



## HIGH COURT NOTICE TO RAJASTHAN GOVT. OVER PETITION CHALLENGING CLASSIFICATION OF TRANSPeOPLE AS OBCS

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE



**Context:** The Rajasthan High Court has served a notice to the State in response to a petition filed by a transwoman, challenging the State government's decision to classify transgender individuals as Other Backward Classes (OBC) for reservations in public education and employment.

- **Rajasthan High Court Notice:** The Rajasthan High Court has issued a notice to the State government in response to a petition filed by Ganga Kumari, a transwoman, challenging the classification of transgender people as Other Backward Classes (OBCs) for reservation in public education and employment.

- **Court Bench:** A Bench of Chief Justice Manindra Mohan Shrivastava and Justice Nupur Bhati has directed the State government to respond to the petition within four weeks.
- **Petitioner Details:** The petitioner, Ganga Kumari, is the first transwoman to serve as a police constable in Rajasthan. She has contested the State government's January 2023 circular issued by the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, which categorizes transgender individuals as a separate entry under the OBC list.
- **Petitioner's Argument:**
  - Ganga Kumari claims that classifying transgender people as OBCs is unconstitutional and counterproductive.
  - She argues that it could result in the exclusion of transgender people from both OBC-related and transgender-related benefits.
- **Failure to Account for Diversity:**
  - The petitioner asserts that the circular fails to recognize that some transgender individuals may belong to the General category or Scheduled Castes (SC), and does not account for their unique status.
  - She also argues that the circular contradicts the special provisions granted to transgender people in the 2014 NALSA judgment of the Supreme Court.
- **2014 NALSA Judgment:** The Supreme Court's NALSA judgment directed governments to provide reservations to transgender people in public education and employment, treating them as "socially and educationally backward classes of citizens."
  - The judgment calls for horizontal reservation, which would allocate a percentage of reservation within each socio-economic category for transgender individuals.
- **Interpretations of the Judgment:**
  - Some activists, including Ganga Kumari, argue that the judgment mandates horizontal reservation, which should provide transgender people with specific reservations within the existing socio-economic categories.
  - However, a section of the government has interpreted the ruling as a call to place transgender people under the OBC category.

- **Other State Governments:**

- The Madhya Pradesh government classified transgender individuals as a separate entry under the OBC list in April 2023, following a similar interpretation.
- In contrast, courts in Karnataka, Madras, and Calcutta have interpreted the Supreme Court's ruling as a directive for horizontal reservation, aligning with the petitioner's stance.

## MDL-TKMS BID FOR P-75I SUBMARINE TENDER CLEARS TECHNICAL EVALUATION

### SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

**CONTEXT:** The multi-billion dollar deal for six advanced conventional submarines under Project-75I has reached a significant milestone, with the bid from Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) of Mumbai and Germany's TKMS (Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems) successfully passing the technical evaluation conducted by the Defence Ministry. However, the bid submitted by Larsen & Toubro in partnership with Navantia of Spain did not clear the evaluation.



- **Project-75I Deal Overview:** The multi-billion dollar deal for six advanced conventional submarines under Project-75I has reached a major milestone with the technical evaluation conducted by the Defence Ministry.
- **Successful Bid:** Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) from Mumbai, in collaboration with Germany's Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems (TKMS), has cleared the technical evaluation, marking a significant step forward in the project.
- **Unsuccessful Bid:** The bid submitted by Larsen & Toubro (L&T) in partnership with Navantia of Spain

did not pass the technical evaluation.

- **Cost Expectation:** The deal's benchmarked price of ₹43,000 crore, set a decade ago, is expected to see a major upward revision due to technological upgrades, inflation, and currency fluctuations.
- **Commercial Bid Status:** MDL confirmed that its commercial bid has been opened by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) for further processing, as required by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).
- **Evaluation Process:**
  - Compliance checks for the two bids were completed in June last year during the Field Evaluation Trials (FET).
  - The technical reports were under scrutiny by the Ministry, and the bids were opened last week.
  - The MDL-TKMS bid was declared technically compliant.
- **Next Steps:** Commercial negotiations will now begin based on the price quoted in the successful bid.
- **Request For Proposal (RFP) Requirements:**
  - The RFP specifies that the first submarine should have 45% indigenous content (IC), which should increase to 60% for the sixth and final submarine.
  - The Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) module is the key criterion for technical qualification, enhancing the endurance and stealth of the submarine.
- **AIP Module:** The AIP module is a critical factor in qualifying for Project-75I, as it significantly improves the submarine's operational capabilities.
- **Designs Offered:**
  - TKMS, in partnership with MDL, has offered designs based on its successful Class 214 and Class 212CD submarines, featuring an operationally proven AIP module.
  - Navantia proposed a design based on its new S80 class of submarines, with the first S80 class submarine commissioned in 2023 as S-81 'Isaac Peral' in the Spanish Navy.

# PRESIDENT OF INDONESIA ARRIVES FOR REPUBLIC DAY EVENT

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**CONTEXT:** Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto arrived in India on Thursday to attend the 76th Republic Day event on Sunday as the chief guest. This is his first state visit to India.



- **Historical Significance:** Mr. Subianto is the fourth Indonesian President to attend India's Republic Day celebrations as the chief guest.
- **Special Gesture:** A 352-member marching and band contingent from Indonesia will participate in the Republic Day parade as part of the official visit.
- **Official Engagements:**
  - Mr. Subianto will be hosted at Hyderabad House on Saturday, where he and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lead official delegations in dialogue.
  - A number of memorandums of understanding (MOUs) are expected to be signed during the meeting.
- Mr. Subianto will attend an "At Home" reception hosted by President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan.
- Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar will meet with the visiting dignitary.
- **Diplomatic Meetings:** Official engagements for Mr. Subianto will begin on Friday, with a scheduled meeting with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar.
- **Historical Relations:**
  - India was the first major country to recognize Indonesia's independence, and it led the international campaign for Indonesia's recognition in the late 1940s.
  - The relationship between the two countries was strengthened when Indonesian President Sukarno was invited as the chief guest at India's first Republic Day on January 26, 1950.
- **Strategic Partnership:**
  - Over the years, Indonesia has become a key component of India's Act East Policy.
  - The bilateral trade between India and Indonesia reached \$29.4 billion in 2023-24, with Indonesia being one of India's largest trading partners in the ASEAN region.
- **Elevated Relations:** In 2018, Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Indonesia, and the relationship was upgraded to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.
  - Both countries adopted the Shared Vision of India-Indonesia Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.
  - The Defence Cooperation Agreement signed in 2018 has enhanced military ties and fostered joint talks between the armed forces of both nations.
- **Cultural and Diaspora Links:** Indonesia hosts one of the oldest Indian diaspora communities in the ASEAN region, and the two nations share deep historical and cultural ties.
- **Areas of Focus for the Visit:**
  - The visit will review collaboration in key areas such as defence, security, trade, investment, healthcare, digital technologies, energy, cultural connectivity, tourism, and people-to-people relations.
- **India-Indonesia CEO Forum:** The third India-Indonesia CEO Forum will be held during the visit to discuss business and economic ties.
- **Aviation Partnership:** Indonesia is one of India's oldest aviation partners in Southeast Asia.

## WE AIM TO INSPIRE YOU

# THE HIDDEN DANGERS OF RHODAMINE B: A GLOBAL AND LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

**CONTEXT:** Rhodamine B is a synthetic dye utilised in industries such as textiles, paper, and leather. Its application extends to scientific research due to its fluorescent properties. However, its use in consumable products is fraught with health risks. Studies indicate it can cause DNA damage, leading to mutations and potentially triggering cancerous growths



### Rhodamine B: Hidden Dangers and Global Health Impact

#### • What is Rhodamine B?

- Rhodamine B is a synthetic dye primarily used in industries like textiles, paper, and leather. It is also used in scientific research for its fluorescent properties.
- The dye is linked to serious health risks when used in consumables.

#### • Health Risks

- Studies indicate that Rhodamine B can cause DNA damage, mutations, and potentially trigger cancerous growths, particularly in organs like the liver and bladder.
- Animal research has shown tumor development following prolonged exposure to the dye.

#### • Global Regulatory Actions

- **USA:** The FDA has long prohibited Rhodamine B in food, and in January 2025, it reinforced the ban due to growing evidence of its carcinogenic properties.
- **EU:** Classified as a substance of high concern, restricting its use in cosmetics and consumer goods due to potential carcinogenicity.

#### • India's Response

- **Tamil Nadu:** Banned the production and sale of cotton candy containing Rhodamine B in February 2024 after detecting the dye in samples.
- **Karnataka:** Prohibited Rhodamine B in street foods like "Gobi Manchurian" and cotton candy in March 2024, imposing strict penalties for violations, including imprisonment and heavy fines.
- **Puducherry:** Also banned cotton candy with Rhodamine B and mandated food safety inspections.
- **Himachal Pradesh:** Imposed a one-year ban in May 2024 on the production, sale, and storage of cotton candy containing the dye.

#### • Health Expert Opinions

- **Dr. Mohammed Mithi (Surgical Oncologist, Mumbai):** Warns that synthetic dyes, including Rhodamine B, can induce DNA damage and promote tumor growth in animal models. Long-term exposure to unregulated products remains a concern, especially for vulnerable groups like children and the elderly.
- **Dr. Abyramy Balasundaram (Dermatologist, Chennai):** Notes that while regulated synthetic dyes are generally safe, prolonged exposure may cause allergic reactions, chronic skin issues, and pigmentation changes. Rhodamine B was banned in cosmetics by the EU in the 1990s due to carcinogenic and skin sensitization risks.

#### • India's Food Safety Ecosystem

- **Priyadarshini Chidambaram (Community Health Specialist, Bengaluru):** Stresses the need for robust research on the safety of food additives, especially synthetic dyes like Rhodamine B. Advocates for independent research, proactive policy-making, and increased awareness through digital platforms to educate the public about food safety.
- Highlights a knowledge gap among the public regarding food standards and the importance of enforcing strict action against violators.

#### • Conclusion

- Rhodamine B's presence in consumables serves as a warning about the hidden dangers in everyday products.
- A collective effort from governments, industries, and consumers is needed to prioritize health and safety over aesthetics, ensuring the safety of food products and consumer goods.

This case underscores the need for proactive policy actions and public awareness to ensure food safety and safeguard long-term public health.

# DIGITAL ECONOMY TO CONSTITUTE FIFTH OF INDIAN GDP BY 2030: ICRIER REPORT

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**CONTEXT:** According to a report by the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), based on a study by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, India's digital economy is projected to grow at twice the pace of the overall economy, contributing 13.42% to the national income by the end of 2024–25, up from 11.74% in 2022–23. This is the first such attempt by the government to quantify the size of India's digital economy



- **Projection for 2030:** India's digital economy is expected to contribute nearly 20% of the overall GDP by 2030.
- **First Government Attempt:** This is the first official effort by the government to quantify the size of India's digital economy.
- **Methodology:**
  - The report combines definitions from OECD and Asian Development Bank (ADB).
  - It includes the digital share of traditional sectors like trade, banking, financial services, insurance (BFSI), and education, broadening the scope of measurement.
- **Digital Economy in 2022–23:**
  - Gross Value Added (GVA): ₹28.94 lakh crore (~\$368 billion).
  - GDP: ₹31.64 lakh crore (~\$402 billion).
- **Dominance of Traditional ICT:** Despite the expanded definition, the traditional ICT sector remains the largest contributor to the digital economy in India.

# U.S. WHO EXIT JEOPARDISES AFRICA, SAYS HEALTH BODY

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**CONTEXT:** The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention warned on Thursday that the U.S. decision to withdraw from the World Health Organization (WHO) would impact health initiatives across Africa. The organization urged African countries to explore alternative sources of funding. This move followed U.S. President Donald Trump's signing of an executive order on Monday, marking his exit from the WHO shortly after beginning his second term.

- **Concerns about U.S. Withdrawal:** Africa's public health officials have raised concerns over the U.S. decision to withdraw from the WHO, highlighting potential impacts on global disease control and emergency responses without the largest financial contributor.
- **Dependency on U.S. Funding:** Many African countries rely on U.S. contributions through the WHO to fund public health initiatives, as emphasized by Africa CDC senior official Ngashi Ngongo.
- **Impact on Health Programs:** Ngongo warned that the reduction or cessation of U.S. funding could negatively affect health responses across the continent and urged African countries to reconsider their public health financing strategies.
- **Zimbabwe's Concern:** Zimbabwe's Finance Minister expressed worry that the U.S. withdrawal might lead to cuts in health aid for countries heavily impacted by HIV/AIDS.
- **Exploring Alternative Funding:** Africa CDC may explore funding opportunities with non-African countries to mitigate the expected decline in WHO support.
- **Risk to Collaborative Efforts:** Ngongo also expressed concern that the U.S. withdrawal could jeopardize a joint action plan between Africa CDC and the U.S. that had been in development for the past year.



# VEDHIK

## IAS ACADEMY

*The New Learning Mantra*

# START YOUR JOURNEY WITH THE BEST

**INDIA'S  
TOP MOST  
CIVIL SERVANTS  
FOR COACHING**

[www.vedhikiasacademy.org](http://www.vedhikiasacademy.org)

Head Office:

Vedhik IAS Academy  
Mercy Estate,  
MG Road, Ravipuram,  
Ernakulam-682 015,

Corporate office:

Vedhik IAS Academy  
Samkalp Bhawan, Plot No.15,  
Sector 4, Rama Krishna Puram,  
New Delhi, Delhi-110022

Regional office

Vedhik IAS Academy  
202, Raheja Chambers, 12,  
Museum Road. Bangalore -  
560001. Karnataka, India.

GCC Office:

Bobscoedu,  
Bobsco Trading & Contracting Co. W. L . L  
Office 22, Dream Tower 1,  
Road: 2701, Adliya, Kingdom of Bahrain  
[www.bobscoedu.com](http://www.bobscoedu.com)