EDITORIAL

Sambalpur Gears Up for Hanuman Jayanti 2025: High Security Measures in Place

By **Brajabandhu Mahanta** • March 29, 2025 • 4 min read

A day after the **Orissa High Court** gave the green signal for the **Hanuman Jayanti processions** in **Sambalpur**, the district administration has announced elaborate security measures to prevent any disruption and ensure peaceful celebrations. The decision comes in the wake of last year's (2023) violent clashes during the festival, which had resulted in significant property damage and curfews in the city.

High Court's Green Signal and Security Preparedness

Following the High Court's directive, the **Sambalpur Superintendent of Police (SP)**, **Mukesh Kumar Bhamoo**, informed that an extensive security plan has been put in place to manage the celebrations smoothly.

To maintain law and order, the following security measures have been approved:

- **Two companies of the Border Security Force (BSF)**
- **One company of the Rapid Action Force (RAF)**
- **12 platoons of police forces**

The deployment of central forces highlights the seriousness with which the administration is approaching the festival this year. The objective is to ensure that no untoward incidents occur and that devotees can participate in the celebrations without fear or disruption.

AI-Enabled CCTV Surveillance and Improved Infrastructure

To enhance real-time monitoring and quick response, the administration is installing **high-resolution AI-enabled CCTV cameras** at key locations across the city. These advanced cameras will help authorities track movement, detect potential threats, and respond swiftly to any disturbances.

In addition to CCTV surveillance, the administration has also focused on improving the city's infrastructure to support better crowd management and safety:

- **Dark areas are being illuminated** to prevent accidents and improve visibility.
- **Mobile police units** will patrol sensitive areas to ensure a rapid response to any situation.

SP Bhamoo urged the public to cooperate with the administration, stating,

> *"I urge everyone to celebrate the festival peacefully without spreading negativity. There will be zero tolerance for wrongdoers."*

This strong stance reflects the administration's determination to prevent any repeat of the violence witnessed last year.

Remembering the 2023 Sambalpur Violence

The heightened security measures stem from the violent incidents that occurred during **Hanuman Jayanti in 2023**. The clashes led to significant property damage, injuries, and a tense law and order situation in the city.

In the aftermath of the violence:

- A **curfew** was imposed.
- **Internet services** were suspended to curb the spread of misinformation and to prevent further escalation.

- Several arrests were made as the police worked to identify and apprehend those responsible for inciting violence.

The 2023 incident highlighted gaps in crowd control and intelligence gathering, prompting the administration to reassess its security strategy for large-scale religious events.

High Court’s Directive and Government’s Response

The Orissa High Court, while allowing the processions to proceed, stressed the importance of taking all necessary precautions to prevent a repeat of last year’s violence.

The Court instructed the state government and local administration to:

- ➡ Maintain strict vigil over potential flashpoints.
- ➡ Monitor social media platforms for inflammatory content.
- ➡ Engage with community leaders to promote harmony and avoid misunderstandings.

The government’s proactive approach in deploying central forces and installing advanced monitoring systems reflects its commitment to ensuring that the festival remains a peaceful celebration of faith and unity.

Balancing Faith and Security

Hanuman Jayanti holds deep religious significance for devotees in Odisha, especially in Sambalpur. The processions, chants, and religious rituals are a vibrant display of cultural and spiritual devotion. However, the communal tensions witnessed in recent years have made the celebration a sensitive event, requiring careful handling by the authorities.

The administration’s decision to involve central forces and use AI-driven surveillance marks a shift towards a more technology-focused and intelligence-driven approach to managing public gatherings. While these measures inspire confidence, they also highlight the delicate balance between allowing religious freedom and ensuring public safety.

Challenges and the Way Forward

The success of the upcoming Hanuman Jayanti processions will depend on three key factors:

1. **Effective crowd control** – Ensuring that the processions follow designated routes and do not lead to confrontations.
2. **Community involvement** – Engaging with local religious and community leaders to maintain harmony.
3. **Swift action against troublemakers** – The administration's zero-tolerance policy toward lawbreakers will be crucial in preventing escalation.

Conclusion

The decision to allow Hanuman Jayanti processions in Sambalpur after last year's turmoil reflects the High Court's faith in the state's ability to maintain law and order. The deployment of central forces, AI-enabled surveillance, and improved infrastructure are positive steps toward ensuring a peaceful celebration. However, the real test will be in the administration's ability to strike a balance between maintaining security and preserving the sanctity of the festival.

As the city of Sambalpur prepares for Hanuman Jayanti on **April 23, 2025**, all eyes will be on how the administration manages this high-stakes event. A peaceful celebration will not only restore faith in the state's security apparatus but also reinforce the spirit of unity and harmony among the people of Odisha.

(By Brajabandhu Mahanta)

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