

Vigilance probe sought into ₹500 cr sugarcane loan scam



Allegations of misuse exceeding ₹500 crore in loans issued under the guise of sugarcane cultivation surface

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, March 30: Cooperative leaders have demanded a Vigilance inquiry into an alleged scandal of ₹500 crore involving sugarcane farm loan in the district which surfaced recently.

The demand for inquiry, and allegations about the scam were raised by cooperative leader Sanyasi Pradhan during the district-level Cooperative Festival held at the Zilla Parishad Conference Hall Saturday.

According to a report from the District Agriculture Department, no sugarcane cultivation has taken place in the area. However, the Cooperative Department has allegedly disbursed loans exceeding ₹500 crore on the pretext of sugarcane farming.

Pradhan expressed concern

that subsidies were being misappropriated through fraudulent paperwork by claiming loans for sugarcane cultivation.

He said a preliminary investigation into these loans revealed that over ₹20 crore worth of subsidies might have been misappropriated, casting doubt on the role of the Cooperative Department.

Sugarcane cultivation in Nayagarh district has been declining since the closure of sugar mills. Apart from areas like Kridashpur and Jemadepurpatna, sugarcane farming has largely ceased. A handful of farmers continue to cultivate sugarcane to keep the tradition and crop alive, particularly to preserve the popularity of local jaggery.

Though most sugarcane farmers did not reportedly avail loans for raising the crop, the Cooperative Department claims to have disbursed loans exceeding ₹500 crore to farmers for the 2024-25 fiscal year. Investigations suggest that reports of sugarcane cultivation are being fabricated to siphon off subsidies.

Farmer leader Ranjit Dal-

abehera stated that sugarcane farming has effectively disappeared from Nayagarh district. He alleged that funds intended for sugarcane cultivation subsidies are being diverted for other purposes.

According to an RTI finding, while the Cooperative Department claims to have issued loans for sugarcane farming, the Agriculture Department maintains that no such cultivation is taking place in the district. "This discrepancy indicates a potential scam requiring thorough investigation," Pradhan said.

Sources said the loans were disbursed through nine branches of the Nayagarh Central Cooperative Bank during the 2024-25 fiscal year: Sharanakul, Odagaon, Itamati, Nayagarh, Gania, Mahipur, Daspalla, Khandapada, and Bhapur.

Pradhan stated, "There needs to be an investigation to determine which farmers have taken these loans and whether they are genuinely engaged in sugarcane farming. Only a proper inquiry will reveal the truth."

The conflicting reports from the Agriculture and Cooperative departments highlight a significant irregularity. The investigation is necessary to establish the truth and hold those responsible accountable, he added.

Pradhan wondered how cooperative banks and farmers are going to benefit if such corrupt practices prevail in the absence of adequate checks. "This systemic corruption within the system has to be exposed," he said.

Two youths drown in Koel



Pradip, Tarai



Ashirbad Barik

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, March 30: Two youths died by drowning while bathing in Koel river under Bisra police limits near here Sunday.

The deceased were identified as Pradip Tarai, 19, of B-block, house no-177 in Sector-17, and Ashirbad Barik, 19, of C-block in Sector-8 in Steel City. However, no reports were filed in connection with the incident at the local police station by evening, when reports last came in.

Sources said both of them worked for a tent house and DJ firm in Rourkela. On Sunday, they went to take bath at Karkata ghat of the river along with two friends. While bathing, they slipped and went deep into the water.

Locals rescued Ashirbad immediately, but Pradip was rescued in evening after a hectic search. They were rushed to the Ispat General Hospital where doctors pronounced them dead. Police and fire personnel were also pressed into the rescue operation.

No shortcuts in business: Kar

Bikalananda Kar's Rasagola from Salepur is a household favourite confectionary outlet in Odisha. Decades ago, Bikalananda Kar had started this sweets business under a banyan tree, selling rasagolas and bara dalma. He would travel to fairs and festivals, using his skills to attract customers. Inspired by his entrepreneurial spirit, his family has carried the business forward across generations. Today, nearly a century later, his granddaughters Sai Sibani Kar and Saipriya Kar continue his legacy. In an exclusive interview with Orissa POST, she shares insights about the business and its expansion. Excerpts...



Sai Sibani Kar

Can you tell us about your early life and what led you to enter the confectionery industry?

"This business was started by my late grandfather in 1924-25 in Salepur, Odisha. He started in a small hut, making Rasagola by hand, along with a few other traditional sweets like Chhena Gaja and Gulab Jamun. Over time, the business was passed down to the second generation—my father and his brothers—who introduced mechanisation and proper packaging to expand our reach. Growing up, my father always involved me in discussions about the business—its challenges, decisions, and future prospects. Those conversations sparked my interest in this venture. Even during my college days, I knew I would eventually join the family business. After completing my B.Com and an MBA in Hospitality Management, I officially stepped in around 7-8 years ago. My education has helped me understand modern business dynamics while staying true to our brand's legacy. My younger sister Saipriya and I have decided to take the family business to new heights.

With the growing market base in this business, what is your unique selling point?

Our philosophy has always been simple: Deliver the best quality food at a nominal price. We never compromise on quality, and we ensure that every customer who walks in gets exactly what they need. Whether it's traditional sweets or new-age fusion desserts, we focus on taste, affordability, and variety under one roof.

How do you keep up with the surging competition in this industry?

The food industry is highly competitive, with numerous brands offering sweets, snacks, baked goods, and more. The approach has always been to evolve with time while maintaining the authenticity of our products. We also recognised the health-conscious shift in consumer preferences. That's why we became the first brand in Odisha to launch Stevia Rasagola, a sugar-free version that has been well-received by diabetic and health-conscious consumers. This ability to innovate while staying true to our core product has helped us stay ahead in the market.

What impact has online delivery had on your sales?

Online delivery has been a game changer for us. Earlier, Rasagola was mostly a local delight, but now we can ship it across the country and even internationally. E-commerce platforms have helped us reach customers who otherwise wouldn't have access to our products. It has also pushed us to improve our packaging and shelf-life techniques to ensure freshness upon delivery.

What makes Bikalananda Kar's Rasagola so special?

Our Rasagola is unique because it follows a traditional Odia recipe passed down through generations. The texture, flavour, and meth-

od of preparation make it different from any other variant in the market. But beyond the taste, it's also about authenticity. We are the only brand with the official GI tag for Odisha's Rasagola, proving our product's originality and historical significance. Moreover, every sweet we make carries the blessings of Lord Jagannath. For us, Rasagola isn't just a dessert—it's a cultural and spiritual heritage of Odisha. That's what makes it truly special.

How has your journey been so far? Do you have any expansion plans?

The journey has been both challenging and rewarding. Transitioning from a small-scale business to a nationally recognised brand was not easy. At present, our packed Rasagola is exported globally, and we are continuously working on increasing shelf life without compromising on its taste. We have also expanded into bakery, chocolates, ice creams, and namkeen, ensuring we cater to every segment of the market.

With decades of experience, what advice would you give to the newcomers in this business?

Food industry is one of the most challenging and risky sectors because you are directly responsible for something people consume. Maintaining hygiene, quality, and consistency is non-negotiable. Many brands emerge every year, but only those who prioritise quality and customer trust can sustain in the long run. Shortcuts might give quick profits, but they don't create lasting brands. One lesson I've learnt from my father is that there are no shortcuts in business. Hard work, patience, and continuous improvement are the only ways to build a brand that lasts for generations.

Man beating elephant in viral video identified

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, March 30: The Forest Department claimed to have identified the person who was seen beating an elephant with sticks in a viral video in Keonjhar district, recently.

The department launched a hunt after the purported video of the incident went viral. Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Dhanraj HD identified the accused as Sipun Behera of Kantiapada village under the Patana forest range. The Forest department has also released a photo of the accused.

Behera is said to have been



identified by some foresters and forest guards from Champua and Patana ranges after they came across the video. However, the miscreant has not yet returned to the village and is currently absconding. "The accused will be arrested under the Wildlife Protection Act," Dhanraj said.

However, the Forest sleuths are yet to identify the exact location where the incident took place which has raised questions about the department's investigative skills.

Elephant-related incidents are common in Keonjhar district. Herds of elephants often react aggressively when provoked by people. In the past, there have been instances of locals throwing fireballs at elephants, pelting them with stones, and beating them with sticks to drive them away. Many individuals have also taken selfies, or recorded videos of these acts to share on social media, drawing wide-

spread condemnation from animal welfare advocates.

While the Forest department employs technologies and personnel to monitor elephant movements, concerns are being raised about the effectiveness of these measures in preventing such incidents.

Notably, some individuals are reportedly profiting by sharing images and videos of animals on social media. Despite the existence of over 10 such accounts, the Forest department has yet to take action, contributing to the rise of similar incidents, said former wildlife warden Subhendu Mallik.

NMO organises blood donation camp at VIMSAR

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, March 30: In a noble initiative to celebrate the Hindu New Year, and address the perennial requirement for the 'fluid of life', the National Medicos Organisation (NMO) and the Indian Public Health Association-Odisha organised a blood donation camp at Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (VIMSAR) at Burla in Sambalpur district, Sunday.

Students, doctors, and local volunteers, significantly contributed following which 50 units of blood were collected during the camp. The collected blood will aid accident victims, sickle cell and thalassemia patients, and those undergoing surgeries, said Dr Sanjeeb Ku-

The collected blood will aid accident victims, sickle cell and thalassemia patients

mar Mishra, assistant professor and organisational secretary, NMO-Odisha Paschim.

VIMSAR Superintendent Prof Lal Mohan Nayak inaugurated the camp alongside Prof Subrat Pradhan, vice president of IPHA Odisha; Lilarani Swain, Nursing College tutor and other dignitaries like Shankar Panda. Prof Nayak lauded the effort, emphasising the importance of such camps in ensuring a steady supply of blood. Dr Mishra expressed gratitude to all donors and participants.

BJP worker shot dead in Ganjam

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kabisuryanagar, March 30: Unidentified miscreants shot dead a BJP worker on the main road of Pathrapalli village, under this police limits, in Ganjam district over unknown reasons Sunday morning, police said.

The victim was identified as Lakshmi Narayan Paikaray, 55, alias Kuna, a contractor by profession, of Athagarhatna village. He was an active BJP worker and a close confidante of Kabisuryanagar MLA Pratap Chandra Nayak.

Nayak alleged the involvement of Opposition BJD workers in the murder, while the Additional SP (ASP) said that the reason behind the killing is unclear and is yet to be ascertained. This is the second murder in the Kabisuryanagar Assembly constituency area during last three days.



Police said Paikaray had several criminal cases registered against him at various police stations in and outside the district. He had returned home two years ago after remaining behind bar in connection with a case.

Paikaray was supervising the construction of a culvert on the main road of Pathrapalli village when three unidentified miscreants arrived at the spot and started video recordings the works, Sunday morning.

Later, they asked the workers

to summon the contractor to the site. One of the labourers informed Paikaray over phone and called him to the site. As soon as Paikaray got down from his bike, one of the miscreants shot him on his head and fled. Paikaray collapsed on the ground. The labourers rushed him to a nearby hospital where doctors pronounced him dead.

BJP MLA Nayak, Kodala block chairman Suryanarayan Nayak, BJP leaders Sitaram Choudhury, Meera Deo, Ram Prasad Moharana and several others were present at the hospital.

A team led by the ASP Priyaranjan Prusty, and Purusottampur SDPO Deepak Kumar Mishra rushed to the spot and launched an investigation after sending the body for post-mortem. Prusty said that all those involved in the murder will be arrested soon.

Ex block vice-chairperson scripts success story

POST NEWS NETWORK

Daringbadi, March 30: Bilasini Nayak of Greenbadi village under Daringbadi block in Kandhamal district has established herself as a successful woman farmer and brought a turnaround in her fortune by cultivating maize and tomatoes on her farmland, a report said.

Bilasini was elected as a Samiti member from 2007 to 2012, and later served as the block vice chairperson following her nomination to the post. She was re-elected as a Samiti member

for a second term from 2012 to 2017. During this period she dedicated her tenure to public service.

Additionally, she led several agitations and movements in her region for alcohol prohibition, and served as the state secretary of the Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC). She also contested for the Kandhamal MP seat, but was unsuccessful in her endeavour.

However, despite her active involvement in social service and local issues, Bilasini has placed significant emphasis on

MAIZE, TOMATO FARMING



agriculture. This season, she cultivated maize and tomatoes

on her two acres of land, generating more than ₹2.5 lakh earn-

ings from the harvest. Encouraged by her success, she now plans to expand her farming operations further.

"My husband, Jyoti Nayak, has been a constant support in my agricultural ventures," Bilasini said.

"This year I have also ventured into cultivating American sweet corn, which has gained considerable demand in the local markets of late," she added.

Confident in her farming endeavors, she is optimistic about further growth and contributing to the agricultural economy.

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ଶୁଭେଚ୍ଛା ବାର୍ତ୍ତା

ପବିତ୍ର ଇଦ୍-ଉଲ-ଫିତର ଅବସରରେ କିଲ୍ଲା, ରାଜ୍ୟ ତଥା ଦେଶର ସମସ୍ତ ମୁସଲମାନ ଭାଇ ଓ ଭଉଣୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ଶୁଭେଚ୍ଛା ଏବଂ ଅଭିନନ୍ଦନ ଜଣାଉଛି । ଶାନ୍ତି-ନୈତ୍ରୀ-ହର୍ଷୋଲ୍ଲାସର ଏହି ପର୍ବରେ ସମସ୍ତେ ସାମିଲ ହେବା ସହ ମୁସଲମାନ ଭାଇଭଉଣୀମାନଙ୍କ ସୁଖ, ଶାନ୍ତି ଓ ସମୃଦ୍ଧି କାମନା କରୁଅଛନ୍ତି ।

ସମ୍ବାଦନ ମହାକୁଡ଼
ବିଧାୟକ, ଚମ୍ପୁଆ, କେନ୍ଦୁଝର