

BJD slams early Assembly adjournment

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

THE BJD on Tuesday criticised the Odisha government for adjourning sine die the monsoon session of the Assembly four days ahead of schedule and for not holding any debate on an amended mining law, claiming that the ruling BJP was “not interested in discussion” about the legislation. The Naveen Patnaik party also vowed to intensify its protest over the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2026, which allegedly restricts States’ powers to levy taxes on mineral rights and mineral-bearing land parcels. Addressing a press conference at the BJD’s State headquarters here, party MLA and former minister Arun Kumar Sahoo, former minister Tukuni Sahoo and others expressed gratitude to the people for “extending massive support to the party’s mass protest programme” held on Monday. “The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) has strongly criticised the decision of the State government to close the Odisha Legislative Assembly four days ahead of schedule without accepting the demand for a discussion on the issue of the



MMDR Amendment Act,” the party said in a statement. It appeared that the ruling dispensation was “afraid of the massive public support for BJD’s demand to repeal the MMDR Amendment Act”, it said. BJD spokesperson Lenin Mohanty said the amended law will cause massive loss to Odisha. “The State will suffer a loss of Rs 1 lakh crore towards pending tax dues to be collected from the mines. This apart, the State will lose approximately Rs 12,000 crore per annum in mining revenue due to the new legislation,” he claimed. The BJP countered the claim, saying that the MMDR Amendment Act will benefit the State and not cause any revenue loss. The BJD MLA, Arun Kumar Sahoo, said the party had submitted a motion seeking a discussion on the matter in the Assembly, but the BJP

did “not show any interest in holding a debate”. “Scared of the public support for BJD’s demand to repeal the mining law, the State government adjourned the Assembly four days ahead of schedule,” he alleged. “It is unfortunate that a discussion could not be held in the State Assembly on such an important issue as the MMDR Amendment Act concerns the interests of the State,” he told reporters. He said the BJD would not remain silent on this issue and would launch a statewide agitation. On the other hand, BJP MLA Tankadhar Tripathy said, “The government was prepared for a discussion over the notice given by the Congress, but the Opposition parties created a ruckus and disrupted the proceedings. The government is ready for discussion on any issue in proper format.”

STATE’S URBAN SANITATION GETS NATIONAL RECOGNITION

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

RECOGNISING Odisha’s efforts to strengthen urban sanitation and scientific waste management, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) has selected Bhubaneswar and Puri among 50 cities across the country under its PRAGATI 50 Initiative, as part of the Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0 (SBM-U 2.0). Officials noted that the initiative aims to transform the selected cities into Model Sanitation Cities through focused monitoring, structured handholding, and accelerated implementation of interventions in solid waste management, used water management, sanitation, cleanliness, and citizen participation. The 50 cities, selected from 24 States and Union Territories, will serve as models of good practices for



other urban centres. The initiative was launched virtually on Tuesday under the chairmanship of Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs Manohar Lal Khattar. During the programme, the Union Minister interacted with Krushna Chandra Mahapatra, Odisha Housing & Urban Development Department minister. During

the interaction, Mahapatra highlighted Odisha’s ongoing waste-to-value initiatives, including the establishment of Compressed Bio-Gas (CBG) plants in Bhubaneswar, Katka and Puri, with support from Oil India’s CSR. Waste-to-Charcoal initiatives are also being pursued in Bhubaneswar and Katka. Mahapatra reaffirmed the

State government’s commitment to implementing the PRAGATI 50 initiative in close coordination with MoHUA and the Urban Local Bodies concerned and in accordance with the guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures prescribed by the Ministry. The selection of Bhubaneswar and Puri is particularly significant given their

importance as major urban centres, with Bhubaneswar being the State capital and Puri a major cultural and religious destination attracting large numbers of visitors. The initiative will provide an opportunity to strengthen sanitation systems further, improve waste management and enhance citizen participation in both cities. The Housing & Urban Development department, in coordination with the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation, Puri Municipal Corporation and SBM-U teams, will undertake focused interventions and monitor progress against defined Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Through PRAGATI 50, Odisha will further strengthen its efforts toward cleaner cities and scientific urban development, while developing replicable practices for other urban centres.

Modi Healthcare marks a paradigm shift in health management

TAPAN CHAND

OVER the past 25 years (2001–2026), first as the Chief Minister of Gujarat and later as Prime Minister, Narendra Modi reshaped India’s healthcare landscape from a fragmented system into a proactive, holistic wellness model centered on ‘Antyodaya’. His strategy involved pioneering grassroots initiatives in Gujarat and scaling them into the world’s largest public health programmes. As Chief Minister, Modi addressed systemic vulnerabilities by prioritising public health infrastructure, sanitation, financial risk protection, and maternal safety. A key milestone came in 2012 with the launch of the Mukhyamantri Amrutam (MA) scheme, which provided low-income households with cashless tertiary care coverage of up to Rs 2 lakh. This initiative ultimately served as the technological and operational blueprint for India’s national health insurance architecture. The Chiranjeevi Yojana and Nirmal Gujarat Abhiyan successfully transformed public health by leveraging strategic partnerships and community-focused infrastructure. Through the Chiranjeevi Yojana, the State partnered with private obstetricians to provide free delivery services for tribal

and below-poverty-line families, which dramatically scaled up institutional deliveries. Complementing this medical initiative, the Nirmal Gujarat Abhiyan integrated sanitation directly into the public health framework. By establishing decentralised waste management systems, this programme targeted the root causes of environmental health hazards, significantly reducing waterborne and vector-borne diseases. By attaching new medical colleges to district hospitals, the State initially expanded its capacity for medical students and resident physicians. Upon becoming Prime Minister, Modi scaled this model nationally, anchoring India’s healthcare policy on affordability, accessibility, infrastructure, and preventive care. Launched in 2018, Ayushman Bharat (PM-JAY) is the world’s largest publicly funded health assurance programme, providing Rs 5 lakh annual free health insurance per family for secondary and tertiary care. The scheme has issued over 48.5 crore Ayushman Cards, facilitated more than 13 crore hospital admissions, and saved low-income families over Rs 2.03 lakh crore. In 2024, coverage was expanded to include all senior citizens aged 70 and above, regardless of

income. Ayushman Arogya Mandirs transformed primary care by converting over 1,86,000 sub-centres into Health and Wellness Centres for rural diagnostics. Medical education expanded significantly, increasing medical colleges from 387 to 858, boosting MBBS seats past 1,36,000, and growing the AIIMS network to 22 campuses. Additionally, over 10,000 Janaushadhi pharmacies cut medicine costs by 70 per cent to 90 per cent, while the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission digitised medical histories for paperless care through 97.8 crore active ABHA IDs. Prime Minister Modi’s governance strategy has transformed public health by addressing clean water, sanitation, and digital health delivery. Through the Swachh Bharat Mission, the construction of 12 crore toilets significantly reduced childhood stunting and diarrhoeal outbreaks. Simultaneously, the Jal Jeevan Mission delivered clean tap water to over 15 crore households, while the digital CoWIN platform facilitated the domestic rollout of 220 crore COVID-19 vaccine doses. Together, these structural reforms have built a resilient, digitised, and accessible healthcare ecosystem.

TEXTBOOK ERROR ROW

Bandh partially hits normal life

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

NORMAL life was partially disrupted in parts of Odisha on Wednesday due to a 12-hour bandh called by a farmers’ rights outfit over alleged large-scale errors in textbooks used in government schools, officials said. Shops, business establishments and educational institutions remained closed at several places in the State in the wake of the bandh call by the Naba Nirman Krushak Sangathan (NNKS). Vehicular movement was impacted in some areas of Khordha, Bhadrak, Baleshwar, Jagatsinghpur and other districts as protesters blocked roads and burnt tyres. Most offices, however, functioned normally and train services were largely unaffected. Essential and emergency services were kept out of the



purview of the dawn-to-dusk bandh. Security was tightened across the State to prevent any untoward incident during the shutdown. The NNKS has demanded the resignation of School and Mass Education Minister Nityananda Gond over the “errors” in textbooks used in government schools. The outfit’s members have been observing a relay hunger strike since August 20 over the issue. NNKS national coordinator Akshay Kumar said the bandh was called “as the State government did not take accountability of the textbook errors”. Among the errors cited by the organisation were a reference to Niyamgiri Hills as being located in Jharkhand and a picture of the Karnataka Assembly being published in place of the Odisha Assembly. Scientist Isaac Newton was described as a pilot in the textbooks.



Questions raised over NEP-2020

SUNIL MOHAN PATNAIK
BRAHMAPUR

NEP-2020 cannot be called a national education policy as it was neither debated in Parliament nor discussed in any State Legislative Assembly, said former Utkal University Professor Birendra Nayak at a discussion held in Brahmapur to mark the birth centenary of former Lok Sabha Speaker Rabi Ray. Speaking on “New National Education Policy and the Future of Our Nation,” Nayak said the education policies of 1968 and 1986 had undergone parliamentary discussions before implementation. In contrast, he alleged, the 2020 policy was prepared without adequate participation of students,

teachers, progressive organisations and intellectual forums. He further alleged that the policy gives prominence to Sanatan Dharma instead of India’s broader ancient knowledge traditions and described NEP-2020 as a political document rather than an education policy. Nayak stressed that an education policy should take into account students, teachers and their geographical and social backgrounds and should focus on education that helps shape the future of students and the country. The programme was organised by the Rabi Ray Memorial Committee under the chairmanship of environmentalist Prafulla Samantara. Senior journalist and ‘Samadrusti’ editor Bighneswar Sahu coordinated

the event and spoke about Rabi Ray’s life and contributions. Samadrusti Media Foundation chairman and columnist Sudhir Patnaik spoke about the present education system and called for greater awareness. Former Chhatrapur MLA N Narayan Reddy recalled Rabi Ray’s association with Ganjam and his support for the anti-Tata movement. Lohia Academy Trust secretary Debaprasad Ray spoke on the compilation of the Rabi Ray Memorial Lecture Series, while ‘Naveen’ weekly editor Rabi Rath delivered the welcome address. A special issue of ‘Naveen’ dedicated to Rabi Ray was also released. AAP activist Aditya Rath also spoke, while essayist Dr Bidhuprobha Rath proposed the vote of thanks.

Gundicha temple reopens for devotees

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PURI

THE Gundicha temple in Puri, situated close to the famous Jagannath temple, reopened for devotees on Wednesday after a hiatus of six years, officials said. The temple doors opened at 7.45 am, after rituals were performed in the presence of Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) Chief Administrator Arabinda Padhee. The Gundicha temple had

remained closed for the public since the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. “The public can visit the Shree Gundicha Temple from 6 am to 5 pm every day. While devotees aged 80 years and above and children of 5 years or below can visit free of cost, others have to pay Rs 10 as entry fee. The fee is being collected not for any revenue generation, but for regulatory expenses,” Padhee told reporters. However, no fee will be collected from devotees for the

first three days from September 30, he said. All ancillary arrangements have been made by the temple administration, district administration and the Puri police for the convenience of devotees, the officials said. The Gundicha temple, where the idols of Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Lord Jagannath are kept for seven days every year during the Rath Yatra, is located around 2.6 km from the 12th-century main shrine.



Motorcycle showroom gutted

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BALESHWAR

A motorcycle showroom was gutted in a fire in Baleshwar on Wednesday morning, police said. The blaze erupted around 7 am at Sahadevkhunta area in Baleshwar town. A fire services department official said the flames were doused within 30 minutes, and the situation is under control now. Nobody was injured in the blaze. An e-bike that was being charged inside the showroom is suspected to have caused the fire, though the exact reason can be ascertained after a probe, he said. Initial reports indicate that eight two-wheelers, furniture, accessories and other items were reduced to ashes in the fire, the official added.

CM calls for family role in child nutrition

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

ODISHA Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Tuesday stressed the need for greater participation of fathers and other family members in ensuring proper nutrition and development of children, saying the State government is committed to building a well-nourished Odisha. Addressing the State-level celebration of Angan Ka Utsav and the 9th Rashtriya Poshan Maah (National Nutrition Month) at an Anganwadi centre in Barmunda, Majhi said several nutrition-focused programmes are being implemented through Anganwadi centres and schools to improve the

nutritional status of women and children. He emphasised that the government is involving the entire family, including men, in efforts to improve children’s nutrition. “Through awareness and successful implementation of various programmes, we will certainly establish Odisha as a well-nourished State. The government is committed to a well-nourished Odisha,” Majhi said. The Chief Minister noted that more than 46 lakh activities were successfully organised across the State during Poshan Maah and added that Odisha secured the first position in the country in Aadhaar verification. Highlighting the importance of the first 1,000 days of a child’s

life, Majhi called for active participation of fathers and other family members alongside mothers in childcare and nutrition. He also appealed to people to contribute towards building a healthy, prosperous and developed Odisha. Majhi credited Anganwadi workers, helpers, ANMs and ASHA workers for increasing child immunisation, promoting institutional deliveries and significantly reducing infant and maternal mortality in the State. He said Odisha, once among the states with the second-highest infant and maternal mortality rates, had now reached a satisfactory position. He further highlighted women’s welfare initiatives, including Subhadra Yojana,

Lakshpati Didi, Mukhyamantri Kanya Vivah and Mukhyamantri Kanya Sumangal Yojana, noting that at least 40 per cent of the State’s annual budget is spent on women. Majhi said education in government and government-aided institutions has been made free-fee up to the postgraduate level, with girl children set to receive Rs 1 lakh after completing graduation. In healthcare, he said selected private hospitals across the country are providing cashless treatment under the Ayushman Bharat-Gopabandhu Jana Arogya Yojana. During the programme, Majhi distributed school kits to Anganwadi children and felicitated fathers who



participated in healthy-food presentations. He also honoured Anganwadi workers, helpers and ASHA workers. The Chief Minister inspected the Tiranga

Thali and hot-cooked meals served at the Anganwadi centre and personally served food to the children. Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida, Ekamra-

Bhubaneswar MLA Babu Singh and senior officials, along with Anganwadi workers, ASHA workers, children and their parents, attended the programme.