

# Fire rips through market complex

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BHUBANESWAR

A major fire broke out at a supermarket in Lingipur area of Bhubaneswar. The blaze, which started late Monday evening at around 10 pm, quickly engulfed multiple floors of the four-storey building, which contained large quantities of highly flammable goods, including plastic and rubber items.

Upon being informed, Fire Services personnel reached the spot and rescued two mall staff members who were trapped inside. Subsequently, they doused the blaze with water and later with foam. However, the fire was so severe that the firefighters struggled to douse it completely. The Fire Services department officials told mediapersons that the building reportedly has no staircases, and only a single entry and exit point.

Over 45 personnel, 12 fire tenders, robot firefighters, and other advanced firefighting equipment were



deployed to extinguish the blaze. The firemen used foam and water to douse the severe blaze that engulfed the building. Meanwhile, due to the blaze and extreme heat, parts of

the building have begun to develop cracks on multiple sides, raising concerns that the entire structure may collapse. Residents staying in nearby buildings have been evacuated to

avoid any eventualities. The fire had been raging for over 18 hours.

"The mall has four floors (Ground + 3), and we have successfully doused the fire on the ground, first, second, and third floors using foam. However, while attempting to control the blaze on the fourth floor, we noticed cracks developing in the building's roof. For safety reasons, we avoided entering the floor and withdrew our personnel from the building. We are now trying to douse the fire externally through holes created in the building wall on the front and other sides," informed Central Range Fire Officer Trilokya Kumar Babu.

The owner of the mall, Subash Chandra Jagati, claimed that around Rs 4 crore to Rs 5 crore of goods were destroyed in the building inferno. A large quantity of goods stored in the supermarket, especially plastic materials, was reduced to ashes. The building houses a wholesale market dealing in plastic products and supplies goods across the State.

# Naveen targets State govt's 'anti-farmer policies'



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THE Opposition Biju Janata (BJD) on Tuesday held a massive demonstration of farmers at Lower PMG in Bhubaneswar over the State government's alleged anti-farmer policies and the deteriorating law-and-order situation. Thousands of BJD workers and leaders gathered at the Master Canteen Square and later in a rally reached the Lower PMG, where a huge meeting was held.

Addressing the gathering, BJD president and Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik slammed the BJP-led State government, raising serious concerns over alleged irregularities in mandis and the deteriorating law and order situation in the State. Patnaik alleged that while the present government is raising the slogan of "Jai Kisan" (hail the farmers), its actions reflect "Bhago Kisan" (run away, farmers). The BJD su-

premo said a government cannot function on stories and speeches; it must deliver through concrete action.

"This government will soon complete its two years in office. However, it has failed both in decision-making and implementation. During elections, they used to make tall promises, but none have been fulfilled," alleged Patnaik. Highlighting the pro-farmer policies of the previous BJD government, he noted that a separate agriculture budget was introduced, the farmer welfare KALIA (Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation) scheme was implemented, credit support was ensured, and irrigation facilities were expanded for farmers.

The BJD chief further alleged that farmers are not getting fertilisers on time, the paddy procurement is not being carried out properly, and the illegal practices of "katni-chhatni" (deduc-

tions in paddy weight) are on the rise. He said farmers are not receiving payments on time, and when they raise complaints, the government dismisses their concerns as false. Patnaik stated that he had written to the government urging it to sincerely fulfil its electoral promises and resolve farmers' issues.

Raising concerns over the law-and-order situation, Patnaik said no one in the State feels safe. He alleged that women are not secure, and youth are not getting employment opportunities. He also criticised the repeated examination paper leaks, stating that the government has failed to conduct even a single examination properly.

"People need service, not speeches from politicians. A government cannot run on narratives; it must deliver results," said Patnaik, affirming that the BJD will continue its fight for farmers' rights till the government awakes from its deep slumber.

# Steps to curb accidents remain ineffective

JEEBAN MOHANTY  
JHARSUGUDA

THE administration's efforts to reduce accidents in the district have yet to yield significant results. Despite frequent meetings on road safety, the implementation of accident-reduction measures remains delayed.

On January 10, the District Regional Transport Office wrote to the National Highways Authority of India to take steps to curb speeding between Prashant Panda chowk and Gandhi chowk, but to no avail. Five police personnel died in a road accident on Sunday after their vehicle was hit by a speeding truck on NH 49.



Located 200 metres from the Regional Transport Office, more than 500 students study in Odisha Adarsh

Vidyalaya. It is situated adjacent to Katapali School, which has an enrolment of more than 600 students, and

PKSS College. The district hockey stadium is located near it. Every day, over 2,000 students commute to schools and college from Brajrajnagar, Belpahar and Jharsuguda. A formal request has been submitted to the district administration for the installation of barricades, street lighting and a flyover.

Meanwhile, former BJD MLA Dipali Das, Municipality chairperson Rani Hati and BJD district president Harish Ganatra met District Collector Kunal Motiram Chavan and urged him to initiate the process to provide jobs to the kin of five police personnel who tragically lost their lives in the accident.

# Over 800 animals poached in Odisha

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR

OVER 800 animals were poached in the last five years in Odisha, Forest Minister Ganesh Ram Singkhuntia said in the Assembly on Tuesday. In a written reply to a query by BJP legislator Sanjali Murmu, the minister said 2,836 elephants, tigers and other wild animals died in Odisha from 2020-21 to 2024-25, of which 808 were poached. As per data provided by Singkhuntia, the Forest, Environment and Climate Change Minister, 586 wild animals died in the State in 2020-21 due to various reasons, including poaching and accidents. Altogether 532 animal deaths were reported in various forests of Odisha in 2021-22.

The State registered the animal deaths of 585, 541 and 592 in the three subsequent years, respectively. The minister informed the House that 164 wild animals were electrocuted to death between 2020-21 and 2024-25 in Odisha, while

diseases claimed the lives of 347 during the period. Thirty-six wild animals perished after being hit by speeding trains, 89 in road accidents, one due to poisoning and 263 in various other accidents, he said. Singkhuntia said 17 animals were killed in infighting among themselves during the period.

The Forest and Environment department did not know the reasons behind the death of 671 wild animals reported in the past five years, as per the statement. In his reply, the minister also informed the House that a total of 15,731.41 hectares of forest land have been diverted for non-forestry works during the last five years.

In return, a total of 22,194.49 hectares of land have been identified and handed over to the Forest department to carry out compensatory afforestation, he said. So far, compensatory afforestation has been carried out over 11,044.86 hectares of land with a cost of Rs 141.61 crore, Singkhuntia said.

# Devotee gifts home to Lord Jagannath

SUNIL MOHAN PATNAIK  
BERHAMPUR

IN a rare blend of faith, sacrifice and spiritual surrender, a devout woman of Paralakhemundi in Gajapati district has dedicated her residence to Lord Jagannath, turning a personal dwelling into an offering of devotion. Kanak Prabha Patra, a resident of Sunari Sahi in Gajapati district headquarters, donated her house to the New Jagannath Temple Construction Committee following what she described as a divine message received in a dream.

Her late husband, Satya Narayan Patra, was an ardent devotee of Lord Jagannath and an active member of the temple construction committee. Having no children, he had for long cherished a desire to donate his house for the sacred cause and spent much of his time serving the temple during his lifetime.

After his demise last year, Kanak Prabha was living



alone. According to sources, she repeatedly dreamt of Lord Jagannath, who, in a recent vision, conveyed that her husband's cherished wish should be fulfilled and the house be dedicated for the temple's construction.

Moved by what she believed to be the divine command and her husband's unfulfilled spiritual resolve, Kanak Prabha visited the Jagannath temple at Paralakhemundi on Sunday and formally handed over the ownership of her residence to the deity, accepting Lord

Jagannath as her eternal son. The noble act drew deep appreciation from devotees and members of the construction committee. Committee member Durga Madhav Panigrahi and others present expressed gratitude, describing the donation as a shining example of faith, sacrifice and devotion that would inspire many.

The offering, born out of a dream and fulfilled through devotion, has added a new chapter of spiritual grace to the sacred journey of the temple's construction.

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THE Odisha government on Tuesday said that the next three-tier panchayat elections in the State will be held at its scheduled time in February 2027. This was stated by Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water Minister Rabi Narayan Naik while replying to a question by BJD member Ganeswar Behera in the Assembly. "There has been no decision at the government level to hold panchayat

# Rural polls as per schedule

polls ahead of its schedule in February 2027," the minister said. Naik said that the panchayat elections will be held as per the stipulated schedule. He said no guideline has so far been prepared for the reconstitution of blocks and gram panchayats.

The minister's reply in the House has put a halt to speculations about early rural polls

in the State following a statement of Odisha BJP president Manmohan Samal. While addressing party workers' meeting last month, Samal had told the party rank and file to be prepared for an early panchayat polls in the State this time.

"There is a possibility of holding the rural polls two to three months ahead of the

scheduled time," the BJP State president had stated. He had cited the 2027 census as a possible reason for advancing the timeline of panchayat polls.

However, State Election Commissioner Madhusudan Padhi later stated that the polls will be conducted only after the existing rural bodies complete their five-year term. The last rural polls were held in the State in five phases starting from February 16, 2022, and the next elections are due in 2027.

# ODISHA SIGNS MOUs TO BOOST ADVENTURE TOURISM

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BHUBANESWAR

THE Odisha government on Tuesday signed MoUs with Indian Mountaineering Foundation (IMF) and Aero Club of India (ACI) with an aim to develop the State as a premier adventure tourism hub in Eastern India. The MoUs were signed here in the presence of Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida, who holds the Tourism department portfolio. The Deputy Chief Minister also launched the Go-Adventure portal.

Addressing the gathering, Parida said safety is the cornerstone of the State's adventure tourism expansion. Through international

partnerships and a new focus on spiritual and experience-based travel, the State plans to modernise the sector and attract fresh investment from young entrepreneurs, she said. Parida appreciated the joint efforts of the Tourism, Sports and Home departments in opening a new chapter in Odisha's tourism landscape and called upon all departments to work collectively to make Odisha a world-class tourism destination.

Chief Secretary Anu Garg, who was present at the event, said the State government is prioritising tourism development with the vision of achieving Utkarsh Odisha by 2036



and Viksit Bharat by 2047. She stressed that all departments should explore ways

to contribute to tourism growth alongside their core responsibilities and

emphasised the importance of collective efforts. Garg expressed hope that adven-

ture tourism would boost local economies and create large-scale employment

opportunities, and called upon stakeholders to adopt the mantra "Think India, Think Odisha".

Officials said the Go-Adventure portal will simplify registration, verification and licensing procedures for adventure tourism projects. The MoU with the IMF is expected to strengthen safety audits and training programmes for land-based adventure activities such as trekking and rock climbing.

The partnership with the Aero Club of India will regulate aerial adventure sports like paragliding and paramotoring in line with national aviation safety norms, officials said. To improve ease of doing busi-

ness, 'Licence to Operate' (LTO) and 'Recognition to Set Up' (RTS) certificates were issued to domestic operators, and several adventure tourism operators were formally handed licences during the programme.

Among distinguished guests, former Union minister and ACI president Rajiv Pratap Rudy and Pawan Gupta from the National Institute of Water Sports (NIWS), Goa, joined the programme virtually. The initiative is expected to enhance safety standards, encourage investment, generate employment and promote Odisha as a leading adventure tourism destination in India, said a tourism officer.