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20th Grand Toshali Mela Concludes in Bhubaneswar



The 20th Grand Toshali National Crafts Mela concluded on February 26, 2026, with a vibrant closing ceremony in Bhubaneswar. Speaking at the event, Guha Poonam Tapas Kumar, Commissioner-cum-Secretary of the Handlooms, Textiles, and Handicrafts Department, emphasized that this "Mahakumbh" of crafts has significantly boosted the economic prosperity of local weavers and artisans. She highlighted that Odisha remains a vast treasure trove of culture, with 64 distinct handicrafts now officially recognized by the state government. A notable feature of this year's fair was the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to accurately monitor visitor footfall, alongside the efforts of

the Srujanika Craft Cluster in promoting traditional arts. The valedictory evening was attended by several high-ranking officials, including Additional Secretaries Pratap Chandra Hota and Chinmayee Biswal, and Director of Handicrafts Surya Narayan Patnaik. The night sky over Janata Maidan was illuminated by a spectacular drone show showcasing various government schemes, while a mesmerizing Odissi dance performance by Padma Shri Ileana Citaristi left the audience spellbound. The Secretary concluded the event by thanking the organizers and wishing a bright future for the artisans dedicated to preserving Odisha's rich heritage.

Review Meeting of the Department of Women and Child Development

Bhubaneswar, February 25, 2026: A significant review meeting on the progress of various schemes and programmes of the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Odisha, was held today. Union Minister for Women and Child Development, Smt. Annapurna Devi, attended the meeting, while Deputy Chief Minister and Minister of the Department, Smt. Pravati Parida, chaired the session. At the meeting, Union Minister Smt. Annapurna Devi highly appreciated the State Government's flagship Subhadra Yojana. She stated that "when government assistance is transferred



directly to women's bank accounts, it ensures their financial independence and empowerment." She also advised organizing "Tithi Bhojan" in Anganwadi centres and observing Poshan Diwas and Poshan Week to strengthen nutrition initiatives. She expressed that coordinated efforts between citizens

and the government can significantly help in eliminating malnutrition from the state. Expressing satisfaction over the positive impact of various government schemes in Odisha, she assured full support through Centre-State coordination for the successful implementation of welfare programmes.

28th Board Meeting of OWSSB Charts Major Administrative & Welfare Reforms

Bhubaneswar | 26 February 2026
The 28th Board Meeting of the Odisha Water Supply and Sewerage Board (OWSSB) was held today in the 2nd Floor Conference Hall of Unnati Bhawan, Bhubaneswar, under the Chairmanship of the Hon'ble Minister, Housing & Urban Development Department and Chairperson, OWSSB, Dr. Krushna Chandra Mohapatra.

The meeting assumed special significance as several long-pending service, financial and administrative reforms were deliberated in detail and approved unanimously by the Board.

In a landmark decision aimed at ensuring parity and boosting morale, the Board approved extension of promotional benefits to Engineers working under OWSSB (Board Cadre) at par with those available to



the PHE Cadre under the H&UD Department. This move will resolve long-standing promotional issues of Assistant Project Engineers and provide a structured career progression pathway.

Further strengthening the cadre structure, Deputy Project Engineers (DPEs) in the rank of Assistant Executive Engineer (AEE) will be re-

designated as Additional Project Engineers. The post of Additional Project Engineer will be filled through promotion from DPEs in the ratio of 40% of the sanctioned strength, thereby institutionalizing transparent and merit-based advancement.

Speaking on the occasion, the Hon'ble Minister stated, "Our engineers are the backbone of urban

water and sewerage infrastructure. Ensuring fair promotional avenues and service parity is not just an administrative correction — it is a commitment to dignity, motivation and institutional excellence. These reforms will strengthen OWSSB from within." Recognizing the tireless contribution of field-level workers, the Board approved a special incentive of ₹200 per day for Daily Labour Roll (DLR) workers of OWSSB. Additionally, DLRs disengaged upon attaining the age of 60 years will now be eligible for due gratuity benefits, ensuring financial security after years of service. The Hon'ble Minister emphasized, "Those who work on the ground to ensure uninterrupted water supply deserve recognition and social protection. This incentive and gratuity provision reflect our inclusive and humane governance approach."

Odisha Explores Global Best Practices in Affordable Housing: ACS Smt. Padhee, IAS



Chennai | 13.02.2026
 Committed to continuous learning, innovation and adoption of global best practices, Smt. Usha Padhee, Additional Chief Secretary, Housing & Urban Development Department, Government of Odisha, undertook an exposure and knowledge-sharing visit to Chennai on 12.02.2026 to study affordable housing and urban habitat initiatives supported by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

The visit focused on understanding proven models of affordable housing delivery, institutional strengthening, innovative financing frameworks and sustainable urban habitat development being implemented in Tamil Nadu. During the visit, ACS Smt. Padhee along with officials of the Odisha Urban Housing Mission (OUHM) held detailed interactions with senior officials of the Tamil Nadu Urban Habitat Development Board (TNUHDB) and the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA) to gain insights into policy frameworks, project structuring and implementation strategies. The delegation was briefed on the Housing and Habitat Development Project, supported by the World Bank with an outlay of approximately USD 200 million. The project focuses on strengthening housing institutions and expanding access to affordable housing through the Tamil Nadu Shelter

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Fund (TNSF) — a social venture fund model designed to mobilise private investment for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) and promote sustainable housing solutions. The visit also covered the ADB-supported Inclusive, Resilient and Sustainable Housing for the Urban Poor Sector Project, with an estimated investment of USD 150 million, aimed at developing nearly 6,000 housing units across multiple locations. The project emphasises relocation of families from high-risk and vulnerable areas to safer habitats, energy-efficient building designs, integrated waste management systems and creation of essential social infrastructure such as primary health centres and schools. Later in the day, Smt. Padhee visited IIT Madras where she delivered an Extra Mural Lecture titled “The Intersection of Technology, Policy, and Public Service.” Address-

ing students and faculty, she highlighted the importance of data-driven governance, integration of artificial intelligence and ethical leadership in addressing urban challenges such as housing shortages, sanitation and congestion. Encouraging young technocrats to explore careers in public policy and the Civil Services, she emphasised that empathy, ethics and emotional intelligence are as vital as technical excellence in modern administration. The engagement concluded with an interactive session and guidance on preparation for the Civil Services Examination. Reaffirming Odisha’s forward-looking approach, ACS Smt. Usha Padhee noted that insights gained from Tamil Nadu’s experience and academic engagement would contribute meaningfully towards shaping inclusive, resilient and sustainable urban development strategies in the State.

Orissa Joins Forces with AIRAWAT to pioneer AI-Driven Governance

Bhubaneswar, 11th Feb 2026: In a significant step towards building future-ready, sustainable and citizen-centric cities, the Housing & Urban Development Department (H&UDD), Government of Odisha, today signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the AIRAWAT Research Foundation (ARF), IIT Kanpur to strengthen AI-driven urban governance in the State. The MoU was signed in the presence of Smt. Usha Padhee, Additional Chief Secretary, Housing & Urban Development Department, who reiterated Odisha’s strong commitment to leveraging emerging technologies for improved urban planning, service delivery and evi-



dence-based decision-making. Under the partnership, ARF will act as the Department’s AI Innovation Partner, providing strategic and technical support for the design and adoption of AI-enabled solutions across Odisha’s

urban ecosystem. Speaking on the occasion, Smt Padhee said, “Odisha is committed to building cities that are not only smarter, but also more humane, responsive and inclusive. This partnership will help us harness the power of AI to improve urban services, strengthen governance systems and ensure that decision-making is guided by data, transparency and citizen needs.” Shri Amar Nath, CEO, AIRAWAT Research Foundation highlighted the importance of collaborative innovation between government and premier

research institutions to ensure that AI solutions are impactful, scalable and aligned with citizen needs. He expressed ARF’s commitment to supporting Odisha in developing robust, responsible and governance-ready AI applications for urban transformation. The collaboration aims to co-develop and deploy priority AI solutions to address key challenges in urban governance, strengthen data systems and digital infrastructure, and support ecosystem mobilisation through engagement with research institutions, startups and technology partners. The MoU also places strong emphasis on knowledge partnership and institutional capacity building, ensuring that AI is used in a responsible, ethical and transparent manner for public benefit.

Deputy Chief Minister flags off Tourism Caravans

Bhubaneswar-04.02.2026 Deputy Chief Minister Smt Prvati Parida flagged off three Tourism Caravans at Dhauli today. Caravan tourism offers visitors an exclusive and immersive way to explore destinations, providing greater flexibility, privacy and freedom of movement. Speaking on the occasion Smt Parida said that these caravans will enable tourists to experience Odisha's serene natural landscapes at their own pace, supported by well-designed amenities that combine convenience with sustainability. Caravan



tourism is well-established in several European countries and Odisha's venture into this segment aims to attract young travellers, adventure seekers and offbeat explorers who seek experiential and nature-based travel, she added. Addressing the gathering,

Bhubaneswar-Ekamra MLA Shri Babu Singh said that this will help the tourists to explore the new destinations with more comfort and safety. He lauded such initiatives of the government. Delivering his welcome address, Director of Tourism Department Shri Deepankar

Aims to explore the destinations with more comfort & safety

Mohapatra said that caravan tourism will also facilitate tourist dispersal beyond conventional destinations, supporting balanced regional development and reducing pressure on traditional tourism hubs. This was launched by the Department of Tourism under the Viability Gap Funding (VGF) mode, operated & managed by Sand and Pebble Tours. The department has identified tourism potential such as

Hirakud, Similipal, Dar- ingbadi, Deomali, Talsari, Pentha, Mangalajodi, Jiranga and other pristine locations across the State for caravan-based tourism experiences. The first trip was moved to Talsari in Balasore. A couple Shri Annada Prasad Padhy and Smt Archana Padhy as customers received their first tickets for the journey. Among others Bhubaneswar Block chairperson Smt Niru- pama Sahoo, Dhauli sara- panch Shri Chandan Mallick among others were present where Additional Secretary Shri Rudra Narayan Dash delivered a vote of thanks.

Civil Aviation Security Training Camp Inaugurated in Bhubaneswar



Bhubaneswar, 09.02.2026: A 'Civil Aviation Security Training' camp was officially inaugurated today at 11:00 AM at the Biju Patnaik State Police Academy (BPSPA) premises in Bhubaneswar. Shri Sanjay Kumar, ADG of Police (Law and Order), formally opened the session by lighting the ceremonial lamp. The training program is scheduled to run for two weeks, featuring 40 police security personnel drawn from Jharsuguda, Rourkela, Jeypore (Koraput), and Utkela (Kalahandi) airports. While addressing the gathering, Shri Sanjay Kumar urged the trainees to undertake their duties with utmost sincerity and to set a benchmark for the entire country. Shri Pradeep Baxla, Regional Director of the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS), briefed the participants on various technical aspects and protocols of aviation security. The event was attended by Smt. Debadatta Suranjita Jena, Special Secretary to the Commerce and Transport Department cum Director of Civil Aviation, Government of Odisha. Other notable dignitaries present included SP Shri U.S. Mishra and Aviation Consultant Shri Suresh Chandra Hota. The entire program was coordinated and managed by Deputy Commandant Shri Lalitendu Mohanty.

A high-level delegation from the 66th National Defence College (NDC) Course meets Odisha Chief Secretary

Bhubaneswar dt. 03.02.2026 A high-level delegation from the 66th National Defence College (NDC) Course has arrived in Odisha for a comprehensive five-day study tour titled "Understanding India & Introduction to Strategy," scheduled from February 2nd to February 6th, 2026. The delegation led by Consultant Maj Gen CP Sangra, AVSM, YSM (Retd) have come for a



visit to the State to gain insights into Odisha's socio-economic development, tribal development, internal security apparatus, and strategic infra-

structure. There are five foreign nationals in the delegation. The delegation called on the Chief Secretary, Odisha Ms. Anu Garg,

IAS on 2nd February, Monday and briefed about their visit which is a part of their 11-month training programme at National Defence College,

New Delhi. The delegation will visit INS Chilka, Kalinga Stadium, ICCO of Bhubaneswar Smart City Ltd and explore Odisha's rich cultural heritage at the Raghurajpur Heritage Village and the Udayagiri & Khandagiri Caves. The tour will also culminate in formal calls on the Hon'ble Chief Minister and the Hon'ble Governor of Odisha on February 5th.



Dhamsa, and Jhagedi, reflecting the depth, diversity, and enduring vitality of the State's cultural heritage. Odisha Parab, Guwahati reaffirmed its role as more than a cultural festival. emerging as a strategic platform for tourism outreach, diaspora engagement, institutional dialogue and business collaboration, while strengthening Odisha's presence and partnerships in the Northeast.

Odisha Advances Gender-Responsive Agricultural Governance through Gender Responsive Cell Workshop

Odisha is the only state who had developed a SOP to manufacture women friendly farm machinery- Dy CM Shri Singh Deo

Bhubaneswar: 13 February, 2026 The Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment, Government of Odisha, in collaboration with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and support from the Gates Foundation, organized the Inception Workshop on Institutionalizing the Gender Responsive Cell: Framework and Roadmap, in Bhubaneswar today. It is worth noting that the Gender Responsive Cell was jointly inaugurated by Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister, Shri Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo and Smt. Pravati Parida on 29 November 2025 at Krushi Bhavan, underscoring the State's commitment to advancing women-led development and inclusive agricultural systems. The GRC aims to analyse the existing gender gaps by institutionalizing gender-responsive governance within the Department



of Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment, ensuring that gender equity becomes a core operational principle rather than an add-on. Addressing the gathering, Sri Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo, Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister of Odisha and Minister of Agriculture & Farmers' Empowerment and Energy, called for sustained institutional action. When we launched the Cell last year, it signaled Odisha's commitment to inclusive

and evidence-led agricultural reform. We are proud to share that, Odisha is the only state who had developed a SOP to manufacture women friendly farm machinery. Today's workshop marks the next step of operationalizing this commitment and ensuring that research insights translate into tangible improvements in schemes and services. Dr. Mrinalini Darswal, Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Women & Child Development

Department, emphasized this need for interdepartmental convergence. Women's empowerment cannot be addressed in silos. The Gender Responsive Cell creates space for convergence across agriculture, women and child development, and data systems, which is essential for translating women-led development into measurable outcomes. Sri Sachin Ramchandra Jadhav, Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Department of Agriculture & Farmers' Empowerment, described the GRC as a governance reform. This inception workshop marks the beginning of collective action. Today's discussions will help translate the GRC vision into a practical and achievable roadmap. GRC represents a shift toward accountable and evidence-driven agricultural governance. Highlighting the role of research and academia Prof.

Pravat Kumar Roul, Vice Chancellor, Odisha University of Agriculture & Technology (OUAT), said Gender-responsive agricultural transformation must be grounded in rigorous evidence and continuous learning. Institutions like the GRC can serve as vital bridges between research, policy, and practice. Dr. Shahidur Rashid, Director – South Asia, IFPRI, said the initiative reflects a shift in how gender is addressed within public systems. Our role as IFPRI is to support the state with evidence, measurement frameworks, and capacity enhancement so that gender equity is reflected not only in intent, but in outcomes. Through close collaboration with state partners, the initiative will also enable the sharing of data-driven insights, diffusion of learnings to other states and across the South Asia region.

High-Level Review Meeting of Panchayati Raj Department: Minister Directs to Accelerate Development Works at Block Level

Bhubaneswar | February 14, 2026: Hon'ble Minister for Panchayati Raj, Drinking Water and Rural Development, Shri Rabi Narayan Naik, today chaired a high-level review meeting with Chief Development Officers (CDO-cum-EOs) and Block Development Officers (BDOs) to assess the progress of major rural development programmes across the State. The meeting was held at the MGNREGA Society Conference Hall, SIRD Campus. The review focused on the implementation of Bikashita Gaon Bikashita Odisha (BGBO), Antyodaya Gruha Yojana, MGNREGA and rural connectivity



"Ready to personally visit project sites if required": Hon'ble Minister Shri Rabi Narayan Naik

projects aimed at improving infrastructure, housing and livelihood opportunities in villages. Addressing the officers, the Hon'ble

Minister emphasized the need for accelerated execution of projects during the remaining period of the financial year and urged officials to approach the

assigned targets with greater ambition and commitment. "If we work with sincerity and speed, we can achieve much beyond our targets. Let us send a strong signal that we are capable of delivering more for rural Odisha. The Government stands ready with funds — our performance should reflect our capacity and commitment," the Minister said. The Minister urged the officers to promptly inform the Department about any operational bottlenecks requiring intervention and assured personal support, including field-level visits wherever necessary, to facilitate timely resolution.