SIX PERSONS STILL REMAIN MISSING

Gidipabali search op called off

Sunil Mohan Patnaik
Brahmapur



BRINGING an agonising chapter of tragedy, hope and relentless rescue efforts to an end, the search and rescue operation at landslide-ravaged Gidipabali village along the Ganjam-Kandhamala border has finally been called off, with six persons still remaining untraced beneath tonnes of mud, rocks and debris. Seven bodies have been recovered during the painstaking operation that continued for nearly two weeks following the devastating landslide triggered by cyclone Arnab.

The catastrophe struck around 3 am on October 28, when torrential rainfall triggered by cyclone Arnab unleashed successive landslides on Gangubali hill, sending a massive avalanche of mud, boulders, uprooted trees and water cascading down upon the small hilltop settlement under Baibali Gram Panchayat in Bhanjanagar block.Most of the houses in the hamlet were buried under the massive debris while residents were asleep. Of the 26 inhabitants, several managed to escape, while 13 persons were initially reported missing. One missing resident was subsequently located, leaving 12 persons unaccounted for.The scale of the disaster came to light after survivors negotiated difficult forest trails and reached a neighbouring shelter to alert the authorities. Flooded roads, inaccessible terrain and the absence of proper road connectivity delayed the movement of rescue teams and heavy equipment to the remote location.

Following the tragedy, the Odisha government launched a massive search and rescue operation on October 31, mobilising personnel from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force (ODRAF), Fire Services, District Voluntary Force and other agencies. Around 100 personnel were subsequently engaged in the painstaking operation, with additional specialised teams and technical experts assisting the mission at different stages.

Rescuers had to trek through difficult terrain and negotiate huge deposits of mud and rocks to reach the buried houses. The operation was further complicated by successive landslides that had dumped nearly 30 feet of debris over the affected settlement.

To locate the missing persons, the administration deployed sniffer dogs and advanced life-detection equipment, including seismic sensors, victim-location cameras, and ground-penetrating radar.An Indian Navy unit, alongside specialists from IIT and the Railways, joined the effort. Rescuers used controlled blasting and specialised drilling to break up house-sized boulders blocking buried homes.

However, the operation yielded limited results due to the deep debris and challenges in transporting heavy machinery.

After days of painstaking excavation, rescue teams recovered the first two bodies, identified as Sanman Pradhan (29) and Rabi Mallick (52).The recovery brought some relief to the waiting families but intensified their anguish over the fate of the remaining missing persons.

On November 5, rescuers achieved another significant breakthrough by recovering five more bodies from beneath the debris. The deceased included five members of a family — Bijaya Pradhan (25), Bhumika Pradhan (27), Aruna Pradhan (7), Bijayalaxmi Pradhan (6) and Bagri Pradhan (1). The recovery of the five bodies took the total number of recovered victims to seven, while six persons continued to remain missing.The families chose to perform the last rites of the recovered victims at the disaster site itself, adding another heartbreaking dimension to the tragedy.

On November 4, officials temporarily paused the operation after technical experts warned that further blasting could endanger rescue teams. Although they considered resuming the search once the weather improved, heavy debris and poor access for machinery made progress nearly impossible. Ultimately, following written requests from the families of the six missing persons, the district administration suspended the search on November 9.

Recognising the extreme difficulty of retrieving victims buried under nearly 30 feet of debris, the families have urged the administration to pivot toward their rehabilitation.With search operations now suspended, the focus has shifted to providing adequate financial aid, alternative land, and permanent housing to move survivors out of temporary shelters.

The Gidipabali tragedy remains a lasting scar on the region, making a dignified recovery package essential to help the surviving families rebuild their lives.

CM assures pension for all eligible seniors

Hans News Service
Bhubaneswar



ANNOUNCING an end to the waiting period for social security pensions, Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Tuesday said no elderly person, senior citizen, person with disabilities or helpless individual in the State will henceforth be deprived of any assistance provided by the government.

"Today is a historic day for Odisha. From today, no elder, senior citizen, person with disability, or destitute individual in the state will be deprived of government assistance. From today, eligible beneficiaries will no longer have to wait to receive the Madhubabu Pension. The era of waiting has come to an end; the era of honouring your rights has begun," Majhi said.

He was speaking at a programme in Baleshwar, where he launched the saturation initiative under the Madhu Babu Pension Yojana and inaugurated the Unified Pension Management Portal (UPMP).The Chief Minister said the previous government had imposed fixed quotas at the state and district levels, due to which an eligible person could receive a pension only after an existing beneficiary passed away.

Describing the arrangement as insensitive and inhuman, he said his government has abolished the system to ensure that no eligible person is denied social security benefits.Under the saturation drive, 5,05,817 additional eligible people have been brought under the scheme, taking the total number of beneficiaries to 41,80,825. The government has made an additional annual budgetary provision of Rs 625 crore to cover the newly included beneficiaries.

Majhi said expenditure of Rs 500–600 crore should not be a reason to make elderly people suffer or deprive them of their entitlements. The amount, he said, was a worthwhile investment in the welfare and dignity of senior citizens. The newly launched UPMP will make the pension application and disbursement process simpler, faster and more transparent. Eligible applicants can apply online through the portal or visit the nearest Jana Seva Kendra or Block Development Officer's office.

Pension will be provided from the month following the application. Beneficiaries will automatically receive an enhanced monthly pension of Rs 3,500 after attaining 80 years of age, without having to submit a fresh application.Newly enrolled beneficiaries will receive their October and November pensions together.

District-level distribution programmes will be held on November 11 and 12, followed by block-level programmes on November 13 and 14. Those unable to collect the amount at these programmes can receive it in cash from their respective panchayat or municipal offices on November 25. Regular monthly pension payments will be made on the 15th of every month from December.

ORS officer terminated over bribery

Hans News Service
Bhubaneswar



ENFORCING a zero-tolerance approach towards corruption in government offices, the Odisha government on Tuesday terminated the services of Manisha Mishra, an Odisha Revenue Service (ORS) officer on probation, following her arrest in a bribery case.The official order was issued on Tuesday by the State Revenue and Disaster Management department on the Governor's order. According to the order, Mishra, ORS (under probation), was posted as Sub-Registrar at Baliapal in Baleshwar district. She was caught red-handed by the Vigilance officials of Baleshwar division on November 6 after receipt of a bribe of Rs 7,000 from the complainant, Gyanaranjan Patra from Pancharukhi village of Baleshwar district, on demand in her office chamber in Baliapal in lieu of the registration of his land and issuance of the sale deed.

The order further noted that the GA (Vigilance) Department, Kataka, formally communicated the incident to the R&DM department on November 7.Based on the complaint of Patra, a case was registered at the Baleshwar Vigilance police station on November 5, under Section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Act, 2018, in this regard.

Subsequently, Mishra was arrested on November 7 after getting caught red-handed while receiving the bribe on November 6. She was later forwarded to court and remanded to jail custody until November 20.The government stated that Mishra has not yet completed her probation period as per Rule-17(1) of the ORS (Recruitment) Rule, 2011 and Rule-3(1) of the Odisha Revenue Service, Group-B (Probation and Departmental Examination) Rules, 2016. The department considered her conduct a grave case of corruption, amounting to gross misconduct and personal immorality, and constituting a direct violation of Rule 3 of the Odisha Government Servants Conduct Rules, 1959. Taking into account the gravity of the charges, the appointing authority determined that her further continuance in service is highly detrimental to the public interest. "Now, therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred by Rule -17(2) of the ORS Recruitment Rule,2011 read with Rule-3(2) and 3(3)(a) of the Odisha Revenue Service, Group-B (Probation and Departmental Examination) Rules, 2016, the services of Ms. Manisha Mishra, ORS, Sub-Registrar, Baliapal is hereby terminated with immediate effect from the date of issue of this order," noted the R&DM department.

Rejuvenated MBPY rekindles hope for hapless

Tapan Chand

AS Odisha strives toward its vision of Viksit Odisha@2036 and Samrudh Odisha@2047, true progress must be measured not just by economic and infrastructural growth, but by the dignity and well-being of its most vulnerable citizens. The elderly, widows, persons with disabilities, destitute women, HIV and leprosy patients, and economically disadvantaged groups deserve dedicated care, compassion, and social protection.

Reaching out to vulnerable citizens demonstrates a commitment to 'Antyodaya,' the upliftment of the last person in the queue.Fulfilling its promise, the BJP government in Odisha revitalised the Madhu Babu Pension Yojana (MBPY) in January 2025 by raising the pension to Rs 3,500 for beneficiaries aged 80+ and persons with 80 per cent+ disabilities, and has continued enriching the scheme since.

Significant changes are: (i) abolishing the district-wise quota systemand allowing eligibility to the aged persons on attending 60years and withoutany waiting on principle of saturation. (ii) time-bound grant of pension in nextmonth to the month of application. (iii) retrospective payment from the monthof Oct 2026 (iv) automatic grant of enhanced pension on attending age of 80 (v)eligible person to apply in BDO office or online (http://upmp.odisha.gov.in/) (vi) DBT transfer to bank account of the beneficiaries.

By removing the district-wise quota system, the rejuvenated Madhu Babu Pension Yojana has delighted 5,05,817long-waiting beneficiaries by granting them old-age pensions at once.Named after Odisha's champion of social justice, Utkal Gourav Madhusudan Das, the scheme upholds a core principle: poverty, disability, old age, or social circumstances should never deprive anyone of the right to live with dignity.



The present pension structure provides: Rs 1,000 per month for eligible beneficiaries in the general pension categories; Rs 3,500 per month for beneficiaries aged 80 years and above; Rs 3,500 per month for persons with disabilities of 80 per cent or more.This differentiated financial support prioritises the most vulnerable, fostering their confidence, dignity, and social inclusion.In Odisha, the programme serves over 60 lakh beneficiaries—comprising roughly 42 lakh under MBPY and more than 19 lakh under NSAP —backed by a budget that more than doubled from Rs 2,501 crore to Rs 5,837 crore in 2023–24.

This increase demonstrates the government's commitment to strengthening social security. Rather than viewing social security merely as an expense, it should be recognised as a vital investment in human dignity, social stability, and inclusive growth. However, the success of any welfare scheme depends not just on budget allocation, but on efficient and transparent delivery. To achieve this, the government must ensure eligible beneficiaries receive their pensions regularly and without bureaucratic hurdles. Integrating digital identification, rigorous verification, Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), and transparent records will help minimise duplication, eliminate leakages, and strengthen accountability. Special attention is needed for elderly beneficiaries and persons with severe disabilities who struggle to visit offices or banks. Doorstep assistance, grievance redressal, and regular record verification can strengthen the scheme.

4 held for scuffle with police



Hans News Service
Bhubaneswar

FOUR persons were arrested for allegedly engaging in a scuffle with police personnel, including a woman officer, during Diwali celebrations in Kataka on Sunday night, officials said. The incident took place when a group of people were bursting firecrackers in Nayasadak area, a busy city road stretch, "causing problems for commuters", they said.

Upon receiving information, police personnel, led by ACP Ananya Awasthi, went to the spot and stopped them from bursting the firecrackers, the officials said. Subsequently, the accused allegedly attempted to attack Awasthi and the other police personnel present at the spot, they said. A video clip of the incident went viral on social media.

"When a Quick Action Team from the nearby police station reached the spot, the accused attempted to attack the personnel," Cuttack DCP Khilari Rishikesh Dnyandeo said.

The four accused, aged between 20 and 32 years, have been arrested under various sections of the BNS and the Odisha Urban Police Act, 2003, he said. Further investigation is underway.

Israeli team leaves KIIT with fond memories

Hans News Service
Bhubaneswar

A 20-member Israeli delegation concluded its 10-day visit to KIIT and KISS on Tuesday under the 'India Trek for Global Leaders' programme. Since arriving on November 1, the delegates explored student culture at KISS and engaged with KIIT faculty and students to learn about their teaching and research.

KIIT and KISS hosted a farewell ceremony in honour of the visiting delegation. Expressing their heartfelt



gratitude, the delegates described the visit as truly memorable. They noted that interacting with the children and faculty at both institutions was the highlight of their trip to India, surpassing even their visit to the Taj Mahal. They particularly valued the opportunity to engage with students and academics across various KIIT departments, fostering a rich exchange of ideas, mutual learning, and shared experiences. The delegates praised KISS as a unique global model that reflects the vision, dedication, hard work, and sacrifice of its founder, Achyuta Samanta. While addressing the delegation, Samanta noted that the visit would open new avenues for KIIT and KISS in education, research, cultural exchange, and other areas of mutual cooperation.

Flood in Ganjam man-made, says Naveen

Hans News Service
Bhubaneswar

LEADER of Opposition and BJD president Naveen Patnaik on Tuesday severely criticised the state government's preparedness to deal with Cyclone Arnab and called for impartial rehabilitation and reconstruction work in flood-ravaged Ganjam district. In a letter to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Patnaik has also described the devastating flood in Ganjam as a man-made crisis, calling upon the state government to fix accountability for the lapses and ensure stringent punishment. The BJD supremo also referred to his recent visit to flood-affected areas of Hinjili, Sheragada, Aska and Sorada of Ganjam district and interactions with affected persons on November 7.

Patnaik expressed pain after seeing the sufferings of the people in distress, massive damage to infrastructure, extensive crop losses, loss of lives and destruction of livelihoods during his visit. He alleged that government negligence has set Ganjam back by several years. He alleged that the state government ignored IMD warnings issued since October 23.

The BJD chief said Ganjam remained vulnerable to heavy rainfall, which typically occurs to the right of a cyclone's landfall, and stressed that cyclone and flood management SOPs require advance water release from dams and round-the-clock monitoring of reservoir levels.

"However, in the case of Ganjam, water from dams was released by the Water Resources Department after the onset of heavy cyclonic rains.

This compounded the floods and caused huge loss of life and property. People have complained that adequate warning was not given to them before the gates were opened," alleged Patnaik. "This gross negligence and manmade crisis raises serious issues of accountability. People are demanding strict action against those responsible for such a serious lapse," he further added.

Cabinet clears Rs 393 cr free campus Wi-Fi scheme

Hans News Service
Bhubaneswar

THE Odisha Cabinet on Monday approved 13 key proposals concerning 10 departments, including the flagship initiative to provide free Wi-Fi to higher educational institutions across the State.The proposals were approved during the 49th meeting of the State Cabinet held in Bhubaneswar under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi.

In a significant decision, the Cabinet gave its nod to the flagship scheme "Odisha Shikshanet Empowering Students through a Free Wi-Fi Internet Facility to all colleges and universities" of the State Higher Education Department. The scheme will be implemented with a total outlay of Rs 393.62 crore over a period of three years (FY 2026-27 to FY 2028-29).

"The scheme will extend free, secure and high-speed Wi-Fi connectivity to 601 Government and Aided Colleges across Odisha, building upon the successful Phase-I implementation in 130 colleges. Every authenticated student will receive up to 1 GB of free internet data per day within the campus for academic, research and skill development purposes," the government said.



It further added that the project includes installation of Wi-Fi infrastructure, bandwidth provisioning, network management, cybersecurity, and operation & maintenance support.A centralised monitoring dashboard will ensure efficient service delivery, network security, uptime and optimal utilisation.The facility will support access to e-books, digital libraries, virtual classrooms, SWAYAM and other MOOCs, research databases, competitive examination resources, digital skill development platforms and e-governance services such as SAMS, HIMS and Scholarship portals. "The initiative is expected to benefit over 6 lakh students and faculty members across Government and Aided Higher Education Institutions, particularly students from rural, remote and economically weaker sections, by bridging the digital divide and promoting equitable access to quality higher education," the government claimed.

Other major proposals approved on Monday include the comprehensive, farmer-centric and technology-driven Food and Paddy Procurement Policy for Kharif Marketing Season 2026-27, aimed at transparent procurement at MSP, timely payment, efficient milling and uninterrupted supply of rice under PDS and welfare schemes.

The State Cabinet has also approved the draft Odisha Bovine Breeding (Regulation) Bill, 2026 for introduction in the Odisha Legislative Assembly. The proposed legislation provides a framework for scientific breeding and quality breeding services. Several other key proposals of other departments got the Cabinet nod on Monday.