

APRIL 12-18, 2026

# SUNDAY POST

HERE . NOW

WORLD ART DAY - APRIL 15

# Before the colours fade

COVER STORY

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Though the recent Odia hit 'Bara Badhu' featured an ensemble cast, Bhadrak-born Satya Prakash Jena held his own in every frame he appeared. The son of a drama director, he aspired to act from childhood but truly showcased his talent in 2018 at the prestigious Bharat Rang Mahotsav, organised by the National School of Drama. He soon made his on-screen debut in a popular Odia crime docudrama and has since built a steady career with projects like 'Parab,' 'The Jengaburu Curse,' and 'Savadhan India,' crediting his success to his mother's sacrifices



WITH MOTHER

**Acting rooted in reality**

Whenever I have no work commitments, I immerse myself in theatre and acting, learning new skills and observing people closely, as it greatly helps me understand characters better.

**Culinary curiosity never ends**

I enjoy experimenting with food, and whenever I get some free time, I like stepping into the kitchen to cook and try out new dishes.

**Heart belongs to home**

I live here alone and get very little time with my family, so I make it a point to visit my hometown once my project is over.

**Life's better with friends**

I have a close circle of good friends, and when there is some free time, we make sure to meet and spend time together.



WITH CO-ACTORS ON THE BARA BADHU SET



**Work feels like joy**

I don't have a specific day off; for me every day feels like Sunday because I truly enjoy my work and find happiness in it.

**WhatsApp This Week**

**Only on Sunday POST!**

Send in your most interesting WhatsApp messages and memes at: [features.orissapost@gmail.com](mailto:features.orissapost@gmail.com)  
And we will publish the best ones

**THE BEST MEMES OF THIS ISSUE**

- The difference between in-laws and outlaws? Outlaws are wanted.
- The probability of someone watching you is proportional to the stupidity of your action.
- How do you know that Santa is a man? No woman wears the same attire every year.
- If at first you don't succeed, skydiving is not for you!

**An inspirational voyage**

Sir, Last week's cover story in Sunday POST on the historic voyage of SS Loyalty offers a compelling reminder of India's enduring maritime spirit and its quest for self-reliance. The narrative not only highlights a landmark moment in 1919 but also thoughtfully connects it to India's broader economic and cultural journey. What stands out is how the voyage symbolized more than a commercial breakthrough. Moreover, it reflected a growing national consciousness during colonial rule. The courage of the Scindia Steam Navigation Company and the resilience of Indian seafarers deserve continued recognition, especially among younger generations. Equally enriching was the focus on Odisha's maritime heritage, which reinforces that India's seafaring legacy predates colonial disruptions by centuries. Traditions like Boita Bandana beautifully preserve this connection between history and living culture. As India advances its ambitions of becoming a global maritime hub, such stories serve as both inspiration and guidance. They remind us that progress is rooted in vision, perseverance, and pride in our heritage. This article succeeds in blending history with relevance, making it both informative and deeply engaging.

KAJOL CHAKRABORTY, ROURKELA

**LETTERS**



**A word for readers**

Sunday post is serving a platter of delectable fare every week, or so we hope. We want readers to interact with us. Feel free to send in your opinions, queries, comments and contributions to

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WORLD ART DAY APRIL 15

# Before the colours fade

*Eminent visual artist Jagannath Panda says preserving fading art forms is deeply tied to cultural identity and collective memory. When an art form disappears, society loses not just an object but an entire way of thinking and understanding the world, he adds*

ANISHA KHATUN, OP

Odisha, a land where culture breathes through every ritual, festival and craft, has long been a cradle of extraordinary artistic traditions. From the intricate scrolls of Pattachitra to the rhythmic patterns of palm-leaf engravings and the earthy elegance of terracotta, the state's art forms embody centuries of devotion, storytelling and community wisdom. These crafts are not merely decorative expressions; they are living archives that preserve mythology, folklore, spiritual beliefs and the intimate relationship between people and nature.

However, in today's rapidly modernising and digital-driven world, many of these priceless traditions stand at the brink of fading into obscurity. The lure of faster livelihoods and the growing dominance of mass-produced goods have slowly pushed these heritage crafts to the margins.

As World Art Day is around the corner, Sunday POST sat down with a few artists to understand their perspectives on preserving fading art forms and the future of traditional crafts in a rapidly changing world.

### 'Traditional art forms are living knowledge systems'



Contemporary visual artist **Jagannath Panda** believes that World Art Day is not only a moment to celebrate global artistic heritage but also an opportunity to reflect on the contributions of countless forgotten artists.

For Panda, traditional art forms are not relics of the past but living knowledge systems that continue to hold deep relevance even in today's rapidly changing digital age.

"For me, traditional art forms should not be seen as relics of the past; they are

living knowledge systems. In a fast, digital world where everything is becoming instant and fragmented, these practices offer depth and a slower way of understanding time. If you look at authentic objects of the past, whether Pattachitra, weaving, or terracotta, these forms carry memory, philosophy and our community wisdom. They remind us that making is also a way of thinking," he says.

While technology can expand visibility, he believes it should not replace the essence of tradition. "The digital world can amplify them, but it should not replace their essence. Tradition and technology must coexist and engage in dialogue. One carries the soul; the other extends its reach to a wider audience," adds Panda.

He also highlighted the pressing challenges faced by artists in preserving traditional practices. "The biggest challenge is not just survival, but relevance and pride," he explains, pointing out that many artisans struggle with economic instability and a lack of institutional support for skill-based production.

At the same time, traditional art forms are often reduced to decorative commercial objects, losing their deeper cultural meaning. He also observes a growing generational gap. "Younger artists often move to other professions because they do not see dignity or sustainability in continuing these traditions," he notes, citing how the son of a Dhokra artisan might prefer becoming an auto driver rather than continuing the family craft.

Recalling a visit to Belaguntha, Panda remembers witnessing the brass metal fish craft tradition on the verge of disappearing. Panda stresses that without strong financial, intellectual and institutional support sys-



tems, many of these traditions will gradually vanish. According to him, revival requires collective effort and active

engagement rather than nostalgia alone. "Revival cannot happen through nostalgia alone; it requires active engagement," he says. Panda believes stronger collaboration between artists, institutions, government bodies, and private organisations is essential. He also emphasises the role of education in sustaining cultural traditions. Introducing these practices in schools, workshops and public programmes can build early awareness, while fair pricing, proper funding and long-term policy support remain crucial. Traditional art forms, he adds, must return to public life instead of being confined to museums.

For Panda, preserving fading art forms is deeply tied to cultural identity and collective memory. When an art form disappears, society loses not just an object but an entire way of thinking and understanding the world. Reflecting on Odisha's cultural richness, Panda concludes that preservation is not merely about protecting the past but shaping the future.

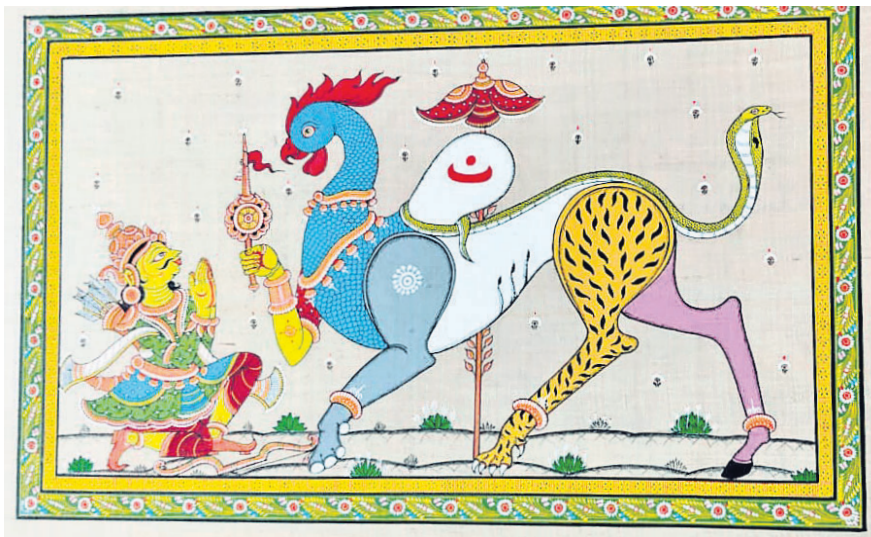


**'Innovation & adaptation key to sustaining traditional art forms'**

Renowned master craftsman and award-winning artist **Dwijabar Das** has dedicated decades to preserving Odisha's rich artistic heritage through the traditional practices of Pattachitra and palm-leaf engraving. Reflecting on his artistic journey, he says, "I became interested in Pattachitra during my school days. I always admired the traditional artists, and whatever I have achieved today is because of the guidance and blessings of my guru."



Speaking about the role of traditional art in today's rapidly changing and digital world, Das said that traditional arts carry stories, rituals, and philosophical ideas that connect communities with their roots. Even though digital platforms are transforming the art market, they can also help bring greater visibility to traditional crafts if used responsibly.



Acknowledging the growing challenges faced by artists who continue to practice traditional art forms, he said, "Today this traditional art is fading not because there is less demand but because people do not want to learn it anymore."

According to him, younger generations often prefer quicker sources of income rather than spending years mastering a craft that requires patience and dedication. As a result, only a handful of experienced artists remain active, and they sometimes struggle to meet the increasing demand for authentic work. This issue is compounded by other challenges faced by artisans, such as imitation products. In many cases, machine-printed replicas and cheaper commercial products overshadow the painstaking labour of hand-painted works.

Despite these obstacles, Das believes that innovation and adaptation are key to sustaining traditional art forms. "To revive this art form and bring freshness to it, we experiment with designs and patterns," he explains. While traditional Jagannath-themed paintings remain central to the craft, artists today are also exploring tribal motifs, contemporary themes, and decorative patterns to reach a wider audience. Such experimentation helps artists maintain the essence of tradition while adapting to changing tastes.

For Das, Pattachitra is not merely a decorative painting style but a living tradition that reflects the beliefs, stories, and artistic sensibilities of generations. Encouraging young artists to learn these traditions, providing proper training platforms, and ensuring fair recognition and financial support are essential steps to keep the art alive for future generations, he signs off.

**'Blending tradition with modern aesthetics important for revival'**

**Priyabrata Sahoo**, a graphic designer and terracotta artist, believes that traditional art continues to hold deep relevance even in today's rapidly evolving digital world. Balancing his work between digital design and clay craftsmanship, he experiences the contrast between technological precision and the organic nature of handmade art.

Reflecting on this balance, he says, "As both a graphic designer and a terracotta artist, I live in a world where digital precision meets the raw, unpredictable texture of the earth. People often ask me how

I balance these two lives, and my answer is simple: the digital world gives us efficiency, but terracotta gives us a soul." According to him, traditional art forms act as a humanising force in an increasingly mechanised society. "While I spend hours on a screen, there is a 'rustic charm' in the clay that no software can replicate," he says



At the same time, Sahoo highlights the serious challenges faced by artisans trying to preserve traditional practices. "The biggest challenge I face, and that I see in the eyes of my fellow artists, is the economic vulnerability of the craft," he says. Terracotta art requires patience and intensive labour, from sourcing the right clay to the long firing process. "It is a labour-intensive journey. From sourcing the right riverbed clay to the delicate firing process that takes over a week, the 'crisis of proper remuneration' is real." He points out that despite their skill and dedication, many master craftsmen continue to live in financial

hardship without adequate institutional support. Sahoo also observes a growing gap between rural artisans and modern markets. "As a designer, I see the gap between the artist's village and the modern market. Without design orientation and better market awareness, our heritage struggles to compete with mass-produced plastic."



**On the brink of disappearance**

**Talapatra Chitra:** A centuries-old art form involving the delicate engraving or painting on dried palm leaves. This craft requires extreme precision and patience, which fewer artisans are practicing today.

**Jhota-Chita:** Traditionally applied to floors and walls during festivals, this, along with Muruja (dry rice powder art), is disappearing from urban households, often replaced by stickers or mass-produced decorations.

**Traditional wood and mask-making:** Crafting masks for dances like Sahi Jatra and Lanka Podi, along with traditional wood carving, is declining due to the increasing use of factory-made items.

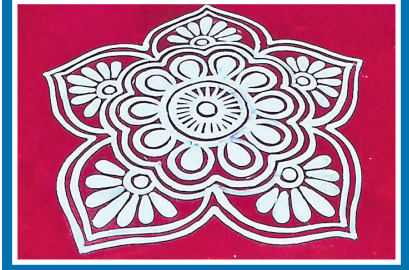
**Saura painting:** Tribal murals from the Saura community, featuring distinctive symbolic figures and nature-inspired themes, are gradually becoming less common as younger generations move away from traditional practices.

**Stone carving:** Odisha has a rich tradition of stone carving, reflected in the intricate sculptures seen in temples and heritage monuments. Skilled artisans shape stone into detailed deities, architectural motifs and decorative pieces. However, the craft is slowly declining as fewer young artisans are willing to take up the physically demanding work, and modern construction materials and machine-made designs increasingly replace handcrafted stone artistry.

To address these issues, Sahoo believes that education and innovation are essential for sustaining traditional art forms. "This is why I teach. I tell my students that we must view terracotta not as a dying relic, but as a 'living heritage.'" According to him, revival requires blending tradition with modern aesthetics so that these crafts remain relevant in contemporary spaces. "To revive it, we must integrate traditional motifs into modern aesthetics, taking the stories of our ancestors and placing them in contemporary homes," he said.

For Sahoo, preserving traditional art forms goes far beyond safeguarding craft, it is about protecting cultural identity and ecological wisdom. "To me, preserving this art form is about maintaining our ecological wisdom. Terracotta is an indigenous, sustainable technology that connects us to the earth," states a proud Sahoo.

Each piece of clay shaped by hand carries a deeper meaning. "When a student shapes a piece of clay, they aren't just making a pot; they are documenting our history and spiritual identity," said the terracotta artist believing that these traditions represent a priceless cultural inheritance that must continue to live within communities.



## BHUBANESWAR AT 78

# A tale of vision, growth & choices

Today, the Temple City stands at a critical juncture. Once celebrated for its wide, uncongested roads, the state capital now grapples with mounting traffic bottlenecks at key intersections. The challenge ahead is clear and urgent: to preserve its rich heritage, safeguard its environment, and shape a future that truly reflects the vision on which the city was founded



GOPABANDHU MOHAPATRA

On April 13, 1948, India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, laid the foundation stone of a city that would go on to redefine urban planning in

capital. However, Cuttack's geographical constraints - sandwiched between the Mahanadi and Kathajodi rivers and frequent flooding - made expansion difficult.

Recognising these limitations, German architect Otto Königsberger proposed a bold alternative: a modern, planned capital near Cuttack but free from its constraints. The selected site, on the banks of the Kuakhai River, offered higher elevation, ample land, and the promise of growth.

This began the story of modern Bhubaneswar. **Designing a city for the future**

Königsberger envisioned Bhubaneswar as a "linear city," with administrative hubs at its core and residential neighbourhoods radiating outward. Wide roads, green parks, and self-sufficient units defined the layout, an approach far ahead of its time.

The city was initially planned for just 15,000 residents and divided into six primary units - Unit-I (Bapuji Nagar), Unit-II (Ashok Nagar), Unit-III (Kharavela Nagar), Unit-IV (Bhouma Nagar), Unit-V (Keshari Nagar) and Unit-VI (Ganga Nagar), each designed to function as a self-contained neighbourhood with schools, markets, and civic amenities. Over time, additional units (Unit VII to IX) expanded this framework, housing government employees and shaping the city's civic character.

What was once dense forest stretching from rail lines to the Khandagiri hills was gradually transformed. Key landmarks like the Secretariat, Assembly, and Raj Bhavan rose first, followed by infrastructure such as the airport, today known as Biju Patnaik International Airport.

**An emerging hub of education and opportunities**

Even in its early years, Bhubaneswar was envisioned as more than just an administrative capital. It quickly evolved into an educational nucleus.

Institutions like Utkal University, founded before the city itself, became pillars of higher learning. Over the decades, the city attracted premier institutions such as IIT, NISER, IIIT, KIIT, KISS and leading private universities, transforming it into an academic powerhouse.

Schools like



Bhubaneswar embodies a rare duality of time. While it emerged as a modern, planned capital in 1948, its roots stretch back over 2,500-3,000 years. The city's ancient soul lives on through its timeless temples, the nearby fortified settlement of Sisupalgarh, and the historic landscape shaped by the 3rd-century BCE Kalinga War—making it a unique confluence of antiquity and modernity

Bhaktakabi Madhusudan (BM) High School, Capital High School, and Sainik School laid the foundation for a strong educational ecosystem. By the 1960s, national institutions like Kendriya Vidyalayas and the Regional Institute of Education further enriched the landscape.

From a population of just over 16,000 in 1951, Bhubaneswar has now grown into a metropolitan area of over 1.3 million—an extraordinary leap in less than eight decades.

**From forests to concrete: The cost of expansion**

The land that now forms Bhubaneswar was once part of the lush Chandaka forest. Many of today's localities such as Aiginia, Ancharua, Badagada, Baramunda, Bhagabanpur, Bharatpur, Bomikhal,

Chandrasekharapur, Dumduma, Ganganagara, Jagamara, Jharapara, Kesura, Laxmisagar, Patia, Pitapalli, Pokhariput, Samantrapur, Siripur and others still carry echoes of their village origins.

But growth has come at a cost. Cyclones like the 1999 Odisha Super Cyclone, Phani, Amphan, and Hud-Hud have battered the city's green cover over the years. Rapid urbanisation has accelerated the loss, with thousands of trees felled for roads, housing, and infrastructure projects.

In just the past five years, over 10,000 trees have reportedly been cut, raising concerns about sustainability and ecological balance.

**A City under pressure: Traffic, growth, and urban strain**

Today, Bhubaneswar stands at a critical juncture. Once known for its wide, uncongested roads, the city now struggles with growing traffic bottlenecks at key junctions like Jayadev Vihar and Rasulgah.

The surge in private vehicles, combined with infrastructure lag, has led to daily congestion and commuter frustration. Plans for a metro rail system have been shelved, highlighting the complexities of urban mobility planning in a mid-sized but rapidly expanding city.

Authorities are now exploring alternative solutions, including road expansions inspired by models like Chandigarh but these too raise questions about sustainability and livability.

**The road ahead: A choice between chaos and character**

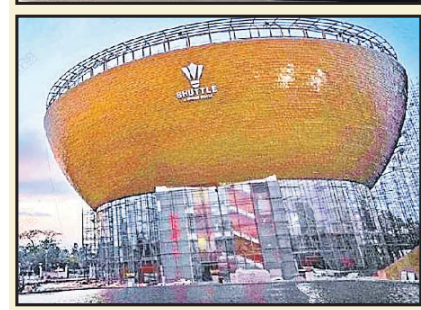
Bhubaneswar's future hangs in a delicate balance.

With world-class healthcare institutions, a thriving education sector, and growing corporate presence, the city is poised to become a major hub of eastern India. Yet, the path it chooses will define its identity.

Will it follow the trajectory of overcrowded metros with high-rises, traffic congestion, and shrinking green spaces? Or will it reclaim its original vision as a planned, green, and livable city?

As Bhubaneswar turns 78, the answer lies not just in policy decisions, but in collective will to preserve its heritage, protect its environment, and shape a future worthy of its visionary beginnings.

*The writer is a retired banker. Views are personal.*



eastern India—Bhubaneswar. As the capital turns 78 in a day, its journey from a carefully planned township to a bustling urban hub offers a compelling story of ambition, transformation, and emerging challenges.

**From Cuttack to a new capital vision**

Before Bhubaneswar came into existence, Odisha functioned under the administrative shadow of the Bengal Presidency, with Cuttack as its



# Bhubaneswar's audience listens with hearts: Antara

Popular Bollywood singer Antara Mitra, who rose to fame as a finalist on "Indian Idol Season 2," has secured a space for herself with chartbusters like "Saree Ke Fall Sa," "Gerua," and "Kesariya." She was recently in Bhubaneswar for a musical concert. On the sidelines of the event, Antara had a breezy chat with **Sunday POST**

**Excerpts:**

**You've performed across the globe—how has your experience been performing in Bhubaneswar?**

Bhubaneswar has always felt very special to me. The audiences here listen with their heart. It's not just about energy or applause, but a deep emotional connection. When I perform here, I can truly feel that bond from the stage. Every visit feels familiar, and the warmth I receive here is incredibly touching.

**Odisha has a rich musical heritage. Would you like to collaborate with musicians from the state?**

Absolutely. Odisha's folk and classical traditions are beautiful. Blending traditional elements with contemporary sounds can create something truly unique. I would love to explore such collaborations if the opportunity arises.

**It's been 20 years**



**since your journey on Indian Idol 2. How has the industry changed?**

The industry has transformed significantly. Earlier, opportunities were limited and growth was slower. Today, platforms like YouTube and social media have made music more accessible. While that's exciting, it also means greater competition. Talent matters, but consistency and individuality are equally important now.

**Your collaborations with Pritam and Arijit Singh are widely loved. What makes them special?**

Working with Pritam da is always comfortable as he understands voices so well. Arijit brings immense honesty to every song. Together, we focus on emotion rather than chasing hits, and I think that authenticity connects with listeners.

**Which songs reflect your personality the most?**

I'm quite emotional in real life, so I connect more with soft, melodic songs. That vulnerability reflects who I am, though I do enjoy peppy tracks as well.

**How do you stay fresh while rooted in classical music?**

Classical training is my foundation. At the same time, I explore new genres and artists. It's about balancing roots with evolution and trusting what feels right musically.

**Advice for aspiring singers from small towns?**

Never see your background as a limitation. Keep learning, stay consistent, and use every platform available. Success takes time, but persistence always pays off.

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

# Ananya's stress busters

Actress Ananya Panday's So Positive, a children and family first initiative designed to acknowledge exam stress, has joined forces with Nick India to come up with new and exciting ways to tackle exam pressure.

Rooted in Nick India's ongoing Pressure Ko Bolo Bye campaign, the initiative encourages parents to actively ease exam pressure by recognizing each child's unique strengths and learning style and by building confidence over comparison.

The collaboration came to life with a special on-ground activity led by Ananya, along with Nick's beloved Chikoo and Bunty.

They selected everyday exam worries written on balloons and popped them to reveal easy stress-busting actions.

Shedding further light on the initiative, Ananya revealed that as a kid, she learned that

the best way to overcome exam pressure is to take a step back and keep in mind that exams are merely a small part of the bigger journey.

The CTRL actress said, "Exam pressure is something almost every student experiences, but it's important to remember that it doesn't have to define you. Growing up, I realised that the best way to deal with it is to take a step back, breathe and remind yourself that exams are just one small part of a much bigger journey."

SIANS



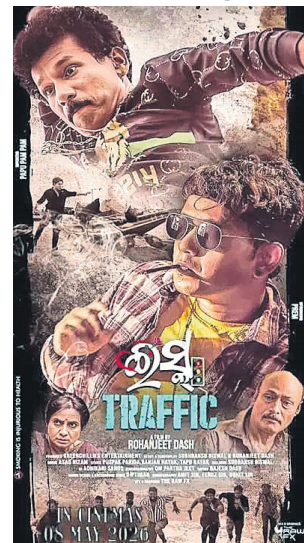
## OLLYWOOD ROUNDUP

### Bindusagar trailer out

**Bhubaneswar:** The trailer of the upcoming Odia film *Bindusagar* was released recently, offering a glimpse into an emotional narrative centred on homecoming, relationships, and rediscovery. The film is scheduled to release in cinemas nationwide April 17. The trailer was presented by actor Anubhav Mohanty. The plot revolves around a young woman played by Prakruti Mishra living abroad who returns to Bhubaneswar to fulfill her mother's last wish. Her journey back home unfolds into an emotional exploration of identity, belonging, and reconnecting with her roots. Through this personal quest, the film highlights the cultural and emotional ties that bind individuals to their homeland. The film also features Dipanwit Dashmohapatra, Sukant Rath, Satya Ranjan, Sonali Sharmistha, and Robin Das in important role. Written by Abhishek Das and directed by Abhishek Swain, *Bindusagar* is produced by Platoon One Films and Boundless Blackbuck Films in association with MDC Filmworks. PNN



### Ishq Traffic to release May 8

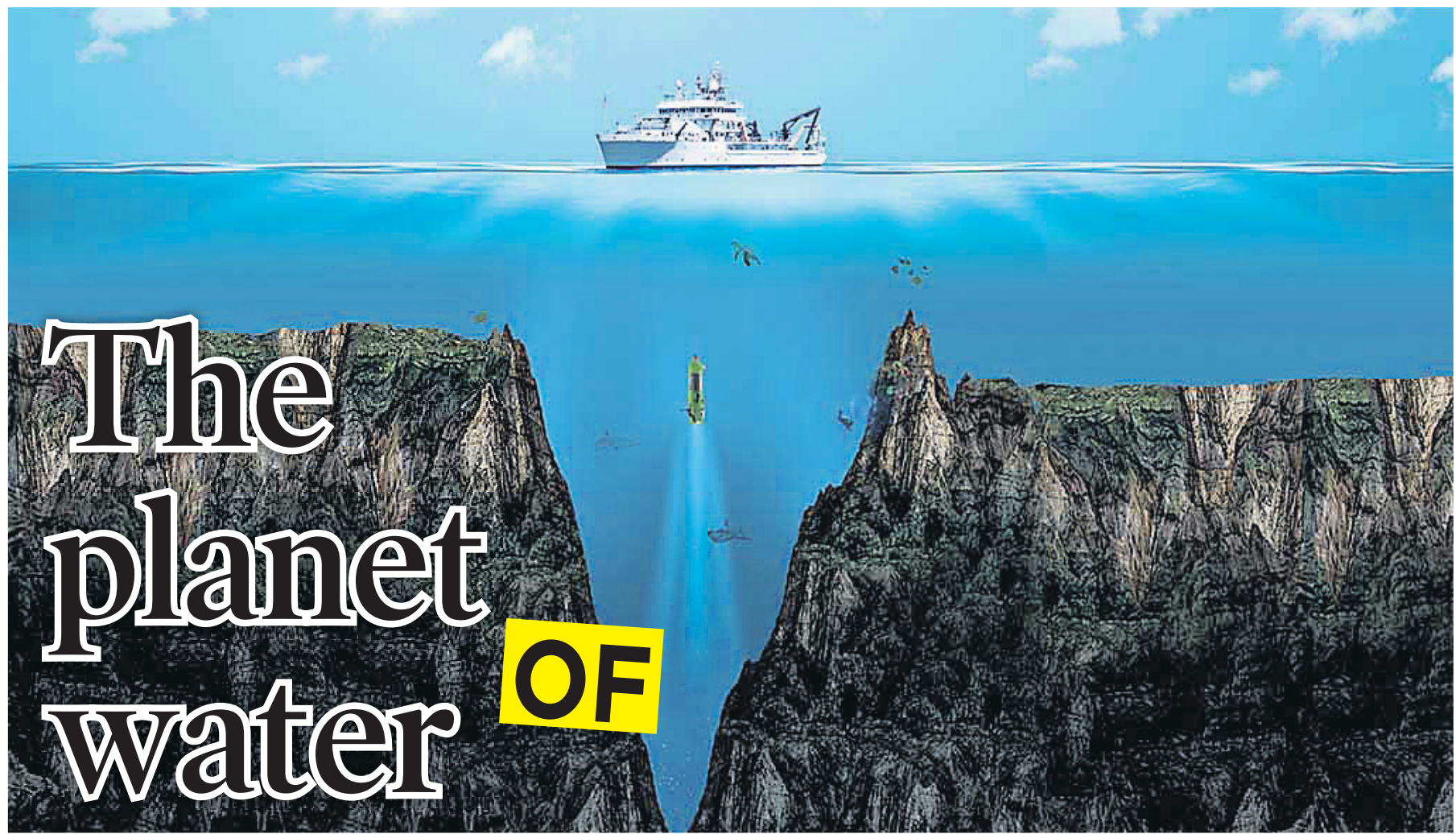


**Bhubaneswar:** After long delay, the Odia film *Ishq Traffic* is now scheduled to hit cinemas May 8. Presented by Green Chilies Entertainment and directed by Rohanajeet Das, the film features Papu Pom Pom, Pushpa Panda, Manaswini Pati, Chaudhury Jayaprakash Das, Jiban Panda, Santu Nijey and Mahaprasad Kar in key roles. Newcomer Prem plays the lead. The music is scored by while the lyrics are penned by Tapu Nayak, Ranjan Nayak, Pushpak Parida, and Asad Nizam. The songs are rendered by Human Sagar, Mantu Chhuria, Kuldeep Pattnaik, Asima Panda, Satyajit Pradhan, and Abhinash. The film revolves around a story centered on a mother, her son, and an uncle. PNN

### Mehermunda to hit theatres May 15

**Bhubaneswar:** Odia film *Mehermunda* which tells the heartfelt story rooted in Odisha's rich handloom tradition will be released May 15 across the state. Produced under the banner of GR Records, the film stars Jyoti Ranjan Nayak and Arlin Ankita in lead roles, with Rakesh Padhi, Susanta Dasmohapatra, and Santu Nije playing key supporting characters. Directed by Nikunj Hota, the project is co-produced by Rakesh Kumar Padhi and Gyanranjan Behera. Music for the film has been composed by Amit Yuvraaj and Chandraniv Saha. Lead actor Jyoti, last seen in *Paree*, takes on a strong role in this socially relevant narrative while Arlin was most recently seen in *Sanatani* opposite Sambeet Acharya. With its meaningful storyline and focus on Odisha's weaving legacy, *Mehermunda* aims to strike an emotional chord while celebrating the unsung heroes of the handloom sector. PNN





# The planet water OF

*From the shallow shores to the deepest trenches, the oceans are a realm of contrasts—light and dark, calm and turbulent, known and unknown. They are not just a backdrop to life on Earth; they are its foundation, quietly shaping the story of our planet every single day*

temperatures, and an absence of light. Yet it is far from lifeless. Strange creatures—glowing fish, giant squid, and bioluminescent organisms—have evolved to thrive in conditions that would be hostile to most life forms. The deep sea is not just a place; it is an entire ecosystem operating under rules vastly different from those on land.

### The deepest frontier

At the very bottom of the ocean lies its most extreme frontier: The Mariana Trench. This immense underwater canyon plunges deeper than Mount Everest is tall, reaching depths of around 11,000 meters. In its deepest point, known as Challenger Deep, the pressure is so intense it would crush most human-made objects. And yet, even here, life persists. Tiny microorganisms and specially adapted creatures survive in this crushing darkness, reminding us of life's remarkable resilience. The trench stands as a symbol of how much remains unexplored; humans have visited it only a handful of times, making it more remote than the surface of the Moon in some ways.



distant parts of the world. One such route—the Strait of Magellan, became a vital passage linking the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Carved between the southern tip of South America and Tierra del Fuego, it offered ships a safer alternative to the treacherous waters around Cape Horn. This narrow strait witnessed the movement of explorers, traders, and adventurers, shaping global trade and cultural exchange. It stands as a reminder that oceans are not barriers, but pathways—connecting continents, economies, and histories.

Warm currents can soften winters along coastlines, while cold currents can cool entire regions. They also play a crucial role in supporting marine life by transporting nutrients that sustain fisheries and ecosystems. Without these currents, the planet's climate would be far more extreme and less hospitable.

### Gateways and global journeys

Long before modern navigation, sailors relied on natural ocean routes to connect

From the shallow shores to the deepest trenches, the oceans are a realm of contrasts—light and dark, calm and turbulent, known and unknown. They regulate our climate, sustain biodiversity, and hold secrets yet to be uncovered. As exploration continues, each discovery reveals how interconnected our world truly is. The oceans are not just a backdrop to life on Earth; they are its foundation, quietly shaping the story of our planet every single day.

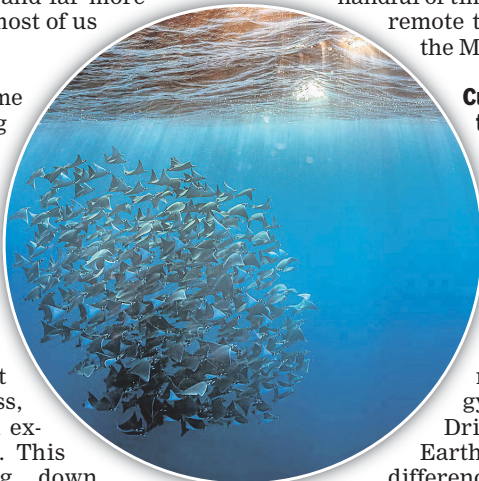
OP DESK

Stand on any shore, and the horizon reminds you of a simple truth: Earth is, above all, a water world. Nearly 71% of its surface is covered by oceans, vast blue expanses that shape weather, sustain life, and inspire wonder. From space, the dominance of water is unmistakable—a swirling canvas of deep blues and shifting whites. Yet, for all their visibility, oceans remain among the least understood realms of our planet. Beneath their glittering surfaces lies a world that is darker, colder, and far more mysterious than most of us imagine.

Here's a look at some of the fascinating aspects of oceans.

### Into the deep sea

Venture just 200 meters below the ocean's surface, and you enter what scientists call the deep sea. Here, sunlight fades into darkness, and life adapts in extraordinary ways. This realm, stretching down thousands of meters, is defined by crushing pressure, near-freezing tem-



### Currents that shape the world

While the depths remain hidden, the oceans' influence is constantly felt through their currents. These vast, flowing rivers of seawater move heat, nutrients, and energy around the globe. Driven by winds, the Earth's rotation, and differences in temperature and salinity, ocean currents regulate climate and weather patterns.



For years, Josephine Baker, an American-born French glamorous stage performer, moved through a world controlled by enemy forces, carrying intelligence that could have led to her execution if uncovered. Still, no one suspected because no one was looking for her

# The SpY



Josephine Baker

When men in uniform looked at Josephine Baker, they saw exactly what they expected to see: a glamorous performer, a Black woman whose fame rested on charm, movement, and spectacle. To them, she was entertainment—someone to admire, photograph, and dismiss.

She understood that perception better than anyone. And she turned it into one of the most effective weapons of World War II.

What they never saw was the spy.

### A star born in exile

Josephine Baker's journey to becoming an unlikely wartime operative began far from the battlefields of Europe. Born into poverty in St. Louis, she fled a country that denied her dignity and opportunity. In 1925, she arrived in Paris—a city that would transform her life.

France embraced her in a way America never had. On Parisian stages, she became a sensation. Her performances captivated audiences, challenged social norms, and made her one of the most recognizable entertainers in the world. She lived boldly, unapologetically, and successfully.

France, in many ways, gave her everything.

So when France fell to Nazi Germany in 1940, Baker didn't hesitate when asked what she would give in return. Everything.

### Recruitment into the shadows

As the French Resistance began forming in secrecy, its leaders faced a critical problem: how to move intelligence across borders without detection. Traditional spies often looked the part—nervous, cautious, easily scrutinized.

Josephine Baker was the opposite.

Jacques Abtey, a senior figure in French military intelligence, saw what others did not. Her fame made her visible—but in a way that shielded her. Officials wanted her autograph, not her arrest. Guards saw a celebrity, not a courier.

And beneath that visibility lay something even more powerful: prejudice. In the racist worldview of Nazi officers and collaborators, a Black female entertainer could never be a threat.

Baker understood that blindness. She embraced it. And she weaponized it.

### Espionage in plain sight

Under the cover of performance tours, Baker began traveling across Europe and North Africa—Spain, Portugal, Morocco, and beyond. Officially, she was entertaining audiences. In reality, she was gathering and transporting intelligence that could alter the course of the war.

She attended embassy gatherings in Lisbon, listening carefully as diplomats and officials spoke freely in her presence. Fluent in multiple languages, she absorbed conversations, identified loyalties, and memorized details others overlooked.

The information she carried was critical: troop movements, submarine locations, airfield positions, and the fragile web of alliances within Vichy-controlled territories.

Her methods were as daring as they were ingenious. She hid photographs of German military installations

## THEY NEVER SAW

by pinning them to her clothing—sometimes even beneath her garments. She wrote coded messages in invisible ink on sheet music, using lemon juice that revealed secrets only when heated.

At border crossings, she smiled, posed for photographs, and signed autographs. Guards, eager to meet the famous performer, waved her through without inspection. Her greatest disguise wasn't a costume. It was expectation.

### The body that refused to quit

In Casablanca, the war nearly claimed her—not through capture, but through illness.

Baker developed a severe infection that escalated into peritonitis, a life-threatening condition. She underwent emergency surgery and spent months—nearly two years—confined to a hospital bed. At one point, newspapers believed she would not survive.

For many, this would have marked the end. But for Josephine Baker, it was merely a pause.

Even in extreme pain and weakness, she refused to step away from her work. Intelligence continued to pass through her hands. Messages were smuggled in and out through trusted visitors. She reviewed information, coordinated efforts, and remained an active part of the Resistance. Her body may have been failing, but her resolve was not.

### Performance as cover, courage as constant

When Baker recovered, she returned not to rest, but to action.

She began performing for Allied troops across North Africa and the Middle East. These performances boosted morale, but they also served another purpose: cover. Every trip was an opportunity. Every au-



Josephine Baker

dience concealed a mission.

Sometimes she appeared on stage in her Free French uniform, a quiet signal of allegiance. Offstage, she carried the same risks she always had—a revolver in her bag, secrets hidden in plain sight, and the constant threat of discovery.

For years, she moved through a world controlled by enemy forces, carrying intelligence that could have led to her execution if uncovered. Still, no one suspected. Because no one was looking for her.

### Silence, recognition, and revelation

After the war, France honored Josephine Baker with some of its highest distinctions, recognizing her extraordinary contributions. Yet the details of her work remained largely hidden.

She did not speak about her missions. When asked about the war, she spoke simply of entertaining troops. She allowed the world to believe a partial truth.

The full story stayed buried for decades.

It was only later, when Jacques Abtey published his account that the scope of her actions came to light. He revealed the risks she took, the intelligence she delivered, and the unwavering commitment she showed to a country she had chosen as her own.

### The power of being overlooked

Josephine Baker's story is not just one of bravery, it is one of perception.

She understood something her enemies never did: that invisibility, when chosen and controlled, can be a powerful form of resistance. What others dismissed as weakness, she transformed into strength.

The Nazis saw a performer. A distraction. A harmless figure. She saw an opportunity. And in that gap between perception and reality, she carried secrets across borders, helped coordinate resistance efforts, and contributed to the Allied cause in ways that remained hidden for years.

Josephine Baker didn't just dance across stages. She moved through history; quietly, strategically, and dangerously close to discovery.

The men in uniforms never saw her coming.

OP DESK

Grown up fatherless and in poverty, Josephine symbolised the beauty and vitality of Black American culture, which took Paris by storm in the 1920s