

Bandhan Bank expands presence with 9 new branches across 3 states

Bandhan Bank has announced the opening of nine new branches across West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra, strengthening its nationwide presence. Among them, one branch has been inaugurated in Kolkata, while six have opened in Uttar Pradesh and two in Maharashtra. The new Kolkata branch, located at Poddar Court, 43 William Carey Sarani, was formally inaugurated by ParthaPratimSengupta, MD & CEO, Bandhan Bank, in the presence of senior bank officials and local dignitaries. Additionally, Sengupta virtually inaugurated the remaining eight branches alongside Executive Director Mr. Rajinder Kumar Babbar. **PG 3**



Morning India



Mamata Banerjee lays foundation for 1,100-bed super specialty hospital ensuring healthcare revolution in Bengal

MI News Service, Kolkata: In her continued efforts to make significant strides in healthcare services in West Bengal, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee laid the foundation of a state-of-the-art super specialty 1,100 bed hospital in New Town area of the city on Thursday evening.

In a major boost to the sector, the state government has allocated 7.26 acres of land for the establishment of the cutting-edge private hospital as part of the national chain of Narayana Hrudayalaya, headed by renowned cardiac surgeon Dr. Devi Shetty.

Speaking after laying the foundation of the unique hospital, to be built at an estimated investment of Rs 1,500 crores in two phases, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, highlighted the state's commitment to healthcare expansion. The initiative for this project was first announced during the recent Bengal Global Business Summit (BGBS), where officials of Narayana Health confirmed their plan to set up the facility.

True to her promise at the summit, the Chief Minister attended the ground-breaking ceremony, which took place opposite the New Town Convention Centre this evening.

She said the project involves a total investment of 1,500 crore and will be executed in two phases. In the first phase the hospital will have 500 beds, while in the second phase another 600 beds will be added. The facility will provide specialized treatment for cancer, cardiac surgery, and organ transplants. Furthermore, it is expected to generate direct and indirect employment for at least 10,000 individuals, the Chief minister announced.

Highlighting the state's healthcare advancements, Mamata Banerjee stated, "West Bengal now has 14 new medical

colleges and 42 Super Specialty hospitals. Earlier, critical care units were absent in many districts, but we have expanded services significantly. The number of Sick New born Care Units (SNCUs) has increased from just six to 71. Additionally, 13,392 health centres have been established across the state, along with 117 fair-price medicine shops."

The Chief Minister also emphasized the success of government-led health initiatives. "We have brought a healthcare revolution by offering free medical treatment and medicines. Our Swasthya Sathi scheme benefits 9 crore people, and every family is entitled to enjoy its coverage under a female household member's name. This is a matter of pride for us," she remarked.

Acknowledging Dr. Devi Shetty's contribution, she expressed gratitude for his role in making quality healthcare accessible to the underprivileged.

"Dr. Shetty has assured that this health city will serve the common people. He has rightly said that Bengal is an attractive destination for investment, and I am delighted to hear that."

Addressing critics, Banerjee stated, "Some people thrive on negativity, claiming that Bengal does not attract investments. However, this project, spanning 7.26 acres, is proof of our commitment. This hospital will be one of the largest multi-specialty medical centres in the country, with world-class infrastructure and facilities." She further elaborated on employment opportunities, stating that the project's strategic location and infrastructure will facilitate medical advancements, including organ transplants. "This 1,500-crore investment will play a crucial role in transforming healthcare in Eastern India." Discussing

Delhi's new BJP govt takes over, Rekha Gupta sworn in as CM along with six ministers

MI News Service, New Delhi: Debutant legislator Rekha Gupta was sworn in as Delhi chief minister along with six other ministers on Thursday in a grand show of strength full of colour and spectacle to mark the BJP's return to power in the city after more than 27 years.

The ceremony at the sprawling Ramlila Ground was attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home minister Amit Shah, Defence minister Rajnath Singh, BJP All India President J P Nadda, and the entire top brass of the BJP and NDA.

Rekha Gupta has taken over as Delhi's fourth woman Chief minister after her party's Sushma Swaraj, the Congress' Sheila Dikshit and AAP's Atishi. The 50-year-old first time MLA from Shalimar Bagh, who took charge of her office at the Delhi Secretariat in the afternoon, is also the only woman in the NDA team of Chief ministers and the second in the country after TMC supreme Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal.

Lieutenant Governor (L-G) of Delhi Vinai Kumar Saxena administered oath of office and secrecy to the CM and the ministers at the function.

The former student leader presides over an all-male cabinet that includes giant slayer Parvesh Verma, who defeated Arvind Kejriwal in the elections, Hindutva poster boy Kapil Mishra and the BJP's Sikh face Manjinder Singh Sirsa. Besides, Ashish Sood, Ravinder Indraj Singh and Pankaj Singh were also administered the oath of office by Lt Governor V K Saxena. The portfolios of the ministers are however, yet to be decided.

The development comes 12 days after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was voted back to power in the national Capital after 27 years. Earlier in the day, President Droupadi Murmu appointed Gupta as the chief minister of Delhi and other six MLAs as ministers in Delhi as per the advice of the CM.

The swearing-in ceremony was a grand show of strength by the NDA. Along with PM Modi and Shah, it was attended by NDA chief ministers, spiritual leaders from different communities, representatives from various citizens groups such as auto drivers, sanitation workers, RWA members, various communities belonging to the OBC category, slum dwellers and roadside vendors.

Gupta won from the Shalimar Bagh constituency by 29,595 votes after defeating Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) candidate Bandana Kumari.

The results of the assembly elections were declared on February 8. The BJP won 48 seats out of the 70 total seats while AAP won 22 seats. The other major party—the Congress—however, drew blank.

Gupta, who rose through the ranks as a student leader, is a three-time councillor. She met Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena to stake claim to form the government on Wednesday night after BJP legislators picked her as the chief minister.

Gupta joined ABVP the student wing of BJP's ideological fount Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), in the 1990s. She becomes the fourth woman chief minister of Delhi after Sushma Swaraj, Sheila Dikshit, and Atishi.

Multiple challenges await new BJP govt in Delhi

MI News Service, New Delhi: The BJP which returned to power in Delhi after 27 long years with a decisive mandate has its task cut out: it will have to fulfil key election promises, continue welfare schemes of the previous government, fix the city's pollution and infrastructure issues, and deliver on cleaning the Yamuna.

The BJP government will have to get all this done while keeping a check on the financial health of the national capital. The Aam Aadmi Party, which will now be in the opposition with 22 MLAs in the 70 member House, will also be breathing down its neck given it has never been out of power in Delhi since its formation just over a decade ago.

ssn the recently concluded 70-member Delhi Assembly elections, the BJP secured a decisive victory with 48 seats, while the AAP won the mainline 22 seats ending AAP's decade-long rule in the capital. The other major party in the poll—the Congress—however, drew blank Among the top priorities of Rekha Gupta, who was chosen by the party as the new Chief minister, will have to deliver all its promises including providing a monthly honorarium of Rs 2,500 to women of

▶▶ Continued on page 3

PM Modi congratulates Rekha Gupta, says she will work for Delhi's development 'with full vigour'

MI News Service, New Delhi: Congratulating Rekha Gupta for becoming and taking oath as the Delhi Chief minister on Thursday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said she has risen from the grassroots and expressed confidence that she will work hard for the all round development of the capital city and its neighbourhood "with full vigour".

A first-time BJP MLA, Gupta was sworn in as Delhi chief minister in a grand show of strength



by the party which returned to power in the city after more than 27 years.

Soon after the swearing-in ceremony of the new Delhi government, Modi said in a congratulatory message, "She has risen from the grassroots, being active in campus politics, state organisation, municipal administration and now MLA as well as Chief Minister."

He added, "I am confident she will work for Delhi's development with full vigour. My best

wishes to her for a fruitful tenure."

The Prime Minister wrote on X: "Congratulations to Smt. Rekha Gupta Ji on taking oath as Delhi's Chief Minister. She has risen from the grassroots, being active in campus politics, state organisation, municipal administration and now MLA as well as Chief Minister. I am confident she will work for Delhi's development with full vigour. My best wishes to her for a fruitful tenure."

Along with Gupta,

Parvesh Verma, Ashish Sood, Manjinder Singh Sirsa, Kapil Mishra, Ravinder Indraj Singh, Kapil Mishra and Pankaj Singh were also administered the oath of office by Lt Governor V K Saxena at a grand ceremony in Ramlila Maidan in presence of Prime minister Modi and all other senior leaders of the BJP and its allies at the event including the Union Home minister Amit Shah, Defence minister Rajnath Singh and BJP All India President J P Nadda.

Delhi women to get Rs 2,500 monthly aid by March 8, announces CM Rekha Gupta

MI News Service, New Delhi: Rekha Gupta, the new Chief Minister of Delhi has assured the women of the National capital that the BJP government would soon fulfill its poll promise of providing Rs 2,500 monthly financial assistance to them. Accordingly, the first installment of the monthly grant would be credited to their accounts by March 8, Gupta said.

Ahead of the polls, the BJP manifesto was aimed to outdo the Aam Aadmi Party's announcement of Rs 2,100 monthly support if it came to power.

Gupta, who was elected as the leader of the BJP legislature party on Wednesday night, emphasised that delivering on their promises is her top priority.

"Fulfilling the dream of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is the responsibility of all 48 BJP MLAs in the capital. We will definitely fulfill all our promises, including financial support for women. Women will

100 per cent get monetary support into their accounts by March 8," she said as March 8 is observed as the International Women's Day. Earlier on Thursday Rekha Gupta was administered the oath of office and secrecy of the Chief minister of Delhi by Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena in a brief but grand ceremony at the historic Ralila Maidan in the heart of the capital city in presence of a huge gathering. After she took her oath, six of her new cabinet colleagues were also sworn in by the LG. They included Parvesh Verma who defeated AAP supreme Arvind Kejriwal in New Delhi constituency by over 4,400 votes. The other ministers are BJP MLAs Ashish Sood, Manjinder Singh Sirsa, Ravinder Indraj, Kapil Mishra and Pankaj Kumar Singh, who were also administered the oath of office on

▶▶ Continued on page 3

Rahul Gandhi targets Modi government over inflation

MI News Service, Lucknow: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has once again accused the BJP government at the Centre of diverting attention from real issues and promoting capitalists. Gandhi, who is on a two-day visit to his Parliamentary constituency of Raibareilly in Western Uttar Pradesh from Thursday, first visited the Hanuman temple at Churruva border. After spending some time at the temple, he proceeded towards Bachhrawan. At Bachhrawan, the former Congress President addressed a party workers' conference and criticised the Narendra Modi government at the Centre of diverting attention from real issues and promoting capitalists. At Bachhrawan, Rahul Gandhi also asked the a party workers to maintain a stronghold at the

booth level across the constituency. Addressing hundreds of party workers he said inflation has risen significantly, and the BJP government is only promoting capitalists. "Meanwhile, some BJP workers claimed they have been placed under house arrest during Gandhi's visit. BJP mandal president Pravesh Verma alleged, "Along with 25 workers, we have been confined to the nagar panchayat office. It is the MP's responsibility to stay here, listen to the problems of the people, and resolve them because the people of Raebareilly elected him as their representative. "Rahul Gandhi is not paying attention to the public," he charged. However, there was no confirmation from the police about the house arrest.

Elon Musk's decision to build Tesla factory in India is 'very unfair' to the US, says Donald Trump

MI News Service, Washington (DC): Expressing his strong reservation against American billionaire Elon Musk's decision to set up a new Tesla car factory in India, the US President Donald Trump has said Musk's decision to build a factory in India to avoid that country's tariffs, would be "unfair to his own country - the US". Trump's comments came amid moves by him to increase tariffs significantly. On February 13, hours before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's bilateral meeting

with President Trump at the White House, billionaire Elon Musk's announcement of his global expansion plans, with Tesla gearing up to enter the Indian market, has made the US President unhappy as he has raised concerns about this move. In an interview with Fox News on Tuesday, Trump said if Tesla built a factory in India to avoid the country's high tariffs, it

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Police cooperate Madhyamik girl to sit for Examination

MI News Service, Shantipur: A Madhyamik Candidate was on the verge of missing her examination on Thursday as by mistake she had left her Admit card in home 7 km. away. But a remarkable co-operation of the police, has helped her to finally sit for her examination. Ankita Bhowmick, a candidate of Madhyamik examination who was scheduled to appear for an exam. at Santipur Baigachi School in Nadia, nearly missed her opportunity due to forgetting to bring her admit card. In a remarkable display of dedication, commit-



ment and compassion, Village Police Toton Ghosh and CVF Bhagirath immediately took action. They rushed to her residence at Gobindapur, located about 7 km. away, and retrieved the admit card just in time. With the assistance of the police, the admit card was delivered to the candidate at the last moment, enabling her to appear the examination successfully. "The commitment that these police personnel have shown to their duty is truly appreciable," Siddharth Dhapola, the Additional SP, HQ Ranaghat police district, said.

Teen's mysterious death uncovered after classmate's inquiry

MI News Service, Uttar Kashipur: A shocking incident has surfaced in Uttar Kashipur, where the body of a secondary school student was recovered six days after her secret burial by her family, without informing authorities.

The deceased, identified as Parveena, daughter of Hannan Hazra, was appearing for her secondary board examinations from Karbala High School. She had completed her Bengali and English exams but was absent from subsequent subjects, raising suspicions among her classmates.

One of her close friends, who had sat beside her during the first two exams, went to her home to ask about her absence. Shockingly, she discovered that Parveena had allegedly died by suicide on Valentine's Day.

According to family members, Parveena was buried in secrecy without informing the police. They

cited concerns over an autopsy, fearing her body would be dismembered. However, the police have launched an investigation to verify the claims surrounding her death.

The incident has raised serious questions about the family's actions and the circumstances of her alleged suicide. Authorities from Uttar Kashipur Police Station have confirmed that the body will be exhumed and sent for autopsy, pending court approval.

Local police officials stated that further legal action would be determined based on the autopsy report. The case has sparked widespread discussion, with many questioning whether there was an attempt to conceal crucial details regarding Parveena's death.

With the investigation ongoing, officials are closely examining the events leading up to the teenager's tragic demise.

Man beaten and threatened at gunpoint over love affair

MI News Service, Canning: A harrowing case of assault and intimidation has surfaced in Satmukhi Moukhal, under Canning police station, where a young man was brutally attacked by assailants posing as police officers.

The victim, Chandan Mandal, had been in a long-term relationship with a girl from a different background. However, their relationship met violent resistance when four to five men, allegedly from the girl's family, attacked him.

According to reports, Chandan and his friend Sudhamoy Halder were abducted from near their home in Kailashnagar, Kultali, and forcibly taken to Satmukhi Moukhal. There, they were beaten mercilessly and threatened at gunpoint. The attackers allegedly warned Chandan to stay away from the girl, citing his poor financial background as the reason for their disapproval.

Following the incident,

Chandan filed a complaint with Canning police station, detailing his ordeal. He claimed that the girl's father had previously assaulted her and that her grandfather had initially assured support, only for the situation to escalate into physical violence.

Authorities are currently investigating the case, gathering evidence to verify Chandan's allegations. Police sources indicate that the attackers' identities are being traced, and appropriate legal action will follow.

This shocking case highlights the dangers of personal disputes turning violent and underscores the importance of law enforcement intervention in such matters. Experts warn that threats and coercion in relationships often stem from control, possessiveness, and deeply rooted societal biases. Seeking police and legal support in such cases is crucial to prevent further harm.



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee inaugurates 'Banglar Haat' at New Town, beside Biswa Bangla Convention Centre, in Kolkata on Thursday.

Madhyamik exam: Board President reviews arrangements in Asansol

MI News Service, Asansol: In a surprise move, Ramanuj Gangopadhyay, President of the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (WBBSE), conducted an unannounced inspection of Madhyamik examination centers in Asansol on Thursday. His visit aimed to assess the examination arrangements and interact with students and parents.

During his visit to Manimala Girls' School in Asansol, Gangopadhyay expressed satisfaction with the conduct of the exams, stating, "The examination process is well-balanced, and the arrangements are excellent. The state and district administrations have done a commendable job. It's a team effort, and I am confident that students will perform well and grow into responsible citizens." Addressing concerns about exam evaluations and result declarations, Gangopadhyay assured that the board will follow its established procedures. He acknowledged the increased workload but

emphasized that assessment and result announcements will be conducted as per the standard guidelines. He added, "We will review and notify the public in due time."

Gangopadhyay also highlighted the increased participation of female students in Madhyamik examinations, attributing it to various social welfare schemes implemented by the state government. He noted, "The initiatives taken by the Hon'ble Chief Minister have encouraged more girls to pursue education. This is a positive outcome of the government's efforts." When asked about absenteeism among students, he stated that the board would analyze the data and take appropriate steps. He added, "Our inspections provide insights into potential improvements, which will help the board implement better policies in the future." During his inspection of multiple exam centers in Asansol and nearby areas, Gangopadhyay assessed whether students faced any difficulties during the

examination. He also interacted with parents to gather feedback. His primary objective was to gain first-hand experience and use it to refine future examination processes.

By collecting insights from the ongoing exams, he aims to provide valuable input to the board, ensuring that Madhyamik examinations in the coming years are conducted even more efficiently.

As the Madhyamik exams near their conclusion, students are increasingly anxious about their results. Addressing this concern, Gangopadhyay reassured, "We understand the stress students go through, but I assure you that result processing will be done with complete fairness and adherence to protocols." The West Bengal Board of Secondary Education remains committed to maintaining transparency and efficiency in conducting and evaluating Madhyamik examinations, ensuring that students receive fair and timely results.

Industrial parks at Ethelbari & Jaigaon get road funds

MI News Service, Alipurduar: Road construction funds for two industrial parks at Ethelbari and Jaigaon in Alipurduar district have been released following the intervention of chief minister Mamata Banerjee.

Sources said a sum of 15 crore has been sanctioned for the construction of approach roads to these two parks.

"During an administrative meeting in Alipurduar last month, the chief minister was unhappy that there was no proper con-

nectivity to these industrial parks so far," said a source in the administration, admitting that the existing roads were both narrow and short, making commutes to these industrial hubs difficult.

The Ethelbari industrial park is spread over an area of 42 acres and consists of 59 stalls.

The Jaigaon industrial park, which is situated near the India-Bhutan border, is spread over 17.68 acres with 12 stalls.

The approach road at Ethelbari is 908 metres

long while the one in Jaigaon is only 615 metres.

R. Vimala, the Alipurduar district magistrate, said: "We have received funds to construct the approach road for the two industrial parks at Ethelbari and Jaigaon. We are trying to start the work soon."

Traders maintained that the lack of proper road connectivity to these industrial hubs had hampered their functioning to a great extent.

M.L. Rajoria, the secretary of the Ethelbari indus-

tries association, said: "Most of the concrete-based industries of the district are in Ethelbari. Even though we have been allotted plots, the lack of a proper approach road was a deterrent for the full operation of the park."

Administrative sources said that some encroachment had come up along the existing approach roads in both the places. "We will have to clear the encroachments before commencing road construction work," said a source.

Foresters rescue aged leopard, gaur

MI News Service, Alipurduar: An aged leopard and a gaur that had strayed into human habitats in Alipurduar district were rescued by the foresters. Sources said that foresters managed to trap a leopard in a cage at Prodhnapara village, which lies adjacent to the

Jaldapara National Park in Alipurduar district. Last week a forester fell and was injured when he tried to chase the leopard from the village. The foresters had then set up cages in the area.

Following a thorough checkup, foresters believe that the leopard

is around 10 years old. Its nails and teeth had become weak due to age.

Navojit Dey, assistant wildlife warden, Jaldapara said: "Since it is old, we took the animal to the South Khayerbari animal rescue centre." A gaur entered the Uttar

Mendar village under Kanchini block from the Chilapata forest. On being informed, a forest team arrived at the village with a kunki (trained elephant).

The gaur was tranquillised and released into the Chilapata forest.

Aikyashree: 45 lakh students to get scholarships

MI News Service, Kolkata: The state government is all set to provide scholarships to a total 45 lakh beneficiaries under the "Aikyashree" scheme within March this year.

The state government had earlier received 44 lakh applications out of which 16 lakh applicants were given scholarships under the

scheme within December last year. The ruling party Trinamool Congress on social media said that the Chief Minister delivers on her promises and Bengal continues to bring opportunities for the students. "The Hon'ble Chief Minister of West Bengal, @MamataOfficial, delivers on her promises! By March, 45 lakh applicants in West

Bengal will receive their Aikyashree Scholarship funds. Under the visionary leadership of Smt. Mamata Banerjee, West Bengal continues to make remarkable strides in education!" Trinamool Congress said in a post on X.

The "Aikyashree" scheme provides scholarships to students of minority communities in the state.

The decision to launch the scheme was taken by the Mamata Banerjee government in 2019, after over 16 lakh students had failed to avail a scholarship granted by the Centre. The state had launched the scheme and shoulders the entire cost of providing scholarships to students of minority communities.



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee visited stalls at 'Banglar Haat' at New Town, beside Biswa Bangla Convention Centre, in Kolkata on Thursday.

Bird Flu: State zoos ban chicken from animal diets

MI News Service, Kolkata: In the wake of the bird flu outbreak among animals in some zoos, particularly in the Central part of the country, the West Bengal Zoo Authority (WBZA) as a preventive measure has prohibited chicken from the diet of the inmates in the state zoos. There are 11 zoos in the state, including mini zoos. "We have followed the guidelines of the Central Zoo Authority and have withdrawn chicken from the diet of the animals in the state zoos as a preventive measure," said Saurabh Choudhury, Member Secretary of WBZA. According to sources, chicken is being

supplemented with pig, goat and lamb meat. In January, there was confirmation of Avian Influenza (H5N1) in Leopards and Tigers in Gorewada Project, Nagpur, Maharashtra. Following this, the CZA advised all zoos to remain alert for any symptoms among captive animals housed in zoos and incidence, if any, in nearby areas. "Preparedness with specific reference to 'Bio-security' needs concerning Avian Influenza may also be assessed and strengthened in the respective zoo(s)," the directive from CZA stated. There is no poultry of its own in any of the zoos and chicken is procured from

the market, hence the zoo authorities are in no mood to take any risk in its efforts to ensure the best of health for the zoo inmates. Tigers, lion, leopard, jungle cat, jackal, jaguar, hyena among others are offered meat in their daily diet. Predominantly buffalo and chicken meat are provided. Some of the birds are also given meat. Chicken has been prohibited from their diet. The chances of bird flu spread are from birds. Hence, a temporary stop of bird exchange of any sort has been initiated and the zoo keepers are keeping a special vigil on the birds.

tempted to break through the barricade. The police swiftly blocked the path with barrel containers. On inspection, officers found 140kg of cannabis inside the vehicle. The driver, Anup Sutradhar of Birpara in Alipurduar, and his associate, Aditya Das of Siliguri, were arrested. After the duo's arrest, Farakka SDPO Aminul Islam, Samsarganj BDO Sujit Chandra Lodh and Jangipur CI Swarup Biswas reached the spot.

Police intercept 140kg of cannabis worth Rs 12 lakh

MI News Service, Murshidabad: Jangipur police in Murshidabad intercepted an ambulance carrying 140kg of cannabis worth Rs 12 lakh. Preliminary probe revealed that the vehicle with a blue beacon was originally donated by the state government to a Jalpaiguri-based club. Acting on a tip-off, around 5am, cops led by the Samsarganj OC Shihprasad Ghosh intercepted the ambulance on NH12 at the checkpoint near the Chaksapur

crossing in Samsarganj. The ambulance, with its siren blaring, was headed towards Ranaghat in Nadia with five sacks of cannabis. The consignment, sent from Cooch Behar's Toofanganj, was meant for delivery in Ranaghat, police sources said. When the speeding ambulance approached the checkpoint, the driver initially demanded clearance, persistently honking. But when officers insisted on checking the vehicle, the driver at-

tempted to break through the barricade. The police swiftly blocked the path with barrel containers. On inspection, officers found 140kg of cannabis inside the vehicle. The driver, Anup Sutradhar of Birpara in Alipurduar, and his associate, Aditya Das of Siliguri, were arrested. After the duo's arrest, Farakka SDPO Aminul Islam, Samsarganj BDO Sujit Chandra Lodh and Jangipur CI Swarup Biswas reached the spot.

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Anit Thapa asks state govt to stop land survey in tea garden areas

MI News Service, Darjeeling: Anit Thapa, chief executive of the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA), requested the state government to stop

the land survey in tea garden areas in an apparent move to put the lid on the widespread protests in the tea belt. Thapa met state labour minister Moly

Ghatak in Kolkata and handed him a letter requesting the government to distribute land to the workers on an "as is where is" basis.

2 rare birds sighted during bird census in Dzongu forest

MI News Service, Darjeeling: Two rare winged creatures have been sighted during bird census in Sikkim.

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) was conducted across the Himalayan state. Dibyendu Ash, the coordinator (Sikkim chapter) of the GBBC, said the avian population was counted on the Khecheopalri Lake in the Gyalshing district of the state for the first time during the census.

The lake was recently designated as a Ramsar site, which means it is a wetland of international importance.

"During the survey, the birders sighted the rare 'rufous-faced warbler' and 'black-crowned scimitar babbler' in the forest of Dzongu in north Sikkim. The first is also found in Arunachal Pradesh and Bhutan. In this part of the world, the second species is seen only in Sikkim," Ash said. Dzongu has been identified as an area with the highest number of bird species. In north Sikkim, a total of 182 bird species were sighted during the survey and 155 of them were found in the vast areas of Dzongu. In Dzongu, the exercise was carried out in places like

Dikchu, Passing Dang, Lingthem, Bee Village, Pentang and Sakyong, which are located at elevations of over 5,000 feet.

The lowest number of species sighted in west Sikkim is 51. Ash said the number of bird species found in the eastern and southern parts of the state were 190 and 105, respectively.

Altogether, 59 birdwatchers in 30 groups conducted the count. The census was organised by Bird Count India, e-bird India and Sikkim Birds Tours & Travels.

North Bengal, which shares the border with Sikkim, is also considered one of the hot spots for birds.

"For birdwatchers, north Bengal and Sikkim can be ideal destinations to watch avian species and click their photos," said Animesh Bose, a veteran nature conservationist based in Siliguri.

Yabez Lepcha, who participated in the survey, said birds like bluethroat were seen in Lachen of north Sikkim.

Some other prominent species that were sighted during the count included the blue-throated barbet and the laughing thrush.

Mamata Banerjee lays...

From PG 1
The Swasthya Sathi scheme, she added, "Our health initiative has benefited families immensely, without any conditional clauses. So far, we have invested 12,000 crore in this sector. Under the Shishu Sathi scheme, nearly 32,000 children have undergone free surgeries, while over 2.3 crore individuals have received eye care services."
Banerjee concluded by reiterating her government's commitment to healthcare development.

"Our administration has established 14 medical colleges, 42 super-specialty hospitals, and 71 SNCUs. We aim to build 12,000 more health centers next year. Additionally, we have set up critical care units, mother-and-child hubs, fair-price diagnostic centers, and even a cord blood bank to enhance medical services."
With such initiatives, West Bengal is setting new benchmarks in healthcare accessibility and infrastructure, ensuring quality treatment for all, she said.

Nabanna issues strict guidelines to ensure full utilization of project funds

MI News Service, Kolkata: In a bid to ensure that allocated funds for various projects are fully utilized and not returned unspent, the West Bengal government has issued strict deadlines for all departments. Nabanna, the state secretary, released an official directive on Wednesday, emphasizing the importance of timely and transparent fund expenditure.
Towards the end of every financial year, a rush to spend leftover funds is often observed across government departments. This last-minute expenditure spree not only disrupts financial planning but also increases the likelihood of errors. Taking a firm stance, the state finance department has made it clear that any laxity in fund utilization will not be tolerated. The directive further underscores the necessity of spending funds meant for public welfare efficiently and within the stipulated time frame. Additionally, the govern-

ment has stressed the need for absolute transparency in the expenditure process. Alongside the financial directives, the government has also ensured that salaries, pensions, and monthly allowances for government employees, educational institutions, libraries, and panchayat workers for the month of March will be disbursed by April 2. The notification warns that a large influx of pending bills at the end of the financial year could create bottlenecks. To prevent such issues, all departments have been instructed to submit bills systematically and within designated timelines.
A structured schedule has been provided for the submission of bills to the Treasury or the Pay and Accounts Office. This includes clarifications regarding outstanding payments, retirement benefits, and travel allowance (TA) bills, ensuring that no procedural confusion arises. As

per the directive, departments will not be allowed to submit any bills to the Pay and Accounts Office or the Treasury after March 28. Moreover, any bills previously returned or objected to by the department must be rectified and resubmitted by March 17, with a prior deadline of March 13 for identifying such cases. In a firm warning, the government has stated that "cheques, nil bills, and PL transfer statements will not be accepted after the financial year ends. No advance payments will be approved unless specifically sanctioned by the finance department." This measure aims to prevent unnecessary financial irregularities and ensure a smooth transition into the next fiscal year.
By implementing these strict deadlines, the state government aims to maintain financial discipline across departments. The move is also expected to reduce last-minute procedural errors

and ensure that development funds reach their intended beneficiaries on time.
Nabanna's directive sends a strong message that fund mismanagement or delay in expenditure will not be tolerated. With the new guidelines in place, the government seeks to enhance financial efficiency, transparency, and accountability in its spending processes.
As the financial year-end approaches, all eyes will be on how efficiently the departments adhere to these deadlines and whether the new measures lead to a more structured financial workflow within the administration. Leaders of employee unions have welcomed the decision to ensure 100% expenditure and maintain transparency in project funds. Similarly, Manoj Chakraborty, President of the All Bengal Pensioners' Association, has praised the initiative regarding retirement benefits.

Multiple challenges await...

From PG 1
Delhi. This was a key commitment in the party's manifesto and was designed to outmatch AAP's pledge of Rs 2,100 per month.
Prime Minister Narendra Modi, addressing a rally in Dwarka on February 1, had assured that the decision to transfer the amount would be taken in the first cabinet meeting if the BJP came to power.
AAP has already raised doubts about the BJP's commitment to paying the honorarium, with outgoing chief minister Atishi this Friday said she would hold the new government accountable. Another major challenge for the BJP will be to continue welfare schemes initiated by the AAP government, including free electricity up to 200 units, free water connection and free bus rides for women, among others.
While the BJP has assured voters that these benefits will not be discontinued, AAP leaders have questioned the party's long-term commitment.
During campaigning for the February 5 Delhi Assembly polls, PM Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah reassured voters that free schemes

would continue but "corruption" in such programmes would be eliminated.
The BJP also has to implement its own flagship programmes in Delhi. The BJP had promised to introduce the Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme in Delhi and it had become an electoral issue.
The scheme provides free treatment up to Rs 5 lakh per beneficiary, with an additional Rs 5 lakh covered by the state government. The AAP government had previously refused to implement it, claiming that Delhi's existing healthcare system was superior and more inclusive. The BJP has also vowed to reform Delhi's Mohalla Clinics, alleging corruption in its functioning. BJP MLA Manjinder Singh Sirsa from Rajouri Garden said that the clinics will be rebranded as "Ayushman Arogya Mandirs" and will deliver better healthcare delivery.
BJP has consistently accused the AAP of corruption, alleging that it was deliberately trying to avoid the tabling of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) reports in the assembly to hide financial irregularities.



Activists create graffiti on the road ahead of International Mother Language Day, in Kolkata.

KMC unveils development-focused budget for 2025-26

MI News Service, Kolkata: The Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) has presented an ambitious budget for the financial year 2025-26, with a strong focus on affordable housing, local infrastructure, and social welfare. Despite a projected fiscal shortfall of 114.72 crore, the budget reflects the city's commitment to growth, better urban planning, and improved public services.
In alignment with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's vision, the budget prioritizes the Banglar Bari scheme, ensuring quality housing for middle-class residents. To expand this initiative, KMC has identified 16 locations across the city where new housing units will be developed. This initiative will make homeownership more accessible while promoting structured urban development.
KMC has designated various areas to accommodate middle-class families under this scheme, including J.K. Ghosh Road, Lalbagh Road, Canal East Road, Raja SubodhMallick Square, and Chittaranjan Colony, among others. These projects will provide quality homes in well-connected locations, enhancing the city's residential landscape. Understanding the need for continuous urban development, KMC has increased allocations for local projects: Borough Development Fund: Increased from 25 lakh to 30 lakh to accelerate neighborhood improvements. Councillor Neighborhood Fund: Raised from 15 lakh to 20 lakh, allowing more investment in ward-level civic projects.
Approval Fee for Residential Construction: Reduced by 50% for homes built on plots between 2 to 3 kathas, making homebuilding more affordable for residents.

These measures will ensure better infrastructure, cleaner neighbourhoods, and improved public services across Kolkata.
KMC has set a bold revenue target of 5,524.84 crore for 2025-26, with focused efforts on increasing earnings from various sources: Property Tax Collection: Expected to grow to 1,581.33 crore, reflecting steady economic growth, Car Parking Fees: Targeted at 21 crore, optimizing urban mobility and Licensing Revenue: Set at 80 crore to enhance business-friendly regulations.
With these strategies, KMC aims to improve revenue generation while ensuring that residents continue to receive high-quality civic services.
A key highlight of the budget is the significant increase in funding for social welfare and urban poverty alleviation, with an allocation of 29.52 crore—up from 1.31 crore in the previous year. This investment will support essential services for underprivileged communities and enhance quality of life across the city.
Despite adjustments in budget allocations, KMC remains committed to strengthening the city's healthcare infrastructure. With an allocation of 180.05 crore, public health programs and medical facilities will continue to receive strong support, ensuring access to essential healthcare services for all residents.
The 2025-26 budget reflects KMC's proactive approach to fostering sustainable growth, improving urban living, and enhancing public services. With a clear focus on housing, infrastructure, and social welfare, this budget lays a strong foundation for a more vibrant and well-planned Kolkata.

Delhi women to get...

From PG 1
Thursday afternoon after the Chief minister The BJP secured a landslide victory in the Delhi Assembly elections, winning 48 out of 70 seats and ending the AAP's decade-long rule.
Gupta, a former Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU) president and municipal councillor, was sworn in as the fourth woman Chief minister of Delhi at a grand ceremony at Ramlila Maidan on Thursday afternoon, in presence of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP President J P Nassa and many other dignitaries... Over 25,000 police personnel and more than 15 paramilitary companies have been stationed across the city. The robust security measures were aimed at maintaining order as top BJP leaders and chief ministers from BJP-governed states attended the ceremony. "We have deployed more than 25,000 police personnel

and over 15 companies of paramilitary forces," confirmed a Delhi Police officer, highlighting the emphasis on law and order during the high-profile event. More than 5,000 personnel have been positioned strategically in and around the venue in order to the safety of approximately 50,000 attendees, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Cabinet colleagues.
Rekha Gupta's rise to the position of chief minister marked the end of a ten-year rule by the Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party. Gupta was elected as the Leader of the House in the Delhi Assembly following a BJP legislature party meeting. The announcement, made by senior BJP leader Ravishankar Prasad, confirmed the party's return to power in Delhi after 27 years. Gupta subsequently met Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena to officially stake her claim to form the government.

Ganja worth Rs 1cr seized in Howrah

MI News Service, Kolkata: In a major crackdown on narcotics, CID and Narcotics Cell officials seized 711 kg of ganja worth 1 crore from a residence in Bauria, Howrah. The operation was conducted late Wednesday night in the KazircharaAshwathala area, leading to the arrest of Sheikh Majed, who is suspected to be involved in large-scale drug trafficking. According to police sources, Majed allegedly smuggled the ganja from Odisha and stored it at his residence for distribution across Howrah and neighboring districts. In addition to the seized contraband, authorities also confiscated two vehicles and three mobile phones. Investigators believe Majed was part of a larger drug network, possibly operating across multiple states. The police are now focusing on identifying other individuals linked to the operation. Further interrogation is expected to reveal key details about the extent of the trafficking network and its possible interstate connections.



Mayor Firhad Hakim addresses the budget session at KMC House in Kolkata on Thursday.

TMC files privilege notice against Hiran

MI News Service, Kolkata: The Trinamool Congress (TMC) has filed a privilege notice against BJP MLA Hiran Chatterjee following his allegations against the state government during his speech on Wednesday. Chatterjee claimed that the awards received by the state government were granted in exchange for money, triggering strong protests from TMC MLAs.
The notice alleges that Chatterjee's remarks violated the privileges of the state government. The matter has been referred to the Privileges Committee, which will review the evidence and documents

submitted by Chatterjee.
The BJP MLA has been asked to provide supporting evidence for his claims by March 19. In response, Chatterjee stated that he possesses all necessary documents and will submit them to the committee within the stipulated time.
This development comes amid an already heated atmosphere in the assembly, with similar breach of privilege notices recently filed against Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari and BJP MLA Agnimitra Paul. The Privileges Committee will examine the matter and determine further action.

Tangra triple murder: Autopsy reveals 'brutal killing'

MI News Service, Kolkata: The shocking deaths of three women from the De family in Tangra were not suicides but calculated murders, as confirmed by the preliminary autopsy report. The victims—Sudeshna Dey, wife of Pranay Dey; Romi Dey, wife of Prasad Dey; and their teenage daughter Priyamvada—fell prey to a meticulously executed crime, exposing a chilling narrative of violence and deception.
The forensic report confirms that both women were slain with precise brutality, their throats and wrists veins mercilessly severed. Meanwhile, Priyamvada was poisoned, yet multiple injury marks on her body suggest she endured considerable agony before succumbing. Medical examiners discovered semi-digested food with a yellowish-white hue and traces of a medicinal odor in her stomach, indicating that she had been poisoned, with death occurring three to six hours after her final meal. The estimated time of demise for all three victims places the murders between 36 and 48 hours before the autopsy, implying they were killed prior to Tuesday evening. A crucial revelation from the autopsy highlights that the perpetrator was right-handed, as the deep incisions on the victims' throats ran from left to right. The extent of these wounds suggests the use of a sharp weapon, causing fatal blood loss. The case initially emerged on Wednesday following a road accident near the EM Bypass, involving Prasad Dey and Pranay Dey, husbands of Romi and Sudeshna. Their minor son was also in the vehicle at the time. However, as the investigation unfolded, an unsettling timeline surfaced, casting doubt on the circumstances surrounding the murders.



Heavy rain batters Kolkata on Thursday.

Cal HC seeks State's stand on pvt schools' fee regulation bill

MI News Service, Kolkata: The West Bengal government's proposed Education Bill, aimed at regulating excessive fee hikes and teacher salary structures in private schools, has hit a legal roadblock. The bill, which seeks to introduce checks on arbitrary fee increases, has been awaiting the Governor's signature for over a year. Justice Biswajit Basu of the Calcutta High Court questioned the state government's stance on the bill while hearing a case related to unjustified fee hikes in private schools. The next hearing is scheduled for Friday. During the hearing, Justice Basu remarked, "Some schools even offer horse riding or camel racing lessons, but a basic fee structure must be maintained. Many schools treat additional charges as a source of extra income."
He further stated, "Several petitions have been filed against unjustified fee hikes in private schools across the state. The state government must regulate this sector. Arbitrary in-

creases in the name of 'charges' are unfair. Shouldn't there be any control over this?" Responding to the court, state counsel Biswabrata Basu Mallick revealed that the Education Bill has been pending with the Governor for over a year. He argued that since the Governor has not approved it, the government has been unable to take further action. "If the Governor clears this bill, it will benefit a large section of the public," he added. Justice Basu then questioned why the state education minister was not taking proactive steps to resolve the matter. He also suggested that West Bengal could follow Rajasthan's model for private school regulation, urging the government to review the policy framework used in that state.
Later, Advocate General Kishore Dutta appeared in court and assured that the government would consult the education minister and present its position on Friday.

JCI
(A Govt. of India Enterprise)
Krishnagar Regional Office 5, R. K. Mara Lane, 03rd Floor, Krishnagar, Nadia, West Bengal, Pin - 741101.
Ref. No.: 555 Date: 20-02-2025

Tender Notice

Experienced Transport Contractors are invited to visit e-Procurement Portal for participation in the Transport Tender regarding carrying Jute Bales (150 kg) from different centers under Krishnagar Region, JCI to various jute mills in and around Kolkata. Interested bidders may download the tender from the website <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app> on all days from 24.02.2025 to 16.03.2025. Last date of tender submission up to 05 PM of 16.03.2025. Tender will be opened at 12PM on 17.03.2025. **CBC 41122 / 12 / 0050 / 2425**

ITCX 2025: India's Largest Temple Convention Brings Together 1,500+ Temples, Political Leaders, and Religious Heads

TIRUPATI: The International Temples Convention & Expo (ITCX) 2025, held in the spiritual heart of Tirupati, served as India's largest and most influential gathering on temple management, concluded with an unprecedented congregation of 1,500+ temples, esteemed political leaders, and revered religious heads from across Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Jainism.

Value-adding to the narrative of honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Viksit Bharat 2047, the event served as a transformative platform for shaping the future of temple governance, sustainability, and technological integration while reinforcing the timeless values of Sanatana Dharma. With thought-provoking discussions on temple autonomy, smart temples mission, and global best practices, ITCX 2025 has set a new benchmark in reimagining temples as centres of religious, cultural, and societal progress. Envisioned by Gresh Kulkarni, founder of ITCX and Temple Connect, and Prasad Lad, ITCX Chairman who is also the Chief Whip of Maharashtra Legislative Council, the platform has created a ripple effect, opening new avenues for temple leaders to reinvent temples as power centres of Hindu society. With India's temple economy valued at ₹4-5 lakh



crore, comparable to any major global industry, the discussions emphasized the need to operate temples as professional institutions where the common person's donations directly benefit communities through medical aid, education, healthcare, and large-scale food distribution through langars. In only its second edition, ITCX has solidified its role as the driving force in reshaping temple management. Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a letter of appreci-

ation, said: "ITCX reflects the inherent unity in diversity of temples globally, and is in a way, a celebration of the spirit of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam - visualisation of the entire Earth as one family. The 21st century belongs to knowledge-driven societies. It is particularly in this context that the efforts of Temple Connect to document, digitise and share this rich heritage acquire greater significance."

The first day saw three CMs namely Devendra Fadnis (Maharashtra), N Chandrababu Naidu (Andhra Pradesh) and Pramod Sawant (Goa) come together on one stage for the first time, as well as Shri Shripad Naik - Central Minister & Minister of State for New and Renewable Energy of India. Day two saw Shri K. Annamalai - State President, BJP Tamil Nadu and Shri Milind Parande - General Secretary, Vishva Hindu Parishad power the cause of liberating Hindu temples from government control. The closing day continued to make an impact with Nara Lokesh, Minister for Human Resources Development, AP, who acknowledged that "the time has come for us to pull together a world class convention like ITCX to bring thought leadership, exchange ideas and best practices. We live in an era where we talk about

Cutting funding for science can have consequences for economy US technological competitiveness

TUCSON (US) : America has already lost its global competitive edge in science, and funding cuts proposed in early 2025 may further a precipitous decline.

Proposed cuts to the federal agencies that fund scientific research could undercut America's global competitiveness, with negative impacts on the economy and the ability to attract and train the next generation of researchers. I'm an astronomer, and I have been a senior administrator at the University of Arizona's College of Science. Because of these roles, I'm invested in the future of scientific research in the United States. I'm worried funding cuts could mean a decline in the amount and quality of research published - and that some potential discoveries won't get made.

THE ENDLESS FRONTIER : A substantial part of US prosperity after World War II was due to the country's investment in science and technology.

Vannevar Bush founded the company that later became Raytheon and was the president of the Carnegie Institution. In 1945, he delivered a report to President Franklin D. Roosevelt called The Endless Frontier.

In this report, Bush argued that scientific research was essential to the country's economic well-being and security. His advocacy led to the founding of the National Science Foundation and science policy as we know it today. He argued that a centralized approach to science funding would efficiently distribute resources to scientists doing research at universities.

Since 1945, advances in science and technology have driven 85% of American economic growth. Science and innovation are the engines of prosperity, where research generates new technologies, innovations and solutions that improve the quality of life and drive economic development. This causal relationship, where scientific research leads to innovations and inventions that promote economic growth, is true around the world. The importance of basic research. Investment in research and development has tripled since 1990, but that growth has been funded by the business sector for applied research, while federal investment in basic research has stagnated. The distinction matters, because basic research, which is

purely exploratory research, has enormous downstream benefits. Quantum computing is a prime example. Quantum computing originated 40 years ago, based on the fundamental physics of quantum mechanics. It has matured only in the past few years to the point where quantum computers can solve some problems faster than classical computers.

Worldwide, basic research pays for itself and has more impact on economic growth than applied research. This is because basic research expands the shared knowledge base that innovators can draw on.

For example, a biotech advocacy firm calculated that every dollar of funding to the National Institutes of Health generates US\$2.46 in economic activity, which is why a recent cut of \$9 billion to its funding is so disturbing. The American public also values science. In an era of declining trust in public institutions, more than 3 in 4 Americans say research investment is creating employment opportunities, and a similar percentage are confident that scientists act in the public's best interests.

SCIENCE SUPERPOWER SLIPPING : By some metrics, American science is preeminent. Researchers working in America have won over 40% of the science Nobel Prizes - three times more than people from any other country. American research universities are magnets for scientific talent, and the United States spends more on research and development than any other country.

But there is intense competition to be a science superpower, and several metrics suggest the United States is slipping. Research and development spending as a percentage of GDP has fallen from a high of 1.9% in 1964 to 0.7% in 2021. Worldwide, the United States ranked 12th for this metric in 2021, behind South Korea and European countries. In number of scientific researchers as a portion of the labour force, the United States ranks 10th. Metrics for research quality tell a similar story. In 2020, China overtook the United States in having the largest share of the top 1% most-cited papers. China also leads the world in the number of patents, and it has been outspending the US on research in the past few decades. Switzerland and Sweden eclipse the United States in terms of science and technology innovation.

This definition of innovation goes beyond research in labs and the number of scientific papers published to include improvements to outcomes in the form of new goods or new services.

Among American educators and workers in technical fields, 3 in 4 think the United States has already lost the competition for global leadership.

THREATS TO SCIENCE FUNDING

Against this backdrop, threats made in the beginning of President Donald Trump's second term to science funding are ominous. Trump's first wave of executive orders caused chaos at science agencies as they struggled to interpret the directives. Much of the anxiety involved excising language and programs relating to diversity, equity and inclusion, or DEI.

The National Science Foundation is particularly in the crosshairs. In late January 2025, it froze the routine review and approval of grants and new expenditures, impeding future research, and has been vetting grants to make sure they comply with orders from the U.S. president.

The National Institutes of Health announced on Feb 7, 2024 a decision to limit overhead rates to 15% which sent many researchers reeling though it has since been temporarily blocked by a judge. The National Institutes of Health is the world's largest funder of biomedical research, and these indirect costs provide support for the operation and maintenance of lab facilities. They are essential for doing research. The new administration has proposed deeper cuts. The National Science Foundation has been told to prepare for the loss of half of its staff and two-thirds of its funding. Other federal science agencies are facing similar threats of layoffs and funding cuts.

THE IMPACT : Congress already failed to deliver on its 2022 commitment to increase research funding, and federal funding for science agencies is at a 25-year low. As the president's proposals reach Congress for approval or negotiation, they will test the traditionally bipartisan support science has held. If Congress cuts budgets further, I believe the impact on job creation, the training of young scientists and the health of the economy will be substantial.

Zeenat Aman Returns with Her Music-Conversational LIVE Show 'Yeh Shaam Mastani' This Women's Day in Kolkata



Kolkata : After mesmerizing audiences in Mumbai and Delhi, the O.G. diva, Zeenat Aman, is bringing the music-conversational live show-Caravan LIVE's Yeh Shaam Mastani to the cultural heart of India, Kolkata. Scheduled for March 8 at Dhono Dhanya Auditorium, this one-of-a-kind tribute to the golden era of Bollywood promises an evening of nostalgia, music, and storytelling. A city known for its deep appreciation of art, music, and cinema, Kolkata provides the perfect stage for this immersive experience. Audiences will be transported back in time with Zeenat Aman's iconic songs, performed by Pragati Nagpal and Pranav Chandran alongside a LIVE band, interwoven with behind-the-scenes stories and personal anecdotes shared by the legendary actress herself. Expect an evening of great conversations and unforgettable melodies. The show will offer a rare glimpse into Zeenat Aman's illustrious career, featuring first-hand accounts of her experiences in films like Manoranjan, Don, Satyam Shivam Sundaram, Qurbani, and many more. She

will also share candid insights about working with legendary directors such as Raj Kapoor and Feroz Khan, as well as her chemistry with co-stars like Amitabh Bachchan and Dharmendra, including amusing behind-the-scenes stories and on-set rivalries. A trailblazer who redefined Bollywood, challenged conventions, and inspired generations, Zeenat Aman is an icon of grace and empowerment. Celebrating Women's Day with her is the perfect way to honor the remarkable women in our lives-whether attending with spouses, children, or friends.

Zeenat Aman on 'YehShaamMastani', "Cinema is not just about the films we make but the stories we live through in the journey. I have lived a life full of adventure, music, and moments that have shaped who I am. 'YehShaamMastani' is my way of sharing those experiences with all of you-celebrating the music, the memories, and above all, the power of storytelling. I can't think of a better way to celebrate Women's Day than by coming together for an evening of joy and nostalgia."

Opposing arrows of time emerge from certain quantum systems: Study

Washington DC [US], : Researchers at the University of Surrey made a thought-provoking discovery. A new study reveals that opposing arrows of time can theoretically emerge from certain quantum systems.

Dr Andrea Rocco, Associate Professor in Physics and Mathematical Biology at the University of Surrey and lead author of the study, said: "One way to explain this is when you look at a process like spit milk spreading across a table, it's clear that time is moving forward. But if you were to play that in reverse, like a movie,

you'd immediately know something was wrong -- it would be hard to believe milk could just gather back into a glass." However, there are processes, such as the motion of a pendulum, that look just as believable in reverse. The puzzle is that, at the most fundamental level, the laws of physics resemble the pendulum; they do not account for irreversible processes. Our findings suggest that while our common experience tells us that time only moves one way, we are just unaware that the opposite direction would have been equally possible." The study, pub-

IDFC FIRST Bank Introduces Exclusive package designed for Senior Citizens

Mumbai: IDFC FIRST Bank has unveiled an exclusive and specialised range of banking products and services specifically curated to address the unique financial requirements of the elderly members of the society.

These offerings, include the Senior Citizen Savings Account and Senior Citizen Fixed Deposits, reaffirming the bank's commitment to provide superior, secured and customised financial solutions for this important customer segment.

Under this program, the Bank has introduced a dedicated feature on its Mobile Banking App called 'Senior Citizen Specials'. This feature offers to senior citizens

- Safe, secure, and customised investment solutions as applicable to senior citizens' needs based on their life-stage.
- Additional 0.5% interest rate on fixed deposit
- No penalty on pre-mature closure of the FDs
- Cyber Insurance Coverage of Rs 2 lakhs to protect our senior citizens from rising cyber threats.
- Complimentary one-year MediBuddy health membership with unlimited complimentary doctor video consultations for up to 4 family

members

f. Up to 15% discount in network pharmacies, a full body health checkup covering 50+ parameters, and a Rs 500 wallet balance to avail.

g. The mobile banking app also provides access to a simplified mutual fund investment experience which is backed by innovation and research. The MF offers are conservative, and can be modified by the senior citizen based on their own risk-reward appetite.

Commenting on the Bank's offerings for Senior Citizens, Mr.ChinmayDhoble, Country Head - Retail Liabilities & Branch Banking said, "We want to treat our Senior Citizens special and we are happy to announce specialised and innovative offerings for Senior Citizens.

Our Senior Citizen Savings Account eliminates over 30 charges that are typically levied on savings accounts. In addition, we have put together a very special package for our esteemed senior citizens, with no premature breakage penalty on fixed deposits, health benefits, cyber insurance and a special app customised for seniors. We hope this is liked by our seniors and this will be a tribute for their contribution to us."

Seeking Expert Guidance on the Process of IVF

Howrah: Dr. Sonali Mandal is a life-changing process for many couples facing infertility. It involves complex medical

procedures, and the emotional journey can be overwhelming. Seeking expert guidance from a fertility specialist is essential to navigate this intricate path. These experts provide critical insights into the IVF process, helping couples understand their reproductive health and explore the most suitable treatment options.

"Seeking expert guidance on the IVF process is essential for navigating this complex and emotional journey. Fertility specialists provide crucial insights into your individual needs, helping to assess your reproductive health, explain treatment options, and guide you through each stage of IVF. From initial consultations to embryo transfer, a knowledgeable team ensures that you understand the process, manage expectations, and receive personalized care," mentions Dr. Sonali Mandal Bandyopadhyay, IVF Specialist at Birla Fertility and IVF, Howrah.

Fertility specialists assess the medical history, conduct necessary tests, and help identify any underlying conditions that may affect conception. Once a personalized treatment plan is developed, they provide thorough explanations of each step, from ovarian stimulation to egg retrieval, fertilization, and embryo transfer.

Dr. Sonali adds, "With the right expert support, you can make informed decisions, reduce uncertainty, and increase your chances of success, all while feeling supported and empowered throughout the IVF experience."

The support and guidance provided by experts also help in managing the emotional aspects of IVF. Emotional well-being plays a vital role in the success of IVF, and experts offer reassurance, answering questions and addressing concerns at every stage of the process.

Choosing a trusted fertility specialist allows couples to make informed decisions, reduces uncertainty, and increases the likelihood of a successful pregnancy. With expert care, the IVF journey becomes more understandable, less stressful, and ultimately more empowering for those seeking to start or grow their families.

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The Future of Spine Surgery - Advancing with Robotics and Innovation

BANKURA : Spinal disorders are a significant health concern worldwide, affecting people across different age groups, with the most common issue being low back pain which impacts 60% of men and 80% of women, particularly those aged 50+ years. Spinal stenosis is another common condition among the elderly (50+ years), while lumbar disc issues, including herniation (37%) and degeneration (33%), predominantly affect individuals aged 30-50 years. Scoliosis, seen in 2-3% of children aged 10-18 years, is another prevalent condition, while spinal cord injuries are more common in young adults (20-40 years).

In this regard, Manipal Hospital Old Airport Road, Bengaluru, organized a Manipal Community Care Program at Bankura on 16th February 2025 to raise awareness about spinal health and offer guidance on managing age-related spinal issues. The event featured interactive sessions with leading spine specialists - Dr. S. Vidyadhara, Chairman,

HOD & Consultant - Spine Surgery & Consultant - Robotic Spine Surgery; Dr. Balamurugan T, Consultant - Spine Care; and Dr. Abhishek Soni, Consultant - Spine Care, who addressed all patient care needs, focusing on newer therapies and advanced management. About 65+ members from different associations, including the Bankura Welfare Association, Bankura Chamber of Commerce, Bankura Marwari Association, and Bankura Women Social Welfare Forum, attended the program.

For nearly 2 decades, the Manipal Robotic Spine Care Centre at Manipal Hospital Old Airport Road has been a pioneer in spine care, successfully performing over 20,000+ spinal surgeries and 60,000+ spinal injections, while treating more than 2.5 lakh outpatients. Recently established in 2023, the Manipal Institute of Robotic Spine Surgery, armed with the Mazor X Stealth Edition Spine Robotics system, has already performed close to 1000 robotic



spine surgeries across all age groups. Notably, 40% of our all spine cases are from West Bengal and Northeast India.

Dr. S. Vidyadhara emphasized the significance of robotics in enhancing surgical outcomes. He stated, "Utilizing robotic guidance, we have achieved

unparalleled precision in scoliosis correction, cervical corpectomy, cervical pedicle screw fixation, vertebroplasty, and kyphoplasty. The AI-powered preoperative planning and real-time intraoperative guidance enable us surgeons to perform these complex procedures

with increased confidence and efficiency. For patients, these techniques ensure faster recovery, less pain, and shorter hospital stays, allowing patients suffering from spinal deformities, herniated discs, and degenerative spinal conditions to regain mobility and lead pain-free lives."

Dr. Balamurugan T highlighted the impact of these advancements on managing low back pain and spinal stenosis. He stated, "Robotic spine surgery is revolutionizing the field by allowing us to offer tailored surgical solutions, reducing human error and complications. The spinal alignment post-surgery is better in most patients, leading to accelerating rehabilitation and quicker recovery with reduced postoperative discomfort."

Dr. Abhishek Soni spoke about the transformative impact of minimally invasive techniques, stating, "Another breakthrough in spine care, MISS and regenerative therapies like stem cell treatments and biologics help reduce tissue trauma

by reducing the need for large incisions and aiding in spinal repair and regeneration. In cases of lumbar disc herniation and spinal cord injuries, these advancements allow patients to regain mobility and function much sooner and improve long-term outcomes."

The future of spine surgery is being transformed with cutting-edge technologies such as robotic-assisted procedures leading the way. Innovations in minimally invasive techniques, together with artificial intelligence (AI), multimodal neuromonitoring, and navigation systems are leveraging surgical precision and safety, improving patient outcomes and reducing recovery times.

With continued innovation, spine surgery is now becoming safer, more precise, and less invasive. The integration of robotics, AI, and advanced imaging is paving the way for a new era in spinal care, ultimately improving the quality of life for patients worldwide.

"IT'S NICE TO WIN TWO CLOSE ONES," SAYS MEG LANNING AS DC END VADODARA LEG WITH SEVEN-WICKET VICTORY OVER UP

VADODARA (GUJARAT) : With a convincing seven-wicket win over UP Warriorz in their third match of WPL 2025, the Meg Lanning-led Delhi Capitals side finished the Vadodara leg with two victories and one defeat.

After opting to bat first, Delhi Capitals restricted UP Warriorz to 166/7 in 20 overs. Captain Meg Lanning anchored the chase, with crucial contributions from Annabel Sutherland and Marizanne Kapp's last-over heroics sealing the team's second win of the tournament.

Reflecting on the game, skipper Lanning, who struck 69 off 49, expressed her delight on the win and said as quoted by Delhi Capitals press release, "It was nice to bounce back as a team. We probably didn't put our best effort out the other night (against RCB) but we had the opportunity to put our best foot forward in this match and we did that. We still feel like there are areas where we can get better. It's been nice to win two close ones because it shows we're able to hold our composure to an extent and get over the line."

Captain Meg Lanning heaped praise on Annabel Sutherland for her match-winning contribution. The Australian impressed with both bat and ball, registering figures of 2/26 in four overs before playing a crucial unbeaten knock of 41 off 35 balls to guide Delhi Capitals to the victory.

"Annabel (Sutherland) was outstanding with the ball initially as she got early breakthroughs when we were really under pressure. Later, she held her nerves while batting as well. She probably felt that she wasn't hitting them as well as she would have liked but to have that sort of stability at one end allowed Marizanne Kapp to come in and play with freedom. It was a crucial role and it was nice to see her do well," Lanning said as the Delhi Capitals press release added.

Lanning along with Shafali Verma provided DC with a quick start as the two chipped in with a first-wicket stand of 65 runs in just 6.5 overs before Verma departed for 26 off 16. The captain lauded the Indian opener for providing a brisk start.

"Shafali (Verma) just knows one way and that is to give a quick start and this plays a really important role in setting up the innings to get ahead of the run rate a little bit early. It takes a bit of pressure off through the middle and back end," she concluded.

The action will now shift to Bengaluru, where Delhi Capitals will again take on the UP Warriorz on Saturday.



India's Mohammed Shami and teammates celebrate the dismissal of Bangladesh's Soumya Sarkar during the match in the ICC Champions Trophy, 2025, at Dubai International Cricket Stadium in Dubai on Thursday. (ANI Photo)

Game of fine margins, crucial points on cards as NorthEast United FC host Bengaluru FC

SHILLONG (MEGHALAYA) : NorthEast United FC (NEUFC) are set to host Bengaluru FC (BFC) at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Shillong in the Indian Super League (ISL) 2024-25 on Friday. The ISL thus returns to the capital of Meghalaya after the first-ever league game was held there during the fixture between the Highlanders (NEUFC) and Mumbai City FC (MCFC) earlier this month, as per a release from ISL.

Bengaluru FC have been winless in their last four games on the road, including two defeats on the bounce. However, the Blues (BFC) have had a promising goal-scoring season, having scored 36 goals, their second-highest in ISL history, with Sunil Chhetri leading the charts, courtesy of his 11 strikes.

The Blues will be buoyed by the fact that NorthEast United FC have not won against them in their previous five meetings. The two sides have played three draws in a row and another stalemate would mark the third time the Highlanders do so four straight times against a single opponent in the ISL.

NorthEast United FC also have their home record to protect, since they last suffered a 0-2 defeat here against Mumbai City FC and the previous time they faced losses in consecutive matches in their backyard, in a single season, was in February 2023. Further, the Blues have never failed to score on the road against the Highlanders, netting eight times in six matches, and a strike in this encounter will mark their longest such sequence against any opponent.

Both these teams are firmly in contention to qualify for the playoffs, as NorthEast United FC are positioned fourth with 32 points from 21 games, whereas Bengaluru FC have garnered 31 points from 20 encounters and are

sixth in the table. The tussle is tough with only three points separating the Highlanders from the seventh-placed Odisha FC (29). The Highlanders have scored the third-most goals in ISL 2024-25 (39), with over 50% of those coming through Alaaeddine Ajaraie. In their last five games, NorthEast United FC have netted eight times - going scoreless in two encounters.

Jithin MS (6 goals and 8 assists) is one goal contribution away from becoming the fourth player to record 15+ goal contributions for NorthEast United FC. Jithin has scored once and assisted five times this season.

Bengaluru FC have kept six



clean sheets this season, the third-most amongst all teams. However, they have recorded only one shutout in their previous 15 ISL encounters.

The two sides have played each other 17 times in the league, with NorthEast United FC winning twice and Bengaluru FC emerging victorious in eight games. Seven matches have produced draws.

NorthEast United FC head coach Juan Pedro Benali asked his side to defend collectively in the coming match.

"The whole team needs to defend well because we are playing against a strong side. All of their players are dangerous and we need to take care of that," Benali said, as quoted from a release by ISL.

Bengaluru FC head coach Gerard Zaragoza lamented his team's form last month, but expressed hope following their 3-0 win in the last game against Jamshedpur FC.

"We were not doing well in January and we were not consistent. We bettered our performance in the last game though. We kept a clean sheet and that should be the way we need to play to arrive in the playoffs," he said.

India debut, which eventually came during India's T20I series against South Africa at the end of 2024.

"I am extremely grateful to have made my debut for India. I have worked hard to reach this position in my career, and now, I am reaping the fruits of my hard work. It is a dream come true to get retained in a mega auction. Looking forward, my attempt will be to give my 100% to the team once again," he said, while talking about his breakthrough in IPL 2024.

The Punjab-born cricketer's connection with Eden Gardens and its passionate fans runs deep. "We have the most wonderful fans at the Eden Gardens. Their support and their chants ensure that I have a very special connection with them. I am looking forward to entertaining the fans and making them proud once again," he expressed.

As KKR prepares to kick off their IPL 2025 campaign against Royal Challengers Bengaluru at home on March 22, Ramandeep's evolution as a dual-threat player could prove crucial to the team's aspirations to retain the trophy.

KARACHI (PAKISTAN) : The ICC Event Technical Committee has approved the inclusion of opener Imam-ul-Haq as a replacement for Fakhar Zaman in Pakistan's squad for the ICC Champions Trophy 2025.

Zaman was ruled out of the tournament after suffering an injury while fielding in the first over against New Zealand in Pakistan's opening match, as per Geo News.

The decision was made by the ICC Event Technical Committee, which includes Wasim Khan, Usman Wahla, Sarah Edgar, and former South African cricketer Shaun Pollock.

The left-handed batter suffered a muscular strain while fielding in the opening over against New Zealand at Karachi's National Bank Stadium on February 19. The injury occurred when New Zealand opener Will Young drove a delivery from Shaheen Afridi through the covers, evading the infield. Zaman sprinted to intercept the ball and managed to palm it back to Babar Azam for the return throw. However, he immediately appeared in discomfort, clutching

his lower back and signalling for a substitution. Though he walked off the field unaided with the team physio, he was forced to leave the match. Fortunately, he returned to the field after New Zealand lost their second wicket in the ninth over. Fakhar made 24 off 41 balls, with four boundaries.

The PCB confirmed that Zaman was undergoing further medical assessment and would provide additional updates in due course. In its latest statement, the board announced that he would not be travelling with the squad to Dubai for their next match.

"Fakhar Zaman's injury is of serious nature. He will not be able to play the remainder of the tournament," the PCB said, as quoted from Geo News.

Pakistan has already dealt with a similar injury blow, with Saim Ayub ruled out of the tournament. During a Test match against South Africa, Ayub twisted his ankle while chasing a ball toward the boundary, suffering a fracture that will sideline him until at least mid-March. Fakhar, who was not initially included in Pakistan's ODI squad, had been called up as Ayub's replacement. He made an immediate impact, scoring 84 off 69 balls and 41 off 28 in his first two matches back in the team.

Among other notable doubles entries, top singles seed Vit Kopriya will partner Marek Gengel in doubles, while former World No. 17 Bernard Tomic teams up with Colombia's Nicolas Mejia. India's Sidhant Banthia and Parikshit Somani are also among the direct entrants, strengthening home representation.

Since its inaugural edition in 2015, the Bengaluru Open has produced four all-Indian winning pairs, while at least one Indian player has claimed the title in six of the past eight editions. India's Saketh Myneni and Ramkumar Ramanathan are the reigning Bengaluru Open doubles champions.



Shami completes 200 ODI wickets, becomes India's ICC ODI events top wicket-taker

DUBAI (UAE) : Indian pacer Mohammed Shami completed 200 ODI wickets on Thursday, becoming the fastest to reach the milestone in terms of balls taken.

Shami accomplished this milestone during India's ICC Champions Trophy campaign against Bangladesh in Dubai.

During the match, he bowled his full quota of 10 overs and looked in a nice rhythm. He ended his spell with 5/53 in 10 overs, getting wickets of Soumya Sarkar, Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Jaker Ali, Tanzim Hasan Sakib and Taskin Ahmed.

In 104 ODIs, Shami has 202 wickets at an average of 23.63, with best figures of 7/57. He has six five-wicket hauls as well. He is India's eighth-highest ODI wicket-taker.

Also, he has overtaken Zaheer Khan (59 scalps) to become India's leading wicket-taker in ICC ODI tournaments, with 60 wickets in total. In the ODI WC, he has 55 scalps in 18 matches at an average of 13.52, with best figures of 7/57 and four five-wicket hauls. In his first ICC Champions Trophy match here, he has taken five

wickets. This is also the best figures by an Indian pacer in CT history, and overall second next to Ravindra Jadeja, who took 5/36 against West Indies in 2013.

Coming to balls taken, Shami has taken 200 ODI wickets in just 5,126 balls, making him the fastest to do so, outdoing Mitchell Starc, who did so in 5,240 balls.

In terms of matches, Shami is the second fastest to 200 ODI wickets, tied with Pakistan legend Saqlain Mushtaq (104 matches). The fastest to 200 wickets in ODIs in terms of matches is Starc, who reached the landmark in 102 matches.

Coming to the match, Bangladesh won the toss and elected to bat first. India reduced Bangladesh to 35/5 in the first nine overs. Then a 154-run stand between Jaker Ali (68 in 114 balls, with four boundaries) and Towhid Hridoy (100 in 117 balls, with six fours and two sixes) helped Bangladesh reach 228 in 49.4 overs.

Shami (5/53) and Harshit Rana (3/31) were the top wicket-takers for India, with Axar also getting two for 43 runs in his nine overs.

Imam-ul-Haq replaces injured Fakhar Zaman in Pakistan's Champions Trophy squad

his lower back and signalling for a substitution. Though he walked off the field unaided with the team physio, he was forced to leave the match. Fortunately, he returned to the field after New Zealand lost their second wicket in the ninth over. Fakhar made 24 off 41 balls, with four boundaries.

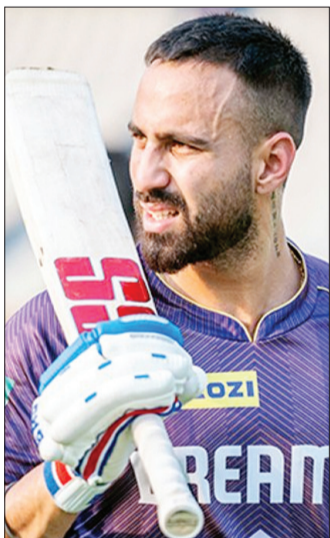
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"Want to win games as a bowler": KKR's Ramandeep Singh eyes bigger role in IPL 2025

KOLKATA (WEST BENGAL) : Kolkata Knight Riders' (KKR) all-rounder from their title-winning Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 season, Ramandeep Singh has set his sights on making a mark in the 18th edition of the tournament, this time as a bowler. In a heart-felt conversation on Knight Live Adda, the promising all-rounder - who made his debut for India in November 2024 - opened up about his journey and aspirations, as per a release from KKR.

Fresh from an impressive showing in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, where he scalped 5 wickets at an economy rate of 8.10 in the seven matches that he played for Punjab, Ramandeep is eager to showcase his bowling prowess alongside his batting capabilities.

"The conversation from IPL 2024 was that coaching staff have the same expectations from my bowling as they had from my batting. A couple of impactful overs in the middle of the bowling innings will be very important for the team. So, I am working on the same. I want to win games as a bowler," shared the 27-year-old all-rounder, as quoted from a release by KKR.



India debut, which eventually came during India's T20I series against South Africa at the end of 2024.

"I am extremely grateful to have made my debut for India. I have worked hard to reach this position in my career, and now, I am reaping the fruits of my hard work. It is a dream come true to get retained in a mega auction. Looking forward, my attempt will be to give my 100% to the team once again," he said, while talking about his breakthrough in IPL 2024.

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Teenager Dhamne, experienced Ramkumar, Prajwal Dev to enter Bengaluru Open 2025 singles draw

BENGALURU (KARNATAKA) : India's 17-year-old prodigy Manas Dhamne and seasoned campaigners Ramkumar Ramanathan and SD Prajwal Dev have been awarded wild card entries into the singles main draw of the 2025 Bengaluru Open, as the ATP Challenger 125 event returns its ninth edition at the Karnataka State Lawn Tennis Association (KSLTA) courts in Cubbon Park from February 24 to March 2.

Meanwhile, Kriishi Tyagi and Niki Kaliyanda Poonacha will compete in the qualifying rounds as wild cards, looking to secure a spot in the main draw, as per a press release from KSLTA.

Dhamne, one of India's most promis-



ing young talents, has been active on the circuit for two years and recently captured his first significant title at the M15 Monastir in Tunisia. The teenager

has already etched his name in history, becoming the youngest player to win a first-round match at the junior Australian Open and the youngest to play a main-draw ATP Tour match in 2023.

Prajwal Dev and Ramanathan, meanwhile, bring decades of experience to the tournament. Ramanathan, a mainstay in India's Davis Cup team, has been active on the circuit since 2009 and is a Bengaluru Open favourite, having added three doubles titles over the years to his burgeoning trophy cabinet.

Prajwal Dev, on the other hand, earned his ATP ranking in 2015 and has competed in both singles and doubles throughout his career, winning one ATP

Challenger doubles and several ITF doubles titles, including four in 2024.

Tournament Director Sunil Yajman commented on the occasion: "The Bengaluru Open has always played a key role in giving Indian players a platform to compete at a high level, and this year is no different. Manas Dhamne's rapid progress is exciting for Indian tennis, while Ramkumar and Prajwal Dev bring valuable experience to the field. We look forward to seeing how all our wild card entrants perform in the competition."

Meanwhile, the Bengaluru Open doubles event will feature 16 teams, split between 10 direct entries, four on-site acceptances, and two wild cards.

India's Anirudh Chandrasekar and Chinese Taipei's Ray Ho enter as the highest-ranked duo in the main draw, while Blake Baylton and Matthew Christopher Romios form the second-highest-ranked team. Fresh from their Delhi Open final appearance, Niki Maheshwar Rao IAS, Hon. Secretary, KSLTA and Organising Secretary, Bengaluru Open, said: "Doubles has been a strength for Indian tennis, and this event continues to showcase that legacy. The field is strong, featuring top-ranked pairs and accomplished champions, and we look forward to another thrilling week of doubles action

at the Bengaluru Open."

Among other notable doubles entries, top singles seed Vit Kopriya will partner Marek Gengel in doubles, while former World No. 17 Bernard Tomic teams up with Colombia's Nicolas Mejia. India's Sidhant Banthia and Parikshit Somani are also among the direct entrants, strengthening home representation.