

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee inaugurated the newly constructed Bagla Maa temple in Kalighat on Wednesday afternoon, coinciding with the festival of Makar Sankranti. She arrived at the temple premises in the afternoon, accompanied by Abhishek Banerjee's mother Lata Banerjee and popular singer Imon Chakraborty. A special puja was organized at the temple, and during the rituals, the Chief Minister rang the ceremonial Kasar-Ghanta (temple bell). Makar Sankranti, one of the 13 major Bengali festivals of the year, is celebrated with religious fervor across the state. Millions of devotees take holy dips at Gangasagar, while in Birbhum, the Joydeb Mela begins on this day. The Tusu festival is also observed during this period, creating a festive atmosphere across West Bengal. Against this backdrop, Mamata Banerjee participated in the inauguration ceremony of the Bagla Maa temple in Kalighat, offering prayers and blessings to devotees present. **PG 3**

PG 3

A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a bright yellow robe, is performing a ritual in front of an altar. He is holding a small object in his hands. A woman in a white and blue striped sari is standing beside him, observing the ritual. The altar is decorated with various items, including a large yellow and red cloth-covered object and several small figures. The setting appears to be a traditional Hindu temple or shrine.

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Over nine lakh devotees take holy dip in Magh Mela

MI News Service, Prayagraj
: MI News Service, Prayagraj : More than nine lakh devotees took a dip in the Ganga and at the Sangam here on Wednesday morn-

The Mamata Banerjee government has made elaborate arrangements for the mela... Giving the status of a national mela to the Gangasagar mela is up to the Union government as well as on the people. People have seen all kinds of arrangements made here. Such a huge gathering is not organised anywhere else in India.

Sujit Bose
West Bengal fire
Brigade minister

ing as part of Makar Sankranti festivities, official sources confirmed. While many parts of the country are celebrating the harvest festival on Wednesday, Uttar Pradesh will celebrate Makar

►► *Continued on page 3*

Morning India

A man with long, dark, flowing hair stands on a beach at sunset, holding a long, thin object that trails behind him like a comet's tail. He is wearing an orange cloth and is looking towards the camera. The background is a hazy, golden sunset over the ocean.

A sadhu whirls his flowing jata after taking a Holy dip in the River Ganga at sunrise, on the occasion of Makar Sankranti at the Gangasagar Mela, Sagar Island, on Wednesday. Pic: Prabir Bhattacharya

Pongal a global festival, cherished by all world over: PM Modi

MI News Service, New Delhi : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said Pongal, which gave the message of maintaining harmonious balance with nature, has emerged as a global festival, cherished by Tamilians world over. Participating in Pongal celebrations at the residence of Union Minister L Murugan, the Prime

minister said this festival celebrates the hard work of farmers and expresses gratitude to the land and the Sun. "The festival of Pongal reminds us that gratitude should go beyond mere words and become an integral part of our daily lives. When the Earth provides us with so much, it is our responsibility to cherish and protect

it,"PM Modi said at the celebrations that had Union Ministers, bureaucrats, and people from a cross-section of society in attendance.

The Prime minister said that around the world, the Tamil community and those who cherish Tamil culture celebrate Pongal with great enthusiasm, and he

was proud to be among them. PM Modi said Tamil culture was one of the oldest living civilisations in the world and embodied centuries of wisdom and tradition that draw lessons from history to guide the way toward the future. "Inspired by this legacy, today's India draws

►► *Continued on page 3*

Mamata's interim Budget triggers expectations before poll

MI News Service, Kolkata

MI News Service, Kolkata : With barely three months to go for the much anticipated West Bengal Assembly polls, the spotlight in the state has now shifted to the next month's interim budget, widely viewed as Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's last major opportunity to woo voters before the model code of conduct kicks in. Going by convention, the state budget is presented within a week of the Union Budget.

Budget.

With Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman set to table the Union Budget for 2026-27 on February 1, the state government is expected to convene its own budget session in the first week of February and place a 'vote on account'. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay has confirmed that preparations for the budget session are already underway, signalling that the state government is entering a crucial pre-election phase where fiscal announcements often double up as political messaging. "The process for the budget session has started. The House is likely to meet in the first week of February," said Chattopadhyay. The monthly assistance under the scheme was raised from Rs 500 to Rs 1,000, a promise that was later fulfilled after the party returned to power for a third consecutive term. Political observers say precedent has sharpened speculation this time around over whether the government will again sweeten existing welfare schemes or announce fresh benefits targeting women, the rural poor and marginalised groups, constituencies that form the backbone of the party's electoral strategy. "The budget before elections is never just about

►► *Continued on page 3*

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Lakhs take Holy dip at Gangasagar on Makar Sankranti

MI News Service, Ganga Sagar: Lakhs of pilgrims gathered at Gangasagar on West Bengal's Sagar Island on Wednesday morning to take a holy dip at the confluence of the Hooghly River and the Bay of Bengal on the occasion of Makar Sankranti.

Lakhs gather for holy dip

Despite the winter chill, devotees entered the waters at sunrise and later offered prayers at the Kapil Muni Ashram in South 24 Parganas district, where the annual Gangasagar Mela 2026 was underway. Officials said the auspicious shahi snan was scheduled to begin at 1.19 pm and continue for the next 24 hours, with authorities expecting a further surge in footfall.

Pilgrims brave cold at sunrise

In view of the large gathering of pilgrims from different parts of the country, the West Bengal government had made elaborate arrangements to ensure safety, sanitation, and smooth movement across the mela area, located about 100 kilometres from Kolkata. Security had been strengthened across Sagar Island as well as at major railway stations and bus terminals in Kolkata.

For the first time, advanced water rescue drones had been deployed for continuous surveillance along the shoreline. These drones were stationed near key bathing ghats and around the Kapil Muni Ashram to assist in emergencies and were capable of carrying loads of up to 100 kilograms.

Indian Navy rescues drowning pilgrim

During the holy dip, a pilgrim identified as Sudipta was rescued after he was seen floundering in deep waters. An Indian Navy diving team deployed for search and rescue operations rushed to the spot in a Gemini boat, brought him safely to shore, and handed him over to the police control room before resuming their vigil. Rescue drones deployed along shoreline

To ensure improved facilities for pilgrims and local residents for the Gangasagar Mela, ensuring complete solid and liquid waste management. A total of 627 community sanitation

ter supply and drainage-related works had been completed. Nearly 580 kilometres of roads, includ-

Sea of Faith at Gangasagar as Makar Snan Draws Over 85 Lakh Pilgrims from Across India

Glimpses of Gangasagar Mela on Makar Sankranti on Wednesday



PIC: Prabir Bhattacharya

2026, the Panchayat and Rural Development Department of South 24 Parganas undertook extensive infrastructure and sanitation initiatives along the Gangasagar route. Officials said projects worth nearly ₹675 crore had been implemented across several blocks, including Thakurpur-Maheshtala, Bishnupur-I, Falta, Diamond Harbour I and II, Magrahat-I, Kulpi, Kakdwip, Namkhana, and Sagar.

State allocates funds for sanitation

An amount of ₹1.5 crore had been allocated exclusively for sanitation at the mela. As part of waste management efforts, 1,033 villages along the route had been declared ODF Plus model villages.

complexes had been constructed for pilgrims and local residents, while 545 e-carts had been deployed for waste collection and disposal.

Security and surveillance intensified statewide

Officials said 96 solid waste management units, five plastic waste processing units, and seven temporary waste segregation centres had been set up at the mela site. The entire Gangasagar Mela had been declared plastic-free, with single-use plastic completely banned. A faecal sludge treatment plant had also been operational at Kakdwip.

Using funds from the 15th Finance Commission, drinking wa-

ting internal village roads, had been constructed and upgraded along the Gangasagar route to ensure smooth and uninterrupted movement of pilgrims.

10,000 workers engaged in waste management operations

More than 10,000 workers had been engaged in solid, liquid, faecal, and plastic waste management operations, while around 1,500 sanitation workers had been deployed daily based on requirement. Officials said strict monitoring, emergency preparedness, and environmental safeguards had been maintained throughout the mela period to ensure a safe and orderly pilgrimage.

Suman Ganguly, Ganga Sagar: Around 85 lakh pilgrims from various states had arrived at the Gangasagar Mela grounds by 3 p.m. on Wednesday to take the holy dip at the confluence of the Ganga and the Bay of Bengal and offer prayers at the Kapil Muni Temple, said state Minister for Power and Housing Aroop Biswas.

The minister stated that with the commencement of the holy bath for the 2026 Gangasagar Mela, the auspicious timing for the Shahi Snan (royal bath) began at 1:19 p.m. on 14 January and will continue for 24 hours. As a result, devotees from across the country have been thronging the

early morning.

"On Makar Sankranti, a massive influx of pilgrims has been witnessed at the Sagar Sangam. The Shahi Snan is being conducted under tight security arrangements and will continue till tomorrow," Biswas said.

From the early hours of Wednesday, lakhs of pilgrims gathered along the Gangasagar coast to earn religious merit on the auspicious occasion of Poush Sankranti. Braving biting cold

puja. The temple premises were packed to capacity, leaving virtually no space to move. To manage the swelling crowd, several thousand police personnel and volunteers have been deployed across the mela area.

The famous adage, "All pilgrims drown many times, Gangasagar once," seemed to resonate strongly as devotees took the holy dip with deep faith. Security across the mela grounds has been further strengthened with extensive use of drones and CCTV cameras. Civil Defence personnel, disaster response teams, and the Navy are maintaining continuous water patrols to prevent any untoward incidents at the bathing

management. For the first time at the Gangasagar Mela, advanced water drones, also known as rescue drones, have been deployed by the NDRF and state disaster management teams. These high-tech drones are being used for continuous surveillance along the sea beach and to assist in swift rescue operations during emergencies.

According to official sources, the drones have been specifically positioned to monitor the Kapil Muni Ashram and the main bathing ghats. Notably, each rescue drone is capable of carrying up to 100 kg, enabling quick evacuation of pilgrims in distress and their safe transfer to secure locations.

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area. A special control room has been set up to regulate crowd movement and trace missing persons swiftly. From aerial surveillance to waterway patrolling, the entire mela area has been placed under a multi-layered security cover to maintain order and discipline.

Gangasagar is considered the second-largest Hindu congregation in India. According to Hindu belief, the spiritual merit gained by visiting all major pilgrimage can be attained by visiting Gangasagar just once. The occasion of Makar Sankranti holds special astrological significance, marking the Sun's transition into the Capricorn sign—a period regarded as highly auspicious for ritual bathing and religious observances.

Nipah virus attacks 2, Centre and State steps up jointly to prevent outbreak

MI News Service, Kalyani: The Nipah virus has sparked panic across West Bengal amid fears of its spread in the state. Two nurses suspected to be infected with Nipah are currently undergoing treatment in hospital. Even as investigations continue into how the virus entered Bengal, another nurse suspected of Nipah infection was admitted to Kolkata's Beliaghata ID Hospital late on Tuesday night. She has been placed in an isolation ward, and contact tracing tests are currently underway.

Considering the seriousness of the situation, the Centre and the state government have jointly stepped up strict surveillance. Specific protocols have been put in place to tackle the infection, including sample collection, contact tracing, isolation, and bed preparedness.

Sources in AIIMS Kalyani said that a good number of people those came closer to 2 nurses, are under process of examination in AIIMS K but none so far was reported Nipah virus positive.

Ranjit Kumar Das, Acting Chief Medical Officer of Health of Nadia district, said on Wednesday that the family members of the house in Krishnanagar, Nadia, where two persons suspected of being infected with the Nipah virus had stayed during a visit, have been kept under observation.

"Beyond this, I do not have any further information. However, those suspected of being infected are not residents of Nadia; they had come from outside," he added.

A team of specialist doctors and central health departments has already visited the private hospital in Barasat. Samples of at least 14 people who came into contactors from both the with the infected nurse have been sent to AIIMS for testing. In addition, samples have also been collected from several individuals at Khatua and Burdwan Medical College and Hospital.

Across the border from Ghogragachhi village in Krishnanagar lies Chaudanga in Bangladesh, with Kushtia located a short distance away. These areas have been witnessing a rise in Nipah cases for some time. According to sources, Infrared camera footage has even captured bats feeding on date palm sap in the region, raising concerns that the infection may have spread to Bengal from there.

According to doctors, the nurse infected with Nipah at the Barasat private hospital had visited the border village of Ghogragachhi on December 15 last month to attend a family wedding. It is suspected that she consumed raw date palm sap during her visit, which may have led to the infection.

Drones Beneath the Waves for Gangasagar Safety



MI News Service, Ganga Sagar: In a major boost to safety and disaster preparedness, the South 24 Parganas district administration is set to deploy advanced water drones for underwater rescue operations during the Gangasagar Mela, coinciding with the holy dip at the confluence of the Ganga and the Bay of Bengal.

A mock drill and test run were conducted today near the confluence. District Magistrate Arvind Kumar Meena said the move has been taken in view of the expected massive turnout of pilgrims this year. "A huge congregation is anticipated, with devotees taking the holy dip at four to five ghats. To effectively handle any disaster or emergency situation, water drones will be deployed for rescue operations," he said. The water drone can tow up to 1,000 kg (one tonne), enabling it to assist multiple survivors simultaneously or pull life rafts during emergencies. Similar underwater drone technology is being explored by the Odisha Fire Services Department to locate missing persons in high-risk areas such as the Puri sea beach. Meena said the Gangasagar drone as "highly powerful and technologically advanced," capable of operating in adverse riverine and sea conditions.

According to administration sources, the Gangasagar Mela will be held from January 10 to 17, 2026, centred around the Kapil Muni Ashram in South 24 Parganas. This year's mela could be the largest ever, with more than 1.5 crore pilgrims expected, said Mahant Sanjay Das, successor of

chief priest Swami Gyandas Maharaj. The absence of the Kumbh Mela this year is likely to lead to a surge in pilgrim footfall at Gangasagar.

To prevent accidents and ensure real-time information flow, stringent surveillance measures have been implemented. With support from ISRO, the administration has installed GPS-based navigation and monitoring systems. Complete monitoring is being conducted from the Sagar Mega Control Room through live video feeds, ensuring vessels and barges do not lose direction in dense fog.

Enhanced security arrangements include 1,200 CCTV cameras from Lot No. 8 to the mela grounds, 20 aerial drones for surveillance, and 21 operational jetty lines, including 10 permanent ones at Lot No. 8 and Namkhana. The river fleet comprises 13 barges, 45 vessels, and 100 wooden launches. Nabanna has deployed around 2,500 buses to ferry pilgrims from major transport hubs in Kolkata directly to the mela site. Officials said all arrangements have been finalised to ensure a safe, smooth, and incident-free Gangasagar Mela.



In a humanitarian initiative, South 24 Parganas Press Club organised a medical camp at the Gangasagar Mela.

Opening Ceremony of JIS Samman Sports 2026



MI News Service, Kolkata: The Opening Ceremony of JIS Samman Sports and Games 2026 was successfully organized on 8th January 2026 at the JIS Campus with great enthusiasm and sportsman spirit. The event marked the commencement of a major inter-collegiate sports festival under the JIS Group of Institutions.

The ceremony was graced by several eminent dignitaries. The Chief Guest, Goutam Sarkar, legendary footballer, inspired the students with his motivational address emphasizing discipline, dedication, and sportsmanship. The occasion was further dignified by the presence of Samir Pal, former CAB President, whose association added prestige to the event. Tarjanit Singh, Managing Director of JIS Group, also honored the program and encouraged students to actively participate in sports for holistic development.

The opening address of the ceremony was delivered by Dr. Partha Sarkar, Principal, JIS College of Engineering. In his address, he warmly welcomed all dignitaries, principals of group colleges, faculty members, student partici-

pants and press media. He highlighted the importance of sports in shaping leadership qualities, discipline, and teamwork among students, and emphasized the role of JIS Samman Sports 2026 in fostering unity and healthy competition among the institutions.

A total of 18 colleges are participating in JIS Samman Sports and Games 2026, with around 450 student participants. The responsibility of hosting this prestigious event has been undertaken by JIS College of Engineering, an institution accredited with NAAC 'A' Grade, recognized by NBA, and accredited by NITR, and accredited by NBA.

reflecting excellence in academics as well as extracurricular activities.

The ceremony included the touch relay, flag hoisting, parade, Orth taking, inaugural addresses, motivational speeches by the dignitaries, and a formal declaration of the games open. The event concluded with a pledge emphasizing fair play, discipline, and sportsmanship.

As part of JIS Samman Sports 2026, indoor sports events are also scheduled. A Carrom Tournament will be held on 9th January 2026, followed by a Chess Tournament on 10th January 2026. Furthermore, other outdoor and team sports events will be conducted at Dr. Sudhir Chandra Sur Institute of Technology & Sports Complex and GNCC Campus from 12th January to 22nd January 2026, providing students with opportunities to showcase strategic and analytical skills.

The opening ceremony successfully set an energetic and inspiring tone for JIS Samman Sports 2026, fostering unity, healthy competition, and holistic development among students of the JIS Group.

Emphasising Human-AI Collaboration as Core of Enterprise Transformation: CII



(L-R): Shiv Siddhant Narayan Kaul, Managing Director, Nicco Engineering Services Ltd; Deepak Parganikar, Head of AI and Agentforce, Salesforce India; Pankaj Vyas, CEO & Managing Director, Siemens Technology & Services Pvt Ltd; Shashwat Goenka, Chairman, CII Eastern Region and Vice Chairman, RPSC Group; and John Kuruvilla, Regional Director, CII Eastern Region.

MI News Service, Kolkata: CII on Wednesday highlighted the transformative potential of artificial intelligence in Indian enterprises at "AI: The New Engine of Enterprise", a precursor to the India AI Impact Summit organized by CII Eastern Region in Kolkata. Industry leaders emphasized that the future of enterprise growth will be driven by collaboration between human and AI, reshaping productivity, decision-making, and business outcomes.

Pankaj Vyas, CEO & Managing Director, Siemens Technology & Services Pvt Ltd, said the world has entered the age of the Intelligence Revolution, with

AI evolving from prediction-based models to agentic systems capable of autonomous action. He stressed that enterprises with robust data strategies, reliable infrastructure, and adaptive human-AI governance frameworks will be best positioned to succeed.

Highlighting the economic potential of AI, Shashwat Goenka, Chairman, CII Eastern Region and Vice Chairman, RPSC Group, noted that study suggested that AI could add USD 500 to 600 billion to India's GDP by 2035 through productivity gains and USD 17 to 26 trillion globally over the next decade. He underlined that India can capture 10 to 15 per cent of this value as both a user and creator of AI-driven products, platforms, and services, with reskilling and digital fluency critical for success.

Deepak Parganikar, Head of AI and Agentforce, Salesforce India, emphasized that Agentic AI can autonomously manage end-to-end business processes, enabling outcome-driven execution and value creation.

Shiv Siddhant Narayan Kaul, Managing Director, Nicco Engineering Services Ltd, emphasized that structured data collection, organizing data, and data mining are essential for transforming raw information into actionable intelligence, driving the ongoing intelligence revolution.

The discussions concluded that India's enterprise transformation will depend on bold AI adoption, strategic reskilling, and stronger collaboration between industry and academia to build AI-driven products, platforms, and services.



(L) On the occasion of Makar Sankranti, Mohanty Sanjay Das distributes holy offerings (prasad) to devotees outside the Kapil Muni Ashram at the Gangasagar Mela, Sagar Island, on Wednesday. (R) Swami Sanjay Das along with priests offer prayers on the occasion of Makar Sankranti at the Kapil Muni Temple at the Gangasagar Mela on Wednesday. Pic: Prabir Bhattacharya



HC urges immediate release of MNREGA wages

MI News Service, Kolkata: The Calcutta High Court has emphasized the urgent need for workers to receive pending payments under the 100-day MNREGA scheme. Acting Chief Justice Sujoy Paul remarked, "The court's primary objective is to ensure that the poor receive their money as quickly as possible." The court noted that those working under MNREGA are largely economically disadvantaged, and securing their wages is a key priority. Advocate Kalyan Bandopadhyay, appearing for the state, said, "Regardless of any complaints by the Centre, the money must be released immediately." On the other hand, the Deputy Solicitor General representing the Centre highlighted allegations of corruption, saying the guilty must be punished and the state was found responsible, which led to the Centre taking over certain powers. Lawyer Ashok Chakraborty questioned the purpose of the ongoing litigation, while Chief Justice Paul clarified that related contempt and other matters would be heard together. Advocate Bikash Bhattacharya urged, "The money has been pending since August; at least ensure workers receive their wages without further delay." The court confirmed, "We all want the money to reach the workers' hands."

Over nine lakh devotees take dip in Magh Mela

From PG 1 Sankranti on Thursday. The second major bathing festival of the ongoing Magh Mela, Makar Sankranti, is scheduled for Thursday. On the occasion of Ekadashi, a large number of devotees arrived at the Sangam Ghat very early in the morning Prayagraj to take a holy dip during the ongoing Magh Mela. Drone visuals from the Mela show thousands of devotees at the Sangam Ghat, braving the cold and taking the dip. The second sacred bathing ritual (snan) of Magh Mela will be held on Makar Sankranti, on January 15 in Prayagraj. After the successful Paush Purnima snan, in which over 31 lakh devotees took a holy dip, the Mela administration is preparing for the upcoming Makar Sankranti Snan. The administration has implemented high-security measures, with UP ATS mobile patrol squads monitoring the Magh Mela area. Informing on the security arrangements, SP Magh Mela Neeraj Pandey said around 10,000 police personnel have been deployed and strict surveillance has been maintained to ensure a "safe snaan." "Keeping Makar Sankranti in view, the police have made complete arrangements. Around 10,000 police personnel are deployed. 22 PAC, 6 RAF, NDRF, ATS, and civil police personnel are deployed in large numbers. The river police are also continuously patrolling. Surveillance is being conducted through drone cameras and CCTV cameras. Full preparations are in place, and everyone is being ensured a safe 'snaan,'" the SP said.

Abhishek shares 15-year State development report with Ranjit Mallick

MI News Service, Kolkata: All India Trinamool Congress General Secretary Abhishek Banerjee met veteran Bengali film actor Ranjit Mallick during a courtesy visit in Kolkata on Wednesday. During the meeting, Abhishek handed over the West Bengal government's 15-year development report card along with a letter from Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. The interaction highlighted the party's ongoing engagement with prominent cultural figures in the state, aiming to share achievements and future plans. Sources said Ab-



hishek Banerjee discussed the government's initiatives across

sectors such as education, health, infrastructure, and social welfare, emphasizing the progress made over the last 15 years. The Trinamool Congress has kicked off the promotion of its "Unnayoner Panchali" campaign, aimed at showcasing the West Bengal government's 15-year record under Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. The initiative seeks to present the government's achievements across sectors including health, education, infrastructure, and social welfare to the public and prominent citizens. The campaign

has already reached distinguished personalities at both state and district levels, with copies of the "Panchali" being distributed to highlight key accomplishments and ongoing projects. Abhishek's engagement is expected to boost visibility of the initiative and ensure the message reaches both urban and rural populations throughout West Bengal. This campaign continues the party's efforts to highlight governance and development achievements while preparing for electoral outreach in the coming months.



State Minister Aroop Biswas, along with State Ministers Sujit Bose and Pulok Roy addresses a press conference at the Gangasagar Mela, Sagar Island, on Wednesday.

KMC Gives 15 Days to Comply with Fire Safety Norms

MI News Service, Kolkata:

The Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) has taken a strict stance again on fire safety and structural compliance in rooftop restaurants across the city. Notices are being issued to establishments that fail to adhere to government-prescribed SOPs, with warnings that licenses could be revoked if violations are not rectified within 15 days. KMC sources said that while some rooftops hold fire licenses, they fail to keep 50% of the terrace area open as mandated. Others

operate without licenses or have not renewed them, even if fire safety equipment is installed. In some cases, structural compliance work has only just begun. Recently, joint inspections by KMC, fire services, and police covered 83 rooftop restaurants and bars, uncovering multiple lapses. Seventeen restaurants have already received notices, and more are expected. Officials check fire licenses, trade licenses, mutations, terrace access, emergency staircases, and other safety parameters,

Kunal hits out at Centre over Nipah handling, cites COVID failures

MI News Service, Kolkata:

Amid reports of Nipah virus cases in West Bengal, the Trinamool Congress has mounted a strong political counterattack against the Centre, with senior party leader Kunal Ghosh accusing the BJP-led Union government of hypocrisy and past mismanagement during health crises. According to official information, two Nipah virus cases have been confirmed in the state, while two more are suspected. The cases came to light earlier this week, prompting the state health department to intensify surveillance and containment measures. Union Health Minister J P Nadda spoke to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee after the first case was reported and informed her that a central expert team would be sent to review the situation. However, Union Minister of State for Education Sukanta Majumdar said the West Bengal government should seek greater cooperation from the Centre and involve central virology experts to prevent further loss of life. Responding sharply,

compiling reports for higher authorities. The crackdown follows a tragic fire in April at a Park Street hotel that killed 14 people, including children. Ahead of Durga Puja, KMC issued interim permits with written commitments to implement safety rules, but many restaurants failed to comply within the stipulated three months. A KMC building department official warned,

"If establishments do not meet requirements within 15 days of receiving notices, their licenses may be cancelled."

HC defers order on Suvendu's Nabanna dharna, suggests alternate venue

MI News Service, Kolkata:

The Calcutta High Court on Wednesday deferred its order on a plea by Leader of the Opposition Suvendu Adhikari, who seeks permission to stage a sit-in protest outside Nabanna over alleged obstruction during Enforcement Directorate (ED) searches at the residence of I-PAC head Pratik Jain and the firm's offices. Justice Suvra Ghosh said permission could be granted at either the Nabanna bus stand or Mandirtala bus stand, but not in front of the state secretariat. Adhikari was asked to choose a location and inform the court, after which a written order will be issued on Thursday. Adhikari plans the dharna on January 16 with 15-16 BJP MLAs. His counsel, Bilwadai Bhattacharya, argued that police cannot deny permission for a small, peaceful protest when large rallies had recently been allowed for the ruling party. He added that prohibitory orders may regulate but cannot ban protests.



Actor and Trinamool Congress MP Dev appeared at a hearing for the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Kolkata on Wednesday.

Mamata's interim Budget triggers expectations before poll

From PG 1

numbers. It is also about signalling priorities and reassuring core voters," a senior political observer said.

The budget session will follow the completion of the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, with hearings scheduled to conclude on January 31 before the publication of the final Voters list on February 14 as per schedule. There is particular interest over whether New Delhi will announce steps to clear the state's long-pending dues, an issue the TMC has consistently foregrounded in its confrontations with the Centre. Senior TMC leaders said the contours of the state's Vote On Account would also depend on what fiscal space remains after the Union Budget, especially in terms of central transfers and borrowing limits. "The state's fiscal planning will naturally factor in what the Centre announces or does not announce for Bengal," a senior TMC leader and MLA said. As campaigning gears up and parties fine-tune their narratives, the interim budget is expected to serve as more than a routine fiscal exercise. For the ruling TMC, it could be a statement of intent before seeking a renewed mandate; for the opposition, a document to scrutinise for "pre-poll inducements".

Mamata inaugurates Bagala Maa temple in Kalighat on Makar Sankranti



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee offers puja at the Bagala Maa Temple at Kalighat in south Kolkata on Wednesday.

MI News Service, Kolkata:

In December, the Chief Minister had laid the foundation stone for the Durga Angan temple in New Town. She also announced the foundation-laying ceremony of a grand Mahakal temple in Siliguri, stating that the land had been prepared and the ceremony would take place in the second week of January. Due to slight delays, the event has been rescheduled to the third week of January. Following the construction of the Jagannath temple in Digha, the Durga Angan temple was also planned, with work expected to be completed within the next two years.

This week, Mamata Banerjee is scheduled to visit North Bengal for a two-day trip. On January 16, she will lay the foundation stone of the Mahakal temple in Siliguri, followed by a program in Jalpaiguri on January 17. Last October, North Bengal was hit by natural disasters, and the Chief Minister had personally visited multiple affected areas to support the victims. During that visit, she had performed puja at the Mahakal temple in Darjeeling and announced the construction of the state's largest Mahakal temple in Siliguri.



Firefighters battle a blaze at several furniture shops on B.B. Ganguly Street in Kolkata on Wednesday.

Pongal a global festival, cherished by all world over: PM Modi

From PG 1

strength from its cultural roots as it moves forward. On this auspicious occasion of Pongal, we feel the spirit of trust and unity that is propelling India ahead is deeply connected to its culture and holds great respect for its land," the Prime minister said. PM Modi also said the festival of Pongal stressed the importance of maintaining a harmonious balance between nature, family, and society. "Maintaining soil health, conserving water, and using resources wisely for future generations are essential. Initiatives like Mission LIFE, Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam, and Amrit Sarovar embody this very spirit and encourage us to uphold these values," the Prime minister said. In a letter in Tamil and English, he said that Pongal is also about expressing gratitude to all those who enrich our lives with their hard work. "Dear fellow citizens, Vanakkam! I extend my heartfelt greetings to you and your family on the joyous occasion of Pongal. This special festival reminds us of the close relationship between human labour and the rhythms of nature," PM Modi said in his letter. The Prime minister noted that this festival is deeply connected with agriculture, the hardworking farmers, rural life and the dignity of work.

NAME CHANGE

I, Aamir Nadeem, on behalf of my minor son Aayan Nadeem (Old Name) residing at 283/4/1, Belilious Road, P.S.-Howrah, Dist.-Howrah-711101 have changed his name and he shall henceforth be known as Aayan Nadeem (New Name) as declared before the Ld. Judicial Magistrate 1st Class at Howrah vide affidavit no. 33, dt. 13.01.2026. Aayan Nadeem (Old Name) and Aayan Nadeem (New Name) both are same and identical person.

NAME CHANGE

I, Golam Rasul Mondal, S/o Late Golam Akbar Mondal, residing at Vill & PO : Bargarhia, P.S. Swarupnagar, DIST. North 24 Parganas, do hereby declare that in my secondary examination documents, my name is recorded as Golam Rasul, s/o Late Akbar Ali, As per the affidavit dated 29th August, 2025, before the Court of 1st Class Judicial Magistrate, Bargarh, I affirm that Golam Rasul, s/o Late Akbar Ali, & Golam Rasul Mondal, s/o Late Golam Akbar Mondal, are considered to be the same person.

NAME CHANGE

I, Shantika Rani Sain, Wife of No. 29782499 Rank ExK NT (TS) Name Late Madan Mohan Sain resident of Vill-Rasukhanda, P.O. - Sahajpurbhattala, Dist- Purba Bardhaman (WB), Pin-713424 have change my Name & Date of birth from Shantika Rani Sain & 20 Jun 1965 to Shantika Sain & 03 May 1965 vide Affidavit dated 14.01.26 before the Court of Ld. First Class Judicial Magistrate at Purba Bardhaman.

NAME CHANGE

I, Riya Samanta Bagai, B/o.-Chanchal Bagal, R/o.- Vill-Ichchhatraman, P.O.-Palishgram, P.S.-Mongolkote, Dist- Purba Bardhaman-713147, WB, declare that my name has been wrongly recorded in Monteswar Gram Panchayat Civil Docs. as Riya Bagal in place of Riya Samanta Bagai vide Affidavit No. 5878, dt. 02.12.2025, before the LD. 1st Class Judicial Magistrate at Purba Bardhaman. That, Riya Samanta Bagai & Riya Bagal both are the same and one identical person.

NAME CHANGE

I, Dipika Basak Das, wife of Sonjoy Basak, residing at B-15/101B-2, Ward No-12, Kalyani, Nadia, WB.-741235, do hereby declare that due to a clerical mistake my name was wrongly recorded as "Dipika Basak" in my daughter Samraggi Basak's Birth Certificate issued by Kalyani Municipality bearing Certificate No. B/2025/1950575 (Old Reg. No. KM-B/07143-2009, Date of Registration 06-10-2009) and also "Dipika Basak (Das)" in my Voter I. Card, instead of Dipika Basak Das. My correct and full name is "Dipika Basak Das", as recorded in my Aadhar Card No. 2589 8272 7241. Therefore, "Dipika Basak (Das)", "Dipika Basak" and "Dipika Basak Das" refer to the same and identical person. This declaration is made on the basis of an affidavit sworn before the Court of the Ld. A.C.J.M-II (1st Class), Kalyani, Nadia, on 13 January 2026.

NAME CHANGE

I, Aftab Uddin Shah S/o - Nur islam Shah Residing at Vill-Nazra, P.O.-Nazra, P.S.-Usthi, Dist-South 24 Parganas, Pin-743375. declare that my & my father's name has been wrongly recorded in my Madhyamik pass certificate as Aftabuddin Shah S/o Md Nur islam Shah, that my & my Father's actual name recorded in my Aadhaar, Voter & Pan card as Aftab Uddin Shah S/o - Nur islam Shah vide an affidavit before the Ld.1st class Judicial Magistrate at Diamond Harbour 24pgs(S) Date:18.12.2025. ThatAftab Uddin Shah S/o - Nur islam Shah and Aftabuddin Shah S/o Md Nur islam Shah both are the same and one identical person.

NAME CHANGE

I, Mostanur Ali Sardar (Old Name) S/o Late Upendra Chowdhury Residing at Vill- Natpurnatty, P.o- Subhasgram, P.s- Sonarpur, District- East Medinipur, Pin-721463, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Sk Sabat Ali (New name) as declared before the Notary public Kolkata vide affidavit dated 14-01-2026. Sipad Saha (Old Name) and Sipad Ali Saha (New Name) both are same and one identical person.

NAME CHANGE

I, Indrajit Das Chowdhury (Old Name) S/o Late Upendra Chowdhury Residing at Vill- Natpurnatty, P.o- Subhasgram, P.s- Sonarpur, District- East Medinipur, Pin-721463, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Indrajit Chowdhury (New Name) as declared before the Notary public Kolkata vide affidavit dated 14-01-2026. Indrajit Das Chowdhury (Old Name) and Indrajit Chowdhury (New Name) both are same and one identical person.

NAME CHANGE

I, Mostanur Ali Sardar (Old Name) S/o Late Upendra Chowdhury Residing at Vill- Natpurnatty, P.o- Subhasgram, P.s- Sonarpur, District- East Medinipur, Pin-721463, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Mostanur Ali Sardar (New Name) as declared before the Notary public Kolkata vide affidavit dated 14-01-2026. Mostanur Ali Sardar (Old Name) and Mostanur Ali Sardar (New Name) both are same and one identical person.

NAME CHANGE

I, Hena Parvin (Aadhaar No. 480431688141) D/o Md. Safig residing at H.No.20 B.L. No. 21 Barapara, P.O.-R.B. P.S- Bhaptara, Dist-North 24 Pgs. Declare that my deceased mother's actual Name is Nuresha Khatun as mentioned in her Death Certificate but in my birth Certificate issued by Kalyani Municipality my mother's Name has been recorded wrongly as Nuresha Khatun. That Nuresha Khatun and Nuresha Khatun both are same and one identical person vide affidavit dated 13.01.26 before Judicial Magistrate, 1st Class at Barrackpore.

NAME CHANGE

I, SOURINDRA CHAKRABORTY (S/o Late Amarendra Nath Chakraborty), Resident of F105, Ganga Green Complex, 19 G.T. Road, P.O.: Uttarpara, Dist: Hooghly, Pin- 712322 do hereby declare that I have changed my name from SOURINDRA CHAKRABORTY to SOURINDRA CHAKRABORTY and henceforth I shall be known as SOURINDRA CHAKRABORTY in all purpose, vide affidavit no. 08AC406742 sworn before the Notary Public at SERAMPORE on 14/01/2026, SOURINDRA CHAKRABORTY and SOURINDRA CHAKRABORTY both are same and one identical person.

NAME CHANGE

I, Nouroze Begam w/o Bulbul Ali Khan r/o Vill Jamider Mahalla ward no 4 PO Panchperra PS Kharagpur Town Dis- Paschim Medinipur Pin 721305 do hereby solemnly affirm and declare that Nouroze Begam & Nouroze Begum is same, one and identical person i.e. myself vide affidavit No 315 dated 07.01.2026 in the court of Ld. J. M. 1st class Kharagpur.

NAME CHANGE

I, Bulbul Ali Khan s/o Hazi Sajjad Ali Khan r/o Vill Jamider Mahalla ward no 4 PO Panchperra PS Kharagpur Town Dis- Paschim Medinipur Pin 721305 do hereby solemnly affirm and declare that Hazi Sajjad Ali Khan & Haji Sajjad Ali Khan is same, one and identical person i.e. my father vide affidavit No 316 dated 07.01.2026 in the court of Ld. J. M. 1st class Kharagpur.

NAME CHANGE

I, Dr. (Smt) Kanchan Gurto, W/o.- Dr. Jainath Gurto, B/o - Flat No. 9, 3rd Floor, Flat No-6, Sunny Park, Kol-19, Previously stayed at Flat No.4A, 36/2B,Garcha Road, Kol-19, declare that my name has been wrongly recorded in my Passport as Kanchan Lata Gurto in place of Kanchan Gurto, vide Affidavit No. 2749, dt. 08.01.2026, declared before the First Class Magistrate at Alipore, that, Dr. (Smt) Kanchan Gurto & Dr. (Smt) Kanchan Lata Gurto both are one and the same person.

NAME CHANGE

I, Shabana (Old Name) W/o Md Rizwan Jabbar Shaikh, Residing At 21/B, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Road, Po Kamarhati, P.s Kharad, North 24 Parganas, Wb 700058 India, Have Changed My Name And Shall Henceforth Be Known As Shaikh Shabana (New Name) Vide An Affidavit Sworn Before The Notary Public At Kolkata On 13/01/2026. I Declare That Shabana (Old Name) And Shaikh Shabana (New Name) Both Are The Same And One Identical Person.

NAME CHANGE

I, Aamir Nadeem, on behalf of my minor son Aayan Nadeem (Old Name) residing at 283/4/1, Belilious Road, P.S.-Howrah, Dist-Howrah-711101 have changed his name and he shall henceforth be known as Aayan Nadeem (New Name) as declared before the Ld. Judicial Magistrate 1st Class at Howrah vide affidavit no. 33, dt. 13.01.2026. Aayan Nadeem (Old Name) and Aayan Nadeem (New Name) both are same and identical person.

NAME CHANGE

I, Azizul Mondal (Old Name) S/o UDAY KUMAR DEY, Vill - Uttar Mathurapur Colony (Present Mathurapur), P.O.-Khulapota, P.S.-Mata, Dist - North 24 Parganas, Pin-743428. Have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as PAPPY DEY (New Name) as declared before the Notary Public, Affidavit No.-12793 Basirhat Court on 23.12.2025. PAPPY DEY (New name) and PAPPY KUMAR DEY (Old Name) both are The Same And One Identical Person.

NAME CHANGE

I, Azizul Mondal (Old Name) S/o Haji Yakub Ali Mondal Residing at Ulasi, Hanksali, Nadia Pin- 741502, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Azizul Hoque Mondal (New Name) as declared before The Notary Public at Kolkata, vide affidavit dated 14-01/2026, Azizul Mondal (Old Name) and Azizul Hoque Mondal (New Name) both are same and one identical person.

NAME CHANGE

I, Kajal Biswas (Old Name), Wife Of Anup Biswas, Residing At Vill-Panchpota, Po-Panchpota, P.s-Gaighata, Bongaon, North 24 Parganas- 743273, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Kajal Biswas (New Name) Vide An Affidavit Sworn Before The Notary Public At Kolkata On 13/01/2026. Kajal Biswas And Kajal Biswas Both Are The Same And One Identical Person.

NAME CHANGE

I, Kajal Kumar Pahari (Old Name) S/o Ram Chandra Pahari Residing at Uttar Dumundi, North Dumundi (M), District- North 24 Parganas, Pin- 700049, West Bengal India Have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Kajal Pahari (New Name) as declared before the Notary public Kolkata, vide affidavit dated 14-01-2026, Kajal Pahari (Old Name) and Kajal Pahari (New Name) both are same and one identical person.

NAME CHANGE

I, Kajal Biswas (Old Name), Wife Of Anup Biswas, Residing At Vill-Panchpota, Po-Panchpota, P.s-Gaighata, Bongaon, North 24 Parganas- 743273, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Kajal Biswas (New Name) Vide An Affidavit Sworn Before The Notary Public At Kolkata On 13/01/2026. Kajal Biswas And Kajal Biswas Both Are The Same And One Identical Person.

NAME CHANGE

I, Sabir Ali (old name), son of Sk Sabat Ali, residing at 22 Old Ballygunge 2nd Lane, Kolkata- 700019, West Bengal, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Sk Sabir Ali (new name) vide an affidavit sworn before the Ld 1st Class Judicial Magistrate at Kolkata on 30/12/2025. Sabir Ali and Sk Sabir Ali both are the same and one identical person.

NAME CHANGE

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SAARC Journalists' Forum President Lama meets former Home Minister Thapa



MI News Service, Kathmandu: President of the SAARC Journalists' Forum (SJF), Raju Lama, met former Home Minister of Nepal Ram Bahadur Thapa "Badal" on Wednesday.

During the meeting, Lama congratulated Thapa on his election as Vice President of the CPN-UML at the party's 11th convention, which was held last month.

Former Home Minister Thapa described the Zen-Z protest as a reactionary movement and urged all democratic forces to unite either to reinstate Parliament or jointly go for elections.

He also said Nepal is facing a major political crisis due to external interference and the prevailing geopolitical situation.

Leader of the SAARC Journalists' Forum Nepal Chapter, Karan Tamrakar, was also present at the meeting.

S. E. RAILWAY – TENDER

For and on behalf of President of India, the Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer (Carriage Works), Kharagpur Workshop, South Eastern Railway, Kharagpur invites e-tender for the following works: (1) E-Tender Notice No: DOUBLEACTINGDOOR, Date: 13.01.2026. Name of the work: Provision of double acting AC compartment swing doors for AC coaches. Quantity: 400 coaches. Tender Value: ₹ 2,24,67,200. Earnest Money: ₹ 2,62,300. (2) E-Tender Notice No: ICF-SS-Pipeline-250-R1, Date: 13.01.2026. Name of the work: Retrofitment of SS Pipelines in Air Brake System of Coaches. Quantity: 250 coaches. Tender Value: ₹ 1,72,92,365. Earnest Money: ₹ 2,36,500. Contract period: 12 Months from the date of issue of LOA (for Sl.No. 1 & 2). Closing Date and Time of Tender: 16.02.2026 at 15:00 hrs. (for Sl.No. 1 & 2). Place of Work: Kharagpur Workshop, South Eastern Railway, Post-Kharagpur Dist-Paschim Midnapore, Pin-721301 (for Sl.No. 1 & 2). Cost of Tender Document: Nil (for Sl.No. 1 & 2). Bidding System: Single Packet System (for Sl.No. 1 & 2). Contract Type: Open (for Sl.No. 1 & 2). Tender Notice and Tender Document is available in the e-Portal website [https://www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in). (PR-1064)

EASTERN RAILWAY
Tender Notice No.: EL/HWH/25/21[Notice]/729, dated: 13.01.2026, Divisional Railway Manager, Eastern Railway, Howrah Division, New DRM Building, 4th Floor, Near Rail Museum, Howrah-711011 invites Open E-Tenders for the under-mentioned electrical works:
Tender No.: EL-HWH-25-21-3530-R, Name of work: Comprehensive Annual Maintenance Contract of 02 nos. Passenger Escalator with spares (Make - Johnson Lifts Pvt. Ltd.) at Rampurhat station Platform No. 1 and 2 & 3 for 36 months. Tender Value: Rs. 18,28,056/- Bid Security (Earnest Money Deposit): Rs. 36,600/- Completion period: 36 Months. Closing date and time of tender: 30.01.2026 at 15.00 hrs. In case the date of closing mentioned in the notice inviting tender is declared a holiday/bandh/strike on any account, the date of closing of tender online will not be changed as the application in the website of IREPS does not permit submission of any offer after closing date and time of the tender. However, opening of tenders online will be on any convenient day after closing date and time of the tender. The details of tender are available at website www.ireps.gov.in. Tenderers are requested to submit their offer online on the above website.

HWH-537/2025-26

Tender Notices are also available at Website www.indianrailways.gov.in and www.ireps.gov.in

Follow us at: [@easternrailwayheadquarter](http://EasternRailway)

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender Notice ST-OT-LHS-03-KUR-534, Dt : 08.01.2026
NAME OF WORK : PROVISION AND CONSTRUCTION OF LIMITED HEIGHT SUBWAYS (LHS) TO PREVENT TRESPASSING AND IN LIEU OF EXISTING MANNED LEVEL CROSSINGS AT KM. 429/20-22 BETWEEN KANDARPUR-CUTTACK STATIONS ON CUTTACK-PARADEEP LINE, AT LEVEL CROSSING NO. JD-1 (RAILWAY KM. 147/44-148/2) BETWEEN DAITARI-TOMKA STATIONS, AT LEVEL CROSSING NO. CP-8 (KM. 418/5.7) BETWEEN MATTAGAJAPUR-KANDARPUR STATIONS, AND AT TRESPASSING LOCATION KM. 3467-9 BETWEEN JAKHAPURA-JENAPUR UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF KHURDAROAD DIVISION.

Tender Value : ₹ 14,13,17,146.29, EMD : ₹ 2,21,600/-

Bidding Start Date : 16.01.2026.

Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1100 Hrs. of 30.01.2026.

No manual offers send by Post/ Courier/ Fax or in person shall be accepted against the e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and receipt in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.

Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website: www.ireps.gov.in

Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 15 days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/contingencies issued for this tender.

SI. Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer, PR-1007/Q/25-26

Khurda Road

10th Defence Forces Veterans' Day to pay tribute to the valour, sacrifices & dedicated service of the veterans

MI News Service, New Delhi: The nation will observe the 10th Defence Forces Veterans' Day on January 14, 2026, paying tribute to the valour, sacrifices and dedicated service of the veterans who have served the nation with distinction. A series of events and outreach programmes will be organised across the country to mark the day. The main event at Manekshaw Centre, Delhi Cantt will be graced by Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh and attended by veterans residing in Delhi/NCR.

The day will be commemorated across the country at 34 Rajya Sainik Boards in States & UTs and various locations.

The Defence Forces Veter-

ans' Day is commemorated on 14th January every year to honour the legacy and yeoman service of Field Marshal KM Cariappa, OBE, the first Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, who retired on this day in 1953. A towering figure in India's military history, Field Marshal Cariappa led the forces to victory in the 1947 war and laid the foundation for an enduring legacy of service, discipline, and patriotism. The day reaffirms the nation's deep respect and gratitude towards its veterans & strengthens the bond among the serving personnel, veterans, and citizens.

Connecting India better: Three new Amrit Bharat Express trains to hit the tracks from West Bengal

MI News Service, 14 Jan 2026,

Kolkata: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will flag off new Amrit Bharat Express trains on 18.01.2026 viz, Howrah - Anand Vihar Amrit Bharat Express, Sealdah - Banaras Amrit Bharat Express and Santragachi - Tambaran Amrit Bharat Express.

Amrit Bharat Express is a shining example of Indian Railways' commitment to provide comfortable, economical and modern rail travel to the common people. Designed and built in India, the train has enhanced passenger comfort, better seats and advanced safety features. It is a symbol of the vision of an inclusive and future-ready Railway transport system that connects people, places and aspirations across the

country.

13065 Howrah-Anand Vihar Amrit Bharat Express (weekly) will leave Howrah on every Thursday at 23:10 hrs and will reach Anand Vihar at 02:50 hrs. on the third day. In the return direction, 13066 Anand Vihar - Howrah Amrit Bharat Express will leave Anand Vihar on every Saturday at 05:15 hrs and will arrive Howrah at 10:50 hrs. on the next day. The train will stop at 26 stations including Bandel, Bardhaman, Durgapur, Asansol and Durgapur stations in Eastern Railway jurisdiction enroute in both directions.

16107 Tambaran-Santragachi Amrit Bharat Express will leave Tambaran every Friday at 15:30 hrs and will reach Santragachi at 20:15 hrs. on the next day. In the return direction, 16108 Santragachi - Tambaran Amrit Bharat Express will leave Santragachi every Saturday at 23:55 hrs and will arrive Tambaran at 10:00 hrs. on the third day.

22588 Banaras-Sealdah Amrit Bharat Express will leave Banaras on every Sunday, Tuesday and Friday at 22:10 hrs. and will reach Sealdah at 09:55 hrs. on the

next day. In the return direction, 22587 Sealdah- Banaras Amrit Bharat Express will leave Sealdah every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday at 19:30 hrs and will arrive Banaras at 07:20 hrs on the next day. The train will stop at 06 stations including Jasi-dih, Madhupur, Asansol and Durgapur stations in Eastern Railway jurisdiction enroute in both directions.

16109 Santragachi - Tambaran Amrit Bharat Express will leave Santragachi at 20:15 hrs. on the next day. In the return direction, 16110 Tambaran - Santragachi Amrit Bharat Express will leave Tambaran every Friday at 15:30 hrs and will reach Santragachi at 20:15 hrs. on the next day. In the return direction, 16111 Tambaran - Santragachi Amrit Bharat Express will leave Tambaran every Saturday at 23:55 hrs and will arrive Santragachi at 10:00 hrs. on the third day.

16112 Sealdah - Banaras Amrit Bharat Express will leave Sealdah every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday at 19:30 hrs and will arrive Banaras at 07:20 hrs on the next day. The train will stop at 06 stations including Jasi-dih, Madhupur, Asansol and Durgapur stations in Eastern Railway jurisdiction enroute in both directions.

16113 Sealdah - Malda Town Amrit Bharat Express will leave Sealdah every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday at 19:30 hrs and will arrive Malda Town at 07:20 hrs on the next day. The train will stop at 06 stations including Jasi-dih, Madhupur, Asansol and Durgapur stations in Eastern Railway jurisdiction enroute in both directions.

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CM Gupta inaugurates 81 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs in Delhi on Makar Sankranti

New Delhi : Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Wednesday inaugurated 81 new Ayushman Arogya Mandirs across the national Capital on the occasion of Makar Sankranti.

Speaking to reporters, Gupta said that with the addition of these new centres, healthcare access for Delhi's residents would significantly improve.

"We have inaugurated 81 new Arogya Mandirs today on Makar Sankranti. Before this, 238 Arogya Mandirs were already functioning. With these additions, we are providing more comfortable and accessible healthcare facilities to the people of Delhi," she said.

The Chief Minister explained that Ayushman Arogya Mandirs function as primary healthcare centres and play a crucial role in strengthening the city's health infrastructure.

"These centres work like primary hospitals. They will reduce the burden on major hospitals and help address key health issues faced by the people of the national Capital. Citizens will be able to avail themselves of essential medical facilities closer to their homes," she added.

Gupta further stated that the Delhi government has set an ambitious target of inaugurating 1,100 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs across the city and is actively working to achieve this goal in the



coming months. BJP MLA Satish Upadhyay said, "Today, the way these Arogya Mandirs are being constructed is remarkable, and 81 Arogya Mandirs will be dedicated to Delhi. This is the eighth Arogya Mandir in our Bhim Nagar and Malviya Nagar constituency, and two more Arogya Mandirs are yet to be built."

On Tuesday, Delhi Health Minister Pankaj Kumar Singh had said that the initiative will significantly strengthen accessible and preventive healthcare services for residents.

With this expansion, total centres will rise to 319 across the national Capital, he added.

"With this addition, Delhi is steadily progressing toward the establishment of more than 1,100 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, as envisioned under the national Capital's long-term primary healthcare road map," he said.

"At present, 238 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs are operational. Following tomorrow's inauguration, the total number of functioning centres will rise to 319 across Delhi," Minister Singh added.

"These centres represent a major step in the Delhi government's mission to provide free, accessible, and dignified primary healthcare close to every household. The initiative is being implemented under the leadership of Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, in line with the national vision of 'Healthcare for All,'" the Minister said.

"These centres represent a major step in the Delhi government's mission to provide free, accessible, and dignified primary healthcare close to every household. The initiative is being implemented under the leadership of Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, in line with the national vision of 'Healthcare for All,'" the Minister said.

maternal and child healthcare, immunisation support, growth monitoring, lifestyle counselling, mental health services, and preventive health programmes such as yoga and nutrition guidance.

"These neighbourhood-level facilities will significantly reduce pressure on major hospitals, ensuring timely care for women, senior citizens, and low-income families without long travel or queues."

"Parallel to the expansion of Arogya Mandirs, Delhi continues to strengthen coverage under both the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) and the Ayushman Bharat-Vaya Vandana Yojana (AB-VVY). As on 13 January 2026, a total of 6,91,530 health cards (combined PM-JAY + VVY) have been issued in Delhi, including 2,65,895 VVY cards," Minister Singh said.

The Health Minister had said that to ensure seamless access to secondary and tertiary care, Delhi now has 189 empanelled hospitals, comprising 138 private hospitals, 41 Delhi government hospitals, and 10 Central government hospitals.

"These empanelled institutions provide cashless treatment, ensuring that financially vulnerable families can receive lifesaving care without cost barriers," he added.

Increase taxes on fruit juices, sugary drinks, alcohol to reduce diabetes and cancers: WHO

New Delhi : Increasing taxes on fruit juices, sugary drinks, and alcohol is essential to curb the rising non-communicable diseases such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, cancers, and injuries, especially in children and young adults, said the World Health Organization (WHO).

In two new global reports, the WHO flagged concerns that sugary drinks and alcoholic beverages are getting cheaper, due to consistently low tax rates in most countries.

While more than 100 countries tax sugary drinks like sodas, other high-sugar products, such as 100 per cent fruit juices, sweetened milk drinks, and ready-to-drink coffees and teas, escape taxation. The median tax for these accounts for only about 2 per cent of the price of a common sugary soda.

Besides, only a few countries are adjusting taxes for inflation, allowing the health-harming products to become steadily more affordable.

Being cheap for consumption, the harmful products are generating billions of dollars in profit. On the other hand, health systems across the globe are facing mounting financial pressure from preventable noncommunicable diseases and injuries, the WHO said, while calling on governments to significantly strengthen taxes on sugary drinks and alcoholic beverages.

"Health taxes are one of the strongest tools we have for promoting health and preventing disease," said Dr. Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-

"By increasing taxes on products like tobacco, sugary drinks, and alcohol, governments can reduce harmful consumption and unlock funds for vital health services," he added. In a separate report, the WHO stated that alcohol has become more affordable or remained unchanged in price in most countries since 2022, despite clear health risks. At least 167 countries levy taxes on alcoholic beverages, while 12 ban alcohol entirely.

General, "By increasing taxes on products like tobacco, sugary drinks, and alcohol, governments can reduce harmful consumption and unlock funds for vital health services," he added.

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Now, a team of University of Michigan researchers reports new clues about what might be happening in the brains of people experiencing even the earliest signs of dementia-related behavior changes.

Using two types of advanced medical imaging to study the brains of 128 people in the early stages of dementia, they show links between one of the brain's most crucial communication networks, a protein called tau, and the level of behavioral symptoms a person has.

This goes beyond the role of tau that scientists have already known about in people with more advanced dementia: causing tangled nerve fibers in brain regions involved in thinking and memory. The new study suggests

Researchers find clues about dementia's behavior changes

MICHIGAN [US] : When most people think of dementia, particularly Alzheimer's disease, they often think of memory loss first.

However, dementia alters a person's behaviour, whether it leads them to become agitated or worried, melancholy, nervous, or apathetic, or even changes their entire personality.

Over time, these behavioural changes can cause as much disruption in their life as losing their capacity to think and remember effectively.

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Using two types of advanced medical imaging to study the brains of 128 people in the early stages of dementia, they show links between one of the brain's most crucial communication networks, a protein called tau, and the level of behavioral symptoms a person has.

They call for further study of the potential connection in other populations, and for research to evaluate change over time to explore what might be going on within the pathways of connected brain cells that make up the salience network, and explore how it relates to tau buildup and behavioral changes over the course of years.

They also hope to test whether they could slow behavioral change in people with early-stage dementia by

targeting the salience network with mild electrical current or magnetic fields applied from outside the skull and guided by precise imaging.

The researchers, from the Research Program on Cognition and Neuromodulation Based Interventions (RP-CNBI), are led by Alexandru D. Iordan, Ph.D. and program leader Benjamin M. Hampstead, Ph.D. Both are faculty in the U-M Medical School's Department of Psychiatry.

While the one-time imaging of these 128 research volunteers can't show cause and effect, the strong association between tau, salience network disruption and behavior change is intriguing, the team says.

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Directly Inside the Body To bypass these challenges, the KAIST team focused on "tumour-associated macrophages" that naturally gather around tumours. The researchers developed a method to reprogram these cells directly inside the body rather than modifying them outside it.

Their approach uses lipid nanoparticles -- engineered to be

Strong Tumour Suppression in Animal Studies

When the treatment was injected into tumours, macrophages quickly absorbed the nanoparticles and began producing proteins that identify cancer cells.

At the same time, immune signalling was activated. The resulting "enhanced CAR-macrophages" showed much stronger cancer-killing ability and stimulated surrounding immune cells, leading to a powerful anti-cancer response.

In animal models of melanoma (the most dangerous form of skin cancer), tumour growth was significantly reduced. The researchers also found evidence that the immune response could extend beyond the treated tumour, suggesting the potential for broader, body-wide immune protection.

New Direction for Cancer Immunotherapy

Professor Ji-Ho Park said, "This study presents a new concept of immune cell therapy that generates anticancer immune cells directly inside the patient's

RG Stone Urology & Laparoscopy Hospital Kolkata Achieves Clinical Milestone: Successful Modified Radical Mastectomy for Breast Cancer Patient

Kolkata: RG Stone Urology & Laparoscopy Hospital Kolkata, through its RG Institute of Advanced Breast Care, has successfully performed a Modified Radical Mastectomy with Axillary Lymph Node Clearance (up to Level III) on a 68-year-old woman diagnosed with carcinoma of the right breast. Led by Dr. Tapti Sen, Senior Consultant - Breast Surgery, the procedure reinforces the hospital's expertise in advanced breast cancer care, delivering precision oncology with rapid recovery.

The patient presented with a painless swelling in the right breast for 1 year, lesion gradually increasing in size. Clinical evaluation and imaging revealed a firm, irregular 3.3 x 3 cm lesion in the lower quadrants, not involving skin or deeper structures. Mammogram and TRU cut biopsy from RT Breast confirmed the diagnosis Carcinoma RT Breast. Whole Body PET CT Scan reported locoregional disease, no distant Mets. Patient was taken up for surgery - RT Breast Modified Radical mastectomy with axillary Lymph Node Clearance after IHC done.

Before surgery complete preop work up and anesthetic clearance was taken. Medical oncologist's opinion was taken before surgery. Patient & patient's relative were explained in detail regarding course of treatment and precaution to be taken after surgery to avoid complication like lymph edema or wound infection. Patient was discharged with drain in situ after 48 Hours of surgery. Patient is doing well. The multidisciplinary team, including medical oncology review, supports integrated care for superior long-term outcomes.

Commenting on the procedure, Dr. Tapti Sen, Consultant - Breast Surgery at RG Stone Urology & Laparoscopy Hospital Kolkata, said: "Modified radical mastectomy continues to be an important treatment option for breast cancer patients with lymph



node involvement. Timely diagnosis, appropriate surgical intervention, and structured postoperative care are key to achieving positive outcomes and improving patient quality of life." About RG Stone Urology & Laparoscopy Hospitals:

RG Hospitals is a leading healthcare provider in India, renowned for its expertise in urology, nephrology, minimally invasive surgery, gynaecology, and critical care. Established in 1986 with a single lithotripsy clinic, the group has expanded to a network of 17 advanced centers across the country, delivering world-class medical care to diverse communities. With over 40 years of clinical excellence, RG Hospitals has successfully performed more than 750,000 procedures, combining cutting-edge technology with compassionate patient care.

Commenting on the procedure, Dr. Tapti Sen, Consultant - Breast Surgery at RG Stone Urology & Laparoscopy Hospital Kolkata, said: "Modified radical mastectomy continues to be an important treatment option for breast cancer patients with lymph

Extra 5 minutes of sleep, 2 minutes of brisk walking can add 1 year to your life: Study



New Delhi : Just five more minutes of sleep, and two minutes of moderate exercise like brisk walking or climbing stairs can add a year to your life, according to a study on Wednesday.

Adding half a serving of vegetables per day more could also lead to an extra year of life for people with the worst existing sleep, physical activity, and dietary habits, revealed the study that followed 60,000 people for eight long years.

The study, published in The Lancet journal eClinicalMedicine, suggested that seven to eight hours of sleep per day, more than 40 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity a day, and a healthy diet were associated with over nine years of additional lifespan and years spent in good health.

The combined relationship of sleep, physical activity, and diet is larger than the sum of the individual behaviours. For example, for people with the unhealthiest sleep, physical activity and dietary habits to achieve one additional year of lifespan through sleep alone would require five times the amount of additional sleep per day (25 minutes) than if physical activity and diet also improved a small amount.

"These estimates provide important evidence on the wide range of public health impacts associated with even small positive changes in physical activity and inactivity," said corresponding author Prof. Ulf Ekelund, from the Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, Oslo. The researchers cautioned that the findings should not be used as personalised advice; rather, they highlighted the potential benefits for the population as a whole.

INDIA OPEN 2026: PV SINDHU CRASHES OUT AFTER LOSS TO VIETNAM'S NGUYEN

NEW DELHI : India's ace shuttler and two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu endured a shock early exit at the India Open 2026, suffering a three-game defeat to Vietnam's T.L. Nguyen in the Round of 32 at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium on Wednesday.

Sindhu started the contest on a positive note and showed her experience in the opening game, saving crucial points and edging past Nguyen 22-20 in a closely fought opener. The Indian relied on her strong defence and net play to seal the first game despite stiff resistance from the Vietnamese shuttler.

However, Nguyen turned the tables in the second game with an aggressive approach. She dominated the rallies, targeted Sindhu's backcourt effectively, and forced a series of unforced errors from the Indian to level the match with a commanding 21-12 win.

The decider saw Nguyen maintain her momentum as Sindhu struggled to regain control. The Vietnamese player kept the pressure on with sharp returns and consistent attacking play, gradually building a lead. Sindhu attempted a comeback, but Nguyen remained composed and closed out the match 21-15, sealing one of the biggest upsets of the tournament.

The defeat marks an early end to Sindhu's campaign at her home tournament, while Nguyen advanced with a confidence-boosting victory.

This first-round defeat marks a new low for the Indian star. This is Sindhu's earliest exit from the India Open since 2023. In last year's edition of the Super 750 tournament, she had reached the quarter-finals on home soil but failed to continue the momentum in the semi-finals.

Sindhu had a strong start to the 2026 season, reaching the semifinals of the Super 1000 Kuala Lumpur event in Malaysia. However, she lost to world number two Wang Zhiyi in a close encounter. Sindhu went down 16-21, 15-21 to the Chinese shuttler, missing an opportunity to avenge her loss to Wang, who had beaten her in last year's Malaysia Open final.

**2nd ODI: With unbeaten 131, Daryl Mitchell guides NZ to 6-wicket victory**

Thanks to Daryl Mitchell's unbeaten 131 off 117 balls, coupled with Will Young's 87, New Zealand defeated India by seven wickets to level the three-match ODI series 1-1. Mitchell and Young put together a 162-run stand for the third wicket, which came in just 152 balls, which propelled New Zealand towards the target of 285. Thanks to Mitchell scoring his eighth ODI century, New Zealand managed to complete their highest successful chase in India in ODIs. The result means that India's eight-match winning streak against New Zealand in ODIs ends.

Earlier, Wicketkeeper-batter KL Rahul struck a magnificent unbeaten 112 off 92 balls as India posted 284/7 in the second ODI against New Zealand at the Niranjan Shah Stadium in Rajkot on Wednesday.

As to bat first by New Zealand skipper Michael Bracewell, India's openers overcame a testing new-ball spell from Kyle Jamieson to reach 57 for no loss at the end of the first Power-play. While Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli couldn't do much, Shubman Gill kept the scoreboard moving by raising a 47-ball half-century.

But Jamieson's dismissal of Gill led to India slipping from 99/1 to 118/4 on a two-paced pitch. Rahul and Ravindra Jadeja rebuilt via a significant 73-run stand for the fifth wicket before the former shifted gears to up the tempo and register his eighth ODI hundred, laced with 11 fours and a six. His heroics ensured India posted a competitive total at a venue where



all four previous ODIs have been won by sides batting first.

New Zealand's decision to bowl first paid early dividends as Jamieson swung the new ball well to deliver consecutive maidens

before Gill and Rohit hit 11 boundaries between themselves in the first 12 overs. But Rohit fell for 24 when he sliced a cross-seam delivery from Kristian Clarke to deep cover.

Gill looked more fluent than his opening game knock in Vadodara and reached his 18th ODI fifty in 47 balls. But Jamieson returned to remove him, as Gill was unable to keep the pull down and was caught by mid-on for 56. It sparked a collapse that saw India lose Shreyas Iyer (chipped to mid-off) and Kohli (chopped on to his stumps) off Clarke.

Rahul then steadied the innings with his beautiful drives, slices, and pulls, though he lost out on support from Ravindra Jadeja when Michael Bracewell's sharp caught-and-bowled ended his stay at 27.

With the pitch slowing down and boundaries hard to come by, Rahul farmed the strike and accelerated after the second drinks break - reaching his fifty

through a lucky edge off Jamieson for four and even reverse-swept Bracewell for another boundary.

Nitish Kumar Reddy added 20 before pulling to mid-wicket off Zak Foulkes, while debutant spinner Jayden Lennox claimed his first international wicket by having Harshit Rana hole out to long-on. But Rahul continued to hit boundaries at will and got his century by thumping a full toss from Jamieson over long-on for six, before collecting two boundaries from Foulkes lifted India past 280, leaving New Zealand with a stiff chase under lights.

BRIEF SCORES:
India 284/7 in 50 overs (KL Rahul 112 not out, Shubman Gill 56; Kristian Clarke 3-56, Michael Bracewell 1-34) against New Zealand

Vedanta Kalinga Lancers Register Fourth Straight Win to Go Top of Men's Hero HIL Table

PC JHA



The closely contested encounter was decided by a solitary goal from Alexander Hendrickx, whose successful penalty-corner conversion in the third quarter proved to be the difference between the two sides. The win marked the Lancers' fourth successive victory of the season, underlining their growing dominance in the league.

The opening quarter saw both teams engage in a cautious battle for control, with little separating them in terms of circle entries. Hyderabad Toofans enjoyed marginally greater possession, but it was the Lancers who created the clearer scoring opportunity. Liam Henderson came close to breaking the deadlock, only to be denied by Hyderabad goalkeeper Jean-Paul Danneberg, ensuring the teams remained level at the first break.

struck first when Alexander Hendrickx converted a penalty corner in the 40th minute, registering his fifth goal of the season and handing his side a crucial lead.

Following the breakthrough, the Lancers adopted a disciplined approach, focusing on ball retention and defensive solidity through the remainder of the third quarter. Their structured backline effectively absorbed pressure while limiting Hyderabad's scoring opportunities. In the final quarter, Vedanta Kalinga Lancers showcased resilience and tactical maturity, defending deep while exploiting counter-attacking chances. Despite Hyderabad Toofans enjoying the majority of possession, they failed to register a single shot on target in the final fifteen minutes. The Lancers, meanwhile, created more meaningful chances, earning additional penalty corners and controlling the closing stages of the match.

The narrow but decisive victory propelled Vedanta Kalinga Lancers to the top of the standings, reinforcing their credentials as strong title contenders in the ongoing Men's Hero Hockey India League season.

KOHLI DETHRONES ROHIT TO RECLAIM TOP SPOT IN ODI RANKINGS

powerful strike crashing against the post. Despite the attacking exchanges, neither side managed to find the net before halftime.

Hyderabad Toofans resumed the second half with control over proceedings, dictating the pace and probing for openings in the Lancers' defence. Against the run of play, Vedanta Kalinga Lancers

DUBAI : India batter Virat Kohli regained the No. 1 position, dethroning his teammate Rohit Sharma, who slipped to the No. 3 spot in the latest men's rankings, following India's four-wicket victory over New Zealand in the first ODI.

Kohli's score of 93 off 91 balls helped the hosts complete the chase, bringing him closer to India legend Sachin Tendulkar and moving him into second place on the all-time men's international run-scoring list. He has been in excellent form since the 50-over series in Australia, scoring 74 not out, 135, 102, 65 not out, and 93 in his last five matches.

The 37-year-old batting stalwart has returned to the top of the batting charts for the first time since July 2021, after his performance helped India chase down New Zealand's 300-run target in Vadodara.

Kohli first reached the top ranking in October 2013, marking his 11th stint at the top. To date, he has held the position for a total of 825 days, making it the 10th longest overall and the longest for any Indian.

New Zealand all-rounder Daryl

update, Mohammed Siraj's excellent performance helped him ascend five spots to reach 15th place, tying with Bangladesh's Mehidy Hasan Miraz.

Pacer Kyle Jamieson also benefitted after achieving his career-best bowling performance, taking four wickets against India. This performance moved him up 27 spots to share the 69th position with India bowler Arshdeep Singh.

Several Australian players improved their positions in the latest Test rankings after the conclusion of the Ashes series, with Travis Head climbing seven spots to reach third place after becoming the top scorer in the high-profile Test series against England, where he scored 629 runs with an average of 62.90, including three centuries.

Other Test gainers include Jacob Bell, who advanced 25 spots to share the 52nd position with Tom Blundell, thanks to his impressive maiden Test century in the final Ashes Test, and Michael Neser, who moved up seven spots to 47th following a strong performance in Sydney.

In the ODI bowlers ranking

Beau Webster experienced a rise

in rankings across all three departments following an outstanding all-round performance in the Ashes finale. His batting ranking improved six places to 58th, his bowling ranking jumped 29 places to 80th alongside Justin Greaves and he climbed 22 places to 26th in the all-rounder rankings, where Simon Harmer is also listed.

Wanindu Hasaranga's performance in the series-drawing T20I against Pakistan helped him move up three spots to second place in the latest T20I bowler rankings.

Pakistan pacer Salman Mirza also made a leap, climbing 16 spots to 19th after taking three wickets in the first T20I against Sri Lanka. Meanwhile, Sajibzada Farhan's key contributions with the bat elevated him to fifth position, an increase of one spot, and captain Salman Agha advanced 13 spots to reach 41st.

In the all-rounders list, Saim Ayub dropped one position, allowing Zimbabwe's Sikandar Raza to reclaim the top spot in the latest rankings update.

Jordan Smith wins inaugural 'One Point Slam' ahead of Australian Open

MELBOURNE : Amateur tennis player Jordan Smith produced a fairytale run at Melbourne Park, stunning reigning Australian Open champion Jannik Sinner and a host of top professionals to clinch the inaugural '1 Point Slam' exhibition event, held four days ahead of the start of the 2026 Australian Open.

The unique mixed-gender exhibition, hosted inside Rod Laver Arena, has a prize pool of AUD 1 million and brings together leading professionals and amateurs in a novel format where a single point decides matches. With professionals limited to just one serve, the event delivered high drama and unpredictable outcomes.

Despite the presence of some of the biggest names in world tennis, including Carlos Alcaraz, Coco Gauff, and Iga Swiatek, none of the established stars managed to lift the trophy. Instead, it was Sydney native Smith, who captured the spotlight, defeating five professional players during his remarkable run to the title.

Smith's breakthrough moment came when he eliminated World No. 2 Jannik Sinner. The two-time Australian Open champion's serve clipped the net, allowing Smith to advance to the next round. He followed it up with another composed performance to knock out US Open finalist Amanda Anisimova before edging past Spain's Pedro Martinez in a tense semifinal rally.

In the final, Smith faced Chinese Taipei's Joanna Garland, ranked 117 in the WTA standings. Garland had enjoyed an impressive run herself, having earlier beaten former Grand Slam finalists Alexander Zverev and Nick Kyrgios, as well as Olympic silver medalist Donna Vekic. However, the decisive point went Smith's way after Garland's forehand sailed long following a deep return from the baseline.

The victory was met with loud celebrations from the crowd, as Smith was crowned the '1 Point Slam' champion and walked away with the lucrative prize.

The Australian Open draw ceremony is scheduled for Thursday, with the main draw action set to begin on Sunday at Melbourne Park. Jannik Sinner is one of the favourites to win the men's singles title in the year's first Grand Slam.

**India Open 2026: Prannoy, Srikanth pack off youngsters to reach Round 2; Malvika Bansod also advances**

Taipei 21-18, 21-19 in the women's singles first round.

World junior championships silver medallist Tanvi Sharma had her chances against second seed Wang but could not convert the game point in the opening game and then ran out of steam in the decider to go down 20-22, 21-18, 21-13 in an hour and nine minutes.

SINDHU KNOCKED OUT
Former World Champion PV Sindhu was also knocked out of the competition after she went down 20-22, 21-12, 21-15 against Thuy Linh Nguyen of Vietnam in an opening round clash in the first session on Wednesday.

But the day belonged to Prannoy and Srikanth, the two experienced campaigners who are looking to make a comeback on the BWF World Tour after a difficult 2025. Prannoy, who had struggled with fitness for the most part of 2025, had gotten an entry in the India Open 2026 after the withdrawal of World No. 3 Anders Antonsen of Denmark and made the most of his lucky



break to beat Lee. The World No. 38 relied on his quick smashes and ability to stay in the rally long enough to frustrate the opponent as he saved two game points in the opening game and then packed enough punch in his down the line smashes to win in straight games setting up a second round clash against former world champion and eighth seed Loh Kean Yew of Singapore, who defeated China's Wang Zheng Xing of China 23-21, 19-21, 21-14.

"Winning a round always feels nice, and especially getting to play a Super 750 itself is something big for me. Today, when I got on the court, the one thing I was telling myself was that even if it goes his way, I shouldn't be

really worried about it. I should be enjoying what I'm doing, and I think probably that helped really a lot," Prannoy said after the match.

Srikanth, who last played a Super 750 event in Singapore in May 2025, struggled with his rhythm initially against Tharun, losing the opening game. But he dominated the second game to force a decider, where his experience made the difference between winning and losing.

The former World No. 1 trailed his younger compatriot for most of the decider, and it felt like curtains for his India Open challenge as Tharun took a 19-17 lead. However, Srikanth controlled the net brilliantly and made his opponent work hard for every point, forcing an error, to clinch four straight points and the match in 53 minutes.

"It was a tough game and could have gone either way as one or two points here, and there would have made a big difference," said Srikanth, who will now face BWF World Tour Finals

winner Christo Popov of France in the second round.

Earlier, Tanvi showed why she is touted to be the future star of Indian badminton as she took the fight to Wang in her first BWF Super 750 event. The 16-year-old, whose entry in the tournament was only confirmed on the eve of the event, had a game point against Wang in the opening game but hit the down-the-line smash wide to lose that game.

She then used her late flicks and neck deception to good effect to bag the second game and force a decider. However, the Indian looked tired in the decider and was unable to match the speed of her opponent in long rallies, ultimately losing.

Important results:
Men's singles: 2-Kunlavut Vitidsarn (Tha) bt Koki Watanabe (Jpn) 21-19, 23-25, 21-10; 5-Christo Popov (Fra) bt Wang Tzu Wei (Tpe) 13-21, 21-18, 21-19; K Srikanth bt Tharun M 15-21, 21-6, 21-19; 3-Jonatan Christie (Ind) bt Jia Heng Jason Teh (Sin) 21-15, 21-7

16, 21-10; 8-Loh Kean Yew (Sin) bt Wang Zheng Xing (Chn) 23-21, 19-21, 21-14; HS Prannoy bt Lee Cheuk Yiu (Hkg) 22-20, 21-18; Women's singles: 2-Wang Zhi Yi (Chn) bt Tanvi Sharma 22-20, 18-21, 21-13; Thuy Linh Nguyen (Vie) bt PV Sindhu 20-22, 21-12, 21-15; 1-AN Se Young (kor) bt Nozomi Okuhara (Jpn) 21-17, 21-9; Malvika Bansod bt Pai Yu Po (Tpe) 21-18, 21-19; 5-Han Yue (Chn) bt Sung Shuo Yun (Tpe) 18-21, 21-13, 21-17

Women's doubles: Nanako Hara/Riko Kiyose (Jpn) bt Rutuparna Panda/Swetaparna Panda 21-8, 21-18; Ha Na Baek/So Hee Lee (kor) bt Gayatri Rawat/Mansha Rawat 21-5, 21-8

Mixed Doubles: Pakkapol Teerattanachai (Tha) bt Dhruv Kapila/Tanisha Crasto 21-15, 21-14; Marvin Seidel/Thuc Phuong Nguyen (Ger) bt Rohan Kapoor/Ruthika Shivani Gadde 21-19, 21-14; Tyuichi Shimogami/Sayaka Hobara (Jpn) bt Ashish Surya/Amrutha Pramuthesh 21-15, 21-7