

Mamata Banerjee forms a Task Force of ministers, secretaries and police to manage state affairs during her London visit



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is speaking to media at Nabanna, on Thursday, 48 hours before her departure for London.

MI News Service, Kolkata: On the eve of her week-long visit to London from Saturday, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has announced the formation of a 'Task Force' and sharing the responsibilities and work of the state administration among ministers, secretaries and police officers. Announcing the formation of this Task Force at a Press Conference at Nabanna on Thursday, the Chief Minister said it comprised Additional Chief Secretary of the Land Department Vivek Kumar, Finance Secretary Prabhakar Mishra, Home Secretary Nandini Chakraborty, DG Rajiv Kumar and Kolkata Police Commissioner Manoj Verma. Moreover, the responsibility of coordinating the entire administrative work have been distributed among five ministers. They are Chandrima Bhattacharya, Shashi Panja, Sujit Basu, Arup Biswas and Firhad Hakim.

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Mamata condemns violence in Nagpur, asserts India is known for unity in diversity

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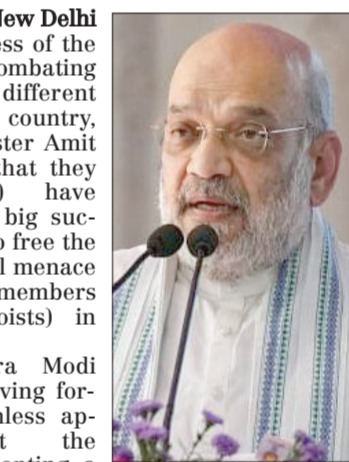
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Modi govt moving forward with ruthless approach against Naxalites, claims Amit Shah



Union Home Minister Amit Shah speaking at a podium.

MI News Service, New Delhi: Hailing the success of the security forces in combating the Naxalites in different parts of the country, Union Home Minister Amit Shah has stated that they (security forces) have achieved another big success in its march to free the country from Naxal menace by eliminating 22 members of the CPI (Maoists) in Chhattisgarh. "The Narendra Modi government is moving forward with a ruthless approach against the Naxalites, and adopting a zero tolerance policy against those extremists who are not surrendering despite all the facilities being offered to them", Shah said.

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64,000 acres of land recovered in UP from land mafia since 2017

MI News Service, Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has claimed that following his government's crackdown on land mafia through the Anti-Land Mafia Task Force, they have been able to recover as much as 64,000 acres of illegally occupied land in the state since 2017. Speaking at the inauguration of the new tehsil building in Mihipurwa (Motipur), on Thursday he emphasized that with vastly improved law and order, Uttar Pradesh has now become a major destination for investment. Highlighting his government's achievements, Yogi Adityanath said they had also resolved 33 lakh pending revenue-related cases in Uttar Pradesh since 2017, bringing relief to thousands of citizens. In his address the UP Chief minister also emphasized the importance of an efficient administrative system in ensuring justice and transparency in land-related matters. He said before 2017, Uttar Pradesh had over 33 lakh unresolved revenue disputes, including cases of land mutation.

22 Naxalites and one cop killed in fierce encounters in Chhattisgarh forest



Security forces conducting an anti-Naxalite operation in a forest area in Bijapur district.

MI News Service, Raipur: In two separate massive and well coordinated operations against Left Wing Extremism, security forces killed 22 Naxalites following fierce encounters in the forested areas of Bijapur and Kanker districts in Chhattisgarh on Thursday, a top District police official said. According to preliminary reports, one police personnel also died during the marathon encounter. Today's operation was conducted after a similar encounter in Bijapur's Indravati National Park area last month, when 31 Naxalites and two security personnel were killed. The reports said the first encounter began at around 7 am in a forest area along the border of Bijapur and Dantewada districts when a joint team of the state police and the Rapid Action Force was taken out in an anti-Naxalite operation in Gangaloor police station area in Bijapur district on the basis of prior information about the assembly of several armed insurgents in the area. After the joint team was able to locate the Naxalites, they were asked to surrender. But instead they opened indiscriminate fire on the Security personnel forcing them to retaliate. In the subsequent encounter 18 Naxalites were killed whose bodies were recovered along with a huge cache of firearms, ammunition and explosives from the spot, the reports quoting senior police officials said. A jawan of the state police's District Reserve Guard (DRG) unit was also killed in the gun battle, the reports said adding that the anti Naxalite operation in the area however continued till late in the afternoon. Incidentally in a similar operation in Kanker district, also in Chhattisgarh early this morning, 4 Naxalites were hunted down and shot dead by the security forces, while one police personnel was killed. Two

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'Two anti-farmer parties' have joined hands against farmers, alleges Kharge

MI News Service, New Delhi: Lambasting both the BJP and AAP and blaming them for the eviction of farmers from Shambhu and Khanauri protest sites, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said on Thursday that it appears "two anti-farmer parties" have now joined hands against the country's food providers. Both the BJP and the AAP were appeared to be "intoxicated" with the arrogance of power and are guilty for their actions against farmers, Kharge alleged "It also appears that two anti-farmer parties have now joined hands against the

MI News Service, New Delhi: Lambasting both the BJP and AAP and blaming them for the eviction of farmers from Shambhu and Khanauri protest sites, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said on Thursday that it appears "two anti-farmer parties" have now joined hands against the country's food providers! First the Punjab government called the farmers for talks and then forcibly removed them from the protest site," the Congress president said in a post in Hindi on X. There is no word that forcible detention of senior farmer leaders Jagjit Singh Dallewal and Sarwan Singh Pandher by the Punjab Police should be protested and cannot be condemned enough, he said. "The country has not forgotten - Mandasaur, Madhya Pradesh, when farmers were fired

Inclement weather likely in several South Bengal districts for two days

MI News Service, Kolkata: Thundersqualls, accompanied by gusty winds and hailstorms, are likely to lash several districts of South Bengal on Thursday and Friday due to a developing weather system over the Bay of Bengal. According to a bulletin issued by the Regional Meteorological Centre, Kolkata, thundersqualls with gusty winds of 50 to 60 km per hour along with powerful lightning and hail are likely to occur in several areas of Jhargram, Bankura, West Midnapore, East Midnapore and Hooghly districts on Thursday evening. For Kolkata and neighbouring areas, Thursday's forecast is for "rain or thundershowers with strong gusty winds", with maximum and minimum temperatures likely to be around 34 degree Celsius and 24 degree Celsius, respectively. The weather system will further intensify on Friday, extending to more districts in Gangetic West Bengal, the IMD bulletin said. Thundersqualls with gusty winds of 50-60 kmph and lightning accompanied with hail are once again likely over East Burdwan, Howrah, Jhargram, Bankura, West Midnapore, East Midnapore and Hooghly districts, while other districts in South Bengal could experience thunderstorms with less powerful gusty winds of 40-50 kmph, it said. Rain or thundershowers with strong gusty winds are likely in the City of Kolkata on Friday, with temperatures expected to drop to between 32 degree Celsius and 22 degree Celsius, the bulletin said. However in total contrast, North Bengal will largely remain dry on Thursday, with light rain or thunder expected only in the hilly areas of Darjeeling and Kalimpong districts. By Friday, thunderstorms with gusty winds of 30-40 kmph and lightning are likely at one or two places across Sub-Himalayan West Bengal, it said.

'We believe India will lower tariffs on US goods from April 2', says US President Trump



US President Donald Trump speaking at a podium.

MI News Service, Washington (DC): While reiterating his threat to impose reciprocal US tariffs on India from April 2, President Donald Trump has said that he believes that the country (India) is going to lower its tariffs on American goods. In an interview with Breitbart News, an American news, opinion, and commentary website, Trump discussed in detail the US' relationship with India. Asked about his summit with Prime Minister Narendra Modi last month, Trump said "he is a very good friend and we have very good relationship" with India. To another query, President Trump however, said that he believes India would certainly lower tariffs on U.S. goods, but added that but from April 2, US will impose the same tariffs on India as India does on its products. "I believe they are going to probably going to be lowering those tariffs substantially, but on April 2, we will be charging them the same tariffs they charge us," Donald Trump was quoted as saying. Tariffs are government-imposed import duties that companies must pay to bring foreign goods into a country. Last week, the Centre had informed Parliament that, as of now, the United States has not imposed reciprocal tariffs on India. The clarification came after Trump criticised India and other nations for imposing high tariffs on American goods, calling them "very unfair". He also announced that from April 2, the US would implement reciprocal tariffs on countries that impose levies on American products including India. On February 13, the US

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Water pipe burst in Howrah, water problems in many wards, chairman assures of war-scale pipe repair

MI News Service, Howrah: Water was seen being wasted due to a big crack in the underground pipeline in the Belgachhiya area under Howrah Municipality. Due to which water supply has been affected in most areas. As a result, the residents of North Howrah and Shibpur assembly constituencies have to face water shortage along with the heat. However, the Chairman of the Municipal

Shibpur assembly constituencies. It is not clear what caused the burst in the pipeline, but it is initially believed that the disruption was due to high water pressure and landslides. Senior engineers from Howrah Municipality and KMDA reached the spot early that morning. In addition, high officials including the chairman of the administrative council of Howrah Municipality arrived. Repair work on the



Board of Administrators, Sujoy Chakraborty, said that the repair work of the pipeline is going on on a war-scale. However, it is not yet clear when this work will be completed. To deal with the water crisis, drinking water tanks are being provided to all these areas. It has been learned that on Thursday night, big cracks appeared in two underground pipelines in Ward No. 8 Belgachhiya Bhagaar of Howrah Municipality. This resulted in the interruption of water supply from the underground reservoir of the Padma Pokhar Water Project. This pipeline supplies water to a large area of North Howrah and

pipeline has been started on a war footing. However, it is not yet clear how long it will take to complete the work. It was initially said that it may take more than two days to control the situation. The chairman of the municipality said, "Water tankers are being sent to the areas to deal with the drinking water crisis of the residents. Vehicles are also being brought in from Kolkata Municipality for this." On the other hand, residents say that they are facing difficulties due to lack of water. People in the areas of Shibpur faced significant difficulties in the evening when they were preparing for Iftar.



Knights in Action: Kolkata Knight Riders Team gears up with intense practice at Eden Gardens, in Kolkata on Thursday.



RCB's practice session ahead of the IPL opening match against RCB at Eden Gardens, Kolkata.

MG Comet EV 2025 launched with enhanced features and smart pricing

MI News Service, Bhubaneswar: JSW MG Motor India has launched the MG Comet EV 2025, an urban electric vehicle with new features. The vehicle

is available in five variants: Executive, Excite, Excite Fast Charge, Exclusive, and Exclusive Fast Charge. Key upgrades include a Rear Parking Cam-

era and Power-folding ORVMs in the Excite and Excite FC variants, premium leatherette seats, and a 4-speaker audio system.

Slovakia's industrial prowess & Bengal's favourable business ATM will create magic: Consul Gen of Slovak Rep



MI News Service, Kolkata: A new era begins in the Indo-Slovak relationship as Republic of Slovakia officially inaugurates Honorary Consulate in Kolkata on March 20. This endeavor

would certainly enhance the betterment of industrial scenario in West Bengal in holistic terms. Vivek Lohia, the new Honorary Consul general of Slovak Republic, Kolkata

said, "The Consulate office in Kolkata is a landmark decision. It without any ambiguity marks a new chapter in Indo-Slovak relationship where West Bengal holds a prime position, both politically and economically. This consulate office will play a crucial role in fostering trade, investment and cultural ties between two nations. Bengal is an engineering and manufacturing hub. With its strategic position and abundant quality human resource, days are not very far for a complete metamorphosis in industrial scenario of West Bengal and states in East India."

Emerging Bengal: Job Fair for Engineers in Kolkata

MI News Service, Kolkata: West Bengal is changing and changing very fast and the change is only for the betterment of the city and the state in holistic term. As part of its 75th year Anniversary Celebrations, The Institute of Indian Foundrymen (IIF)-Eastern Region and Kolkata Chapter in association with Swami Vivekananda Institute of Science & Technology (SVIST) and Alisha Univer-

sity, Kolkata organised a Job Fair in Baruipur, at Southern fringe of Kolkata. Representatives of renowned companies located in Howrah and Kolkata areas interviewed a number of engineering students. This phenomenon clearly shows that the proactive education and industrial policies of the West Bengal government is giving dividend to future human resources of the state.

Jupiter mulls investment in Bengal

MI News Service, Kolkata: Jupiter Wagons Ltd (JWL) envisages investment in Kolkata. JWL, a giant in terms of heavy industries related to railway oriented manufacturing, commercial vehicles, containers and other heavy engineering products are all set to investment in West Bengal.

JWL has headquarters in Kolkata itself and it wants more and more investment in West Bengal and East India.

According Vivek Lohia, MD- JWL, "We are contemplating big investment in West Bengal in terms of electric vehicles, batteries and other heavy engineering products. We would be working very closely with Slovak Republic regarding technical collaboration and manufacturing and automation prowess with us. The current state government's pro active nature is also acting as a catalyst in changing the industrial scenario of West Bengal."

CCC & CCCLF celebrate International Women's Day with 'icons' & 'masters'



MI News Service, Kolkata: The Calcutta Chamber of Commerce (CCC) and the Calcutta Chamber of Commerce Ladies Forum (CCCLF) recently hosted an inspiring event to celebrate International Women's Day. The event, titled "Icons of Change - Masters of Resilience," brought together trailblazing women leaders who have significantly impacted their respective fields with resilience and determination. The event featured a

distinguished panel of speakers, including Mona Sengupta, Founder-Director of Ahava Communications, CA Shivani Agarwalla, a six-time Woman World Champion in Kettlebell Sports. The panel discussion was moderated by Dr. Tania Chakraverty, Dean of Students Welfare at Diamond Harbour Women's University. The event was graced by the presence of Hari Shankar Halwasiya, President of the Calcutta Cham-

ber of Commerce, who emphasized the importance of celebrating the achievements of women across all sectors. Also in attendance was Manjula Jain, Chairperson of the Calcutta Chamber of Commerce Ladies Forum, who expressed her gratitude for the remarkable contributions women have made in various fields. The discussions centered on how women continue to evolve as powerful forces of change and resilience, overcoming personal and professional obstacles to emerge as icons of success. The event served as a platform for recognizing the power of women's leadership and the impact of their resilience in shaping a more inclusive future. The gathering was a reminder of the strength and determination of women, reaffirming the CCC and CCCLF's commitment to supporting and empowering women in their professional and personal pursuits.

GTA opts for App scan for teacher's attendance

MI News Service, Darjeeling: The Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) has decided to use a mobile app to take the attendance of primary school teachers under the hill body.

Rajesh Chauhan, the deputy chairman of the GTA Sabha who is also in charge of the primary education department, stated that all primary school teachers had been asked to download the Notecam app.

"Starting from April, all teachers will have to click their pictures in school using the app every day as soon as school starts and just before it ends," said Chauhan. The photographs taken through the app will have to be submitted to the sub-inspector of schools of the respective circle. There are 13 education circles within the GTA. Notecam is a mobile app designed to take photographs that contain details such as time, date, location, coordinates and other data. The app can be downloaded for free on both Android and iOS platforms. "These days everyone has an Android phone and there should be no issues in submitting photographs," said Chauhan. The GTA wanted to use a biometric system for teachers' attendance. "However, the system was not feasible for schools as the number of teachers in a school is often too few," said a source. There are 778 primary schools in the GTA's juris-

dition with around 2,300 teachers. The GTA, however, has introduced biometric attendance at its headquarters at Lal Kothi, the primary education department at Lewis Jubilee and Shiksha Bhavan in Darjeeling. "We will introduce biometric attendance in circle offices too," said Chauhan. Asked if low teacher attendance prompted the hill body to introduce the app-based attendance system, Chauhan had a different take. "Many teachers attend classes regularly but allegations are still made about poor attendance. This system will clear such doubts," said Chauhan. Even though the hill body plans to introduce the system in April, teachers are being informed about the nitty-gritty of the system in an ongoing workshop on teaching methodology in each education circle. Lecturers from primary teacher training institutes are resource persons.

Political fracas: NBU without key heads for long

MI News Service, Siliguri: Once a beacon of higher education in north Bengal, the University of North Bengal (NBU) is now struggling with administrative vacuum. The university set up in 1962 neither has a vice-chancellor nor a controller of examinations. It also lacks an audit officer and a college inspector. Additionally, a single dean is overseeing the sci-

ence, arts, commerce and law faculties. Many universities in Bengal are without a vice-chancellor after the row between the TMC-led state government and Bengal governor C.V. Ananda Bose over their appointments. Auguably, NBU has been hit the hardest. The university has been functioning without a VC for nearly a year, leaving crucial decision-making in limbo. As key administrative positions are lying vacant, no executive committee meeting has been held since 2023. A senior administrator of the varsity said that the absence of a VC has created a leadership crisis that has rippled through every aspect of university operations. "Without a proper head, critical policy deci-

sions remain stalled, affecting both academic and administrative affairs. The situation has put immense burden on the acting registrar and the other officers who have been trying hard to maintain order and keep the institution running," he said. "Officers are bound to take responsibilities other than their work," he added.

State Govt appoints two new Information Commissioners

MI News Service, Kolkata: The West Bengal government has appointed two new information commissioners to the West Bengal Information Commission, a decision that has sparked debate. Among the appointees is Sanchita Kumar, a retired Indian Revenue Services (IRS) officer and wife of West Bengal Director General of Police (DGP) Rajeev Kumar. The second nomi-

nee, Mriganko Mahato, is a former Trinamool Congress MP and an ex-member of the West Bengal Public Service Commission. The appointments were finalized during a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, attended by Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Sobhan Deb Chattopadhyay. However, Leader of the Opposition Suwendu Adhikari boycotted the

meeting, alleging political favoritism in the selection process. The appointments have drawn criticism from the opposition, which has raised concerns over conflict of interest and political affiliations. Meanwhile, the state government has defended the decision, asserting that the selections were made in adherence to legal procedures and administrative merit.



The Iftar organized by the West Bengal Legislative Assembly Mosque Committee saw the presence of Speaker Biman Banerjee, Ministers Firhad Hakim, Chandrima Bhattacharya, and Siddiquillah Chowdhury, along with other MLAs, officers, and employees at the Legislative Assembly campus.

Hydrogen generation: NBU inks deal with Singapore research institute

MI News Service, Siliguri: The Laboratory of Structural Engineering & Sustainable Catalysis which functions under the chemistry department of the North Bengal University (NBU) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Hydrogen Innovation Pte Ltd of Singapore to research into "low-cost electro-catalyst for hydrogen generation and storage".



KKR CEO Venky Mysore paid a courtesy visit to Sports Minister Aroop Biswas at Nawa Mahakaran and presented him with a KKR jersey as a memento on Thursday.

The research, which is aimed at extracting hydrogen as a fuel from water, has been taken up by a group headed by Bhaskar Biswas, head of the department. The foreign firm, sources said, will also collaborate with the research team to explore possibilities of commercial production. Biswas said the project would run from March 2025 to February 2027. The firm, he said, operates an incubation centre at the National University of Singapore. "In the research, we will focus on the development of low-cost electro-catalysts for hydrogen production, a critical step in enhancing the sustainability and efficiency of renewable energy systems. This partnership will bring together experts from academia and industry," he said. "The idea is to improve the affordability and scalability of hydrogen generation and storage technologies as the fuel is considered as a sustainable and greener source of energy." Biswas added. Sources in the department said they wanted to come up with electro-catalysts that would have significantly lower production costs and high efficiency for hydrogen production from water. "The challenge is to make the process simpler and more sustainable. So far, we have developed around 20 catalysts and five of them show significant promise. One such innovation has even been named 'NBU-4' in recognition of the university's contribution," said a faculty member.

BJP's Samik pleads to Centre for Taslima's return

MI News Service, Kolkata: BJP MP Samik Bhattacharya demanded in the Rajya Sabha that the Union government ensure the safe return of Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasrin to Kolkata. Bhattacharya, who was elected to the Upper House from Bengal, said Nasrin had to leave Bangladesh following protests by fundamentalist forces. Nasrin wrote the famous novel Lajja on violence against minorities in Bangladesh. She came to Kolkata in 2004 and left the city in 2007 following protests. Bhattacharya said Nas-

rin liked Calcutta very much and wanted to go back to the city. "I urge the government to ensure the safe return of Nasrin to Calcutta. She wants to focus on writing," he said. The MP alleged that a former Congress leader had mobilised people against Nasrin in the past. After the leader was expelled from the Congress, he joined the Trinamul Congress, said Bhattacharya. Nasrin has been staying in India on a temporary residence permit. In October 2024, the Union home ministry extended the permit.

Rejuvenation of twin Senchal Lakes: State gov't approves Rs 30 Cr

MI News Service, Darjeeling: The state government has approved a sum of 30 crore to rejuvenate supply to the twin Senchal lakes in Darjeeling. Water is collected through 22 streams in the two Senchal lakes which is then distributed to Darjeeling town. The north and south lakes at Senchal have storage capacities of 20 million gallons and 13 million gallons, respectively. "The water in the lake goes through a total 22 hilly streams through pipelines. But over the decades there has been no renovation of pipelines. It has been decided to renovate the

pipelines and rejuvenate the lake by spending the fund," Chittaranjan Barman, the chief engineer of the municipal engineering directorate (MED), north zone, said. The MED works under the department of urban development and municipal affairs. A source said the lake on the hill was situated over 8,000 feet above sea level in Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary, located some 10km from Darjeeling town. The lake was built during the British era. The northern part of the lake was constructed in 1910 and the southern part of it was built in the early 1930s.

