

Engineer’s illicit wealth unearthed

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

ODISHA Vigilance on Thursday launched simultaneous searches at multiple locations linked to an Assistant Executive Engineer (AEE) in Jajpur district over allegations of acquiring assets beyond his known sources of income. According to Odisha Vigilance, the accused official, identified as Tapan Sethi, is presently posted as Assistant Executive Engineer (AEE), R&B Sub-Division at Badachana in Jajpur district, under the Superintending Engineer, R&B Division, Charbatia, Choudwar in Kataka district.

About the allegation of possession of disproportionate assets (DA) by AEE Sethi beyond his known sources of income, the Vigilance has initiated simultaneous searches at seven places in Kataka, Bhubaneswar, Puri and Badachana (Jajpur). The premises being searched include multi-storey buildings, a farmhouse, a relative’s house, his office chamber, and a house in his native village.

The searches are being conducted on the strength of search warrants issued by the Special Judge, Vigilance, Kataka, on Thursday. Different teams of the Odisha Vigilance, led by three Additional Superintendents of Police, six Deputy SPs, three Inspectors and other supporting staff, are carrying out the house searches.

According to officials, the sleuths have so far found Sethi and his family members in possession of one triple-storey building at Sector-7 in CDA of Kataka district; a building at



Sidha Mahavir, in Puri; one double-storeyed building at Kantabada in Bhubaneswar, a farmhouse spread over one acre at Kantapada near Kataka, three highly valuable plots, including two at Bhubaneswar and one at CDA in Kataka.

The measurement and valuation of the above-mentioned buildings, farmhouse and plots are being carried out by the Odisha Vigilance Technical Wing to assess their extent, estimated market value and the total value of the properties allegedly acquired by the accused public servant. Additionally, Sethi was found in possession of gold jewellery weighing approximately 550 grams, two four-wheelers and two two-wheelers.

The Vigilance sources also stated that a locker operated by Sethi at SBI’s main branch in Bhubaneswar is yet to be opened, while his bank deposits and other financial investments are being ascertained. Sethi joined the Odisha government service in 1997 as a junior engineer (civil) with an initial monthly salary of Rs 5,000. He was promoted to Assistant Engineer in 2018 and to AEE in 2022. He has been serving as AEE in the Roads and Buildings Department’s Badachana sub-division since October 2023, sources said.

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ODISHA Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Thursday said the State aims to transition from a mineral-driven economy to a chemical-led industrial hub by leveraging its mineral resources, ports, and emerging investment opportunities.

Addressing the 14th edition of India Chem 2026 in Mumbai, Majhi stressed that Odisha was looking to play a larger role in India’s chemical and petrochemical industry. He noted the strategic advantages offered by Odisha’s ports at Paradip, Gopalpur and Dhamra, providing connectivity to domestic and international markets, according to a statement issued by the Chief Minister’s Office.



He underscored the importance of the Paradip Petroleum, Chemicals and Petrochemicals Investment Region (PCPIR), Indian

Oil Corporation Limited’s refinery and petrochemical complex, and the Plastic Park at Paradip in creating downstream opportunities

in polymers, packaging and technical textiles.

The Chief Minister also pointed to emerging opportunities in refrigerants,

fluorochemicals, green hydrogen and green ammonia at Gopalpur, along with coal-gasification-based projects at Talcher and Lakhanpur. “These initiatives could strengthen domestic manufacturing and expand Odisha’s role in India’s chemical and petrochemical value chain,” he said.

Majhi said nearly 200 industrial units had been established in the State in less than two and a half years, attracting investments of around Rs 3.52 lakh crore. “Odisha has received investment proposals worth more than Rs 22.50 lakh crore, of which over Rs 12.50 lakh crore have been approved by the High-Level Clearance Authority (HLCA),” he said.

Majhi said the State’s industrial policies, infra-

structure, skilled workforce and institutional support from organisations such as the Institute of Chemical Technology (ICT) and the Central Institute of Petrochemicals Engineering and Technology (CIPET) make it an attractive destination for investment. “Odisha is ready to contribute at scale to realise India’s one-trillion-dollar chemical dream by 2040,” he said, inviting investors to explore opportunities across the State.

Pointing to institutional stability, the Chief Minister cited Odisha’s inclusion among the top five States in NITI Aayog’s Investment Friendliness Index and its top ranking in the Fiscal Health Index. He noted that Odisha has recorded the country’s second-highest investment inflow this year.

Ib riverfront gets major facelift

JEEBAN MOHANTY
JHARSUGUDA

AN attractive new picnic centre and recreational zone has been developed on the scenic banks of the Ib river, located directly behind the renowned Maa Ramchandi temple under Brajarajnagar Municipality. Executed under the guidance and supervision of Jharsuguda Collector Kunal Motiram Chavan, this riverfront beautification project was completed through a strategic convergence of the State government’s Mukhyamantri Sahari Bikash Yojana (MSBY) and Mahanadi Coalfields



Limited (MCL) CSR funds. Previously underutilised and covered in dense, wild overgrowth, this riverfront stretch has been transformed into

a vibrant public space. Sharing project details, Brajarajnagar Municipality Executive Officer Chandramani Swain stated that a 400-metre forest

pathway was cleared, reinforced, and paved with high-quality interlocking blocks to create a dedicated track for walkers, pilgrims, and local residents. Additionally, three spacious, well-designed open platforms have been integrated into a beautifully landscaped setting along the riverbank to accommodate holiday crowds and picnickers.

The Collector’s leadership and administrative follow-up were pivotal to this rapid transformation. From the project’s inception, he conducted on-site field inspections and spearheaded regular

progress reviews. By closely coordinating with municipal and line department officials, he maintained strict project benchmarks, high aesthetic standards, and tight completion timelines. This initiative will significantly boost local tourism in Brajarajnagar, providing citizens with a safe, serene, and nature-friendly weekend getaway.

The proposed second phase of the project will extend the walking track directly to Maa Ramchandi temple. The upgrade will also add new public amenities and enhanced tourist infrastructure.

Missing girl’s body found

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BALASORE

POLICE on Thursday recovered the half-burnt, decomposed body of a girl who had been missing for the last six days in Balasore district, an officer said.

The 14-year-old girl, a resident of a village under Jaleswar police station jurisdiction, had been missing since October 16 after going to a local market in the evening to have snacks, but she did not return home.

Her family had lodged a complaint at Nampo police outpost. Some villagers on Thursday found slippers and scarves lying near a field and, at a distance, the half-burnt body of a girl with burn injuries to her face, abdomen and chest.

The family of the girl alleged that she had been abducted, gang-raped and murdered. They also alleged that miscreants had burnt her body to destroy evidence.

Two DSP-rank officers from the district police headquarters reached the spot and began an investigation with the help of forensic teams. The police seized the body and sent it for a post-mortem examination. “An investigation is underway, and one person has been detained in connection with the case,” said a police officer.

Cong trying to spread anarchy, says Sambit

BHUBANESWAR: The Bharatiya Janata Party national spokesperson and Lok Sabha member Sambit Patra on Wednesday alleged that the Congress, the INDIA Bloc and “anti-national forces” are attempting to spread anarchy and destabilise the democratically elected government under the guise of seeking a “regime change.”

Addressing a press conference in Bhubaneswar, Patra said the national flag is a symbol of the country’s sovereignty and cannot be used as a shield to violate the law or justify disorder.

He claimed Rahul Gandhi had travelled abroad to formulate a strategy for regime change in India and that efforts were underway to politically revive him by fomenting unrest. Patra specifically referred to the proposed protest at Ramlila Maidan on 1 November 2026, stating that the Congress and INDIA Bloc were trying to create chaos to bring about a change of government.

He urged the public to reject such alleged conspiracies through democratic

means, citing the 1984 anti-Sikh massacre as a cautionary example, and called for safeguarding the country’s unity and constitutional institutions. Patra asserted that the masterminds behind the ‘regime change’ agenda want Rahul Gandhi to be launched without having to contest an election. “Even a satellite requires fuel to be launched; nothing gets launched on its own. There is now no fuel left behind Rahul Gandhi, as all of it has been exhausted,” he said. He also claimed that thousands of attempts have been made to launch him, but none have succeeded, adding that now, a final attempt is being made to launch him; set the country on fire and launch Rahul Gandhi.

Patra stated that, as part of this very attempt, Rahul Gandhi had travelled abroad and was holding meetings with Soros and members of his family. He clarified that this would not be limited to a single press conference; all the evidence regarding what Rahul Gandhi was doing abroad would be brought before the public.

Fraudster held for cheating woman of Rs 15L

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

THE Puri district police arrested a cyber fraudster for allegedly cheating a woman of a total of Rs 15 lakh by posing as an Additional Secretary-rank officer in the Chhattisgarh government on a matrimonial app, Puri SP Prateek Singh said.

The accused, identified as Balabhadra Prasad Mishra, 44, is a resident of Matiasahi under Town police limits in Anugola district. Mishra allegedly registered himself on the Bharat Matrimony app and introduced himself to the woman, a nurse, as an Additional Secretary-rank officer in the Chhattisgarh government. He also developed a relationship with her.

According to Singh, a case was registered at the Cyber Crime & EO Police Station, Puri on October 13 following a complaint lodged by the victim nurse. The accused allegedly took



money, promising to secure a job for her sister and later threatened to get her transferred to the KBK region when she began suspecting him.

The Puri SP said the accused allegedly forced the woman to open three bank accounts. “A few days later, the victim discovered that loans amounting to over Rs 13 lakh had been sanctioned in her name through these bank accounts. All those loan amounts were withdrawn and utilised by the accused himself. Thereafter, she approached us and registered a case,” Singh noted.

He further revealed that the accused spent the money on purchasing a

Toyota car and maintaining a lavish lifestyle, including hotel stays and air travel. Police seized 14 bank pass-books, nine cheque books, 17 debit and credit cards, six mobile phones and Rs 10,000 in cash from his possession, Singh said.

The SP further said cases related to fraud and forgery had previously been registered against the accused at police stations in Sambalpur and Saheed Nagar, Airport and Lingaraj in Bhubaneswar.

“Upon further inquiry, it came to light that 12 of his accounts have been frozen across various states. Since his accounts have been frozen in other states, there is strong suspicion that he has been running an interstate fraud racket. We will delve deeper into the investigation, coordinate with other states, and ascertain where else and how many other women he has defrauded, how many states his activities span, and how many people he has duped,” the Puri SP added.

CM greets Shah on birthday

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BHUBANESWAR

ODISHA Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Thursday extended birthday greetings to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and said his contributions to national security and inclusive development continue to strengthen the foundation of a developed India.

“Warm birthday greetings to Hon’ble Union Minister of Home Affairs and Minister of Cooperation Shri @ AmitShah ji,” Majhi said in a post on X.

The Chief Minister also hailed Shah’s “resolute leadership” in strengthening India’s internal security. “Your resolute leadership in strengthening India’s internal security, advancing the mission of a Naxal-free Bharat, and transforming the cooperative sector through the vision of Sahakar Se



Samridhhi reflects an unwavering commitment to a stronger, safer and more prosperous India.”

“Your contributions to national security and inclusive development continue to strengthen the foundations of a Viksit Bharat,” Majhi said. Shah, who has been serving as the country’s Home Minister since 2019, turned 62 on Thursday.

“May Mahaprabhu Shri Jagannath bless you with good health, happiness and renewed energy to serve the nation with the same dedication and determination. Wishing you a long, healthy and fulfilling life,” Majhi added.

Pradhan urges unity to resolve Kotia dispute

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BHUBANESWAR

AMID a political slugfest between the BJP and the BJD in Odisha over neighbouring Andhra Pradesh holding rural polls in disputed Kotia villages, former Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Wednesday stressed the need to create a cordial atmosphere and resolve the issue through negotiations.

The decades-long territorial dispute over Kotia villages, nestled in the picturesque hills of the Eastern Ghats along the border of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha, often comes to the fore during elections. With territorial rights being claimed by both the States, the matter is currently before

the Supreme Court. People of these villages enjoy dual voting status, granting them the unique privilege of exercising their franchise in both the States.

Taking to X, Pradhan said, “We all know how important Kotia is for Odisha and the Odia people. Kotia is the identity of Odisha’s sovereignty and indivisibility. The long-standing border dispute over Kotia is certainly a matter of concern for Odias. Regardless of party affiliations, there is a need to come together for Odisha’s interests and find a collective solution.”

The BJP MP also said it is important for politicians to take responsibility for resolving the problems in this region. “Through

dialogue, we must create a friendly atmosphere and pave the way for a solution,” Pradhan said, adding that the sacrifices and contributions of many eminent sons of the soil to protect Odisha’s geographical boundaries will not go in vain.

“Our fight for Odia identity will continue. Protecting Odisha’s unity and indivisibility is our collective responsibility,” he said. The issue came to the fore two days ago when BJD president Naveen Patnaik wrote a letter to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, seeking to know what measures the State’s ‘double engine’ government has taken to resolve the territorial dispute between Odisha and Andhra Pradesh.



Patnaik also questioned whether the State government remains silent because the NDA government at the Centre survives on the sup-

port of the TDP, which is in power in Andhra Pradesh.

The Odisha government also hit back at the BJD chief, asking him what the

BJD dispensation had been doing to resolve the issue during its 24-year tenure in the State. Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari directly blamed Patnaik for the Kotia dispute. Of 28 villages under the Kotia gram panchayat in Koraput district, Andhra Pradesh continues to claim that 21 belong to its territory.

The claim had been made since British rule, following which a case was filed in the Supreme Court in 1968. The apex court, in 2006, asked both the States to maintain the status quo and observed that the inter-state boundary dispute was best resolved by Parliament under Article 131 of the Constitution. The Odisha government had in 2022 filed a contempt

of court petition against Andhra Pradesh after it held the rural polls in Kotia villages in 2021.

“As the Andhra Pradesh government does not abide by the Supreme Court’s order, the Odisha government is preparing to file another petition in the apex court,” a senior Revenue department official in Koraput district said. Pujari spoke to the Koraput District Collector via video conferencing, took stock of the situation and issued directions to safeguard the State’s interests.

He also spoke to Advocate General Pitambar Acharya and sought his counsel on taking appropriate legal measures. Pujari emphasised the need to expedite the necessary legal steps

to resolve the dispute and to strengthen Odisha’s administrative presence in the border region.

“Our priority is to safeguard the State’s legal rights and interests, while simultaneously maintaining peace, stability, and public trust in the Kotia region. The State government is working with firm commitment to take all necessary and appropriate measures to reach a swift and permanent resolution to this long-standing dispute,” he said.

Meanwhile, the slugfest between the ruling BJP and the Opposition BJD was aggravated by both uploading animated videos on social media platforms blaming each other over the Kotia dispute.