

## Notorious criminal injured in encounter

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR

A notorious criminal and prime accused in a recent armed robbery case sustained bullet injuries during an encounter with the police under Sadar police station area of Keonjhar district on Tuesday morning, officials said. The criminal was identified as Pravat Mallick, the main accused in the case related to the looting of more than Rs 8 lakh from two panchayat-level government officials at Mukuna village under Sadar police limits on May 18.

The police, during the course of an investigation into the armed robbery case, ascertained Mallick's involvement. Apart from this, the accused is also involved in more than 40 criminal cases relating to robbery, theft and other serious offences. According to the official statement of Keonjhar police, in a major breakthrough, a team of Sadar police station apprehended the dreaded criminal during a raid in the wee hours on Tuesday.

"During interrogation, the accused confessed his



involvement in the armed robbery of Rs 8,18,100 and disclosed concealment of robbery proceeds and other stolen property. During the recovery of the stolen property near Mahuldiha Water Tank, Belda, Keonjhar district, the accused suddenly retrieved a concealed country-made firearm and fired one round at the police party with the intention to kill the police person-

nel," informed the Keonjhar police.

Subsequently, the police resorted to a controlled retaliatory fire in self-defence, resulting in injury to the accused on his right leg. The cops later overpowered the accused and disarmed him. He was immediately rushed to the Keonjhar District Headquarters Hospital for treatment. Doctors later shifted him to SCB Medical

College and Hospital, Cuttack, for advanced care. A country-made firearm and robbery-related cash were seized from the spot.

A fresh case has been registered under the relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Arms Act. The police said that further investigation is underway to apprehend other associates and recover the remaining stolen property.

# Out-of-control car kills 3 bystanders

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR

AT least three persons were killed and three others seriously injured when a speeding car ran over several people having tea on a roadside stall after hitting multiple vehicles here, police said on Tuesday. The mishap took place in Gajapati Nagar area under Maitree Vihar police station limits, on the road connecting Acharya Vihar to Nalco Square in Bhubaneswar, on Monday night.

The speeding EV crashed into several two-wheelers and an auto-rickshaw on the road before ramming into a group of people having tea near the roadside stall. While two persons, identified as Jeyrom Ekka, husband of an IAS officer, and Santosh Behera (from Dhenkanal) were declared dead at the hospital on



Monday night, another person, Laxmidhar Toppo, died during treatment at a hospital here on Tuesday morning, said Bhubaneswar ACP (zone-5) Biswaranjan Senapati.

Three other persons, including auto driver Shankarlal Sharma, Sulagna Deo, an HR in an IT firm, and Subrat Mishra, an employee of Nalco, are under treatment and ad-

mitted to different hospitals, he said. Sharma's health condition is stated to be serious, while the other two injured persons are stable, Senapati said.

He further said that three cases were registered at Maitree Vihar police station related to the accident. "We have arrested the car driver Anil Kumar Gouda (30), a resident of Gangapur area in

Gangjam district, under Section 105 of BNS (culpable homicide that does not amount to murder)," the ACP said.

When asked about the reason behind the accident, he said, "The car driver was experiencing severe cough just before the accident, and he did not exactly know how he lost control of the vehicle and crashed into people and other vehicles." "A breath analyser test conducted on the driver showed zero alcohol reading, indicating that he was not under the influence of alcohol at the time of testing," the ACP stated.

The police have seized the prescription and cough syrup bottle he was using. The police, however, said the exact cause and circumstances of the accident will be determined after completion of the investigation and examination of all available evidence.

## Bamboo handicraft demand drops

VENKAT RAMAN PRADHAN  
BARGARH

BAMBOO handicrafts, once a major source of livelihood for people living near the forest areas of Bargarh district, are witnessing a steady decline in demand. Local artisans traditionally produce a variety of bamboo products such as winnowing baskets, carrying baskets, trays, and other household items, which have long supported their families financially.

However, artisans say that the lack of adequate government support, promotional initiatives, and access to dedicated markets have significantly affected the industry. As a result, sales have dropped over the years, threatening the survival of this traditional craft.



Bamboo craftsmen have urged the government to take immediate steps to revive the sector by providing better marketing opportunities, financial assistance, and policy support to sustain their livelihoods and preserve the region's rich handicraft heritage.

Rising costs of quality bamboo poles also eat heav-

ily into the artisans' narrow profit margins.

Many rural artisans struggle to secure upfront cash to buy automated machinery or bulk materials independently. Plummeting profits have pushed the younger generation to abandon the trade, and migrating to other States for better paying jobs.

## Two workers rescued from Tirupati

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR

ODISHA Police rescued two labourers belonging to Gajapati district who were allegedly subjected to bonded labour and illegal confinement in Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh, an official said on Tuesday. The rescued labourers were identified as Santiel Karado (54) and Gamiel Karado (29), residents of R Udayagiri block in Gajapati district. According to police, both had been working as labourers under a businessman in Tirupati for the last five years. However, according to information received from their family members, they had been illegally confined by their employer for the past eight days, the police officer

said. The families also alleged that during this period, the duo was deprived of adequate food, prevented from contacting their families, denied their rightful wages, and threatened to continue working without payment for the coming months. Acting upon the complaints, R Udayagiri Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Rakesh K Sahoo established contact with Tirupati Police and shared all relevant details regarding the victims and the circumstances of their confinement.

Through coordinated efforts, timely intervention, and effective cooperation between Gajapati Police and Tirupati Police, both labourers were successfully rescued and brought to safety, the officer said.

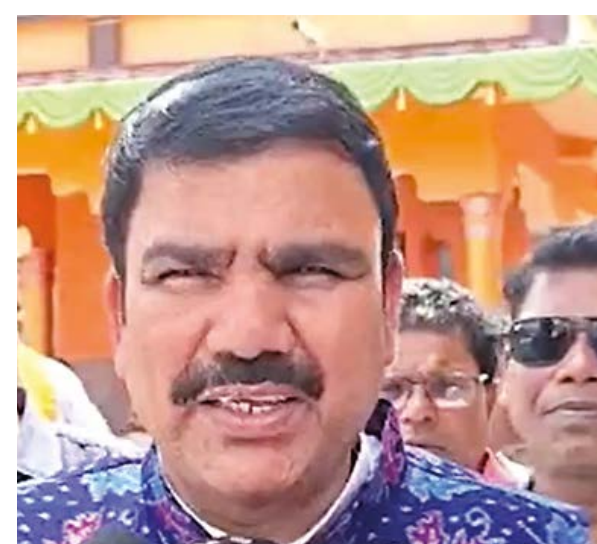
## Schools to reopen tomorrow

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR

ODISHA School and Mass Education Minister Nityananda Gond on Monday said that all schools, both government and private, in the State will reopen on June 18 after summer vacation. The schools were closed on April 27 for summer vacation following a rise in temperature in various districts of the State.

"The government is concerned about the education of the students.

The temperatures have also dipped as monsoon has arrived in Odisha. So, all schools will reopen on June 18," Gond told reporters. If an unbearable heat wave prevails on June 18, further decision will be taken keeping the health of the



students in mind, he said. The government is taking necessary steps to distribute textbooks to the school-going students as soon as possible, he said. Usually, the summer vaca-

tion in schools starts on May 6 and continues till June 17. However, considering the existing heat wave conditions, the government had announced summer vacation on an earlier date.

## Minor sexually abused in Mayurbhanj

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR

A 13-year-old girl was allegedly sexually assaulted in Mayurbhanj district, police said on Monday. The family members of the victim alleged that the minor was gang-raped on Sunday, but Mayurbhanj Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Deepak Kumar Gochayat said it was a case of sexual assault and not a case of gang-rape.

The ASP said the police acted promptly and detained three persons for their alleged involvement in the incident after registering a case at Rairangpur Town police station under the provisions of POCSO and BNS. Based on the preliminary investigation, the ASP said the minor girl had gone to a secluded place with a male friend on a motorcycle on Sunday, where she was sexually assaulted by him.



The minor's elder sister was also there at a distance, talking to one of the accused persons while her sister was being abused in nearby forests. The two girls had gone to the forest area with the four accused persons. The ASP said that the three accused persons, identified as Sk Makbul, Sk Tipu, and Sk Omaan, were detained while Sk Zabeed was absconding. Another case of a woman

allegedly gang-raped was reported from Patnagarh police station area in Bolangir district, the police said. While the alleged crime took place on June 8, the victim reported the matter to the police on June 14, following which the four accused were arrested.

Another such incident was reported from a village under Kodinga police station area in Nabarangpur district,

where a 21-year-old woman was found dead in mysterious circumstances. Her body was recovered from the backyard of her house, police said.

The family members in their complaint said that the victim had gone out on Sunday night to celebrate the Raja festival, and she joined swing play with a friend till 9 pm. Later, she was not seen by friends, the family members said, adding that her body was discovered early Monday morning. There were injury marks on her body, the family alleged.

Nabarangpur SP Kashyap Parth Jagdish, who visited the spot, said, "The death is mysterious. But we cannot say now whether it was a case of rape and murder. The exact cause of death will be determined after the post-mortem report. Strict action will be taken after investigation." No one was either detained or arrested in the Nabarangpur case.

## Bhanja legacy takes centre stage in Delhi

SUNIL MOHAN PATNAIK  
BERHAMPUR

THE literary brilliance and cultural grandeur of Kabi Samrat Upendra Bhanja, one of Odisha's greatest poets, will be celebrated on a national platform as a 20-member cultural troupe from Berhampur and the Ganjam region prepares to present "Swapnila Odisha: A Cultural & Literature Tribute to Kabi Samrat Upendra Bhanja" at the prestigious Stein Auditorium of India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, on June 19.

Organised by Anvesha Kala Kendra, the programme seeks to showcase the immortal literary legacy of Upendra Bhanja through an artistic fusion of music, dance, storytelling and cultural performances.

Revered as the architect of Odia poetic excellence, Upendra Bhanja's works



continue to inspire generations and remain a cornerstone of Odisha's literary heritage. Union Culture and Tourism Minister Gajendra

Singh Shekhawat will grace the occasion as the chief guest. The event will feature a vibrant presentation of Odisha's classical and folk

traditions by artistes from Berhampur and Ganjam, reflecting the region's deep cultural connection with the celebrated poet.

Anvesha Kala Kendra secretary Anvesha Brahma said the programme is aimed at taking Odisha's rich literary and artistic traditions to a wider audience and creating greater awareness about the enduring contributions of Kabi Samrat Upendra Bhanja to Indian literature.

The cultural evening will also offer guests a taste of traditional Odia cuisine, adding a culinary dimension to the celebration. Expected to draw literary scholars, artistes, members of the Odia diaspora and culture enthusiasts, the event promises to be a fitting tribute to the legendary poet and a proud moment for Ganjam's cultural fraternity.

# Lord Jagannath rules Odisha as King, says Majhi

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
PURI

CHIEF Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Monday said that Lord Jagannath was the "real King" of Odisha and he is doing public service by occupying the CM's chair. "In Odisha, the Chief Minister is not the ruler, but the Lord Himself is the real King and the CM's seat is not a symbol of power but a means of public service," Majhi said after being felicitated at a special function here for succeeding in deleting the word 'Dham' tag from the Jagannath temple at Digha in neighbouring West Bengal.

A special programme was organised by 'Shri Jagannath Bhakta Seva Sansthan' at the Town Hall here to felicitate Majhi for taking strong steps to protect the Jagannath culture and establish Odia identity in the world. The meeting was attended by Puri MP Sambit Patra, servitors, Jagannath culture scholars, pandits and devotees.

The speakers at the meeting praised the Chief Minister for the successful and historic intervention taken by him to remove the word 'Dham' from the name of the Jagannath Temple at Digha in West Bengal. Majhi stated that according to the eternal

culture and classical rules, Puri is the only Shri Jagannath Dham in the whole world.

"Shri Jagannath culture and tradition have its own uniqueness. I assure you here that the State government will remain vigilant like a guard for the protection, promotion of Shri Jagannath culture and preservation of the classical tradition of the temple," the Chief Minister said.

Many Jagannath devotees were hurt after the then West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee named Digha Temple as 'Jagannath Dham' and she refused to withdraw

the word 'Dham' despite being requested by many organisations.

However, with the change of political landscape in West Bengal, Majhi urged his counterpart, Suwendu Adhikari, who, after receiving the letter, promptly agreed to drop the word 'Dham' from the Digha Jagannath Temple. Majhi said that those who have done politics of arrogance about Lord Jagannath have suffered the consequences in the elections, because there is no place for arrogance with 'Kalia Saanta' (Lord Jagannath).

Calling his government as a representative of 'Odia

Asmita', Majhi reiterated his commitment to protect the classical tradition of the temple. He said that his government opened all four doors of the temple for devotees on the first day of its formation on June 12, 2024 and opened the Lord's Ratna Bhandar (treasury) for repair and inventory after a gap of 46 years. Majhi also said that many poor devotees, who could not visit Puri temple due to different issues, have benefited through the State government's "Shri Jagannath Darshan Yojana" scheme that provides free 'darshan' of the Lord and can partake of 'Mahaprasad'.

