

MEDICO GANG-RAPE CASE IN DURGAPUR

Police recreate crime scene with rape accused



KOLKATA

THE West Bengal police on Tuesday reconstructed the crime scene with the five accused and the friend of the Durgapur gang-rape victim, as part of the investigation, a senior officer said. The accused and the woman's friend were taken to the spot in a jungle near the private medical college where she is a student, to complete the process, he said. "They were taken to the crime spot for reconstruction of the crime scene. The entire

process was videographed in the presence of an IPS officer. We will corroborate their version with that of the victim," the officer, who is a part of the investigating team, said. Before the reconstruction of the crime scene, investigating officers questioned the victim's friend for nearly an hour, he said. The investigators said they were also probing into the role of the woman's friend with whom she had gone outside the college campus for dinner. The second-year

student, hailing from Odisha's Jaleswar, was allegedly raped outside the campus of the private medical college in Durgapur on Friday night. Meanwhile, two of the five arrested accused were on Tuesday taken to their respective residences, primarily to find evidence linked to the crime which they may have concealed, the officer said. During the search, police seized a few clothes from the duo's homes, which were allegedly worn by them during the crime, he said. Earlier, the clothes of the

Pratap Sarangi visits victim in hospital

KOLKATA

THE BJP MP from Balasore, Pratap Chandra Sarangi, on Tuesday visited the Durgapur 'gang-rape' victim at the private hospital in West Bengal's Paschim Bardhaman district where she is undergoing treatment. Sarangi, who arrived in Durgapur in the afternoon with a team of BJP workers, was reportedly stopped by the hospital's security personnel, leading to an argument between the two sides. "The MP's visit to the hospital had been communicated to the West Bengal administration and the police. Despite that, we were

stopped from entering. This is the state of affairs in Bengal," said Srinivas Pradhan, the BJP's media coordinator for Balasore district. "We are here to meet our daughter, who has been tortured. But, they are not allowing us," Sarangi said. The BJP MP, along with a few party workers from Balasore, later met the woman in the hospital. The second-year student, hailing from Odisha's Jaleswar, was allegedly raped outside the campus of a private medical college in Durgapur on Friday night when she went out with one of her friends for dinner. The mobile phones seized from the possession of the five arrested accused were also sent for tests, he said, adding, the police were questioning fellow students of the victim as part of the probe, too.

VIOLENCE ERUPTS BEFORE START OF MEDICAL FEST

SUNIL MOHAN PATNAIK
BERHAMPUR

WHAT was meant to be a celebration of camaraderie and youthful spirit turned into chaos at the Inter-Medical College Meet hosted by MKCG Medical College, Berhampur. In the early hours of Tuesday, a verbal duel spiralled into violence as students of MKCG, VIMSAR-Burla and SCB Medical College-Cuttack clashed near Hostel No. 3, leaving 3 students of SCB and some of VIMSAR injured. According to sources, the trouble began around 3 am, when groups of students from Burla and Cuttack, who had arrived to participate in the ongoing sports and cultural meet, were allegedly attacked by a section of local students. The altercation, initially verbal, soon escalated into a violent scuffle, with stones hurled and buses vandalised. Windows were smashed, mud and cow dung were thrown at the visiting students. Several students sustained minor injuries and were rushed to the college hospital for treatment before being discharged. Meanwhile, the injured students of SCB returned to Cuttack after the treatment. The reason behind the brawl remains uncertain, though insiders hint at lingering rivalries from previous inter-college fests — no-



tably last year's "Euphoria" hosted by SCB, which had also seen violence. Describing the incident as "regrettable," MKCG Dean Suchitra Das said strict measures will be taken to prevent such misconduct in future events. "Medical students are expected to heal, not harm. Such confrontations tarnish the dignity of these prestigious institutions," she said. A college council meeting was held on Tuesday bringing together representatives from all participating institutions to deliberate on the incident and reinforce discipline. The administration has also suspended Wednesday's scheduled events, prioritising the safety and decorum of students. Authorities are maintaining tight vigil on the campus as the situation continues to be monitored closely. The inter-medical meet, which had drawn students from 18 medical colleges across the region, now stands overshadowed by the very disorder it sought to rise above, a disturbing reminder that even in temples of healing, tempers can sometimes flare faster than reason. However, no FIR has been filed in connection with the incident.

Youth held for spreading hate speech

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

THE police arrested a youth for spreading communal hatred through social media, a

senior officer said on Monday. The cyber crime police arrested the accused, identified as Arshad Ali (19), on Sunday night in connection with a case registered on the

basis of a written complaint lodged by an individual on October 9 this year. In his written report to the police, the complainant alleged that one video

was uploaded and circulated on social media containing false, baseless, provocative, hate-speech content, and the said posting may provoke violence, and it is promot-

ing communal hatred while insulting Hindu sentiments and issuing violent threats. The illegal act of the persons in the video was live-streamed on social media, where four individuals were having a video chat with each other, the complaint alleged.

Their video chat promoted hatred on the grounds of religion. It also insulted the religion or the religious beliefs. The said persons also promoted communal violence and were discussing the recent violence in Cuttack, police said.

BJD slams State govt over delay in inventory of Ratna Bhandar

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

THE Opposition Biju Janata Dal (BJD) raised concerns over the safety of jewellery and valuables stored in Lord Jagannath's Ratna Bhandar at Puri, accusing the Odisha government of misleading the public in the name of religion. The regional outfit also expressed concern over the delay in conducting an inventory of the valuables, even after they were shifted back to the Ratna Bhandar following its repair on September 23. The items from both the inner and outer chambers of the treasury had earlier been moved to temporary strong rooms when the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) opened the inner chamber for repairs in July 2024 for the first time in 46 years. At a press conference on Monday, BJD MP Subhashish Khuntia alleged that the BJP government's intention was "doubtful" as it continued to delay the inventory of the Ratna Bhandar. Khuntia recalled that the BJP's 2024 manifesto promised a comprehensive inventory of the treasury's valuables, and alleged that the State administration was intentionally stalling the process. "The administration delayed the conduct of the inventory with evil intentions," he alleged, demanding that the government publicly disclose all details of the treasury's



contents at the earliest. He warned that "any further delay in the inventory of Ratna Bhandar will indicate that valuables have been looted from the temple treasury and the BJP government will be answerable to the people". The BJD MP alleged that the Central government delayed granting ASI permission for repairs under the former BJD regime, which had established a committee headed by retired Supreme Court Justice Arijit Pasayat to oversee the process. "But after the BJP came to power, a new committee was set up under a retired High Court judge, replacing Justice Pasayat," he alleged. Immediately after shifting jewellery and valuables to Ratna Bhandar after its repair, Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan had stated that the inventory of valuables would be done in the presence of experts from the Reserve Bank of India. The RBI has also given names of its experts and inventory would be done as per the State government's guidelines, he had said.

BJP likely to field Jay for Nuapada by-poll: Sujeet

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

THE Bharatiya Janata Party MP, Sujeet Kumar, on Tuesday, claimed that the party is likely to field Jay Dholakia, son of former Odisha Minister and late Biju Janata Dal (BJD) leader Rajendra Dholakia, as its candidate for the upcoming by-election in the Nuapada Assembly constituency. Speaking to mediapersons here, the BJP MP said that the party may announce his name as its candidate. He also added that the nominations will be filed by Dholakia on October 16. "I, along with ministers, MLAs and MPs of the party will definitely

camp in Nuapada and take part in the campaign, which will be led by the Chief Minister himself. On October 16, a grand joining programme will be organised in Nuapada, where more than 2,000 workers and leaders from the BJD and the Congress will join the BJP, reposing their faith in the leadership and policies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi. We will file the nominations on the same day," Kumar said. He also said more than 40,000 workers and supporters of the BJP will attend the rally in Nuapada on October 16. Chief Minister Majhi, Odisha BJP president Manmohan Samal and

other senior party leaders will remain present there. Responding to a query on the discontent among the BJP cadres over Dholakia's candidature, Kumar said there are no differences within the party and that all members have resolved to work unitedly for the party's victory. He exuded confidence that the BJP would win the by-election by a margin of more than 50,000 votes. The Election Commission of India, on Monday, issued the gazette notification for the by-poll to the Nuapada Assembly constituency, which outlines the election schedule. The Nuapada Assembly seat fell vacant following the death of Rajendra Dholakia on September 8.

DIGITAL PLATFORM FOR 'HABISYALIS'

HANS NEWS SERVICE
PURI

ODISHA Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Monday said his government would launch a digital platform for registration of 'Habisyalis', elderly women who come to perform penance in Puri in the holy month of 'Kartik'. Majhi said registrations for 'Habisyalis' will be made through the digital platform for their food, lodging, healthcare and emergency assistance. The Odisha gov-



ernment has arranged food and lodging facilities for around 2,500 'Habisyalis' from across the State this year, the Chief Minister said, addressing a gathering here.



Laxmi puja pandals in Dhenkanal, renowned for their stunning and creative decorations, are attracting thousands of visitors. Pandals spend lakhs of rupees on elaborate silver decorations. -- Pics by Aradhana Dash

Laxmi puja pandals not disabled-friendly in Dhenkanal

RUCHITA SAHUKARI
DHENKANAL

THE splendour of Dhenkanal's Gajalaxmi puja this year is undeniable, with each pandal reportedly spending upwards of Rs 10-50 lakh on decoration and immersion ceremonies. While some showcase gigantic silver backdrops weighing up to 100 kg, others feature eco-conscious designs using recycled plastic. Yet, amid such magnificence, a glaring omission remains, that is, accessibility,

especially for people with physical disabilities, known as Divyangs. Not a single pandal has provisions for persons with physical disabilities. Without disability-friendly ramps, these elaborate structures have become barriers rather than gateways to devotion. The swelling crowds further compound the problem, making it nearly impossible for Divyangs to approach the sanctum. Several individuals with disabilities were seen waiting outside pandals, hoping for assistance



that never came. While organisers claim that special visiting hours are allotted for differently-abled devotees, many visitors say these promises are hollow. "There were no volunteers, no wheelchairs, no ramps, just words," said Rabindra Nayak, a frustrated differently-abled devotee who came from nearby village. Although some organisers claim they received no formal complaints and therefore did not take any action, the public has a different

perspective. "In an era where inclusivity is both a civic duty and a moral obligation, the absence of such basic accessibility takes away the festive spirit for a segment of society that deserves to be part of the celebration," said Devdutta Patnaik, a social activist. "We will surely address this issue next year and ensure that no person with disability is deprived of seeking blessings from Maa Laxmi," said Rudra Narayan Tripathy, president of Joint Puja Committee. The administration has made

arrangement for senior citizens who can move on the vehicle at day time. As Dhenkanal's Laxmi puja grows bigger each year, it is to be expected that puja committees and authorities will proactively fix shortcomings. Until then, for many Divyangs, the opportunity for 'darshan' will remain a distant dream. Locals said the administration should make arrangements ahead of decoration works as decoration encroaches upon main road inconveniencing thousands of people.