

Rajya Sabha poll

Majhi congratulates BJP winners

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

ODISHA Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Monday congratulated the BJP's Rajya Sabha poll nominees and the Independent candidate backed by the party for winning the election, though the official announcement in this regard is yet to be made.

The BJP Odisha unit president Manmohan Samal and its sitting Rajya Sabha member Sujeet Kumar are the official candidates, while the party supported former Union minister Dilip Ray, who fought the polls as an independent.

In a post on X, Majhi said, "Heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to the party's State president Shri @SamalManmohan7 Ji, who emerged victorious as a candidate on behalf of the Bharatiya Janata Party in the Rajya Sabha elections, the party's senior leader

Shri @SujeetKOfficial Ji, and the party-supported independent candidate Shri @DilipRayOdisha Ji".

Majhi said the victory marks an important milestone in fulfilling the resolve to build a 'Viksit Odisha' under the BJP government. "Their presence in the Upper House of Parliament will further strengthen the voice of Odisha's interests, progress, and public service at the national level," the Chief Minister said.

The BJP nominees are party leader Santrupt Misra and eminent urologist Dr Dattesar Hota, whom the Congress and the CPI(M) are supporting. At least five MLAs of the Opposition BJD and Congress on Monday reportedly voted in favour of the BJP-supported Independent nominee Dilip Ray in the Rajya Sabha elections, for which the voting ended at 6 pm. Results of the polls are yet to be officially announced.

Odisha Pradesh

Congress Committee president Bhakta Charan Das told reporters that three of its MLAs - Ramesh Jena, Dasarathi Gomango and Sofia Firdous - have "voted in favour of the BJP". The BJD's Banki MLA Devi Ranjan Tripathy also announced that he voted in favour of the BJP-backed Independent candidate. Another BJD MLA Souvic Biswal's wife Dr Ananya Priyadarshini claimed that her husband voted in favour of Ray.

Both BJD president Naveen Patnaik and OPCC chief Bhakta Das were surprised when their MLAs came out openly in support of the BJP-backed Ray. "The party will certainly take action against the erring members who jumped party discipline," Das said.

Patnaik said, "I have spoken that the BJP and its allies would indulge in 'horse-trading'. Those Opposition members who voted in favour of the BJP have criminal records and were sent to jail."

BJD objects to 2nd ballot paper issued to Upasana

BHUBANESWAR: Polling for the four Rajya Sabha seats in Odisha was halted for about half an hour on Monday over a dispute on the issuance of a second ballot paper to a BJP MLA. The Opposition BJD agent objected to the issuance of a second ballot paper to BJP MLA Upasana Mohapatra. She sought another ballot paper for overwriting on the one, issued in her name earlier. Later, Mohapatra was allowed to cast her vote.

However, BJD president Naveen Patnaik strongly objected to the issuance of a second ballot paper to the BJP MLA. "The lady MLA from Brahmagiri made a clear mistake while voting. However, the officers present in the voting room, who are in charge, have illegally accepted her vote and issued a second ballot paper."

"This is completely against democratic norms and a violation of election rules. We strongly object to this. Some of our members have raised the issue, but they are not listening, thereby destroying the democratic election process," Patnaik told reporters.

Ruling BJP MLA Saroj Padhi said, "There is no harm in issuing another ballot paper to a voter. The voter may be provided with the second ballot paper if she has not shown the first paper to the party agent present at the booth. Patnaik does not know the rules of Rajya Sabha elections." The voting for the four Rajya Sabha seats commenced at 9 am. Odisha Health and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Mukesh Mahaling was first to cast his ballot, followed by Revenue Minister Suresh



Pujari, who returned to Odisha after a treatment in Delhi.

Patnaik also cast his vote while several MLAs were in the queue to exercise their franchise at the polling booth on the Assembly premises. The BJP has fielded its State party president Manmohan Samal and sitting Rajya Sabha member Sujeet Kumar as official candidates and supported former Union minister Dilip Ray as an Independent nominee.

The BJD nominees are party leader Santrupt Misra and eminent urologist Dr Dattesar Hota. The Congress and the CPI(M) are supporting Hota. The voting for the Rajya Sabha polls is being held in the State after a gap of 12 years, as this time, five candidates are in the fray for the four seats which will fall vacant on April 2. In the 147-member Odisha Assembly, the BJP has 79 MLAs and the support of three Independents, while the BJD has 48 members after the suspension of two of its legislators on January 15. The Congress has 14 MLAs and CPI(M) one legislator. A candidate needs 30 first preference votes to win a Rajya Sabha seat. As the BJP has the support of 82 members, it will have 22 surplus votes after electing its two candidates. Similarly, the BJD will have 18 surplus votes after electing its one candidate.

SCB MEDICAL FIRE

Hope for loved ones' recovery turns into gloom

HANS NEWS SERVICE
CUTTACK

IN the stillness of the early hours, when exhausted attendants of patients were sleeping on hospital floors and benches after a night of anxious waiting, a fire ripped through the trauma care ICU of SCB Medical College and Hospital and turned their fragile hope of loved ones' recovery into gloom forever. By sunrise, at least 10 patients were dead, as families wandered from ward to ward in disbelief, and the corridors of the State's premier government hospital had become a landscape of shock, smoke and grief.

The blaze broke out around 2.30 am on the first floor of the trauma care unit, where 23 patients were undergoing treatment. Patients, who were on ventilator support, were suddenly exposed to thick smoke as chaos prevailed in the ICU and staffers struggled to rescue the patients.

The trauma care centre, where critically ill patients are treated, soon turned into a quagmire of panic and subsequent deaths as the first floor of the five-storey building was engulfed in flames.

The relatives of the patients were fast asleep in the corridors of the hospital as it was past midnight and no person was allowed inside the ICU, when news of the fire spread on the premises, panicking the kin who scrambled to search for their loved ones.

They woke up to cries, running footsteps and confusion in the corridors. Many ran towards the ICU. However, security personnel restricted their entry into the ICU as the blaze spread inside the closed air-conditioned unit. Many hoped their relatives had been rescued on time. Instead, several found their dear ones lying dead with burns.

For the families outside the ICU, the tragedy unfolded not



through official updates, but through desperate searching, unanswered questions, and the unbearable discovery of their loved ones' deaths. "My brother was on ventilator support but he was recovering. Doctors had informed me that he would be brought out of ventilation in one or two days. But, today, when I was searching for him following the fire incident, I found his body lying on a stretcher in the medicine department," the younger brother of Ramesh Chandra Parida, who died in the incident, said.

The shock was perhaps deepest for those who had gone to sleep holding on to the reassurances from doctors of recovery of their kin. Krushna Ballav Das of Balasore had admitted his 27-year-old son to the trauma care unit after a road accident that left him with a head injury on Sunday.

"He was doing well... He was recovering. When I woke up and heard about the fire, I rushed to the hospital, where a staffer told me that my son

had died," Das said, weeping. A mother of four children, who lost her husband to the fire, said she was sleeping in the corridor when suddenly she woke up to the commotion of people rushing towards the ICU.

"When I searched for my husband and asked a staffer, he told me to visit another ward. There, I found my husband dead," she said. In another harrowing account, the son of a patient from West Bengal said his father had been undergoing treatment at the trauma centre for the past four days after suffering a brain stroke.

"I was sleeping in front of the ICU when the staffers asked me to go downstairs for safety," he said. "Later, I found my father dead. His body was charred beyond recognition." Another man, who thanked the almighty as he managed to rescue his brother, said, "When the fire erupted, I, with the help of another person, shifted my brother by carrying him on my shoulder."

Nita Ambani gets KISS Humanitarian Award

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BHUBANESWAR

NITA Ambani, Founder and Chairperson of Reliance Foundation, was honoured with KISS Humanitarian Award 2025 here on Monday. The ceremony took place on the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) campus. The award was presented by the

institution's founder, Achyuta Samanta, in recognition of her extensive work in social development through the Reliance Foundation.

The KISS Humanitarian Award is a gold-plated trophy featuring two hands lifting a heart, symbolising compassion, hope and the transformative power of humanitarian service. The

event was attended by senior functionaries of the KISS and members of the Reliance Foundation. Earlier, Nita Ambani was received at the campus by Achyuta Samanta and other senior officials. Nita interacted with the students of KIIT University and KISS, sharing insights and encouraging their academic and personal growth.

CBI court awards 4-yr jail to ex-post office official

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

A Special CBI Court in Bhubaneswar convicted and sentenced a former Assistant Superintendent of Post Offices working at Baripada in Mayurbhanj district to rigorous imprisonment for four years with a fine of Rs 1 lakh for demanding Rs 2 lakh bribe, an official said on Saturday.

Radha Krushna Sahoo, the then Assistant Superintendent of Post Offices in-charge of Central Sub-Division Baripada, was punished by the court on Friday, the official said in a statement. The CBI registered the instant case on February 4, 2014, against Sahoo.

It was alleged that the accused demanded a bribe of Rs 2 lakh from the complainant to take initiatives for his joining as GDS (Gramin Dak Sevak),

MD (Mail Deliverer/ ABPM), and MC (Mail Carrier) in Deobole branch post office. The accused did not take any step for facilitating his joining and demanded Rs 50,000 on February 3, 2014 (out of the total bribe demand of Rs 2 lakh), the CBI said.

When the complainant expressed his inability to pay Rs 50,000, the accused agreed to accept the money in two instalments, that is Rs 20,000 out of Rs 50,000, at his rented residence at Baliganja on February 6, 2014, said the statement.

The CBI laid a trap and caught the accused red-handed while demanding and accepting bribe of Rs 20,000 from the complainant. After investigation, the CBI filed the chargesheet on June 25, 2014 against the accused and the trial continued for 12 years before the federal agency secured a four-year jail term for the convict.

Fake CBI agents held after fleeing with gold

SUNIL MOHAN PATNAIK
BERHAMPUR

IN a swift and coordinated crackdown, the Government Railway Police (GRP) and Railway Protection Force (RPF) cracked a sensational case of robbery in which miscreants, posing as officials of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), decamped with a bag containing gold ornaments and valuables from passengers near Berhampur railway station.

The incident came to light following a complaint lodged on February 26 at around 10.30 pm by the victim, Hasmukh Jain (43), a resident of Arianth Tower, Pune Market area, Visakhapatnam. In his report to the IIC of Berhampur GRPS, Jain stated that he and his associate Khima Ram had deboarded Konark Express at Berhampur railway station on the night of February 25. As the duo was proceeding outside the station premises between 9.15 pm and 9.30 pm, two unknown persons allegedly intercepted them and introduced themselves as CBI officials. Under the pretext of conducting an inquiry, the imposters snatched their bag containing two mobile phones and 33 pieces of gold ornaments weighing over 800 grams, along with documents such as Aadhaar, PAN and ATM cards and driving licence, before fleeing the scene.

Acting promptly on the complaint, a joint investigation team comprising GRP and RPF officers launched a multi-state operation. The probe team conducted extensive raids across several locations including Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh and multiple towns in Rajasthan such as



Jodhpur, Samdari, Balotra and Majwala.

The relentless pursuit yielded results with the arrest of three accused persons — Narendra Kumar (24), Poonam Chand (55) and Jitu Choudhary (28), all from Rajasthan. Police also recovered the looted gold ornaments from their possessions. The arrested persons have been forwarded to the court.

Meanwhile, police are intensifying efforts to apprehend five more absconding accused, Meethalal (28), Balakram (29), Khetu Ram (28), Mahendra Kumar Prajapat (28) and Dinesh, all reportedly hailing from Rajasthan.

The successful operation was carried out by a joint team comprising Apathese Behera, Crime Inspector, Khurda Road GRP, along with C V Ramana, IIC of RPF Berhampur, and Biswanath Mallick, SI of Berhampur GRPS.

A case has been registered at Berhampur GRPS under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), including Sections 309(4), later altered to 126(2), 319(2), 320, 310(2), 317(3), 61(2) and 111(3)(4). Investigation is continuing to nab the remaining accused and unravel the full extent of the interstate crime network.

OSCPCR directs admins to eradicate child begging

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

THE Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (OSCPCR) has directed district administrations across the State to take immediate and coordinated action to eradicate child begging and ensure the protection and rehabilitation of affected children.

According to official sources, the Commission, in its letter issued on March 11, has directed the Inspector General of Police, IUCAW (Investigative Units for Crime against Women) of Odisha Police, all Municipal Commission-

ers, Collectors and District Magistrates, Superintendents of Police (SPs), Executive Officers of Municipalities and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), all District Labour Officers (DLOs) and District Child Protection Officers (DCPOs) to take immediate and coordinated action for the complete eradication of child labour in the State.

In the letter, the Commission remarked that it had recently come across instances where children are frequently found begging on streets, at traffic junctions and in public places across various districts of the State. "Such practices expose



children to exploitation, trafficking, abuse, accidents and denial of their funda-

mental rights to protection, education, nutrition and dignified childhood," noted

OSCPCR.

The Commission stated that child begging is a serious violation of child rights and is prohibited under various provisions of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, the Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, and other child protection laws.

It instructed the officials concerned to treat children found begging as Children in Need of Care and Protection (CNCP) and to take steps to rescue and rehabilitate them through appropriate legal mechanisms.

The Commission has

asked the authorities to form task forces at the district level that shall plan, coordinate and monitor actions for the eradication, rescue, rehabilitation and prevention of child begging. The District Task Forces, constituted under the leadership of the District Collector, will include the District SP, Municipal Commissioner/ Executive Officer of ULBs, DCPOs, DLOs, representatives of Special Juvenile Police Units, the Women and Child Development Department and NGOs working on child protection.

The OSCPGR further asked district administrations to conduct regular

joint rescue drives at traffic junctions, streets, market-places, bus stands, railway stations and other public places to identify and rescue children engaged in begging.

It also instructed officials to immediately produce the rescued children before the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) for appropriate orders under the provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act. Rescued children in need of care should also be placed in appropriate Child Care Institutions and provided with education, counselling, healthcare, nutrition and rehabilitation support as per the provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act.

Officials have also been directed to take strict legal action against persons or groups forcing or using children for begging, including the registration of appropriate cases under relevant laws.

Municipal authorities and district administrations have been instructed to undertake awareness campaigns discouraging the public from encouraging child begging and promote reporting of such cases to authorities or the child helpline. "A brief compliance report on actions taken may be submitted to OSCPGR every month with detailed data base," instructed the OSCPGR.