

Mahanadi water level rising

Flood situation remains grim

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

ODISHA remained on high alert on Thursday as the flood situation continued to be grim in four northern districts, while rising water levels in the Mahanadi triggered fears of a “medium” flood in the river’s downstream areas, officials said.

Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari said that although water levels in some rivers in north Odisha were receding, they continued to flow above the danger mark and fresh areas were inundated overnight.

“The administration is on high alert and leave of all officials in the flood-affected districts has been cancelled,” he said. Floods triggered by incessant rain under the influence of a deep depression inundated several villages in Baleshwar, Bhadrak, Jajpur and Mayurbhanj districts. In view of the IMD’s rainfall forecast and the flood situation, authorities ordered the closure of schools and Anganwadi centres in Bhadrak, Jajpur, Nabarangpur and Kalahandi districts.

Rescue operations were intensified, and more than 1.65 lakh people were evacuated to safer places, officials said. So far, over six lakh people have been affected due to the floods. Jajpur Collector Ambar Kumar Kar said the flood situation worsened after two breaches developed in the embankment of the Kani river, a tributary of the Baitarani, near Patana under Dasarathapur block on Wednesday night.



The breaches marooned several villages and inundated fresh areas, severely affecting people in three blocks, officials said. Meanwhile, swelling water level in the Mahanadi emerged as a major concern, prompting authorities to alert districts along the river basin following heavy rainfall in its upper catchment areas in Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh.

“The situation has intensified as floodwaters from the Tel, Ib and Jira rivers are adding to the Mahanadi’s flow, leading to a further rise in the water level,” an official said. The water level at the Hirakud Dam stood at 620 feet against its full reservoir level of 630 feet. The reservoir was receiving an inflow of 3,31,063 cusecs, while 64,109 cusecs were being released downstream through two gates.

Officials said additional gates may have to be opened if the water level continues to rise. Water Resources Department Engineer-in-Chief Dillip Kumar Rout said around eight lakh cusecs of water was flowing through Mundali near Cuttack at 6 am on Thursday, and the discharge could rise



CM lauds teams for rescuing pregnant woman

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BHUBANESWAR

ODISHA Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Thursday lauded the disaster response teams who safely rescued a pregnant woman from flood-hit Baleshwar district.

The Chief Minister said the State government is always committed to ensuring the safety and essential services of every life during times of crisis. Majhi, who is monitoring the flood situation from Delhi in a social media post, said, “Your safety and service are our utmost priority.

Amid adverse flood conditions, a pregnant woman from Bagirathipur village in Baleshwar district has been safely rescued and reached the hospital on time. The people’s government is always committed to ensuring the safety and essential services of every life during times of crisis.”



The State government said that three deaths have so far been reported in the floods and many people were rescued from difficult situations.

“Every life is precious for the State government, and the administration is working in that direction,” Revenue and Disaster Management minister Suresh Pujari said while rejecting the allegation of Opposition BJD of the State government’s lack of sensitivity towards flood affected people. The BJD came down heavily on the State’s

BJP government over the death of three persons in the ongoing floods in north Odisha.

“Valuable lives were lost due to lack of preparedness by the State government. Former chief minister Naveen Patnaik’s policy of “every life is precious” has become meaningless for the Mohan Charan Majhi government,” alleged BJD spokesperson Lenin Mohanty. Stating that the BJD government’s “zero casualty” policy was not adopted by the BJP government, leading to human casualties, Mohanty alleged that the administration has become very casual.

“The State government has completely failed in flood management,” he alleged, adding that despite prior warnings issued by the Meteorological department, the State government had made no preparations, resulting in the loss of precious lives.

on Thursday, though light rain accompanied by thunderstorms was expected in several districts.

Odisha, C’garh CMs agree to resolve Mahanadi dispute



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BHUBANESWAR

THE chief ministers of Odisha and Chhattisgarh on Thursday agreed to resolve the long-standing dispute over the sharing of Mahanadi water between the neighbouring States through “cooperation, coordination and constructive dialogue,” an official said.

Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and his Chhattisgarh counterpart Vishnu Dev Sai were part of a high-level meeting held in New Delhi on Thursday under the chairmanship of Union Water Resources Minister C R Patil, related to Mahanadi water distribution and management. Majhi stressed on determining a solution to the water sharing between the two States by giving utmost priority to the rights of Odisha, public interest,

welfare of farmers and protection of the environment.

“In this meeting, both the chief ministers expressed their views to find a permanent and satisfactory solution to the Mahanadi water issue through cooperation, coordination and constructive dialogue between the two States in a cordial atmosphere,” it stated. It was decided at the meeting that a committee headed by the Chairman of the Central Water Commission will submit its report to the Mahanadi Tribunal within three months on resolution of the dispute.

“In this meeting, our side has firmly presented Odisha’s position, giving utmost priority to the rights of the State, the future of our riparian communities, and the protection of the State’s water resources. We are

committed to finding a permanent, fair, and satisfactory solution to the Mahanadi water issue through constructive discussions, mutual cooperation, and a friendly approach between the two States,” Majhi said in a post on X.

The water dispute between the two States has been continuing since over a decade, as Odisha alleged that the free flow of the Mahanadi river was blocked by construction of barrages and weirs in the upstream by Chhattisgarh to provide water to industries.

Chhattisgarh, on its part, claimed that the State takes its share of the river water and nothing more. It also alleged that Odisha failed to utilise the water available to it. Subsequently, the Central government formed the Mahanadi Water Dispute Tribunal in 2018.

Common service centres drive Digital Odisha: Mahaling

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BHUBANESWAR

ODISHA Health and Family Welfare Minister Mukesh Mahaling on Wednesday said Common Service Centres (CSCs) have become a key pillar in building a Digital Odisha by ensuring doorstep delivery of government and digital services to citizens.

Addressing the 17th Common Service Centre (CSC) Day celebrations in Bhubaneswar, the minister said CSC SPV had been serving as a powerful medium for nationwide digital inclusion for the past 17 years. He noted that CSC had become a crucial bridge in taking the Digital India campaign from village to village and door to door. By successfully delivering government services, banking, digital education, telemedicine, the National Digital Health Mission, and various social security schemes to rural areas, CSC had bridged the digital divide and empowered lakhs of rural entrepreneurs.

Mahaling said the National Digital Health Mission had enabled people in rural areas to access digital health IDs, teleconsultation services, and modern healthcare facilities, marking a significant trans-



formation in rural healthcare delivery. He credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision and Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi’s leadership for accelerating Odisha’s digital transformation.

The minister noted that the State now had more than 45,000 CSC centres delivering digital services to citizens and creating a new chapter in digital governance. Highlighting the contribution of CSCs, he said they had facilitated the registration of over one crore women under the Subhadra Yojana, distribution of more than 1.76 crore Ayushman Bharat cards, registration of over eight lakh beneficiaries under the Ayushman Vay Vandana Yojana, and implementation of schemes such as e-Shram, PM Vishwakarma, crop insurance, digital literacy, telemedicine, and several social security programmes.

“The CSCs have become trusted centres of hope,

healthcare, and development, particularly in rural and tribal areas,” Mahaling said. The minister added that CSCs had made remarkable progress in strengthening digital governance, healthcare, and financial inclusion by connecting every village with digital services and ensuring transparent and accessible public service delivery. He further stated that CSCs had generated livelihood opportunities for nearly two lakh Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs) across the country and facilitated business worth around Rs 12,800 crore. He also highlighted that the incentive provided to CSCs by the Odisha government had increased from Rs 1 crore two years ago to Rs 6.5 crore at present, reflecting the rapid growth and success of the CSC network in the state.

Odisha Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water Minister Rabinarayan Naik attended the event as the Chief Guest.

WHATSAPP SHARING CLAIMS

Medical PG exam at MKCG under scanner

SUNIL MOHAN PATNAIK
BRAHMAPUR

SERIOUS allegations of malpractice have surfaced during the Odisha University of Health Sciences (OUHS) postgraduate examinations at MKCG Medical College and Hospital, after photographs of the General Surgery MD/MS question paper were allegedly circulated through WhatsApp while the examination was in progress. The incident has triggered official inquiries and prompted authorities to tighten security by banning mobile phones and electronic devices at the examination centres.

The controversy relates to the General Surgery MD/MS examination for the 2023–26 batch held on July 27. Sources alleged that images of the question paper, and reportedly even answers from some numbers, were shared in WhatsApp groups during the examination, raising concerns over the integrity of the process.

Following formal complaints, an OUHS team has initiated a preliminary inquiry and visited MKCG Medical College to investi-



gate the incident. The institution has also launched an internal probe to identify how the question paper was photographed and circulated. The creators and members of the WhatsApp groups under scrutiny are also being investigated.

Dean and Principal of MKCG Medical College and Hospital, Harekrishna Dalai, said stringent action would be taken against anyone found guilty. He clarified that the incident did not amount to a “question paper leak” since the paper was allegedly photographed and shared only after it had been distributed inside the examination hall. According to him, the images began circulating

at around 9.58 am, minutes after the examination commenced.

Dalai said routine security checks were conducted, but a mobile phone or another electronic gadget might have been smuggled into the examination hall. He added that a virtual meeting convened by the OUHS Vice-Chancellor had reviewed the incident and issued fresh instructions for the remaining examinations.

The episode has sparked concern among students and the medical fraternity, with demands for a thorough investigation, greater transparency and stronger safeguards to ensure the credibility of future examinations.

Purohit seeks West Odisha railway growth

VENKAT RAMAN PRADHAN
BARAGADA



BARAGADA MP Pradeep Purohit met with Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw to submit a memorandum advocating for comprehensive railway development in Baragada and Jharsuguda districts. The proposal urges accelerated timelines for pending infrastructure projects, enhanced passenger amenities, and the introduction of new train services. Purohit urged the Railway Ministry to ensure the punctual operation of the frequently delayed Ispat Express. He also called for improved rail connectivity and better passenger amenities at Brajarajnagar, highlighting its importance as a key Western Odisha industrial hub.

The MP demanded additional stoppages for several long-distance trains at Brajarajnagar, Jharsuguda, Barpali, and Attabira stations, while also requesting the restoration of previously discontinued halts. Purohit proposed the introduction of new train services. They are: Bilaspur-Puri Express; Titilagarh/Balangir-Bhubaneswar Vande Bharat Express; Jharsuguda-Visakhapatnam Vande Bharat Express and a coach connecting Baragada/Balangir with

Bhubaneswar. He also requested extending the Gondwana Express to Sambalpur, extending the Jan Shatabdi Express to Jharsuguda or Raurkela, and converting the Hirakud Express to a daily service.

Purohit also urged the upgrading of passenger amenities at Brajarajnagar railway station, calling for improved toilets, digital display boards, coach guidance systems, public announcements, and enhanced lighting. Additionally, he pressed for the timely completion of development works at Belpahar railway station under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme. The MP urged the speedy implementation of the long-pending Baragada-Nuapada railway project, calling it crucial for western Odisha’s connectivity and economic growth. He requested that the Railway Minister expedite these proposals to address the region’s rising transportation needs and development goals.



HANS NEWS SERVICE
BARIPADA

THE authorities of Similipal Tiger Reserve on Wednesday attributed the rise in the tiger population from five in 2014 to 35 in 2026 to scientific management practices and community participation, as Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and Leader

of Opposition Naveen Patnaik called for collective efforts to conserve the big cats.

In separate messages on the occasion of International Tiger Day, both Majhi and Patnaik urged people to join hands to protect and preserve Royal Bengal Tigers in the State. Addressing a function at Similipal, Field Director of Similipal Tiger Reserve-

cum-Regional Chief Conservator of Forests, Baripada, Prakash Chand Gogineni, said scientific management and cooperation from local communities had played a key role in increasing the tiger population. “A remarkable conservation success has been achieved in Similipal, where the tiger population has increased from five tigers in 2014 to 35 tigers in 2026,” Gogineni said.

He attributed the achievement to the relentless efforts of frontline forest personnel, scientific management practices and the cooperation of local communities. Similipal South Wildlife

Division Deputy Director Sumit Kumar Kar also praised the dedication of frontline forest staff who continue to protect the reserve under challenging conditions.

Similipal Tiger Reserve, spread over around 2,750 sq km in Mayurbhanj district, comprises hills, waterfalls and river systems and is one of the country’s important tiger habitats. Similipal North Wildlife Division Deputy Director Ramesh Kumar Bishnoi highlighted the sustained conservation efforts undertaken jointly by the Forest Department and local communities for the long-term preservation of the ecosystem.

Conservationist Vivekananda Patnaik stressed the importance of community participation in mitigating human-wildlife conflict and promoting sustainable livelihoods through community-based ecotourism in the buffer areas of the reserve.

In a post on X, Majhi said, “On International Tiger Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to protecting one of nature’s most magnificent species. Odisha’s rich forests and thriving tiger habitats reflect our shared responsibility to conserve wildlife, restore ecosystems and safeguard biodiversity for generations to come.”

Naveen said the tiger was one of the world’s most iconic animals and a symbol of India’s cultural heritage. “#Odisha is the world’s only home to wild melanistic tigers. On #InternationalTigerDay, let us all join hands to protect the magnificent big cats and their habitats so that they continue to thrive,” he said in a social media post.

In Similipal, the celebration was held in collaboration with the Centre for Similipal Studies, Maharaja Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo (MSCB) University, Takatpur, Baripada, bringing together academics, conservationists, students, wildlife photographers, gov-

ernment officials, media representatives, and members of the public.

The theme for this year’s celebration, ‘Securing the Future of Tigers with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities at the Heart’, underscores the vital role of local communities in ensuring the long-term survival of tigers and their ecosystems. A major highlight of this year’s celebration was the photography competition-cum-photo exhibition on the theme ‘Biodiversity of Similipal’.

The event received an overwhelming response, with more than 100 wildlife photographers from across India

participating and contributing their work. The exhibition showcased over 250 captivating photographs, portraying the rich biodiversity, scenic landscapes, and unique wildlife of Similipal Tiger Reserve.

Nandankanan Zoological Park in Bhubaneswar also celebrated International Tiger Day 2026 with a series of educational, awareness and conservation-oriented programmes aimed at promoting tiger conservation and inspiring public participation in wildlife protection. Forest, Environment and Climate Change Minister Ganesh Ram Singhuntia graced the event as the chief guest.