and Mesopotamians.
3. Most Harappan inscriptions are recorded on seals and consist of only a few words.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2, and 3

Q.2 With reference to Project-75 I, consider the following statements:

1. It is a programme under the Indian Navy to build advanced conventional submarines with air-independent propulsion (AIP) technology.
2. The submarines under Project-75 I will be built entirely by foreign manufacturers to enhance India's maritime defense.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.3 Consider the following statements regarding the Right to Privacy in India:

1. The Right to Privacy is explicitly mentioned as a fundamental right in the Indian Constitution.
2. The Supreme Court of India, in the Justice K.S. Puttaswamy vs. Union of India case (2017), declared the Right to Privacy as a fundamental right under Article 21.
3. The Right to Privacy is absolute and cannot be restricted under any circumstances.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2, and 3

