

ODISHA GETS RS 10.9K CR FOR RAILWAY SECTOR

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BHUBANESWAR

Minister Ashwini Vaishnav on Monday said the Centre has allocated Rs 10,928 crore for the railway sector development in Odisha in the Union Budget for 2026-27 financial year. Addressing a press conference through virtual mode from New Delhi, Vaishnav said railway projects worth Rs 90,659 crore are under progress in the State.

"We had promised to invest more than Rs 1 lakh crore in Odisha. Now, with the recent budget allocation, the total investment in the railway sector will cross Rs 1 lakh crore soon," he said.

The present allocation exceeded 13 times the average allocated amount of Rs 838 crore Odisha had received each fiscal during the UPA regime between 2009 and 2014, he said. The State in the 2025-26 financial year was allocated Rs 10,599 crore.

The Railway Minister said Odisha will also benefit from

the East-West freight corridor project. The 2,052-km corridor will connect Dankuni in West Bengal with Surat in Gujarat. "It will pass through Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat. The corridor will boost industrial development and economic activity across Odisha," he stated.

Stating that six pairs of Vande Bharat Express and six pairs of Amrit Bharat Express

tracks to detect and prevent collisions with elephants. The project will be launched within 6 months. Besides, 200 spots have been identified across the country for construction of underpasses to allow smooth movement of the elephants, he added.

East Coast Railway (ECR) General Manager Parmeshwar Funkwal said a total of 59 stations in Odisha have been identified for complete redevelopment under the Amrit Station Scheme with a cost of Rs 2,439 crore, of which work at six stations—Cuttack, Baripada, Bargarh, Bimlagarh, Paralakhemundi and Talcher—have been completed.

About 88 per cent of the total budgetary allocation made for the ECR for the year 2025-26 has been utilised so far.

When it comes to Odisha, the total expenditure stood at 91 per cent, he informed mediapersons.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi thanked Prime Minister Nar-

endra Modi, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and the Railway Minister for the railway budget. This initiative of the Central government towards the progress of Odisha has further strengthened the resolve of building a 'Prosperous Odisha', Majhi wrote on X.

"I firmly believe that the 'East-West Freight Corridor', which was approved in the current budget, will usher in a new era in the industrial and commercial fields in Odisha," he said.

Majhi said the use of AI-based thermal cameras and Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) to prevent elephant deaths on railway tracks will create a model towards the protection of wildlife.

Stating that his government is committed to providing all possible support to the Central government for the overall development of Odisha, the Chief Minister said, "With our joint efforts, Odisha will definitely become a progressive and prosperous State."

Public entry to Maa Biraja

Prez arrives on 6-day visit to Odisha

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PRESIDENT Droupadi Murmu arrived here on Monday on a six-day visit to Odisha during which she will attend religious and academic programmes across five districts, officials said. President Murmu was received at the Biju Patnaik International Airport here by Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and others.

She was accorded a ceremonial welcome as different cultural troupes performed at the airport and on the way to Lok Bhawan. According to her itinerary, she will attend programmes across Khurda, Jajpur, Balasore, Puri and Mayurbhanj districts over the next few days.

"Elaborate security arrangements have been made at all the places she will visit," a senior police officer said, adding that special deployment have been made in Bhubaneswar where the President will stay for four days. After an overnight stay at Lok Bhawan, President Murmu will visit Jajpur on Tuesday to offer prayers at Maa Biraja temple and perform rituals at Navi Gaya, a sacred place for offering puja in honour of ancestors.

temple is restricted from 5.30 am till departure of the President on Tuesday. On Tuesday afternoon, she will attend the convocation ceremony of Fakir Mohan University in Balasore as the chief guest and proceed to Puri, where she will perform 'pind daan' at Swetaganga tank on Wednesday morning and visit Shree Jagannath Temple around 7.40 am. Public visit to the 12th century shrine is also regulated during Murmu's visit.

Before going to Similipal, the President will attend a special programme at the Rairangpur Jagannath Temple and interact with tribal women and youth groups.

On February 6, Murmu is scheduled to attend the Black Swan Summit India, an event jointly organised by the Odisha government and the Global Finance & Technology Network (GFTN) to discuss the impact of AI and future technology stacks on global capability centres, education, and the future of jobs in the FinTech and InsurTech sectors.

On the final leg of her Odisha tour, the President will visit the Similipal National Park on Saturday, officials said.

CM unveils Rs 600 cr growth package for Rayagada



C B SINGH

RAYAGADA: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Monday laid the foundation stones for several key development projects in Rayagada, marking a significant push to the district's growth and infrastructure. Upon arrival at Yesco Ground, Majhi participated in the 108-kundhi Vedic Vishwambhi Mahayajna, where he offered the 'Purnahuti'. He later inaugurated the Subhadra Shakti Mela, a powerful showcase of women's empowerment in the district, and extended various forms of assistance to women from Self-Help Groups (SHGs).

Majhi launched development projects worth Rs 600 crore in Rayagada and announced that 80 per cent of jobs in industries being set up in the district would be reserved for local youth. The Chief Minister inaugurated 22 projects worth Rs 238 crore and laid the foundation stones for 87 others valued at over Rs 366 crore. The projects include infrastructure development works such as roads, bridges, healthcare, schools and women empowerment initiatives. Majhi also laid the foundation stone for beautification of Maa Majhariani temple with an in-

ASBM hosts Youth Fest 'IGNITE'

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BHUBANESWAR

THE ASBM University hosted a two-day National Youth Fest, IGNITE 2026, on its campus on January 30 and 31. The event was formally inaugurated by Pradeep Ghosal, Head (CSR), Tata Power Odisha.

The festival witnessed enthusiastic participation from over 500 students from across Odisha and other States, who competed in a wide range of events such as BGMI, Let's Nacho, Solo Singing, War of Bands, Fashion Show, Quiz, Fun Fair, Treasure Hunt, and more.

The grand finale was graced by Odia film actor and Kori MLA Akash Dasnayak, who addressed the students with an inspiring message emphasising dedication, determination, and hard work. Renowned Odia actor Rusi Pattaik also graced the occasion and motivated the stu-



dents with his encouraging words.

The event featured vibrant cultural performances, culminating in an electrifying DJ Night that brought the celebrations to a thrilling

close. On the first day, the ASBM-Technology Business Incubator Foundation showcased Markfest, focusing on idea generation and promoting startup initiatives among young innovators. The Found-

CM rolls out projects worth Rs 276 cr for Subarnapur

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BHUBANESWAR

CHIEF Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Sunday unveiled development projects worth Rs 276 crore and announced new initiatives involving an additional Rs 633 crore for Subarnapur district during his one-day visit to the western town. Majhi launched the projects while attending the 'Subhadra Shakti Mela' a congregation mostly comprising women at Subarnapur.

He disbursed Rs 126 crore interest-free loans to 1,848 Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and said this financial support will strengthen women-led enterprises, promote self-reliance, and enhance livelihoods. Of the projects launched, foundation stones were laid for 24 projects worth Rs 173 crore, while 34 projects valued at Rs 103 crore were inaugurated.



These projects are aimed at strengthening infrastructure in sectors such as roads, drinking water, irrigation, education, health, rural development and urban development. Before attending the Mela, the Chief Minister visited the 'Samadhi Peeth' (memorial) of Santa Kabi Bhima Bhoi at Khaliapali and held discussions with members of the management committee and saints.

He said Santa Kabi Bhima Bhoi, who guided Odisha's social and spiritual consciousness, will be honoured through the comprehensive development of his Samadhi Peeth, for which Rs 35 crore will be spent.

KIIT organises mega blood donation camp

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AS part of the Art of Giving initiative, Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) organised a mega blood donation camp on Saturday. Since early morning, thousands of students and staff members from KIIT, KISS and KIMS made a beeline for the collection centre to voluntarily donate blood.

The blood donation camp was inaugurated by the Founder of KIIT and KISS, Achyuta Samanta, who extended his gratitude to all the volunteers for their noble contribution.

Blood was collected with the participation of medical professionals and staff from



the blood banks of KIMS, SCB Medical College and Hospital, Capital Hospital Blood Bank, BMC Hospital, Bhubaneswar, Central Red Cross Blood Bank in Cuttack, Indian Red Cross Society, Odisha State Branch in Bhubaneswar, as well as blood banks from the district headquarters of Jajpur, Dhenkanal, Kendrapara, Puri, Angul, Keonjhar and Khurda.

A total of 4,000 units of blood were collected. KIIT University Vice-Chancellor Saranji Singh, Pro-V.C. C.B.K. Mohanty, R.C. Das, KIMS Medical Superintendent Manas Behera, KIIT Registrar J.R. Mohanty, KIMS Group Director Dillip Panda, along with several other senior officials from KIIT and KIMS joined the camp.

Over 1K mobile phones seized from 21 burglars

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ODISHA Police on Sunday arrested 21 burglars and recovered 1,066 mobile phones during raids in Ganjam district, officials said. According to police, 20 of them are from West Bengal.

The arrests were made during raids in Bhanjanagar, where the gang members were staying. They were allegedly involved in looting mobile phones from different parts of Odisha and neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, police added.

Police said they seized 1,066 mobile phones, five tablets and accessories, including 1,275 batteries and 424 motherboards, besides 11 motorcycles



and nine fake number plates. The value of the seized items has been estimated at around Rs 50 lakh.

Ganjam Additional SP Ranjan Kumar Dey said police suspect the accused may have smuggled the looted mobile phones to other countries. "A detailed investigation is underway to ascertain the source of the mobile phones and the rea-

son for possessing such a huge number of devices," he said.

Out of the arrested persons, 20 hail from different districts of West Bengal and the remaining one was from Bhanjanagar. The accused resided in four rented houses in Bhanjanagar. While seven of them stayed in a house, 13 others lived in three houses, police added.

Wildlife activists welcome Budget's 'turtle trail' initiative

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ister said. Earlier, there was a proposal to set up a sea turtle research centre near the mouth of Rushikulya river, a major mass nesting site of Olive Ridley turtles. The location has good communication facilities and is close to Berhampur University and a regional centre of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) in Gopalpur.

The Forest department had identified around 3.5 acres of government land near Purunabandh for the establishment of the proposed centre, but no further progress has been made, sources said. "As the Union Finance Minister proposed the turtle trail, which includes research on the sea

creature, we hope the research centre will be expedited with the assistance from the Central government," said Rabindra Nath Sahu, secretary of the Rushikulya Sea Turtle Protection Committee, an organisation working on Olive Ridley conservation for several years.

Research on different aspects of sea turtles, including Olive Ridleys, could be carried out in the proposed research centre, Biswajit Mohanty of Wildlife Society of Odisha (WSO) said. He said it was high time the State government took steps to expedite work on the establishment of the research centre, which would be one of the few such centres in the country.

Berhampur MP Pradeep Kumar Panigrahi said he would take up the matter with the State government and the Union minister concerned and try to establish such a centre. A senior forest officer said they have already submitted the proposal to the government, which was under consideration.

Officials said a record number of around 9 lakh Olive Ridleys laid eggs at the Rushikulya rookery in two phases last year. Olive Ridley turtles visit Odisha's coast near Gahirmatha beach in Kendrapara district, the Devi river mouth in Puri district, and the Rushikulya river mouth in Ganjam district for annual mass nesting.