

# CM reviews Rath Yatra readiness

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BHUBANESWAR

ODISHA Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Friday reviewed the preparations for the annual Ratha Yatra during a high-level meeting at Lok Seva Bhawan here and stressed better co-ordination, communication and safety measures to ensure the smooth conduct of the festival. The review came days after the Chief Minister held a similar high-level meeting in Puri on July 6. During the review meeting on Friday, the Chief Minister assessed the overall arrangements and directed officials to maintain close coordination and constant communication at every level to avoid any communication gaps during the festival.

Majhi emphasised timely conduct of rituals, security of the chariots and devotees, crowd management and fire safety. He said efficient and experienced officers would play a key role in ensuring the orderly management of the Rath Yatra. Reiterating the importance of coordination, the Chief Minister said, "There should be a system for continuous sharing of information among officers and employees at every level to ensure the implementation of pre-determined decisions and to take necessary measures as required. Senior officers must ensure that there is no communication gap under any circumstances."



The Chief Minister also reviewed arrangements related to cordon management, women's safety, surveillance of suspicious persons and substance abusers, traffic regulation, quality checks of food and drinking water, emergency evacuation plans and weather-related preparedness. He asked officials to make all arrangements foolproof.

According to the official statement issued by the Chief Minister's Office, around 12,000 police personnel, along with adequate number of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF), will be deployed for security arrangements during

the festival. The Indian Coast Guard and the Indian Navy will also remain on alert to check any illegal activities through the coastal route. Meanwhile, as many as 19 senior IPS officers have been assigned the duty to supervise the overall security arrangements.

The CMO further added that the State government has installed 473 CCTV cameras to keep watch on the movement of devotees and 65 large LED screens to disseminate important information to devotees in Odia, Hindi and English. Similarly, 16 permanent mobile towers and several temporary towers have also

been set up to strengthen communication services. Bulk messaging facilities will also be used to disseminate information.

The government also informed that help desks will be established at Gundicha Temple to assist elderly and differently-abled devotees to have hassle-free darshan of the deities. Multiple evacuation corridors have been created for crowd management, while an Integrated Command and Control Centre will monitor all security operations. Officials have also made arrangements for parking facilities, high-mast lighting along the Grand Road, 1,700 bio-toilets and

eight temporary hospitals to provide healthcare services during the festival.

Volunteers will be deployed to ensure regular cleaning of the bio-toilets. The meeting was also informed that more than 300 special trains will operate to Puri during the Rath Yatra. The Chief Minister directed officials to coordinate crowd management and passenger movement according to train schedules. Chief Administrator of Shree Jagannath Temple Administration Aravind Padhee and Additional Director General of Police Soumendra Priyadarshi presented detailed reports on the preparations.

# Over one crore women get Rs 20.6K cr Subhadra money

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BHUBANESWAR

THE Odisha government has transferred over Rs 20,648 crore to more than one crore women beneficiaries of Subhadra Yojana in four instalments, while the fifth tranche will be released on the upcoming 'Rakhi Purnima' (Raksha Bandhan) in August, officials said on Friday.

Ahead of disbursement of the fifth instalment of money (Rs 5,000 per beneficiary), Deputy Chief Minister Pravatī Parida on Friday reviewed the preparedness and directed officers concerned to complete field verification of pending applicants by July 25. She also directed that the progress of these cases be reviewed daily to ensure timely completion of the fifth instalment.

Speaking to mediapersons, Parida, who is in charge of the Women and Child Development department, said applications of about 3.53 lakh women are pending field verification. The block level committees under the Subhadra scheme will approve the findings of field level officials and forward them to the district and then to the State government. Accordingly, those found eligible would receive the fifth instalment, she said, adding that the exercise will be completed by July 25.

Several applications are also pending at various stages, including e-KYC, bank account verification, and biometrics. Applicants concerned should complete these as soon as possible to reap the scheme's benefit, Parida said.

According to officials, a total of 1.15 crore applications have been registered



under the Subhadra Yojana so far. Of these, 3.17 lakh new applications were received during the financial year 2026-27.

Following scrutiny and eligibility assessment, 1.02 crore women were initially identified as potential beneficiaries for the fifth instalment, they said.

After verification by district administrations confirmed the deaths of 5,277 beneficiaries, the final list of 1.01 crore eligible beneficiaries has been prepared for the fifth instalment as of now. During the meeting, Parida reviewed the progress of key preparatory activities, including Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) activation, biometric e-KYC, field enquiries, NPCI mapping, payment file preparation and coordination with banks.

The Deputy Chief Minister emphasised the need for expeditious disposal of pending cases and called for close coordination among all stakeholders to complete the necessary processes within the stipulated timeline.

Emphasising timely, transparent and error-free implementation of the

scheme, Parida directed officials to ensure complete preparedness at all levels for seamless disbursement of the fifth instalment to every eligible beneficiary.

She stressed close coordination among field-level functionaries, the departments concerned, technical agencies and banking institutions to complete all necessary processes within the stipulated timeline. Subhadra Yojana, a women-centric ambitious scheme of the BJP government, was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his birthday in Bhubaneswar on September 17, 2024.

Women between the age group of 21 to 60 years are eligible as beneficiaries of the Subhadra Yojana, which envisages providing financial assistance of Rs 50,000 over five years (2024-25 to 2028-29) to make them financially independent and self-reliant.

Each beneficiary is receiving Rs 10,000 per year in two instalments of Rs 5,000 each — one on International Women's Day (March 8) and the other on Raksha Bandhan.

# ASHA WORKER ALLEGES SOCIAL BOYCOTT

SUNIL MOHAN PATNAIK  
BRAHMAMPUR

AN Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) worker from Gajapati district has alleged that she was socially ostracised, fined Rs 5,000 and threatened by members of her own community for providing healthcare services to a family belonging to another community while performing her official duties.

The incident has been reported from Jirang village under Rayagada block, where Sunandini Mishal has been serving as an ASHA worker. In a complaint submitted to the district police, she alleged that she has been facing harassment for providing medicines, injections and other basic healthcare services to



a neighbouring family of a different community.

According to her, some villagers questioned her for visiting the family's house, speaking to them and remaining in contact over the phone.

She alleged that a group of local residents, led by four persons, imposed a social boycott on her and fined her Rs 5,000.

Though the penalty was reportedly paid by her husband, the family continues to face social exclusion and has allegedly been barred from participating in religious and community activities.

Sunandini further alleged that she has also been threatened with losing her job. Claiming that no action was taken despite lodging a complaint with Rayagada police, she approached Gajapati SP Prahlad Sahai Meena seeking intervention. The SP has directed the SDPO to inquire into the allegations. Police said the matter is under investigation.

# Mason held for raping woman

SUNIL MOHAN PATNAIK  
RAHMAMPUR

DIGAPAHANDI police arrested a 31-year-old mason on charges of allegedly raping a 26-year-old woman and blackmailing her with intimate photographs and videos. The accused was produced before a local court and remanded to judicial custody after his bail plea was rejected.

The accused, Shankar Naik alias Saheb of Chintakhali village under Sanakhemundi block, allegedly exploited the woman, who had earlier worked with him as a daily wage labourer at construction sites. Police said he repeatedly threatened her and used secretly recorded intimate images and videos to coerce her into a physical relationship.

According to the complaint, the woman had recently ended all contacts with the accused. On Tuesday afternoon, he allegedly confronted

her near an Aahaar Centre at the Digapahandi bus stand, verbally abused her, threatened to upload her private images on social media, and forcibly took her to an under-construction house, where he allegedly raped her.

The woman's cries for help alerted local residents, who rescued her and shifted her to the Digapahandi Community Health Centre for treatment. Based on her complaint, Digapahandi police registered a case under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

The survivor's statement was recorded, and both the survivor and the accused underwent medical examination at MKCG Medical College and Hospital. Following the investigation, police arrested the accused and forwarded him to court. The court rejected his bail application and remanded him to judicial custody. Further investigation is in progress.

# Murder fugitive caught after 28 years

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BHUBANESWAR

NEARLY three decades after he escaped from police custody in handcuffs, a murder accused was arrested by Odisha Police, officials said on Friday. The accused, identified as Nilamani Mahanand, was wanted in connection with a murder case registered under various sections of the IPC, including Section 302 (murder), the State police headquarters said. Police said Mahanand allegedly assumed a false identity after escaping, changed his name to Raju Gonda and settled in Raigarh district of

neighbouring Chhattisgarh. He had also obtained Aadhaar and PAN cards under the assumed name to evade arrest.

In October 1998, Mahanand and others allegedly killed Duraydon Deep in Bhundupali village of Jharsuguda district over a previous enmity. "While in transit in 1998, Mahanand managed to escape from a police station while still in handcuffs. He remained untraceable since his escape," a police official said.

Acting on intelligence inputs, sustained surveillance and verification, Jharsuguda Police traced and arrested the accused after 28 years, the



statement said. Mahanand was produced before a competent court for further legal proceedings, police said, adding that the arrest brought an end to a long-running manhunt.

# Science-led growth needed to tackle global challenges, says V-P

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR

VICE-President C P Radhakrishnan on Thursday called upon young scientists to harness science and technology to address global challenges, saying scientific capability is fundamental to achieving India's vision of 'Viksit Bharat 2047'.

Addressing the graduating students at the convocation of the National Institute of Science Education and Research (NISER) here, Radhakrishnan said that the world today faces unprecedented opportunities and complex challenges, including climate change, emerging diseases and rapid advances in artificial intelligence, quantum computing and advanced materials.

In such a scenario, the Vice-President said, science must not only generate knowledge but also guide policy and ensure sustainability. He stressed that for a country like India, with its demographic strength and developmental aspirations, scientific capability is not optional but foundational



to achieving the vision of 'Viksit Bharat 2047'.

Emphasising the need for interdisciplinary collaboration, Radhakrishnan said that contemporary challenges cannot be addressed within the boundaries of a single discipline. He urged the graduating students to nurture curiosity, uphold integrity, embrace challenges and use their knowledge for the larger good of society.

"Science is not only about finding answers but also about asking the right questions," the Vice-President remarked. Highlighting India's growing stature in science and innovation, Radhakrishnan said that the country's achievements in space missions, vaccine development, digital public infrastructure and renewable energy have earned it global recognition.

He urged the graduates to balance ambition with responsibility and progress with compassion, adding that their research, ideas and integrity would shape the future of society. Paying tribute to the legacy of Dr Homi Bhabha, Radhakrishnan said that institutions such as NISER are carrying forward India's rich scientific tradition by producing talented scien-

tists who are contributing to fundamental sciences, atomic energy, healthcare physics and other emerging interdisciplinary fields.

He appreciated the institution's alumni for enhancing India's scientific footprint through research and academic excellence in India and abroad. Recalling the day his father told him about the demise of Dr. Homi Bhabha, the Vice-President said that it was a major setback for the country's atomic research.

However, he added, the country emerged stronger from the tragedy and has since become one of the world's leading nations in atomic research. The Vice-President also expressed hope that many of the graduates from NISER would go on to become future Dr Homi Bhabhas, making significant contributions to India's scientific and technological advancement.

The ceremony was attended by Odisha Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati; Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi; Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and other dignitaries.

# BLOOD DONOR KILLS ELDERLY MAN

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BRAHMAMPUR

A man was arrested in Ganjam district on Thursday for allegedly killing a 60-year-old man over the non-payment of dues for the blood he donated to the victim's daughter, police said. The incident took place in Gopalpur area on Wednesday. The accused has been identified as Sunil Kumar Majhi (35), a resident of Gadasanaput in Satyabadi police station area of Puri district.

He was, however, presently residing in Ganju area under the jurisdiction of Gopalpur police station in Ganjam district. The deceased was identified as Saita Das. According to the police, the accused had donated blood to Das's daughter a month ago when she was ill. When Das was returning from his field on Wednesday evening, Majhi intercepted him near Ganju panchayat office and demanded payment.

When Das said he would pay the amount upon returning home, the accused became enraged and assaulted him with an iron spade. As a result, he fell unconscious on the spot, a police officer said. Locals informed Das's family about the incident and he was shifted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries during treatment, he said. The accused was later arrested and further investigation was under progress.

# 3 stranded tourists rescued from hill

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
ANUGOLA

AFTER a gruelling 22-hour ordeal and getting stranded at the Malyagiri hill, three young tourists from Kendujhar were safely rescued by Fire department personnel. The rescued tourists are Ghanshyam Patra (19), Ananta Munda (20) and Bapun Mahanty (25).

Seven tourists from Kendujhar trekked a hill 25 km from Pallahara on Wednesday. While four returned safely, three went missing and spent the night on the hill, raising serious safety concerns.

According to reports, the seven tourists from Kendujhar had arrived by motorcycle to trek Malyagiri hill, beginning their ascent around noon. After trekking some distance, four members of the group abandoned the climb and returned to the base by Wednesday evening.

The remaining three trekkers continued up the hill, reaching the summit before evening. Unable to find a way down as night fell, they used their mobile phones to call 112. Emergency operators immediately dispatched



the Pallahara fire officials to the hilltop to rescue the stranded group.

Pallahara Fire officer Rabin Soren said his team received a distress call on Thursday morning regarding tourists stranded on a hilltop.

The officials requested the youth to share their coordinates, which enabled the rescue team to locate them after a challenging three-hour journey to the summit.

All the three stranded tourists were successfully rescued by Thursday noon and taken for medical checkups.

Following the incident, local authorities and police from Pallahara police station advised tourists and adventure enthusiasts to avoid venturing into forested hilly areas during the monsoon season, as heavy rains rapidly compromise visibility and track safety.