

V-P LAUNCHES HIGH SEAS FISHING SCHEME

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BHUBANESWAR

VICE-President C P Radhakrishnan on Thursday launched the national programme for issuance of Letters of Authorisation (LoAs) for sustainable harnessing of fisheries in the high seas. He presented LoAs for high seas fishing to 10 Fish Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and fishermen from across the country. On the occasion, he also launched the Odisha Deep Sea Fishing Mission Document.

In his address at the event, the Vice-President said that while fishing activities have traditionally remained close to the shore, the new framework would enable Indian fishermen to confidently venture into deep waters for the sustainable harvesting of high-value species such as tuna.

"The initiative marks the beginning of a new chapter in India's maritime journey



by enabling Indian fishermen to sustainably harness the vast potential of the country's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the high seas," he said. India possesses over 11,000 kilometres of coastline and an Exclusive Economic Zone of nearly 24 lakh square kilometres, with immense marine wealth that remains largely untapped, he noted. Highlighting the rapid growth of India's fisheries

sector, the Vice-President said that India is today the world's second-largest fish-producing country, contributing around 8 per cent to global fish production. He noted that the sector supports the livelihoods of nearly three crore fishermen and fish farmers and that seafood exports crossed Rs 73,000 crore during the last financial year. He expressed confidence that the High Seas initiative would

further strengthen India's export potential and generate employment in harvesting, processing, cold chain, transportation, packaging, logistics and export services.

The Vice-President further stated that the new framework gives priority to fisheries cooperatives, Fish Farmer Producer Organisations, and Indian fishermen for the issuance of Letters of Authorisation. He described the initiative as a significant step towards empowering coastal communities and emphasised that collective efforts can bring about transformational change in the fisheries sector.

He observed that the programme reflects the collective resolve of the Union government, the State government, and fishing communities to usher in a new era of growth, sustainability and prosperity in the fisheries sector. Emphasising that sustainable fishing is a moral responsibility, the Vice-President said that

economic progress must go hand in hand with conservation of marine resources. He underlined the importance of digital authorisation systems, vessel tracking, international certification, and strict compliance with measures against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

Urging young people to view fisheries as a modern profession driven by science, technology, innovation and global opportunities, he called upon institutions to continue supporting fishing communities with knowledge, technology and finance to realise the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

The programme was attended by Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati; Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi; Union Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying and Panchayati Raj Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and several other dignitaries.

Odisha to attach PM Surya Ghar scheme to PMAY

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ODISHA'S Deputy Chief Minister and Energy Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo on Wednesday announced that PM-Surya Ghar Yojana will be attached to different housing schemes of the Odisha government, including Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (PMAY), reflecting the State's focus on renewable energy and affordable housing. The Deputy Chief Minister revealed the plan while chairing a high-level review meeting on power sector reforms, safety measures, and implementation of Central and State government schemes.

"It will be an option for the beneficiary. Our aim is to ensure that every beneficiary under PMAY and other housing schemes also gets the benefit of solar power. By attaching PM-Surya Ghar with State housing programmes, we will provide 24x7 clean and affordable electricity to the people, while reducing their electricity bills," said Singh Deo.

Under the scheme, a subsidy of Rs 30,000 from the Centre and Rs 25,000 from the State will be provided for 1 KW

roof-top solar installation in urban areas. The beneficiary has to pay Rs 1,875 for 1 KW solar panel. The Deputy Chief Minister directed DISCOMs to prioritise public safety measures across urban and rural areas.

The key decisions taken during the high-level meeting included undertaking a Rs 3,708-crore underground cabling project across all four DISCOMs to replace overhead power lines; preparing a comprehensive Detailed Project Report (DPR) on safety for Odisha's DISCOMs; shifting low-hanging wires; replacing bare conductors with insulated conductors; installing fencing at distribution substations; constructing boundary walls around power sub-stations (PSS); providing cradle and guard wires for LT line protection; and developing a utility shifting portal/app along with

an LTDB for LT protection.

The Deputy Chief Minister also reviewed the implementation of PM-SGMBY and ULA Model for both urban and rural electrification, including poles, wiring and streetlights. Singh Deo emphasised that the State government is committed to providing safe, reliable, and sustainable power to every household in Odisha. He directed officials to ensure time-bound execution of all safety and infrastructure projects. All the above departments will work in coordination to provide safe and reliable service.

The meeting was attended by Housing and Urban Development Minister Krushna Chandra Mahapatra, Rural Development, Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water Minister Rabi Narayan Naik, along with other senior officials.

Season's first floodwater released from Hirakud

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AUTHORITIES of the Hirakud Dam in Sambalpur district released the season's first floodwater on Thursday, after alerting districts downstream of the Mahanadi river, officials said. Deputy Chief Minister Pravatī Parida was present on the occasion.

A total of four of the 67 dam gates were opened around 11 am, and 64,000 cusec of water is flowing downstream, Water Resources Department Engineer-in-Chief Dillip Kumar Rout said. Apart from the gates, 25,000 cusec water is also flowing through the power channel route while another 5,000 cusec is flowing in a canal system, Rout said. Another six gates of the dam are likely to be opened by this evening, he said. Rout said the water level in river Mahanadi at Mundali near Kataka was 2.24 lakh cusec at 11 am, which will come down to 50,000 cusec before the released water reaches the barrage.

Odisha police facing manpower shortage: DGP

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ODISHA police is facing an acute manpower shortage resulting in heavy workload on personnel, DGP Y B Khurania said on Wednesday.

Speaking to reporters in Kataka, Khurania said that against a sanctioned strength of around 89,000 personnel, nearly 33,000 posts in various ranks are vacant. "This is the factual position and no one can deny this. Due to the large number of vacancies, personnel posted in police stations and outposts work more than their counterparts in other States," he said.

The DGP said Odisha's police-population ratio remains below the national average, adding that the State currently has about 129 police personnel per 1 lakh population against the national average of 153. He thanked Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi for approving the creation of 17,000 new posts in the Police department. "Combined with the exist-



ing 16,000 vacancies, around 33,000 posts will now be filled," Khurania said, expressing hope that the Odisha Uniformed Services Recruitment Board would begin the recruitment process soon. He said filling the vacancies would significantly strengthen policing and improve public service delivery as the State modernises its police force.

Khurania's remarks come amid concerns over work pressure within the force following the resignation request of

Bhubaneswar DCP Jagmohan Meena and the alleged suicide of a woman police inspector in Kataka. Asked whether excessive workload was a factor, the DGP said resignations from government service were not uncommon. "People join government service and also resign," he said. On the death of the woman police inspector, Khurania said the cause would be known only after completion of the investigation and appropriate action would be taken based on its findings.

Identify land for model schools: CM

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IRKED over the delay in implementation of Godabarish Mishra Model Primary Schools (GMMPS) programme, Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Wednesday asked the district collectors to identify land for setting up at least 2,200 such institutions by March 2027.

The Chief Minister issued this direction while reviewing the progress in the GMMPS, a flagship programme of Odisha's BJP government. He said the programme is crucial for strengthening primary education across the State.

The State government has planned to build GMMPS in all the gram panchayats for which Rs 2,200 crore has been allocated in the 2026-27 fiscal. The previous year's allocation was Rs 50 crore. Majhi expressed wonder when he was informed about the difficulties in acquiring five acres of land for the model school.

He said it may be difficult to get one patch of a 5-acre



plot in the coastal region, but there should not be any problem in other districts. He asked the district collectors to acquire private land near schools if there is an inadequacy of government land. "Take help of local MLAs in acquiring land for setting up the GMMPS," the Chief Minister suggested to district collectors.

Majhi instructed district collectors to monitor the implementation of the scheme on a weekly basis and submit progress reports to the

Secretary of the School and Mass Education department every seven days. Majhi said he would personally review the progress of the project every month to ensure timely execution. The Chief Minister said the objective of the GMMPS programme is to set up world-class primary schools at the Gram Panchayat level in line with the provisions of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009.

According to an official

statement issued by the CMO, construction has already begun for 322 GMMPS where foundation stones have been laid. The Chief Minister said the success of the programme largely depends on the effective coordination at the district level and the collectors have a key role to play in achieving the goal. "Treat this as a top priority. Work with full commitment and ensure we meet our targets on time," he told the School and Mass Education department.

Lower Vamsadhara Stage-1 project begins

SUNIL MOHAN PATNAIK
BRAHMAPUR

IN a major boost to the long-pending Lower Vamsadhara Stage-I Irrigation Project, the Odisha government has invited tenders for consultancy services to obtain Environmental Clearance (EC) and Forest Clearance under the Forest Conservation Act (FCA), marking a significant step towards implementation of the ambitious project.

The proposed project envisages the construction of a 3.2-km earthen dam across the Sana Nadi near Khaira, a 1.85-km barrage across the Vamsadhara river near Panidanagar, and an extensive canal network



comprising a 74-km Left Main Canal and a 48-km Right Main Canal. Once completed, the project is expected to provide assured irrigation to large agricultural areas in Rayagada and Gajapati districts.

The irrigation project is expected to enhance agricultural productivity, encourage crop diversification, improve farmers' incomes, generate rural employment, strengthen water security and accelerate the

socio-economic development of the region. The latest development is being viewed as the outcome of sustained efforts by the Odisha government, elected representatives, civil society organisations, farmers'

associations and local residents who have consistently pursued the project for decades. Public campaigns, awareness programmes, representations and legislative interventions helped keep the long-pending proposal on the government's agenda.

Residents and stakeholders have welcomed the move and expressed hope that all statutory clearances will be secured at the earliest, paving the way for construction to begin without further delay. The successful implementation of the Lower Vamsadhara Stage-I Project is expected to become a landmark development initiative for the Gunupur region and a major milestone in the development of southern Odisha.

KIMS surgeons extract arrow

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DEMONSTRATING exceptional clinical coordination, doctors at Kalinga Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS), Bhubaneswar, saved a 22-year-old Rourkela businessman who had an arrow lodged in his chest. The patient sustained a grievous injury when the arrow became lodged deep inside his body. His family rushed him to several hospitals, but due to the complexity and high risk of the case, none would agree to remove the weapon. Ultimately, their refusal to operate proved crucial in saving his life, as it prevented a fatal premature extraction.



With little hope left, the family brought him to KIMS, where a multidisciplinary team of specialists from the Department of General Surgery, Cardiothoracic and Vascular Surgery (CTVS), Anaesthesiology and other departments immediately planned an emergency operation. The team was led by Dr Amaresh Mishra, HOD, Department of General Surgery. The other surgeons included Dr S K Sahu, Dr P S Pujari, Dr D Hota and Dr

S Samal. The Department of General Surgery emphasised the extreme rarity and danger of the case. "These injuries carry immense risk," the team explained. "Patients often bleed out and die the exact moment an arrow is removed, as the weapon itself may be blocking catastrophic blood loss. Fortunately, previous hospitals refrained from pulling it out, which granted us the critical time needed to plan a precise surgical intervention," the doctors said. The Founder of KIIT and KISS, Dr Achyuta Samanta, congratulated the doctors for their accomplishment, emphasising the advanced care and treatment provided to patients at KIMS.

Rayagada SSD hostel deaths spark concern

C B SINGH
RAYAGADA

THE death of 10-year-old Chandu Ulaka, a Class IV boarder at Suri Upper Primary School's SSD hostel in Rayagada district, has once again cast a harsh spotlight on the management of tribal residential schools. The student's death from malaria has exposed critical shortcomings in the district's residential education system, highlighting severe gaps in health surveillance, emergency

medical response, and hostel management.

Sources said at least 10 inmates have died over the past 11 months across various SSD residential schools and hostels in Rayagada. Most of the victims were Scheduled Tribe (ST) students, the primary beneficiaries of these state-run facilities.

Among the reported cases is Nandini Tadingi, a Baising Primary Ashram School student, who died on October 29 last year. While local residents claim

five hostel inmates have died at the institution over the past two years, this remains unverified. Other recent student fatalities include Geeta Majhi, Lagna Ulaka, Manisha Mandangi, Ashok Jhodia, Jackson Mandangi, Tapaswini Piribaka, Saroj Tadingi, Manas Sabar and Chandu Ulaka. All the victims were inmates of residential schools and hostels across Dangalodi, Durgapadu, Baising, Kucheipadar, Panichhatra-Bhoimada, Paikapada, Bilelu and Padmapur.

Previously, the tragic death of Judas Sabar, found hanging inside a Tolana Upper Primary School classroom, sparked statewide outrage and intensified calls for stricter accountability in residential institutions.

Chandu Ulaka tragically died during treatment at the Kolnara Community Health Centre after his condition deteriorated. School authorities stated the student initially developed a fever, and a blood test confirmed malaria, for

which he received medication. Following his death, family members alleged that they were denied a government mortuary vehicle, forcing them to transport the child's body home on a motorcycle.

While departmental inquiries were conducted, local residents and community representatives allege accountability stopped at lower-level functionaries. These claims remain unconfirmed as official findings are not made public. The recurring incidents

expose critical failures in routine health screening, emergency referral, hostel supervision and institutional accountability in SSD residential schools. In response, civil society members and local stakeholders demand an independent high-level inquiry and a comprehensive social audit of SSD residential schools in the district.

Attempts to contact the District Welfare Officer (DWO), Rayagada, regarding the recent incidents have gone unanswered.

