



CM discusses 14 projects with IHC, Adani

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BHUBANESWAR

ODISHA Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Wednesday began the State's investor outreach in the UAE with a high-level meeting with senior representatives of the International Holding Company (IHC), a leading Abu Dhabi-based investment group with interests across several strategic sectors, and the Adani Group.

An Odisha government statement said that the meeting was attended by the Adani Group's Karan Adani and Sagar Adani, IHC Group's Managing Director and CEO Syed Basar Shueb, its Chief Strategic and Growth Officer Peter Abraam, and 2PointZero Group CEO Samia Bouazza.

Representatives from Dune, Al Seer Marine, Ghitha Holding PJSC, Epoint Zen, Sirius Holding and Burjeel Holdings also participated in the discussions, with the talks focusing on potential investments in metallurgy, rare earth and critical minerals, coal-to-chemicals, port-based special economic zones (SEZs), and industrial infrastructure.

According to the State government, the Adani Group and IHC Group have expressed interest

in exploring 14 projects for which MoUs have been signed, involving an estimated aggregate investment of around Rs 2.105 trillion (Rs 2.10 lakh crore). The proposed projects are estimated to generate around 8.7 lakh employment opportunities, including approximately 1.9 lakh direct/on-site jobs, 4 lakh indirect jobs, and 2.8 lakh construction-related employment opportunities. The government clarified that the estimates are indicative and subject to feasibility studies, due diligence, statutory approvals, and execution of definitive agreements.

Addressing the roundtable, Chief Minister Majhi said Odisha offers a unique combination of natural resources, industrial capabilities, strategic location and a growing infrastructure ecosystem. "Odisha offers a unique combination of natural resources, industrial capabilities, strategic location and a growing infrastructure ecosystem. We invite IHC and its group companies to explore long-term investment opportunities in Odisha, particularly in critical minerals, metallurgy, port-led development and emerging

industrial sectors," he said.

Majhi highlighted Odisha's investor-friendly ecosystem and assured continued government support to facilitate strategic investments and partnerships between UAE-based companies and the State. The meeting marks the beginning of Odisha's UAE investor outreach, aimed at showcasing the State's industrial potential and attracting long-term investments across emerging and strategic sectors.

Later, the Odisha Chief Minister also participated in a roundtable discussion with the Indian Business & Professional Group (IBPG) as part of Odisha's UAE Investors' Meet. The discussion focused on strengthening cooperation and facilitating exchange of goods, exports and trade between Odisha and the UAE. Opportunities in turmeric, ginger, seafood, food processing and contract manufacturing for leading UAE brands were highlighted. The meeting also explored opportunities for deployment of highly skilled professionals from Odisha. Odisha-based companies with established UAE presence participated. IBPG President Rajiv Shah also attended the interaction.

Ex-CJI Dipak Misra gets Kalinga Ratna Award

KATAKA: Former Chief Justice of India (CJI) Justice Dipak Misra was conferred with the Kalinga Ratna Award by Sarala Sahitya Sansad here on Tuesday. The award comprises a silver idol of Goddess Saraswati and a citation.

Speaking on the occasion, Justice Mishra said a person may travel far in life, but the soil of birth continues to shape memory, identity and cultural inheritance. Turning to the Constitution, Justice Misra described "fraternity" in the Preamble as a living moral bond that rises above caste, creed, language and social status. The dignity of an individual, he emphasised, could never be protected by diminishing another's dignity. "By respecting another person's humanity, we affirm our own," he said. Invoking anti-war poets, Justice Misra observed that wars might produce victories, but seldom peace, leaving behind grief, hatred and wounded generations. The Sansad also, on the occasion, bestowed the Sarala Samman on eminent litterateur Dr Ramachandra Behera for his notable contributions to Odia literature for over six decades. Presided over by Sansad's founder and president, Pravakar Swain, the award-giving ceremony was attended by Odisha Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan as chief guest.

Man gets 20-yr RI for rape

BRAHMAPUR: A Special POCSCO court here on Tuesday sentenced a man to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment after convicting him of raping a 13-year-old girl after kidnapping her in Ganjam district. The incident took place six years ago in a village under Rambha police station limits in Ganjam district.

POCSCO court judge Rohit Lal Panda has also imposed a fine of Rs 70,000 on the convict. He will undergo jail for an additional nine months if he fails to pay the fine amount, said special public prosecutor Siba Prasad Mishra.

The court has also directed the district legal service authorities to pay Rs 5 lakh to the victim under the victim compensation scheme. The entire fine amount will be paid to the survivor after recovery from the convict, the court ruled.

The court pronounced the judgment after recording the statements of 14 witnesses, including the police and medical officer and based on the medical reports and seized articles, he said. Sources said the accused had taken the victim, a student of Class 8, from her home by giving some false promises on June 8, 2020. The mother of the victim lodged an FIR at Rambha police station after she could not find her daughter.

Police rescued the girl from a house with the accused. He was arrested after a medical test. The accused has been in jail since his arrest, as his bail plea was rejected earlier, the government pleader said.

Officials probe smuggling of five orangutans

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BHUBANESWAR

A day after at least five orangutans were rescued from a forest in Baleshwar district, a joint probe was launched by the State police's STF and the WCCB on suspicion that an international wildlife smuggling racket might be behind the animals' sudden appearance here. State Forest and Environment Minister Ganesh Ram Singhkhuntia on Wednesday said the joint probe by the Special Task Force (STF) and the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) would look into how the animals came to Baleshwar, who brought them to the forest and who was involved in such activities.

Given the high value of the animals -- an orangutan can fetch Rs 20-25 lakh in international markets -- it is suspected that they were smuggled from foreign forests, he said. The minister said orangutans are not found in India and are native to rain forests in Malaysia and Indonesia, including the islands of Borneo and Sumatra



in Southeast Asia. The animals were rescued and kept in quarantine at the Nandankanan Zoological Park in Bhubaneswar.

"A team of veterinary doctors are monitoring the health of the animals, and they are stable. I will visit them. These rare animals are kept in an air-conditioned atmosphere," the minister said.

Odisha STF Inspector General Himansu Lal said a team, led by an SP-rank officer, had already left for Baleshwar and started a probe into the matter. "We are at the preliminary stage of investigation and presently collecting data

and facts available locally. We are in contact with the Central government's IG, Wildlife, and seeking to know whether a similar incident had ever happened in any part of the country," STF DIG Vishal Singh said.

The STF team contacted the Baleshwar SP and the DFO and collected details regarding the rescue of the rare animals from a casuarina forest in the Bichitrapur area of Bhograi block in Baleshwar district.

Meanwhile, forest officials and local police went door to door to collect information regarding the incident. Villagers first spotted the

young apes clinging to trees on Tuesday morning and immediately alerted the Forest department, Baleshwar Divisional Forest Officer Prateek Prakash Indalkar said. Local people have so far reported seeing a black SUV on a road near the forest on Monday night. The vehicle was also spotted in CCTV footage. "Therefore, locating the SUV and its owner could give some clue to the arrival of the baby orangutans in Baleshwar," a local police officer said.

The Odisha Forest department has also sent messages to zoos across the country seeking

information on whether any orangutan was missing from their facilities, the minister said. CCTV footage from airports, ports and major railway stations is being examined, while the Coast Guard has also been contacted to verify whether its personnel had come across any transportation of the animals through water routes, he said.

Authorities at Nandankanan Zoological Park said three of the five animals were males and two females, aged between six months and one year and standing roughly one to one-and-a-half feet tall. All five are currently being provided food and oral rehydration solutions.

Nandankanan Zoological Park has a special enclosure for orangutans, but it has remained empty since the death of one such animal in 2019 at the age of 41. A female orangutan was brought from Pune Zoo to Nandankanan in 2003. The minister said the State government has urged the Central Zoo Authority to allow it to keep the five baby orangutans at the Nandankanan Zoological Park.

BJD protests mining law, appeals to Prez

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BHUBANESWAR

THE Opposition BJD on Wednesday staged a demonstration against the MMDR Amendment Act near the Lok Bhavan in Bhubaneswar and sought President Droupadi Murmu's intervention to safeguard Odisha's financial interests and the country's federal structure.

A party delegation later met Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati and submitted a memorandum addressed to the President. "Any legislative measure that substantially curtails the rights and financial interests of the State in relation to mines and mineral-bearing lands therefore has far-reaching consequences for Odisha and deserves careful constitutional and legal examination," it said.

The party cited the July 25, 2024 judgment of a nine-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court, which recognised the power of State governments to impose taxes and levies on mines and mineral-bearing lands and also dealt with recovery of such dues from April 1, 2005. Based on the

judgment, Odisha became entitled to receive more than Rs 1 lakh crore in arrears of mining-related taxes and levies, besides an estimated additional annual revenue of around Rs 12,000 crore, the BJD claimed. The party said that the MMDR Amendment Act restricted State governments from imposing taxes, cesses or similar charges on mineral-bearing lands, and empowered the Centre to frame rules affecting such taxation. It said that if the amendments permanently dilute States' rights over mines and mineral-bearing lands and deprive Odisha of the arrears and future revenue recognised following the Supreme Court judgment, the issue cannot be treated as merely a matter of legislative policy. Addressing a separate press conference, Congress Legislature Party leader Ram Chandra Kadam said his party was strongly opposed to the MMDR Amendment Act and would continue to protest against it. BJP MLA Babu Singh, however, rejected the allegations, accusing the Opposition of "misleading" people over the new mining laws.



Vedanta-V-Spark tech tieup targets Rs 2.1K cr

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VEDANTA Aluminium, India's largest aluminium producer, partnered with manufacturing deep-tech incubator V-Spark to host the MetALVerse tech showcase in Jharsuguda. The company also announced alliances with tech leaders like OpenAI, Microsoft, and SAP. Together, they will deploy AI, digitalisation, and automation solutions to unlock up to Rs 2,100 crore across Vedanta Aluminium's operations.

Vedanta Aluminium's MetALVerse event united global tech leaders, startups, and experts to accelerate breakthrough industrial technologies. This collaborative platform will

evaluate, pilot, and scale next-generation solutions across the company's value chain. The initiative aims to unlock a Rs 2,100 crore opportunity by boosting plant productivity, cutting costs, ensuring asset reliability, and driving sustainability.

Vedanta Aluminium and V-Spark have partnered to fast-track deep tech innovations from the lab to real-world industrial use. By using Vedanta's massive, fully integrated manufacturing plants as a mega testing ground, the partnership aims to turn promising new technologies into industry-ready solutions and build a powerful, AI-driven manufacturing ecosystem.

"India's manufacturing

sector is entering a defining decade where the future belongs to companies combining scale with intelligence, sustainability, and innovation," said Priya Agarwal Hebbar, Non-Executive Director of Vedanta Limited and Chairperson of Hindustan Zinc. "Akarsh Hebbar, Non-Executive Vice Chairman of Vedanta Aluminium and Chairman of V-Spark DeepTech Ventures, stated that the biggest opportunity in industrial innovation is scaling new technologies for measurable business value. "AI allows industrial companies to transform how they access knowledge, make decisions, and manage operations," said Pinak Dattaray, Founder & CEO of Ripik.AI.

Drinking water concerns dominate Rayagada ZP meeting

C B SINGH
RAYAGADA

THE 83rd Rayagada Zilla Parishad meeting reviewed basic services, as elected representatives questioned the proposed mega drinking-water project, healthcare staffing shortages, school and hostel operations, and the DWO's management of tribal welfare institutions.

The meeting, chaired by Zilla Parishad Chairperson Saraswati Majhi at the Zilla Parishad conference hall, brought together district-level officials, MLAs and elected representatives to assess whether government schemes and infrastructure projects are actually translating into reliable

services for people on the ground.

Major concerns raised during the deliberations included shortages of drinking water, inadequate healthcare, hospital vacancies, declining education, and poor hostel management. The District Welfare Department also faced scrutiny over its supervision of remote and tribal residential schools and hostels.

District Collector and Zilla Parishad Chief Executive Officer Ashutosh Kulkarni, Rayagada MLA Kadraka Appala Swamy, Bissam Cuttack MLA Nilamadhab Hikaka, Gunupur MLA Satyajit Gamango, MP representative Durgaprasad



Panda, Zilla Parishad members and other elected representatives attended the meeting. Chief Development Officer-cum-Executive Officer Akshaya Kumar Khemundu and officials from various departments were also

present.

Drinking water emerged as one of the most pressing issues, with MLA representatives seeking clarity on the proposed mega drinking-water project and the extent to which it will address

the recurring water crisis across Rayagada district. Questions centred on the progress of the project, its implementation timeline and whether the proposed infrastructure would provide dependable water supply to villages facing

seasonal shortages and supply disruptions.

The Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Department was asked to respond to water shortages reported from different parts of the district. Representatives stressed that merely sanctioning large projects would not be sufficient unless the system ultimately delivers regular and safe drinking water to households.

The meeting also discussed the need for immediate interventions in areas facing shortages, including borewells and other local solutions wherever required. The larger question, however, was whether the mega project and existing rural

water-supply infrastructure are being implemented quickly enough to provide a permanent solution.

Healthcare was another major area of concern, with the shortage of doctors and other medical personnel emerging as a critical issue. Elected representatives stressed that people in Rayagada, particularly those living in remote and hilly areas, should not be forced to travel outside the district simply because adequate doctors, specialists, emergency services or other facilities are unavailable locally. The meeting reviewed manpower requirements in health institutions and called for vacancies to be filled according to the actual

workload and population needs of the district.

During a detailed review, elected representatives questioned the quality of government school education and efforts to boost exam scores. Officials stated that additional academic support, such as daily extra classes from 4 pm to 5 pm, is being provided to increase the number of top-tier grades (A1 and A2) on Board examinations. The meeting also evaluated the overall school environment, focusing on drinking water, mid-day meals, CCTV installation, hostel security, parent-teacher engagement, and the need for adequate wardens in boys' hostels.