

# Six die as bus rams into auto

SUNIL MOHAN PATNAIK  
BERHAMPUR

IN a heart-rending road accident near Ladakapalli chowk under Purushottampur police station limits in Ganjam district on Friday, six members of an extended family, including two children, were killed and four others seriously injured after a passenger bus ramed into an auto-rickshaw carrying pilgrims on their way to Maa Singhasani Peetha.

The accident occurred between 7.30 am and 8 am when the bus travelling towards Berhampur allegedly lost control and collided with the auto-rickshaw carrying 10 family members. The impact was so severe that the auto-rickshaw was dragged for some distance before crashing into a roadside tree, eyewitnesses said.

Five persons died on the spot, while another succumbed during treatment at Kodala Community Health Centre. The injured were later shifted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital for treatment.



The deceased were identified as Mali Behera (75), Narasingha Behera (43), Ratani Behera, Lilabati Behera (45), Sneha Behera (10) and Kiran Behera (8).

Police and Fire Service personnel rushed to the spot after being alerted by local residents and launched rescue operations. The bodies were recovered from the mangled

auto-rickshaw.

According to eyewitnesses, the bus was moving at around 50 kmph on a comparatively deserted stretch of the road when the mishap took place. After the accident, the driver reportedly drove the bus to Purushottampur police station and surrendered. An investigation into the incident has been initiated.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Mukesh Mahaling and Commerce and Transport Minister Bibhuti Bhushan Jena went to MKCG and met the injured persons.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and Leader of Opposition in the Odisha Assembly, Naveen Patnaik, expressed grief over the death of people in the accident and

wished a speedy recovery of the injured. Majhi announced Rs 4 lakh financial assistance from the CM's Relief Fund for the next of kin of each deceased.

He also directed officials to ensure proper treatment of the injured and wished them speedy recovery. The tragic incident has cast a pall of gloom over the locality.

# ODISHA MANDATES EVs FOR OFFICIAL USE



HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR

THE Odisha government has issued an eight-point directive mandating virtual official meetings wherever possible, compulsory use of electric vehicles (EVs), and a 10 per cent reduction in fuel consumption across departments. The directives were issued on Thursday on the instructions of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, who had earlier reduced the size of his official convoy following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to spend wisely.

The Chief Minister also directed the Chief Secretary to take appropriate steps to ensure at least a 10 per cent reduction in fuel consumption by government departments. According to instructions issued by the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), government-level meetings, reviews, training programmes and workshops will henceforth be conducted in virtual mode unless physical presence is absolutely necessary.

"In cases where physical presence is required, only essential officers and employees will attend in person, while others will participate virtually," the CMO said. The government has also made it mandatory from June 1 to purchase only electric two-wheelers and four-wheelers for official use.

Hiring of EVs for government work will also become compulsory from the same date.

However, the guidelines stated that the purchase of petrol or diesel vehicles may still be permitted under special circumstances. The CMO said senior officials who have been allotted government vehicles for official use will now be required to carpool and commute using a single vehicle. The allocation for the use of official vehicles will also be reduced accordingly.

The Finance department has been asked to issue detailed guidelines within 15 days specifying which categories of senior officers will be entitled

to government vehicles. The State government also directed officials and employees travelling to distant locations for official work to prefer buses or trains.

The Finance department has additionally been asked to frame guidelines enabling officers who own electric vehicles to use them for official purposes. The government also plans to introduce electric bus and minibus services for employees commuting to offices, particularly in areas with a high concentration of government staff.

The CMO said all offices must take concrete steps to reduce monthly petrol and diesel consumption for the movement of government vehicles by at least 10 per cent. The Chief Minister directed that the new measures be implemented strictly across all government and government-aided institutions, public sector undertakings, universities and societies in the State, beginning with the State secretariat.

# Black tiger skin seized

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BARIPADA

FOREST officials of Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) arrested three persons and seized the skin of a rare melanistic tiger, officials said on Thursday. Officials said this was the third reported case of black tiger poaching in Similipal, the only place in the world where melanistic tigers are found in the wild.

Two similar poaching cases had earlier surfaced in 2025 and March this year. The skin, seized during a raid on Wednesday, is suspected to be that of a two-year-old tiger cub, STR Deputy Director Sumit Kar said. He said the raid was conducted on Basipitha-Bhupat road based on intelligence inputs about a deal involving wildlife body parts. The accused were caught while allegedly

negotiating the deal, he said.

The arrested persons were identified as Gangadhar Murmu (62), Ramdas Hembram (40) and Bhima Baskey (40), all residents of Mayurbhanj district. Officials also seized three motorcycles and two mobile phones from them. Kar said further investigation was underway to trace the wider poaching network and identify others involved in the case.



# KIIT, UN agencies sign MoUs to foster youth leadership

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR

THE KIIT-DU has signed two MoUs with the United Nations Volunteers and the United Nations System Staff College in Bonn, Germany, aimed at creating special global volunteering opportunities for KIIT and KISS students. The MoUs were signed during a visit of KIIT and KISS Founder Achyuta Samanta to Germany.

The MoUs seeks to enable KIIT students gain international exposure and contribute meaningfully to society through volunteering.

According to Samanta, KIIT has become the first university in South Asia to establish such a path with UNV for youth volunteering. During the visit, fruitful discussions were also held with the leadership of the UNV Programme regarding future areas of cooperation focused on service, learning and youth engagement at the global level.

In another major development, KIIT signed an MoU with the United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC) through the Nelson Mandela Global Academy for Social Change. The collaboration is expected to create new opportunities for young leaders to learn about social transforma-



tion, leadership, dialogue, peace-building and service to humanity.

Samanta said education should not remain limited to academic knowledge alone, but must also nurture compassion, responsibility and a spirit of service towards humanity.

He thanked UNV and UNSSC for reposing faith in KIIT and expressed hope that the partnerships would open new avenues for KIIT and KISS students to learn from global platforms and contribute positively to society.

The MoU signing and discussions were attended by Louise Chamberlain, Deputy Executive Coordinator, UN Volunteers; Sukhrob Khoshmukhamedov, Chief, External Relations and Communications Section, UN Volunteers; and Silke Weinlich, Deputy Director, Learning & Knowledge Services, United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC).

# Stakeholders seek Sewa Paper Mill revival

C B SINGH  
JEYPORE

THE prolonged closure of the Sewa Paper Mill has once again triggered widespread public concern, with employees, labour unions, contractors, transporters and local representatives jointly urging Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi to take immediate steps for the reopening of the industrial unit. In a memorandum submitted through the district administration of Jeypore, the stakeholders highlighted the severe socio-economic distress caused by the prolonged shutdown of the mill, which was once regarded as one of the largest industrial establishments in the undivided Koraput region.

The memorandum recalled that during his visit to Jeypore on September 9 last year, the Chief Minister had reportedly assured the public that necessary measures would be taken to restart the mill at the



earliest. However, despite repeated assurances at different forums, the signatories alleged that no visible progress has yet been achieved.

The appeal further stated that on March 11, 2026, Congress MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati, along with representatives of two labour unions, had submitted a demand letter requesting government intervention for reopening the factory. According to the memorandum, several former ministers, political leaders cutting across party lines, trade unions and members of the Chamber of Commerce have repeatedly approached the State government seeking

urgent action for revival of the paper mill. The issue was also reportedly raised during the previous Assembly session, where assurances were said to have been given regarding steps for restarting operations.

The workers further claimed that in April 2025, a prospective investor, identified as Mark AB Capital, had visited the factory premises and expressed willingness to resume operations after obtaining the required No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Odisha government. Despite this development, the unit continues to remain defunct. Established during the early 1980s with the objective of promoting industrialisation and generating employment in the economically backward and tribal-dominated belt of southern Odisha, the Sewa Paper Mill had emerged as a major economic backbone for the region. During its operational years, the mill reportedly provided direct employment to nearly 1,500 regular and contractual workers.

# NEP 2020 internships engage over 1.18 lakh students

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR

MORE than 1.18 lakh students from various higher educational institutions in Odisha have been provided internship and community service opportunities as per NEP-2020 during the academic year 2025-26, an official statement said on Friday. As per the provisions of the National Education Policy (NEP)-2020 and the guidelines of the University Grants Commission (UGC), undergraduate students are required to undertake internships and community service during the fourth semester.

In this context, the Higher

Education department of Odisha has engaged over 1.18 lakh undergraduate students in internships and community service programmes during the academic session 2025-26. The internship programme duration was six weeks, during which students received mentorship and practical training.

Internship opportunities have been provided in government offices, educational institutions, Anganwadi centres, Panchayat Samiti offices, health centres, financial institutions, private organisations and NGOs functioning under various government departments. As per the guidelines issued for the internship programme,

the students will be awarded academic credits based on their attendance, presentations, weekly reports and overall performance during the internship. These credits will also be reflected in their Academic Bank of Credits (ABC). Certificates will be awarded to students upon successful completion of the internship programme, the statement said. This year, the highest participation in internships has been recorded from the districts of Ganjam, Sundargarh, Mayurbhanj, Cuttack and Bolangir.

The students have been placed in offices functioning under departments such as Panchayati Raj and Drinking



Water, Women and Child Development, Health and Family Welfare, Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment, Higher Education, and School and Mass Education.

Higher Education Minister Suryabanshi Suraj said that priority is being given to quality and research-oriented education in higher educational institutions. Through internships and community service, the students will gain practical exposure and understand grassroots-level functioning and administrative processes, he said.

# Pujari inspects hockey stadium



HANS NEWS SERVICE  
JHARSUGUDA

STATE Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari conducted a site visit at the H Katapali hockey stadium to review the progress of the astroturf work. He met Hockey Association of Odisha vice-president Jeeban Mohanty to discuss upgrading the stadium. Pujari asked Mohanty to write to the contractor regarding the delay in completing the hockey stadium's astroturf work. It is worth noting that the turf work was scheduled to be completed before March.

Pujari had announced that a review meeting

will be held with the departments overseeing the hockey stadium construction.

He congratulated Shahid Naik, a 14-year-old student of Hang-Katapali School, and Vivek Naik, a 16-year-old student of the same school, who represented Odisha in the Inter-State School Competition from Jharsuguda district this year.

Pujari wished them the best of luck as they prepare to play for the Odisha Sub-Junior team.

Subhadra Pradhan, former captain of the Indian women's hockey team, welcomed the minister.

# Odisha Police to focus on crowd control during Rath Yatra

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
CUTTACK

THE Odisha Police are focusing on crowd management, traffic regulation and deployment of a specialised force during the annual Rath Yatra in Puri to prevent a repeat of last year's stampede in which three devotees were killed, officials said on Friday. DGP Y B Khurania held a high-level meeting at the State police headquarters in Cuttack on Thursday to finalise a special standard operating procedure (SOP) for the

nine-day festival beginning July 16.

"All aspects - beginning from crowd management, vehicle parking, smooth movement of devotees, health facilities in the wake of the hot and humid weather conditions, to security arrangements - are part of the SOP, which would be strictly followed," said a senior official who is in charge of the Rath Yatra festival this year.

During the discussion, the DGP stressed proper deployment of security vehicles near the temple, engage-



ment of K-9 (canine) squad, NSG-trained Special Operation Group (SOG) personnel, and Special Tactical Units (STUs) to avoid stampede-like situations, he said.

In a bid to ensure smooth rolling of chariots, the issuance of cordon passes will be regulated to manage the

surging crowd, he said. "Last year, there was a delay in pulling chariots as a huge crowd had entered the inner cordon. This time, the Puri

district administration and the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) have been requested to regulate the issuance of cordon passes," the official said.

The DGP said special arrangements will be made for the orderly darshan of devotees, who come from across the country and abroad to witness the annual Rath Yatra of Lord Jagannath.

"Dealing with emergencies, accident management and ensuring quick coordination between various departments were discussed

during the meeting," he said. As per the tradition of the temple, various rituals will be observed on specific dates. The 'Snan Purnima' (Lord's birth day) will be held on June 29, 'Navayuvan Darshan' (eye-opening) on July 14, and the Rath Yatra on July 16.

Several other rituals will also be performed after the pulling of chariots, such as 'Hera Panchami' on July 20, 'Sandhya Darshan' on July 23, 'Bahuda Yatra' on July 24, 'Suna Beshi' on July 25 and 'Niladri Bijje' on July 27. "Since lakhs of devotees

from all over the country and abroad are likely to assemble in Puri on all these occasions, it was decided in the meeting to make the security arrangements more extensive and effective," Khurania said. He said eight more parking spots have been identified to strengthen traffic management.

A special team will be deployed in front of the chariots to ensure the smooth movement of the vehicles of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra on Grand Road on the Rath Yatra day.