

Morning India



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India turned its diversity into strength of its democracy: PM Modi



MI News Service, New Delhi: Prime minister Narendra Modi has emphasised that India has been able to turn its diversity into the strength of its democracy and shown the world that democratic institutions and processes give stability, speed and scale to its development.

Inaugurating the 28th conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth here on Thursday, PM Modi also said that Indian democracy is like a large tree supported by deep roots.

"When India gained Independence, many doubted whether democracy could survive amidst the country's immense diversity. However, this very diversity in fact became the strength of Indian democracy," he said.

"There was also scepticism that even if democracy did take root, India would struggle to progress. Contrary to these doubts, India has demonstrated that democratic institutions and processes provide stability, scale, and speed to its development," PM Modi said.

The Prime minister also said that India has a long tradition of debate, dialogue and collective decision-making. In India, democracy means last mile delivery," he said.

PM Modi also said that India is strongly raising the concerns of the Global South on every global platform. "During its G20 Presidency as well, India placed the priorities of the Global South at the centre of the global agenda," he said.

About 60 speakers and presiding officers are attending the event being held at the Samvidhan Sadan in Parliament House complex here from January 15 to 16.

It is deliberating on a wide range of contemporary parliamentary issues, including the role of speakers and presiding officers, in maintaining strong democratic institutions.

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Parliamentary functioning, the impact of social media on Members of Parliament, innovative strategies to enhance public understanding of Parliament and citizen participation beyond voting, among others, are also being discussed at the conference.

29 more dreaded Naxalites surrender in Chhattisgarh

MI News Service, Raipur: Responding to the government appeal to shun the path of violence, another batch of 29 hardcore Naxalites surrendered before the police in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district on Thursday, a senior police official said.

"The cadres, all active as members of the frontal wings of the outlawed CPI (Maoist), turned themselves in before senior police and CRPF officials here under Poona Margem (from rehabilitation to social reintegration) initiative", Sukma Superintendent of Police Kiran Chavan said.

They were impressed by the state government's surrender and rehabilitation policy and decided to lay down their arms and shun the path of violence, he said adding that a huge cache of sophisticated arms and ammunition including some SLRs, double barrel guns, revolvers and live bullets were surrendered on the occasion.

Among the cadres is Podiam Budhra, head of Dandakaranya Adivasi Kisan Majdoor Sangathan (DAKMS - frontal wing of Maoists) in the Gogunda area, who was carrying a reward of Rs 2 lakh on his head. The other cadres were members of DAKMS, militia, and Janata Sarkar wings of the Maoists, the official said.

The establishment of a security camp in the Gogunda area recently played a crucial role in the surrender. Following the setting up of the camp, intensified anti-Naxal operations, sustained pressure and continuous search operations significantly curtailed Maoist activities in the region, he said.

Gogunda area, owing to its difficult and remote terrain, was earlier considered a safe and strategic base for the Maoists' Darbha division.

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After taking holy dips at the confluence of the Bay of Bengal and performing puja at the Kapil Muni temple to attain salvation, devotees are seen returning home from the Gangasagar Mela ground in South 24 Parganas district on Thursday.

Train Features

- Fastest train on this route saving 2.5 to 3 hours
- Design speed up to 180 kmph
- Disinfectant technology to maintain sanitation in toilet



Mumbai is key battleground, as Maharashtra votes for high-stakes civic polls

MI News Service, Mumbai: As Maharashtra headed to the much-hyped elections for 29 municipal corporations across the state today on Thursday, the main spotlight is focussed on Mumbai, where the BJP-led Mahayati is locked in a do or die battle with the united Thackeray front for control of the cash-rich Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC).

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has predicted that MNS leader Raj Thackeray would emerge as the biggest loser in his alliance with cousin and Shiv Sena (UBT) president Uddhav Thackeray.

He also dismissed the coming together of both NCP factions in Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad as merely a localised development.

Fadnavis ruled that Deputy Chief Minister and NCP leader

A total of 3.48 crore voters are eligible to decide the fate of 15,931 candidates, including 1,700 in Mumbai and 1,166 in Pune.

Counting of votes will take place on January 16.

More than 25,000 police personnel, including senior officers, are deployed across Mumbai to oversee elections to the BMC and vote counting.

Except for Mumbai, the other 28 urban bodies have multi-member wards.

In a political turn ahead of the elections, estranged cousins Uddhav and Raj Thackeray reunited after two decades in their bid to consolidate Marathi votes, even as rival NCP factions forged a local alliance in Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad.

In this election, the Opposition Congress has asserted its pres-



Voters show their ink-marked finger after casting their vote for Nagpur Municipal Corporation (NMC) election 2026, in Nagpur on Thursday.

Mamata Banerjee to lay foundation of Mahakal Temple, preparations gather pace



Preparation going on full swing at Mahakal Temple spot at Matigara near Siliguri, where foundation stone will be laid by Chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday.

MI News Service, Siliguri: The much-awaited foundation stone of the Mahakal Temple at Matigara near Siliguri will be laid by Chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday, Siliguri mayor Gautam Deb confirmed on Thursday after a preparatory meeting with Darjeeling district administration officials.

Accordingly, preparations are in full swing for the stone-laying ceremony of the proposed Temple as the ceremony is scheduled to take place at 4 pm in the Matigara area.

According to official sources, the Chief Minister is scheduled to arrive at Bagdogra Airport at around 3 pm and proceed directly to the Matigara, the site of the programme.

After completing the ceremony, she will stay overnight at the Kanyasree Guest House inside Uttarkanya here.

On January 17, the Chief Minister is expected to visit Jalpaiguri to inaugurate the newly constructed building of the Jalpaiguri Circuit Bench of the Calcutta High Court. Following the inauguration, she is expected to return to Kolkata on the same day.

The Mahakal Mahatirtha project was announced by the Chief Minister in October last year during her visit to Darjeeling. As the Chief Minister is coming to Siliguri for laying the

foundation stone of the Mahakal Temple, many eminent personalities will also attend the programme. The district administration is taking all necessary measures to conduct the ceremony peacefully.

"I have personally visited the site several times to review the arrangements," said Gautam Deb, the Mayor of Siliguri.

The Mahakal Mahatirtha project was announced by the Chief Minister in October last year during her visit to Darjeeling. As the Chief Minister is coming to Siliguri for laying the

offered prayers at the historic Mahakal Mandir located at the Observatory Hill in Darjeeling. Talking to media after her visit to the Mahakal temple, the Chief minister had announced her plans to construct a grand temple in Siliguri. The new temple will be built on 18 acres of land in the Matigara area, opposite the City Centre Mall. The state government has provided the land free of cost. The project also includes a Convention centre and will house the largest Shiva idol in

West Bengal. A Board of Trustee has already been formed to oversee the construction and management of the temple. Meanwhile, preparations are also on for the inauguration of the Jalpaiguri Circuit Bench building. Mayor Gautam Deb visited the site on Wednesday evening to inspect the ongoing arrangements.

According to the Siliguri mayor, the Mahakal Temple will be among the largest Hindu shrines in the country and is expected to become a major

landmark near Siliguri. "It will be one of the biggest temples in the country. Once completed, it will open a new avenue for religious tourism in Siliguri and provide a significant boost to the local economy and surrounding areas," Deb said.

The West Bengal Housing Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (HIDCO) is overseeing the execution of the project in coordination with the district administration and the state public works department (PWD).

The land earmarked for the temple was previously barren. The Siliguri Municipal Corporation has cleared large quantities of waste from the site.

An official source said once the remaining weeds and garbage were completely removed, the project area would be further expanded.

"It is expected that a large number of people from Siliguri and other districts of north Bengal will gather near the temple site during the foundation-laying ceremony. Arrangements have been made to accommodate around 10,000 people. LED screens and a public address system will also be installed for the convenience of the public," the source added.

Ajit Pawar broke the rule that the alliance partners will not speak against each other.

CM Fadnavis led the ruling alliance's canvassing, traversing the state to campaign for candidates of the Mahayati, which includes the BJP and the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena.

NCP, the third partner in the Mahayati, was strategically excluded to attract "non-Hindu" voters, observers said.

This will be the Shiv Sena's first Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation election since the 2022 split, when Eknath Shinde broke away with a majority of the party's legislators, along with its name and symbol.

The undivided Shiv Sena had held sway over the country's as well as whole Asia's richest civic body for 25 years.

Polling for the 2,869 seats spread across 893 wards will begin at 7.30 am and conclude at 5.30 pm on January 15.

ence in Mumbai by stepping out of the shadow of its Maha Vikas Aghadi allies - Shiv Sena (UBT) and Sharad Pawar's NCP (SP).

The Congress has joined hands with Prakash Ambedkar's Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) and the Rashtriya Samaj Paksh in the state capital, even as it contests independently in Nagpur.

Elections to 29 municipal corporations are being held after a gap of over six years, with their terms having ended between 2020 and 2023.

Of these, nine fall within the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), the most urbanised belt in India.

The battlegrounds include Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, Navi Mumbai, Vasai-Virar, Kalyan-Dombivli, Kolhapur, Nagpur, Mumbai, Solapur, Amravati, Akola, Nashik, Pimpri-Chinchwad, Pune, Ulhasnagar, Thane, Chandrapur, Parbhani, Mira-Bhayandar,

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Dal Lake freezes as Kashmir reels under severe cold for weeks



ember 21 and will end on January 30.

Srinagar recorded a low of minus 7.2 degree Celsius on Tuesday night, down from the minus 5.9 degree Celsius recorded the previous night, weather department officials said. However, Shopian in south Kashmir was found to be the coldest place in the Valley, where the mercury settled at minus 7.8 degree Celsius.

Parts of several water bodies, including the famous Dal Lake, froze and covered with thick ice due to severe cold. Pahalgam, a popular tourist spot in south Kashmir, which also serves as one of the base camps for the annual Amarnath yatra, recorded a low temperature of minus 6 degree Celsius.

MI News Service, Srinagar: Parts of the famous Dal Lake in the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir here and several water bodies in the picturesque valley completely froze on Thursday as sub-zero minimum

temperatures across the region dropped further.

The Kashmir Valley is in the midst of 'Chilla-i-Kalan' -- a 40-day period of extreme cold, when the chances of snowfall are the highest. It began on De-

The night temperature in

● Continued to Pg 3

Air India cancels some US flights after closure of Iranian airspace

MI News Service, Mumbai: In the wake of sudden closure of Iranian airspace due to heightened tension in the region, Air India was forced to cancel at least three flights to the US on Thursday and delayed some others to Europe.

Informing this Airlines sources here today said at least three flights -- two from New Delhi to New York and Newark, and one from Mumbai to New York -- have been cancelled because of the Iranian airspace closure.

In a post on X, the airline said that due to the emerging situation in Iran, the subsequent closure of its airspace, and in view of the safety of our passengers, flights overlying the region are now using an alternative route.

Several international airlines including the famous Dal Lake, froze and covered with thick ice due to severe cold. Pahalgam, a popular tourist spot in south Kashmir, which also serves as one of the base camps for the annual Amarnath yatra, recorded a low temperature of minus 6 degree Celsius.

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● Continued to Pg 3

'Pollution forced me to pull out of India Open in Delhi': World No.3 shuttler

MI News Service, New Delhi: World No.3 shuttler Anders Antonsen has said that he has withdrawn from the ongoing India Open due to "extreme" air pollution in the national capital and copped a USD 5,000 fine from the Badminton World Federation (BWF) for his decision.

A four-time World Championships medallist, Antonsen's remarks came a day after fellow Dane Mia Blichfeldt also criticised the playing conditions at

the USD 950,000 event.

"Many are curious why I have pulled out of the India Open for the third consecutive year. Due to the extreme pollution in Delhi at the moment, I don't think it's a place to host a badminton tournament," Antonsen wrote on his Instagram page.

The Danish shuttler also shared a screenshot of Delhi's Air Quality Index reading on Instagram, which showed the AQI at 348 and categorised the con-

ditions as hazardous. Delhi's air

quality drops every year during

winter due to varied reasons

that include vehicular pollution,

stubble burning in neighbouring

Punjab and road dust.

The city is often engulfed in

a thick layer of smog that has

been described as dangerous by

doctors. The India Open is being

held at the Indira Gandhi Indoor

Stadium after the Badminton

Association of India (BAI) shifted

the tournament to the BWF

Academy in Bengaluru.

The BWF has imposed a USD

5,000 fine on Antonsen for

pulling out of the India Open.

Antonsen has also withdrawn

from the India Open.

● Continued to Pg 3

Kolkata realtors seek tax relief, higher housing cap in Union Budget



Members of Voice of Abhaya took part in a protest on Abhaya during their march to CBI demanding justice after 17 months of impunity and supplementary chargesheet in murder-rape case, in Kolkata.

JD(U) Leadership Discusses West Bengal Assembly 2026 Prep in Patna Meeting

MI News Service, Patna: A key meeting was held at the JD(U) party office in Patna with the party's National Working President and Rajya Sabha MP, Sanjay Jha, under the leadership of JD(U) National General Secretary and West Bengal In-charge Khaksha Parveen (Ex-Rajya Sabha MP). A delegation from West Bengal, led by the state leadership, attended the session.

The meeting focused on the current political scenario in West Bengal and organizational strategies for the upcoming 2026 Assembly elections. Participants discussed strengthening the party's membership drive, enhancing grassroots communication, and effectively conveying the party's vision and policies to the public.

JD(U) West Bengal President Amitava Dutta, Secretary General Subhash Singh, National General Secretary of Yuva JD(U) Md Nurul Huda, State General Secretaries



Anil Kumar Singh, Sunil Yadav, and Anshul Chaudhary, along with other members, were present.

The deliberations highlighted the party's aim to consolidate its organizational structure and expand its outreach across West Bengal, laying the groundwork for a strong campaign ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections.



Sujit Bose, West Bengal Fire Brigade Minister.



Pulak Roy, West Bengal PHE and Public Works Minister.

Foreign Tourists Reinforce Gangasagar Mela's Place on Global Pilgrimage Map

Suman Ganguly: Sagar Island: The Gangasagar Mela has steadily emerged as a global pilgrimage destination, with the growing presence of foreign tourists adding an international dimension to the iconic religious event this year. Visitors from the United States, Europe, Russia and several other countries have been seen at the mela, underlining its rising stature on the world tourism map.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, in a post on her X handle two days ago, highlighted the visits of foreign tourists to the mela and noted that Gangasagar was no longer confined within national boundaries. She observed that the centuries-old pilgrimage has now attained international significance, drawing devotees and visitors from across the globe.

The Morning India came across one such instance that added a distinct international flavour to the mela — the visit of French brothers Felix and Rodrigues. However, they are not the only foreign visitors to Gangasagar this year. According to sources, tourists from the United States, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland and several other European countries have arrived at the pilgrimage site, many of them through ISKCON, even before the auspicious



bathing dates.

Several foreign devotees not only took the holy dip at the confluence of the Ganga and the Bay of Bengal but also visited the Kapil Muni Ashram. Many were seen walking along the sea beach, singing devotional songs and immersing themselves in the spiritual atmosphere of the mela.

While the Centre continues to deliberate on granting national fair status to Gangasagar, observers point out that the increasing participation of foreign tourists clearly reflects its global reach. Despite the absence of official recognition, the mela has firmly secured its place on the international pilgrimage and tourism map.

Felix and Rodrigues first visited Kolkata nearly two years ago. During that trip, they travelled to various religious sites and visited the Kapil Muni Ashram at Gangasagar in May, when the

beach was relatively quiet and free from the massive crowds typical of the mela period. After returning to France, they later learned about the Gangasagar Mela through the internet, where it is often described as the second-largest human congregation in India.

Fascinated by descriptions of how a "mini India" comes alive on the small island during the mela, the brothers decided to witness the spectacle themselves. They travelled again from Paris to Kolkata this year and headed straight to Gangasagar soon after landing.

The duo said they were overwhelmed by the scale and organisation of the mela. They plan to spend around ten days in the city and have already visited Gangasagar once ahead of the main bathing day. They intend to return again on Makar Sankranti to experience the peak-day atmosphere.

"We want to see how such a massive gathering takes place and what happens on that particular day," Felix said.

Even before Makar Sankranti, a steady flow of pilgrims has begun arriving at Gangasagar from across West Bengal and other states. Amid the swelling crowds, the French tourists were seen keenly observing the arrangements, clicking photographs and interacting with pilgrims. The illumination, hoardings carrying social messages and the sheer scale of the event left them visibly impressed.

"We had read about the mela on the internet, but only after coming here did we realise how grand the arrangements are," Felix said. "Unless you see it yourself, it is impossible to understand the enthusiasm of the people."

The brothers, both retired and well-travelled, said they had consciously set aside time this year to attend the Gangasagar Mela. While foreign tourists have visited Gangasagar in the past, locals believe it is rare for visitors to return specifically to witness the mela. The French brothers' repeat visit has therefore drawn attention, further reinforcing the Gangasagar Mela's growing global appeal.

Nipha outbreak fears rise, 82 under surveillance

MI News Service, East Burdwan:

Concerns over a possible spread of the deadly Nipha virus in West Bengal have intensified as the number of identified contacts has surged sharply. The CHO of East Burdwan district on Wednesday confirmed that the contact-tracing list has expanded from 48 to 82 individuals within a single day, triggering fresh anxiety among health authorities.

According to CHO Jayaraman Hembra, contact tracing of the Nipha patient had initially identified 48 individual up to Tuesday. However, further investigation and tracing on Wednesday revealed 34 more contacts, taking the total to 82. Of these, two individuals have tested positive for the virus. Health officials said that both positive cases are healthcare workers who were in close and prolonged contact with the infected patient while providing medical services.

One of them, a house staff member from South 24 parganas, is currently admitted to Beleghata ID Hospital in Kolkata. "His condition is stable," the CHO said, adding that a nursing staff member who had shown mild symptoms is also now clinically stable. The sudden spike in the contact list has raised serious questions over containment and infection control measures, even as authorities insist that the situation remains under close monitoring.

Samsung

Kolkata: Samsung Electronics today unveiled its "Companion to AI Living" vision at The First Look, its CES® 2026 event held in the Latour Ballroom at the Wynn Las Vegas. The focus of the event was on AI as Samsung's philosophy, a foundation that connects the company's R&D product development, operations and user experience.



Sankaracharya of Puri.



Aroop Biswas, West Bengal Power Minister.

Gangasagar Witnesses History as Transgender Sadhus Participate for the First Time

Suman Ganguly: Gangasagar: Amid the familiar haze of incense smoke, conch shells, and Vedic chants near Kapil Muni's ashram, this year's Gangasagar Mela marked a historic milestone. For the first time, transgender ascetics joined the age-old religious gathering, establishing their own akhara alongside the well-known Naga sadhus.

Five transgender sadhus and sadhvis, representing the Juna Akhara, took part in the mela. Their presence not only added a new dimension to the centuries-old festival but also sent a strong message against long-standing social discrimination.

Inside the akhara, the transgender ascetics performed ritual offerings in a lit fire pit, strictly following traditional customs. With red bindis on their foreheads, kajal-lined eyes, and rudraksha beads around their necks, their striking appearance drew attention, while their words reflected years of struggle and perseverance. Transgender sadhvi Vaishnavi Jagdambanandgi said emo-

tionally, "The path to God is open to everyone. We may be different in body, but our minds and faith are the same as everyone else's."

The sadhus spoke of painful childhoods marked by neglect from family and society, often forcing them to leave home at an early age. Recalling years of wandering, humiliation, and rejection, Shrimahant Charulata Avantikanandgiri said that the path of spiritual practice restored their dignity and self-respect. Finding shelter under the Juna Akhara, they now lead disciplined and spiritually guided lives.

Their participation has left a lasting impression on pilgrims. Alongside curiosity, many devotees approached the transgender sadhus with reverence to seek blessings. The ascetics said they are offering their blessings in the name of Goddess Bahuchara.

While transgender akharas have previously been established at events like the Kumbh Mela, their participation at Gangasagar for the first time has been hailed as a historic moment, signalling inclusivity and broader social acceptance within the spiritual community.

Assam rapist caught fleeing Kerala minor assault

MI News Service, Kharagpur: In a swift cross-state operation, GRP at Kharagpur arrested Abul Hossain (40), an Assam resident, for the alleged repeated rape of a minor girl in Kerala. The predator, who fled after the crime came to light, was apprehended at Dantan station in Paschim Medinipur while boarding an Assam-bound train, evading a nationwide alert. Abul Hossain had resided in a rented house under Kunmathanadu police station limits in Ernakulam district, Kerala, for work. Shockingly, the victim's home stood directly opposite his, enabling his monstrous access. Kerala Police Sub-Inspector Muralidharan revealed that Abul Hossain subjected the minor to brutal, repeated assaults, employing vicious threats—including death if she spoke out—to silence her.

BJP Illegally Occupying Singur Land for PM Meeting, DM to Take Action: Minister Becharam Manna

The minister alleged that even the Prime Minister is not following established norms," Mr. Manna alleged. He further said he would write to the district magistrate and the superintendent of police of Hooghly, seeking an immediate investigation and urging the administration to stop construction work until the issue is resolved. He also asserted that the Prime Minister should consider cancelling the rally, as holding a public meeting on land allegedly taken without farmers' consent goes against democratic principles.

Displaying copies of the complaint letters, he said farmers including Dilip Kumar Koley, Mohit Kumar Koley and Sanatan Santra had clearly mentioned that the construction of the pandal and other preparations for the Prime Minister's meeting were carried out without their knowledge or consent.

"Singur's soil belongs to democracy-loving people. Leaders from different political parties regularly visit this area, but it is unfortunate

that the Prime Minister should be denied by local BJP leader Sanjay Pandey, who dismissed them as "false." "Anyone can make baseless allegations. There are legal ways to deal with such complaints. We are not worried about this. The Prime Minister's meeting will be held as scheduled on January 18," he said.

Ustad Amjad Ali Khan mesmerizes the IIT Kharagpur audience at the curtain raiser of the 11th Spic Macay International Conference

Manish Ramtake (Kharagpur, West Midnapore): Witnessing a unique confluence of Indian cultural heritage and educational excellence, Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur organized a soul-stirring Sarod recital presented by Padma Vibhushan Ustad Amjad Ali Khan. This musical evening was organized as the curtain raiser of the 11th Spic Macay International Conference 2026 and was a proud part of the 75th Platinum Jubilee Celebrations of IIT Kharagpur.

Organized by Spic Mackay IIT Kharagpur Chapter, this program witnessed unprecedented participation from the students, faculty, staff and guests of the institute, which strengthened the institute's commitment towards holistic education.

A sacred environment and vibrant heritage: Netaji Auditorium was transformed into a sacred abode of music, where approximately 2,000 listeners experienced this historic performance in complete silence and reverence. Following the core principles of Dr. Kiran Seth, founder of Spic Macay, the performance venue was recognized as a "place of worship" and all spectators

removed their shoes before entering the auditorium. This tradition provided spiritual dignity to the atmosphere and connected the listeners deeply with the music. On this occasion Professor C.S. Kumar, Head, Spic Macay IIT Kharagpur Chapter, said: "As

evening is the beginning of many prestigious performances leading to the 11th Spic Macay International Conference to be held between 25 to 31 May 2026. The next Curtain Raiser event will be conducted by Pandit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt on 23 January 2026 during Spring Fest, the annual cultural festival of IIT Kharagpur. The 11th Spic Macay International Conference 2026 is supported by HCL Foundation, Persistent, SBI Payments and SRF Foundation.

Spike McKay: Resolve to connect the younger generation with heritage: For more than four decades, Spic Mackay has been continuously striving to bring the classical, folk and traditional art forms of India to the youth. Through concerts, workshops, yoga sessions, lectures, heritage tours, film screenings and craft experiences, this institution encourages cultural consciousness and aesthetic sense. Let us tell you that IIT Kharagpur, established in 1951 as India's first IIT, is proudly celebrating its 75th platinum jubilee year. This year symbolizes the Institute's rich heritage, global impact and its continued commitment to leadership and innovation for the nation and the world.

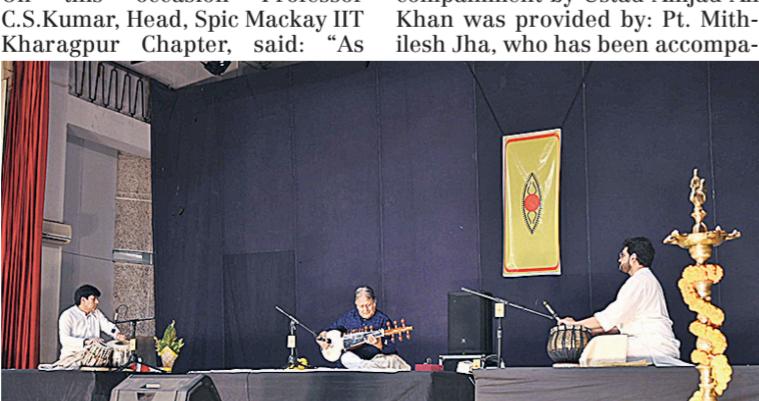
Gangasagar Draws Over 1.3 Crore Pilgrims as Holy Dip Continues

MI News Service, Gangasagar: Gangasagar Island continued to witness an overwhelming influx of pilgrims on Thursday, the second day of the holy bath following the main Makar Sankranti Shahi Snan, as the auspicious period extended this year. According to official estimates, around 1.3 crore pilgrims from across the country had visited Gangasagar by Thursday to take a ritual dip at the Sagar Sangam—the confluence of the Ganga and the Bay of Bengal—and offer prayers at the Kapil Muni Temple.

State Power and Housing Minister Aroop Biswas, present at the mela site, said one pilgrim, identified as Mritunjay Kumar Singh (61) from Bihar, died of a heart attack during the pilgrimage. He added that elaborate arrangements had been made to manage the massive footfall and ensure the safety of devotees.

"Nearly 11 lakh pilgrims have been issued certificates for visiting Gangasagar. Thursday was the last day for the holy bath during the extended Shahi Snan yoga, which is why so many devotees arrived even today to take the dip," Mr. Biswas said.

Despite biting cold, dense fog, and low visibility during the early hours, lakhs of pilgrims thronged the beach since pre-dawn, chanting sacred hymns and immersing themselves in the icy waters. As per Hindu belief, bathing at the Sagar Sangam during Makar Sankranti cleanses sins accumulated over lifetimes and paves the way for salvation. Many pilgrims also performed shraddha, pind daan, and tarpan in memory of their ancestors. Mythology



nearly 2,000 people sat in meditative silence following the principles propounded by Dr. Kiran Seth, it was no longer just a concert, but a spiritual experience that vibrated the soul of IIT Kharagpur through the musical service of Ustad Amjad Ali Khan." Lighting of the lamp and inauguration of the presentation pro-

holds that King Dasharatha performed pind daan at Gangasagar, making it especially sacred for ancestral rites.

The religious fervour was further heightened by the presence of Jagadguru Swami Sri Nischalananda Saraswati, the 145th Shankaracharya of the Govardhan Peeth in Puri, who took a holy dip on Thursday. Ministers Pulak Roy (Public Health Engineering) and Sujit Bose (Fire and Disaster Management) also participated in the sacred bath.

The Gangasagar Mela grounds were abuzz with religious activities, with naga sadhus and saints from various akharas drawing large crowds. Kirtans, bhajans, and other rituals added to the spiritual ambience. Security and crowd management remained tight, with the South 24 Parganas district administration deploying police, civil defence personnel, disaster response teams, and lifeguards. CCTV cameras and drones were used for surveillance, while riverine transport was closely monitored to prevent mishaps.

By Thursday afternoon, thousands of pilgrims began returning to their native states, including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, and Assam. The district administration announced a massive beach-cleaning drive on Friday from 11 a.m., involving around 3,000 beach guards, to restore the shoreline after peak bathing days. Officials urged pilgrims to maintain discipline and cooperate with authorities as the remaining days of the mela continue under strict safety and sanitation protocols.

ECI Rejects Proposal to Accept Madhyamik Admit Card as Valid Document for SIR

MI News Service, Kolkata: The Election Commission of India (ECI) has rejected a proposal to recognise the Madhyamik (Class 10) examination admit card as a valid document for the upcoming Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls scheduled for 2026. The decision was communicated to the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of West Bengal through an official letter issued on Thursday.

According to the Election Commission, the Madhyamik admit card does not figure in the list of documents approved for voter list revision under the guidelines issued on October 27, 2025. As a result, the Commission stated that it is unable to accept the proposal sent by the West Bengal administration seeking to include the Class 10 admit card as an acceptable proof during the revision process.

In its communication, the ECI made it clear that the verification of documents during electoral roll revision must strictly adhere to the pre-approved list specified in the existing guidelines. The Commission emphasised that no additional documents can be included beyond those already notified, as maintaining uniformity in the verification process is essential to ensure transparency, accuracy, and fairness in electoral procedures across the country. Consequently, the Commission confirmed that Madhyamik admit cards will not be accepted as valid documents during the forthcoming voter list revision exercise.

Naxalites surrender

● Continued from Pg 1

But after the security camp was established, the Maoist stronghold was effectively dismantled, the official said, adding that with this surrender, the Maoists' support system in the Darbha division has also been weakened.

Chavan appealed to all those associated with the outlawed Maoist organisation to give up violence, assuring them security and a respectable life.

Earlier, 63 Naxalites surrendered in the neighbouring Dantewada district on January 8, while 26 cadres shunned violence and joined the mainstream in Sukma on January 7.

More than 1,500 Naxalites surrendered in the state in 2025.

The Centre has resolved to eliminate Naxalism from the country by March 31 this year.



As the Gangasagar Mela on the confluence of Bay of Bengal in South 24 Parganas district comes to an end on Thursday, a local fisherman resumes his profession with a good catch
PIC: Prabir Bhattacharya

Abhishek Visits Nandigram for 'Sebaashray' Outreach Prog



MI News Service, Kolkata:

Trinamool Congress (TMC) national general secretary and Member of Parliament Abhishek Banerjee reached Nandigram on Thursday afternoon to take part in a public service outreach programme titled 'Sebaashray-1'. His visit has drawn significant attention, not only for its welfare focus but also for its political implications, given the sensitive political backdrop of the region.

Abhishek arrived at Khodambari in Nandigram at around 2:45 pm. Avoiding large convoys and crowds, he chose to walk through the area, greeting local residents and interacting directly with people who had gathered at the venue. He was seen exchanging greetings with villagers

and listening to their concerns, reflecting the programme's focus on grassroots engagement. During his visit, Abhishek inspected the 'Sebaashray-1' camp and was also scheduled to visit a second service camp in the area.

The 'Sebaashray' initiative aims to provide various welfare services to local residents under one roof, including assistance related to health services, government schemes, and grievance redressal. Abhishek spent time at the camp speaking to beneficiaries, enquiring about their problems, and reviewing the facilities on offer. According to party sources, he was keen to ensure that the services reached the intended beneficiaries ef-

ficiently. A press conference has been planned following the conclusion of the programme, where Abhishek is expected to address both the welfare initiative and broader political issues.

However, despite his presence, Abhishek did not formally inaugurate the 'Sebaashray' programme himself. Instead, on his instructions, the programme was inaugurated by members of families of martyrs from Nandigram, a move that many observers believe carries symbolic and political weight.

The Trinamool Congress has

stated that the decision to organise the 'Sebaashray' camps in Nandigram was taken in response to repeated appeals from local residents.

Party leaders emphasised that Abhishek extended the initiative beyond his parliamentary constituency of Diamond Harbour to reach people in Nandigram, underscoring the party's commitment to public welfare.

The camps are being organised across two blocks of Nandigram and are scheduled to continue until January 30.

Throughout the visit, Abhishek was seen engaging with common people and party workers alike, reinforcing the outreach-driven nature of the programme. Political observers believe that while the initiative is framed as a service-oriented programme, Abhishek's presence in Nandigram conveys a broader political message ahead of future electoral contests.

Fire Breaks Out at Tire Shop Near Bonfield Road

MI News Service, Kolkata:

Panic gripped parts of central Kolkata on Thursday afternoon after a fire broke out at a shop near Bonfield Road in the Burabazar area. The incident occurred in a densely populated commercial zone, triggering fear among shop owners, workers, and local residents. Thick plumes of smoke were seen rising from the area, prompting immediate concern about the possibility of the fire spreading to nearby establishments.

According to fire brigade officials, the incident was reported at around 2:40 pm, following which five fire engines were rushed to the spot. Firefighters began operations promptly to contain the blaze and prevent it from spreading further in the

congested market area. Later, two additional fire engines from Shibpur and Howrah were also pressed into service to strengthen firefighting efforts.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the fire originated at a roadside tire shop. Due to the presence of a large stock of rubber tires, the fire spread rapidly and intensified within a short span of time. The flames quickly engulfed the adjacent shops, causing extensive damage to property. The fire also spread to a Matador vehicle parked close to the shop, which caught fire and was completely gutted.

Sources from the fire department said that there was an acid storage facility located above the affected shop, raising serious concerns about the potential escalation of the incident. Firefighters managed to arrest the fire in the lower section before it could reach the acid godown, thereby averting a major disaster. Several people who were reportedly trapped on the upper floors were safely evacuated by the fire brigade personnel amid the rescue operation.

Eyewitnesses described scenes of chaos as shopkeepers hurriedly tried to salvage goods

while police personnel cordoned off the area to facilitate firefighting operations.

Traffic movement in and around Bonfield Road was temporarily disrupted as a precautionary measure to allow fire engines

unhindered access to the site.



Union Minister of Culture and Tourism Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, along with Vice Chairman Nand Lal Thakur, inaugurated the new building of the Lalit Kala Akademi Regional Centre and the opening of the 3rd Print Biennale India in Kolkata on Thursday.

Dal Lake freezes as Kashmir reels under severe cold for weeks

● Continued from Pg 1

The India Meteorological Department has said a western disturbance is approaching towards Kashmir and is likely to affect the Valley's weather from Jan 16.

Meanwhile in Jaipur, the capital city of neighbouring Rajasthan, there was also no respite from cold conditions, with Lunkaransar in Bikaner district recording a bone-chilling night temperature of minus 1.4 degree Celsius, the meteorological department said on Wednesday.

On Tuesday night, most parts of the state recorded minimum temperatures below 2 degree Celsius, meteorological department data showed.

Fatehpur in Sikar recorded a low of 2.2 degree Celsius, Nagaur 2.4 degree Celsius, Alwar 3 degree Celsius, Karauli 3.2 degree Celsius, Gangaragar 3.5 degree Celsius, Jhunjhunu 3.9 degree Celsius, Pilani (Jhunjhunu) 3.1 degree Celsius and Jaisalmer 2.7 degree Celsius.

The minimum temperature in Qazigund, the gateway town to the valley, settled at minus 5.3 degree Celsius, while, Kokernag recorded a low of minus 2.3 degree Celsius, and Kupwara minus 6.2 degree Celsius.

The aircraft is believed to

have been the last non-Iranian

commercial plane in the air be-

fore Tehran's aviation autho-

rities issued a Notice to Airmen

(NOTAM) suddenly closing the

country's airspace.

Kolkata Police Reroute App-Based Shuttle Buses to Ease Flyover Congestion

MI News Service, Kolkata: Heavy congestion caused by app-based shuttle buses during peak office hours on several major roads in south Kolkata has prompted the city police to impose fresh traffic restrictions. From Thursday, the Kolkata Police Traffic Department has prohibited the movement of app-based shuttle buses on the AJC Bose Road flyover and the Maa Flyover in an effort to ease congestion and restore normal traffic flow on these key corridors.

Traffic congestion was being reported daily at the start of office hours, particularly due to the high volume of shuttle buses operating from areas such as Joka, Thakurpukur, Sarsuna, Tollygunge, Jadavpur, Garia, Chetla and Gariahat towards Salt Lake and New Town. Officials said that nearly 400 shuttle buses were attempting to cross the AJC Bose Road flyover and the Maa Flyover in quick succession every morning, leading to severe bottlenecks on both flyovers and slowing down overall vehicular movement.

To address the situation,

the Kolkata Police held consultations with app-based shuttle service providers and subsequently worked out alternative routes for these buses. The revised routes have been communicated to the service operators as well as destination offices and institutions to ensure smooth implementation. Police officials expressed hope that the new routing system would significantly reduce pressure on the flyovers and also minimise confusion among drivers.

A senior traffic department official said that most of the app-based shuttle buses are either 16-seater or 26-seater vehicles, both of which were previously allowed on the flyovers. Their growing numbers, however, had led to a sharp decline in traffic speed and increased congestion during peak hours. It may be noted that barring emergency services, all buses and goods vehicles are already prohibited from using the Maa Flyover.

Under the new traffic arrangement, shuttle buses heading towards Salt Lake and New Town from Howrah and Behala will be allowed to take AJC Bose Road and proceed via the Park Circus Connector, Park Circus Seven Point Crossing, Fourth Bridge, Biswa Bangla Sarani and Science City before accessing the Eastern Metropolitan Bypass. Buses coming from Behala and Chetla will be directed through Rashbehari Avenue, Gariahat and Ruby Crossing to reach the Bypass.

Similarly, shuttle buses operating from Garia and Jadavpur will be permitted to use the Ajaynagar Link Road or the Patuli Bypass Link. Larger vehicles operating under certain app companies' Max Cab' shuttle services have also been assigned separate routes. These vehicles will be allowed to ply via Shakespeare Sarani, though traffic police may divert them through AJC Bose Road if congestion builds up.

Police officials said the revised measures are aimed at ensuring smoother traffic flow during peak hours while balancing the commuting needs of office-goers.

'Pollution forced me to pull out of India Open'

● Continued from Pg 1

The venue from the KD Jadhav Indoor Stadium, which hosted the tournament in recent years. The Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium is also scheduled to host the BWF World Championships in August, making the India Open a designated test event.

"Crossing my fingers that it will be better in the summer when the World Championships take place in Delhi. As a result, BWF has once again fined me USD 5,000," Antonson wrote.

Under the Badminton World Federation Player Commitment Regulations, a top committed player is liable to a USD 5,000 fine (Rs 4.50 lakh) for failing to participate in a BWF World Tour Level 1 to 3 tournaments, over and above the standard withdrawal fees. BWF has declined to make any comments on Antonson's assertions.



Members of Voice of Abhaya and Voice of Women took part in a protest march demanding justice for Abhaya, calling for a CBI probe after 17 months of impunity and the filing of a supplementary chargesheet in the murder-rape case, in Kolkata on Thursday.

Mamata Defends I-PAC Visit in SC, Questions Timing of ED Raid

MI News Service, Kolkata:

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday informed the Supreme Court that her visit to the I-PAC premises on January 8 was prompted by information that certain unauthorised persons had entered the office of Pratik Jain, who was entrusted with handling the Trinamool Congress's election-related work.

Clarifying the circumstances of the visit, senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Banerjee, told a Bench of Justices Prashant Kumar Mishra and Vilupancholi that the Chief Minister had not gone to the I-PAC office in her official capacity. Instead, Sibal said, she had visited the premises as the chairperson of the Trinamool Congress. He emphasised that I-PAC had been formally engaged by the party through a contract signed in 2021 to manage election strategy. He also rejected allegations that Banerjee obstructed the search or removed devices, calling such claims false and contradicted by the agency's own panchama.

Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for the state government and police officials, submitted that Banerjee, being a Z-plus protegee, was accompanied by the Director General of Police as part of mandatory security protocol.

Appearing for the ED, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told a Bench of Justices Prashant Kumar Mishra and Vilupancholi that the agency's plea reflected "a very shocking pattern", alleging that whenever statutory authorities discharged their functions, the chief minister intervened. Additional Solicitor General SV Raju argued that the facts disclosed cognisable offences. "This is a case of theft, robbery and dacoity. This is a simple case of theft which is made out," he said, relying on the precedent in Lalita Kumari to submit that registration of an FIR is mandatory when a cognisable offence is disclosed.

He added that since the chief minister was also the state's home minister, any probe by the state police would be ineffective, necessitating a CBI investigation.

Justice Mishra questioned the maintainability of the ED's plea and cautioned counsel against disorderly exchanges.

The Supreme Court described the ED's allegations of obstruction as "very serious" and said it would examine whether state authorities could interfere with a central agency's investigation. It stayed the FIR filed against ED officials and directed the state police to preserve CCTV footage of the January 8 raids linked to a coal smuggling case.

ITSEWA organizes a series of Social Welfare Initiatives



MI News Service, Kolkata:

Demonstrating a strong commitment to social responsibility, the West Bengal unit of the All India Income Tax SC/ST Employees Welfare Association (ITSEWA) organized a series of welfare initiatives at the Income Tax Building, Purba Building, with the theme "standing by society and upholding a humanitarian commitment."

As part of the programme, warm winter garments were distributed to security personnel and support staff working tirelessly during harsh winter builds up.

In addition, in collaboration with the charitable organization Bihani, essential commodities and winter clothing were

Mumbai is key battleground, as Maharashtra votes for high-stakes civic polls

of the state.

After the end of the campaign on Tuesday, Fadnavis said Raj Thackeray will be the biggest loser in the alliance with his cousin Uddhav Thackeray.

Downplaying the coming together of the rival NCPs in Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad as a "localised phenomenon", he said the BJP will react only if both factions decide to ally after the polls, which he felt was unlikely at the moment.

Fadnavis also remarked that the Thackerays lacked wholehearted commitment in their campaign and appeared "unwilling to stake their political prestige".

In the 227-ward Mumbai, the BJP is contesting 137 seats, the Shiv Sena 90, while the NCP is fighting separately on 94 seats.

The Mahayati has promised a 50 per cent concession for women in BEST bus travel, while the Thackeray cousins have assured to make any comments on Antonson's assertions.

The Congress has fielded 1,263 candidates across the rest

of the state.

Name Change

I, Priva Kumari (old name) daughter of Pankaj Kumar Mishra (father) & Reena Mishra (mother), by faith hindu, my Date of Birth- 29/03/2003, resident of Quraishi Mohalla, Raipar, Ansos, P.S.- Ansos (North), Dist- Paschini Bardhaman, West Bengal, India, have changed my name & religion and shall henceforth be known as Senehar Khanam (new name) wife of Shabash Khan, by faith Islam, as declared Before The Judicial Magistrate 1st Class at Ansos Court, vide an affidavit dated 10/12/2025. Daeneen Khanam (new name) and Priya Kumari (old name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, Rabia Khatoon (old name) D/O Late Md Asgar, residing at 4B, Jannagar Road, Circus Avenue, Kolkata-700017, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Rabiya Begum (new name), as declared Before The Notary Public at Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 15/01/2026. Rabiya Begum (new name) and Rabia Khatoon (old name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, Tanushree Mazumder @ Tanushree Pan (old name) D/o. Raj Kumar Mazumder & W/o. Partha Pan, R/o. Natungram, Mogra, Hooghly-712148, W.B., do hereby declare that I have changed my name from Tanushree Mazumder @ Tanushree Pan to Tanushree Mazumder Pan (new name) and henceforth I shall be known as Tanushree Mazumder Pan in all purpose, vide an affidavit no. 6746 sworn before Notary Public, Sadar, Hooghly Court on 24/12/2025. I, Tanushree Mazumder, Tanushree Pan & Tanushree Mazumder Pan D/o. Raj Kumar Mazumder & W/o. Partha Pan all are the same & one identical person.

Name Change

I, Jitendra Saraoi, S/o- Sharwan Saraoi, R/o-Nivedita Pally, P.O.-Sripally, P.S.- Burdwan, Distr- Purba Bardhaman-713103, W.B. declare that, my name has been wrongly recorded in my Son's Passport as Jeetendra Saraoi, vide Affidavit No.2542d dtd.14.01.2026, in the Court of Executive Magistrate, Purba Bardhaman. That, Jitendra Saraoi & Jeetendra Saraoi both are the same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, (Old Name) JAHANGIR SEIKH S/o- FARMAN SEIKH Residing at, Vill- Khosbaspur, Post- Khosbaspur, Ps- Kandi, Dist- Mursidabad, Pin- 742136, West Bengal. Do hearby declare that I have Changed my name from JAHANGIR SEIKH To JAHANGIR KABIR in all purpose Vide an affidavit Sworn before the notary public at Berhampore Mursidabad On 12 January 2026, JAHANGIR KABIR and JAHANGIR SEIKH both are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, (Old Name) ALHADI BIBI S/o- NUR ISLAM SK Residing at, Vill- Mahalandi, Post - Mahalandi, Ps- Kandi, Dist- Mursidabad, Pin- 742136, West Bengal. Do hearby declare that I have Changed my name from ALHADI BIBI To MARSHA BIBI (New name) and hence forth I Shall be Known as (New name) MARSHA BIBI in all purpose Vide an affidavit Sworn before the notary public at Berhampore Mursidabad On 12 January 2026, MARSHA BIBI and ALHADI BIBI both are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, (Old Name) AMULLA KUMAR BISWAS S/o- NILKANTHA BISWAS Residing at, Vill- Patikabari, Post - Patikabari, Ps- Nakashipara, Dist- Nadia, Pin- 741126, West Bengal. Do hearby declare that I have Changed my name from AMULLA KUMAR BISWAS To AMULLA KUMAR BISWAS (New name) and hence forth I Shall be Known as (New name) AMULLA KUMAR BISWAS in all purpose Vide an affidavit Sworn before the notary public at Berhampore Mursidabad On 12 January 2026, AMULLA KUMAR BISWAS and AMULLA KUMAR BISWAS both are same and one identical person.

NAME CHANGE

I, Samant Singh (Old Name), S/O- Sundar Singh, residing at MAA Gytri Apartment, BL-B-4 FR, 71, Lala Babu Saire Road, Howrah, Pin- 711202, W.B. have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Sawant Singh (New Name) as declared before Notary Public Sealad Court vide affidavit no. 16AC823206, dated 14/01/2026 Samant Singh and Sawant Singh both are same and identical person.

Name Change

I, Mohammad Ahtasham S/o Mohammad Qayumdin, residing at 9, Kushtia Road, P.O.-Tiljala, Kolkata, South 24 PGS, West Bengal, India, I declare that my name and my minor daughter's name has been wrongly recorded in his birth certificate as Md.Ahtasham instead of Mohammad Ahtasham and Zirqa Ahtasham instead of Zirqa Ahtasham vide an affidavit Before The 1st Executive Magistrate 1st class at Howrah, Date-12.12.2025. That Md.Ahtasham and Mohammad Ahtasham both are same and one identical person and also Zirqa Ahtasham and Zirqa Ahtasham both are the same and one identical person.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Snehar Mandal, W/o Abdul Ali Mandal, R/O Vill- Kundipur, P.O. Ganrapota, North 24 Parganas, W.B., declare that my name has been wrongly recorded as "Senehar Mondal" in my daughter's passport No. J9607934. My correct name is "Snehar Mandal." Both names refer to the same person.

Name Change

I, Md Firoz (Old Name) S/o Md Ali Residing at 127/D, Park Street, P.s- Park Street District - Kolkata, Pin- 700017, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Md Firoz (New Name) as declared before the Notary Public Kolkata vide affidavit Dated 14-01-2026. Md Firoz (Old Name) and Md Feroz (New Name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, Md Qadir (Old Name) S/o Md Feroz Residing at 127/D, Park Street, P.s- Park Street District - Kolkata, Pin- 700017, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Abdul Qadir (New Name) as declared before the Notary Public Kolkata vide affidavit Dated 14-01-2026. Abdul Qadir (Old Name) and Abdul Quadir (New Name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, Devyans Sonthalia (Old Name), Son Of Binay Sonthalia, Residing At 134, Salkia School Road, P.O-Salkia, Howrah- 711106, West Bengal, Have Changed My Name And Shall Henceforth Be Known As Devyans Sonthalia (New Name) Vide An Affidavit No. 4201 Sworn Before The 1st Class Judicial Magistrate At Alipore On 13/01/2026. Devyans Sonthalia And Devyans Sonthalia Both are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, INTEKHAB ALAM, residing at FLORA FOUNTAIN, 22 FLOOR, BL- 1, FL NO. 22G, 45, CHRISTOPHER ROAD, P.O.- GOBINDA KHATKAR ROAD KOLKATA 700046, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as INTEKHAB ALAM (new name), as declared Before The 1st Class Judicial Magistrate At Alipore, vide an affidavit dated 14/01/2026. INTEKHAB ALAM (new name) and INTEKHAB (old name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, Rojina Bibi (Old Name), Wife Of Harun Mondal, Residing At 15 Kustia Road, P.O Tijala, P.S Tijala,Kolkata -700039, West Bengal,Have Changed My Name And Shall Henceforth Be Known As Md Imran (New Name) Vide An Affidavit No. 35 Sworn Before The Notary Public At Kolkata On 15/01/2026. Md Imran And Imran Mohammad Both Are The Same And One Identical Person.

Name Change

I, Mahida Mondal (Old Name), Wife Of Abdul Khaled Mondal, Residing At Vill- Dula, Po- Bhopanapara,Nadia-741501,West Bengal, Have Changed My Name And Shall Henceforth Be Known As Rojina Khatun Mondal (New Name) Vide An Affidavit Sworn Before The Notary Public At Kolkata On 15/01/2026. Mahida Mondal And Saida Mondal Both Are The Same And One Identical Person.

Name Change

I, Siddhartha Tulsyan (old name) S/o Ashok Kumar Tulsyan, residing at 8A, PURNA DAS ROAD, 3RD FLOOR, P.S-RABINDRA SAROVER, Kolkata, 700029, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Siddhartha Tulsyan (new name), as declared Before The Notary Public At Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 14/01/2026. Siddhartha Tulsyan (new name) and Siddhartha Tulsyan (old name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, Rehana Parveen (Old Name), Wife Of Eazaz Uddin, Residing At 2/3, Rameshwar Shaw Road, Entally, Kolkata-700014, West Bengal, Have Changed My Name And Shall Henceforth Be Known As Sonam Parveen (New Name) Vide An Affidavit Sworn Before The Notary Public At Kolkata On 13/01/2025. Rehana Parveen And Sonam Parveen Both Are The Same And One Identical Person.

Name Change

I, Jayesh Jashvanti Vora (Old Name), Son Of Late Jashvanti Maganal Vora, Residing At 43 Chakrabera Road (N), Bhawanipore, Po-L.R.Sarani, Kolkata- 700020, West Bengal,Have Changed My Name And Shall Henceforth Be Known As Jayesh Vora (New Name) Vide An Affidavit Sworn Before The Notary Public At Kolkata On 14/4/2026. Jayesh Jashvanti Vora And Jayesh Vora Both Are The Same And One Identical Person.

Name Change

I, Vishal Mankani (old name) son of Lall Nebhraj Mankani, residing at 8A, Kailash Pandit Lane, New Alipore, Kolkata- 700053, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Vishal Lall Mankani (new name), as declared Before The Notary Public At Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 13/01/2026. Lall Nebhraj Mankani (new name) and Lall Chand Mankani (old name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, Lall Chand Mankani (old name) son of Nebhraj Mankani, residing at 8A, Kailash Pandit Lane, New Alipore, Kolkata- 700053, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Lall Nebhraj Mankani (new name), as declared Before The Notary Public At Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 13/01/2026. Lall Nebhraj Mankani (new name) and Lall Chand Mankani (old name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, Lall Chand Mankani (old name) son of Nebhraj Mankani, residing at 8A, Kailash Pandit Lane, New Alipore, Kolkata- 700053, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Lall Nebhraj Mankani (new name), as declared Before The Notary Public At Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 13/01/2026. Lall Nebhraj Mankani (new name) and Lall Chand Mankani (old name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, Sufia Begum Molla (old name) C/O Golam Gous Molla, residing at 3, SAMBUH CHATTERJEE STREET, KOLKATA, PIN- 700007, P.S- JORASANKHO, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Sufia Molla (new name), as declared Before The Notary Public At Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 13/01/2026. Sufia Molla (new name) and Sufia Begum Molla (old name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, Sufia Begum Molla (old name) C/O Golam Gous Molla, residing at 3, SAMBUH CHATTERJEE STREET, KOLKATA, PIN- 700007, P.S- JORASANKHO, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Sufia Molla (new name), as declared Before The Notary Public At Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 13/01/2026. Sufia Molla (new name) and Sufia Begum Molla (old name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, Md Golamal Mondal (old name) C/O Golam Mondal, residing at BAICHIDA DANGA, HELENCHA COLONY, NORTH 24 PARGANAS, PIN- 743270, P.S- BAGDAH, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Golam Mondal (new name), as declared Before The Notary Public At Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 13/01/2026. Golam Mondal (new name) and Md Golamal Mondal (old name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, Vobosht Mondal (Old Name) S/o Khandra Mondal Residing at Vill- Sainapur, P.o- Nakful, P.s- Bongaon, District- North 24 Parganas, Pin- 743235, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Bhabatosht Mondal (New Name) as declared before the Notary Public At Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 15-01-2026. Vobosht Mondal (Old Name) and Bhabatosht Mondal (New Name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, Narayan Chandra Saha (Old Name) S/o Late Yogendra Saha Residing At Raj Chandra Bhatak Road, Agarpatta, District- North 24 Parganas, Pin- 743235, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Sk. Bhola (new name), as declared Before The Notary Public At Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 04/1/2025. Sk. Bhola (new name) and Sk. Jenali (old name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, Tushar Virendra Sanghvi (Old Name), Son Of Virendra Sanghvi, Residing At 61 Sarat Bose Road, Po-Bhawanipore, Kolkata-700025, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Tushar Sanghvi (New Name) Vide An Affidavit Sworn Before The Notary Public At Kolkata On 15/01/2026. Tushar Virendra Sanghvi And Tushar Sanghvi Both Are The Same And One Identical Person.

Name Change

I, Md Jubair (Old Name) S/o Md Samir Residing at 268, G J Khan Road, P.Tiljala, District- Kolkata, Pin- 700039, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Md Zubair (New Name) as declared before the Notary Public At Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 15-01-2026. Md Jubair (Old Name) and Md Zubair (New Name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, Md Jubair (Old Name) S/o Md Samir Residing at 268, G J Khan Road, P.Tiljala, District- Kolkata, Pin- 700039, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Md Zubair (New Name) as declared before the Notary Public At Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 15-01-2026. Md Jubair (Old Name) and Md Zubair (New Name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, Dipak Ghosh (Old Name) S/o Md Sudhir Ghosh Residing at Nalabazar Mazer Para, P.s- Swarupnagar, District- North 24 Parganas, Pin- 743286, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Dipak Kumar Ghosh (New Name) as declared before the Notary Public At Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 15-01-2026. Dipak Ghosh (Old Name) and Dipak Kumar Ghosh (New Name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, Dipak Ghosh (Old Name) S/o Md Sudhir Ghosh Residing at Nalabazar Mazer Para, P.s- Swarupnagar, District- North 24 Parganas, Pin- 743286, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Dipak Kumar Ghosh (New Name) as declared before the Notary Public At Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 15-01-2026. Dipak Ghosh (Old Name) and Dipak Kumar Ghosh (New Name) both are same and one identical person.

Power Finance Corp announces new plan at Kolkata

MI News Service, Kolkata:
Power Finance Corporation (PFC) Limited envisages tapping Capital Market to raise upto Rs. 5,000 crore via public issue of Secured NCDs. The PFC Chairman and Managing Director, Parminder Chopra made some big announcement in Kolkata. PFC, a public financial institution and a Schedule-A Maharatna Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSE), focused on the power sector, has filed tranche I prospectus dated January 9, 2026 ("Tranche I Prospectus") for public issue of secured, rated, listed, redeemable, non-convertible debentures of the face value of Rs. 1,000 each(except in case of zero coupon NCD, face value shall be ₹ 1,00,000 each). The base issue size is Rs. 500 crore with a green shoe option of up to Rs. 4,500 crore, aggregating up to Rs. 5,000 crore ("Tranche I Issue"), which is within the shelf limit of Rs. 10,000 crore ("Issue").

The Tranche I Issue

Name Change
I, Monira Begam (Old Name) Vide An Affidavit Sworn Before The Notary Public At Kolkata On 15/01/2026. Monira Begam (new name), as declared Before The Notary Public At Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 15/01/2026. Monira Begam (old name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, Rojina Bibi (Old Name), Wife Of Harun Mondal, Residing At 15 Kustia Road, P.O. Tijala, P.S. Tijala, Kolkata-700044, West Bengal, Have Changed My Name And Shall Henceforth Be Known As Rojina Khatun Mondal (New Name) Vide An Affidavit Sworn Before The Notary Public At Kolkata On 15/01/2026. Rojina Bibi And Rojina Mondal Both Are The Same And One Identical Person.

Name Change

I, MUSHTAQUE AHMED, Son Of Late Mehboob Ali, Residing At 7-3/238/106/2/B, Bagdi Para Road, P.O.Bardatala,P.S. Nadial, Kolkata-700044, do hereby solemnly affirm and declare that my name, my wife's name and son's name is wrongly recorded in the birth certificate of my son issued by KMC having Regn.no.776 dtt.13.08.1993.The actual spelling of my name is MUSHTAQUE AHMED, my wife's name RUKHSANA KHATOON and my son ISHTIAQUE AHMED is recorded in our Aadhaar card, nos. 4892 0081 9126 9053 2446 and 3740 8671 9570 respectively. By an affidavit dtd. 04/1/2026 of Ld. Judicial Magistrate

Landmine blasts along LoC cause forest fire in J-K

MI News Service, Jammu: In a major recurrence of violence, nearly a dozen landmines exploded, initiating a forest fire along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district for the second day on Tuesday, officials said.

The fire broke out in the Basoomi forward area of Balakote sector on Monday afternoon and spread to parts of the Mendhar sector on Tuesday.

The fire caused nearly a dozen landmines to explode, according to the officials.

The forward areas along the LoC are dotted with landmines as part of an anti-infiltration obstacle system to prevent terrorists from intruding into Indian territory from across the border.

Amid the threat of possible infiltration attempts, multi-tier security arrangements have been strengthened and patrolling intensified in the area, the officials said.

However, there is no report of any casualty in the blasts and efforts are on to douse the flames.

The fire broke out in the Basoomi forward area in Balakote sector around 1.50 pm, causing five landmines to explode, the officials said.

According to the officials, the Army has intensified vigil as the fire is still raging.

JEE Main 2026 exam rescheduled for Bengal

MI News Service, New Delhi: The National Testing Agency (NTA) has announced a special accommodation for candidates appearing for the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) Main in West Bengal. Due to the celebration of Saraswati Puja on January 23, candidates had requested a change in examination date.

In response to these representations, the NTA has decided to allot an alternative date for the examination to candidates scheduled to appear for JEE Main in West Bengal. The new examination date will be among the advertised dates for the JEE Main 2026 Session 1 examination.

In a post on X, NTA wrote, "In view of the representations received from candidates in the state of West Bengal regarding the celebration of Saraswati Puja on 23rd January 2026, it has been decided that all candidates scheduled to appear for JEE (Main) in West Bengal on 23rd January 2026 shall be allotted another date of examination among the advertised dates for JEE (Main) 2026 Session 1 examination. For any queries, candidates may DM @NTA_Helpdesk or write to us at jeemain@nta.ac.in, or contact us at 011-40759000."

The NTA would implement facial biometric authentication during examinations and live photography at the application stage to strengthen exam security across all entrance examinations, beginning with JEE (Mains) in January 2026.

The move is aimed at curbing impersonation and other malpractices by ensuring real-time identity verification of candidates at multiple stages of the examination process, officials said.

CHITTARANJAN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS
E-TENDER NOTICE
TENDER NOTICE NO.: CLW-DKAE-415-ELEC-GSS-26. E-tenders are invited for and on behalf of the President of India for the following work: Sl. No.: [01]. Tender No.: CLW-DKAE-415-ELEC-GSS-26. Name of the work: Comprehensive AMC of 132/33KV Dankuni GSS for 24 months. Tender Value (Rs.): ₹ 1,94,25,020.52 (Rupees One Crore Ninety Four Lakhs Twenty Five Thousand Twenty and Paise Fifty two only). Cost of tender document (Rs.): ₹ 5,000.00 (Rupees Five thousand only). Earnest Money/Bid Security (Rs.): ₹ 2,47,100.00 (Rupees Two Lakhs Forty Seven Thousand One Hundred) only. Period of completion: 24 (Twenty Four) months. NOTE: (1) Complete details can be seen in the Railways website www.irps.gov.in (II) Contour Number: 03212-230003. (III) Date of closing of tender submission is 30.01.2026 at 12:00 hrs. PR3/83 AWW/Planning/Dankuni

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EASTERN RAILWAY

The following E-tenders are invited by the Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (General), Eastern Railway, Sealdah, 2nd Floor, Remote Control Building, Eastern Railway, Remote Control Building, Eastern Railway, Kolkata-700014 in connection with the following works: Sl. No. 1, Tender No.: ELEG-OT-1280-2025-26, Particulars of the work: Comprehensive corrective maintenance contract for repair of defective electrical Pantry/Sub Pantry appliances of LHB type Rajdhani, Duronto and other LHB trains having pantry cars and saloon of Sealdah Division for Three (03) Years. Tender Value: Rs. 95,22,28/-, Earnest Money: Rs. 1,90,500/- Sl. No. 2, Tender No.: ELEG-OT-1283-2025-26, Particulars of the work: Provision of Lightning protection against electrical substation on Sealdah Division. Tender Value: Rs. 149,03,32/-, Earnest Money: Rs. 2,24,500/- Completion period: 36 months (For Sl. No. 1) and 06 months (For Sl. No. 2). Tender Publication Date on IREPS: 13.01.2026 (For each). Bidding Start Date: 22.01.2026 (For each). Tender Closing Date & Time: 05.02.2026 at 14:00 hrs. (For each). Details of Tender Notice and corrigendum issued from time to time are available at website www.irps.gov.in DAH-355/2025-26

Tender Notices are also available at Website www.indianrailways.gov.in/www.irps.gov.in

Follow us at: @EasternRailway @easternrailwayheadquarter

Railway minister approves Kavach installation on key Eastern Railway sections

MI News Service, 15 Jan 2026, Kolkata: Eastern Railway has taken a significant step towards strengthening rail safety with the approval of the work for provision of the indigenously developed Automatic Train Protection (ATP) system, Kavach, over the balance uncovered section of 443 Route Kilometres on its network, at an estimated cost of Rs. 223.83 crore. The proposal has been submitted to the Railway Board and has received approval from the Hon'ble Minister for Railways.

The approved work will cover important sections of Eastern Railway including Howrah-Santragachhi, Lilabheri-Math, Tarakeswar-Ghosh, Maynapur-Bishnupur, Rampurhat-Dumka, Azimganj-Murshidabad, Lakshminikanta-Purnakhana, Kankurgach-



Term Evolution (LTE) on balance routes of Indian Railways (Umbrella Work 2024-25)", which has been approved under the Works, Machinery & Rolling Stock Programme (Pink Book) 2024-25 at a total cost of Rs. 27,693 crore. Under this umbrella, a sub-umbrella allocation of Rs. 896 crore has been sanctioned for Eastern Railway.

With the completion of this work, the entire railway network of Eastern Railway within the state of West Bengal will be brought under the Kavach system. The implementation of this advanced indigenous safety technology will significantly enhance passenger safety by preventing train collisions and over-speeding, and will further strengthen safe and reliable train operations across the region.



On 15.01.2026 renovated Mahanayak Uttam Kumar (Tollygunge) Metro station on Blue Line has been dedicated to the passengers with cutting of ribbon by kids and women commuters in presence of officers and staff of Metro Railway, Kolkata. Station and the subway were renovated giving the building a facelift matching the theme of the station. Entry gates were relocated to reduce congestion for streamline movement of passengers. Additional luggage scanner and door frame metal detector have been provided to improve scanning efficiency. The building facade has been provided with the improved illumination and station front with nice landscape gardens.

Offenders can't be shielded by state: SC seeks WB CM Mamta Banerjee's response on ED's plea over I-PAC raid interference

MI News Service, New Delhi: Observing that offenders cannot be protected under the shield of law-enforcement agencies of a particular state, the Supreme Court on Thursday issued notice to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and senior state-police officials on plea filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) alleging interference by state authorities during its search operations at the premises of political consultancy firm I-PAC under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

A Bench of Justices Prashant Kumar Mishra and A.G. Moshi noted that if issues involving larger constitutional questions are left undecided, it could lead to a situation of lawlessness in states governed by different political outfits.

"Considering adherence of rule of law in the country and to allow each organ to function independently, it is necessary to examine the issue so that offenders are not allowed to be protected under the shield of law-enforcing agencies of a particular state. According to us, larger questions are involved and raised, which if allowed to remain undecided, would further worsen the situation, and there will be a situation of lawlessness prevailing in one or other state, considering that different outfits are governing at different places," the Court observed.

The Court has also stayed an FIR registered by the West Bengal police against ED officials who had entered the I-PAC premises to conduct searches, after ED counsel sought interim protection. During the hearing, the Solicitor General of India (SG) Tushar Mehta, appearing on behalf of ED, described the incident as reflecting a "shocking state of affairs" in West Bengal.

"This is the state, whenever statutory authorities perform an investigation, the Hon'ble Chief Minister barges into wherever it is being conducted," the SG submitted. He alleged that the Chief Minister was accompanied by the Director General of Police, the Commissioner, the Deputy Commissioner of Kolkata and a large contingent of police personnel. The police personnel also accompanied the political leader to stage a "dharna" (protest) at the site, the SG added.

The SG further submitted that ED officers were obstructed in the discharge of their official duties and were personally aggrieved by the events that unfolded. He also alleged a pattern of intimidation against central agencies in West Bengal by referring to a prior incident in which the residence of a CBI Joint-Director was allegedly "raheeda" and ransacked.

According to the ED, incriminating material pertaining to the alleged coal scam of 2742.32 crores was present both at the I-PAC premises and at the residence of persons under investigation. Despite prior intimation

to the local police, a large police force allegedly entered the premises during the search, ED contended. It was also alleged that materials seized by the ED were taken away, including the mobile phone of an ED officer.

As per the ED, in the alleged coal scam, excavated and stolen coal used to be sold to a group of companies", SG submitted. "If this interference continues, it will encourage central officers not to discharge their duties. Central forces will be demoralised," Mehta warned, adding that such actions would have a chilling effect on investigations.

The ED urged the Supreme Court to set a precedent by directing the suspension of police officers who were present at the scene and ordering a departmental inquiry to be conducted by the State Chief Secretary. Further, it sought directions to recover (from WB authorities) the seized evidence (by ED) of political consultancy firm I-PAC under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, appearing for ED officers who had filed a separate plea seeking registration of an FIR by the CBI, argued that the incident disclosed a prima facie case of theft, which is a cognizable offence.

Referring to the apex court's landmark ruling, Lalith Kumari, he submitted that registration of an FIR was mandatory in such cases. He argued that the offence was not merely theft, but could extend to robbery or dacoity, though he limited his submissions to theft.

"This was a way to cover up tracks. Paper trail created", Singhvi added. Singhvi further submitted that unidentified persons had entered the premises and refused to disclose their identities. Defending the Director General of Police, Singhvi stated the Chief Minister is a Z-plus (security class) protegee. He argued that it was the duty of the police to ensure her security. "That is why the DGP went there," Singhvi said.

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He argued that the ED was aware that the premises contained political party data and election-related material and questioned the necessity of entering such premises in the midst of an election cycle. Senior Advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, appearing for the West Bengal government and the Director General of Police, objected to the maintenance of the ED's plea.

He pointed out that the ED had first approached the High Court and then, the very next day, filed petitions before the Supreme Court. Questioning alleged inconsistencies in the ED's record,

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Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Andhra see obesity more among women than men: Economic Survey

Delhi : Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh have higher proportion of women with obesity compared to men, according to a shocking revelation in the Economic Survey tabled in the Parliament on Monday. In the National Capital Territory (Delhi), 41.3 per cent of women are obese compared to 38 per cent for men, said the survey, citing National Family Health Survey (NFHS). In Tamil Nadu, it is 40.4 per cent for women while 37 per cent men are obese. In Andhra Pradesh, 36.3 per cent of women are obese as against 31.1 per cent for men.

Tabled by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, the survey said, "Combined with an ageing population in some states, obesity presents a concerning situation. Preventive measures must be taken to enable citizens to have



a healthier lifestyle." The survey added that obesity is higher in cities than in rural areas, affecting 29.8 per cent men in urban local-

ities compared to 19.3 per cent of men in villages. Unhealthy diets contribute to 54 per cent of total disease burden in India, said the

survey, sparking worries about increased consumption of processed food items, reduced physical activity and limited access to diverse foods.

The survey warned that preventive measures must be taken to enable citizens to have a healthier lifestyle. In order to reap the gains of the country's demographic dividend, it is critical that Indian population's health parameters transition towards a balanced and diverse diet, said the document. The adult obesity rate in the country has more than tripled while the rise among children is the steepest in the world, after Vietnam and Namibia, said the survey, citing a World Obesity Federation report. The Economic Survey was tabled a day ahead of the presentation of the Union Budget 2024.

MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS EMPHASISES ACCESS ISSUES

MASSACHUSETTS [US] : According to the American Psychological Association's 2023 Practitioner Pulse Survey, the ongoing mental health crisis is posing substantial obstacles for many psychologists as they deal with increased demand from patients coming with increasingly severe symptoms year after year.

The survey, which was completed by 561 licensed practising psychologists between August 30 and September 29, 2023, discovered that not only did more than half of psychologists (52 per cent) report an increase in the severity of symptoms among their patients, but 41 per cent reported an increase in the number of sessions spent treating each patient, which may limit their capacity to accept new patients.

Similarly, more than half (56 per cent) said that they had no openings for new patients. And more than two-thirds (69 per cent) of psychologists who maintained a waitlist said that the average wait was up to three months for a first appointment, while 31 per cent said average wait times were longer than three months. Psychologists reported increasing demand for treatment of certain mental health conditions, including anxiety disorders (68 per cent) and trauma- and stressor-related disorders (50 per cent), among those who treat those disorders.

"As the mental health crisis continues, psychologists are under

pressure," said APA CEO Arthur C. Evans Jr., PhD. "These findings underscore the sustained demand for care, led by increased severity of symptoms and extended treatment courses, compounded by increases year after year. This paints a clear picture of psychologists operating at the brink of their

providers, with 59 per cent saying they do so frequently or very frequently.

Collaborating providers included psychiatrists (76 per cent of psychologists said they worked with them, with 38 per cent doing so frequently); other physicians (45 per cent, with 17 per cent doing so frequently); occupational

therapists, and 25 per cent high blood pressure.

"Integrated care, where psychologists work on health care teams with other providers, is one way that we can expand access to care, prioritize preventive care and find ways to better meet the biological, psychological and social needs of the patients," said Evans.

"We must also support and expand the mental health workforce, foster innovation and technology, and support psychologists in extending their reach in the communities in which they live and work."

Psychologists have shown themselves to be adaptable, changing their work habits during the pandemic to include fully remote or hybrid practices. Only 21 per cent are now offering fully remote practices (down from a peak of 64 per cent in 2020), according to the poll, yet more than two-thirds (67 per cent) are now working in hybrid practices seeing some patients in person and others remotely.

More than one-third (36 per cent) of psychologists reported experiencing burnout and 1 in 5 psychologists (21 per cent) said that they were planning to reduce their practice hours in the next 12 months. Yet nearly three-quarters (73 per cent) said that they were able to practice self-care and nearly two-thirds (63 per cent) said that they were able to maintain a positive work-life balance.

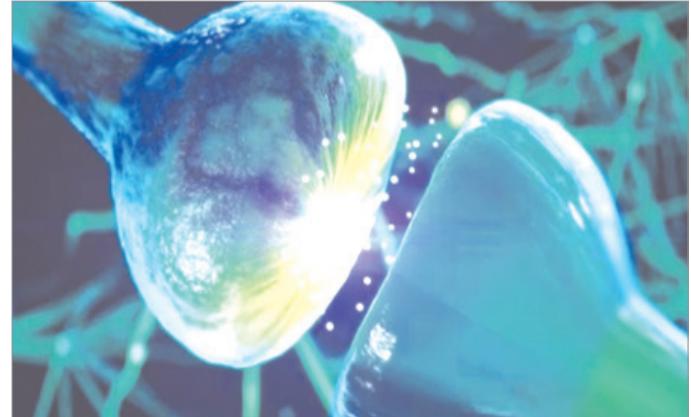


capacity. To better meet demand, it is essential that we develop comprehensive public health strategies that reach people throughout their lifespan and robustly address behavioral health alongside physical health."

The survey found that the psychologist workforce is already adapting to meet the changing needs of the population -- for example, as part of integrated care teams or in medical settings. More than 4 in 5 psychologists (86 per cent) said they have worked alongside other health care

therapists (30 per cent, with 6 per cent doing so frequently); physician assistants (41 per cent, with 11 per cent doing so frequently); community health workers (30 per cent, with 4 per cent doing so frequently); and speech language pathologists (28 per cent, with 5 per cent frequent collaborators). Alongside mental health concerns, psychologists reported treating patients with physical conditions, including 50 per cent treating patients with chronic pain, 42 per cent treating obesity or weight conditions, 27 per cent some symp-

Researchers shed light on how to restore nerve cells after injury



LA JOLLA (CALIFORNIA) : More than 3 million people in the United States suffer from peripheral neuropathy each year, a condition in which nerves outside of the brain and spinal cord are destroyed, resulting in pain and loss of feeling in the affected areas.

Peripheral neuropathy can be caused by diabetes, trauma, genetically inherited disease, infection, and other reasons.

Salk researchers identified a way to repair destroyed nerves in mice during peripheral neuropathy. They discovered that the protein Mitf aids in the activation of the repair function of the nervous system's specialist Schwann cells.

The findings, which will be published in *Cell Reports*, may inspire new therapeutics to increase repair function and heal peripheral neuropathy.

"We wanted to know what mechanisms control damage response in peripheral nerves under varying conditions--like acute trauma, genetic disorders, or degenerative diseases," says senior author Professor Samuel Pfaff. "We found that Schwann cells, which are special cells in nerves that protect and support

genetic nerve degeneration disorder, cells are dying and recovery isn't possible," says first author Lydia Daboussi, a former postdoctoral researcher in Pfaff's lab and current assistant professor at UC Los Angeles. "But our findings show that there are gene programs turned on by Mitf that repair some of the damage done in those chronic disease scenarios, and when you turn those programs off, disease symptoms get worse."

In mice with CMT, the researchers noticed that the Schwann cells completing the repairs had high levels of Mitf in their nuclei--where the genetic instructions for how to be a Schwann cell and how to conduct repairs are stored.

Upon investigation of this relationship between Mitf and Schwann cells, they found that Mitf was in the cytoplasm of Schwann cells until sensing neuronal damage. Damage then prompted Mitf to relocate from the cytoplasm of the cell to the nucleus, where it would direct the Schwann cell to make repairs.

To validate the importance of Mitf in creating repair Schwann cells, the researchers removed Mitf altogether. In cases of both trauma and CMT, nerve repair was arrested in the absence of Mitf--demonstrating that Mitf is required for peripheral nerve repair and regeneration.

According to Daboussi, Mitf acts like a fire extinguisher. Always there, sitting in the Schwann cell, unnoticed until damage occurs. And when that damage occurs, Mitf is ready to go and immediately turns on the cell's repair functions.

Most surprising, noted Pfaff, was that Mitf was orchestrating these repairs during a chronic disease like CMT.

"Going into this project, I thought that when you have a

genetic nerve degeneration disorder, cells are dying and recovery isn't possible," says first author Lydia Daboussi, a former postdoctoral researcher in Pfaff's lab and current assistant professor at UC Los Angeles. "But our findings show that there are gene programs turned on by Mitf that repair some of the damage done in those chronic disease scenarios, and when you turn those programs off, disease symptoms get worse."

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Using sophisticated tests on

Research shows diet has significant impact on risk of Alzheimer's disease

CALIFORNIA [US] : In a detailed study published in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease, Diet's Role in Modifying risk of Alzheimer's Disease: History and Present Understanding*, we can finally discover which diets are useful in lowering the chance of getting Alzheimer's disease. The importance of nutrition in reducing the risk of Alzheimer's disease is well examined. Plant-based diets, such as the Mediterranean diet and traditional cuisines in China, Japan, and India, have been demonstrated to minimise risk, particularly when compared to the Western diet.

Alzheimer's disease rates rise in these countries as they make the nutrition transition to the Western diet. This study identifies dementia risk factors including higher consumption of saturated fats, meat, especially red meat such as hamburgers and barbecue as well as processed meats such as hot dogs, and ultra-processed foods high in sugar and refined grains.

This review also lets us know why certain foods increase or reduce risk of Alzheimer's disease. For example, meat raised risk of dementia the most by increasing risk factors such as inflammation, insulin resistance, oxidative stress, saturated fat, advanced glycation end products, and trimethylamine N-oxide. This study also outlines several foods that are protective against Alzheimer's disease, such as green leafy vegetables, colorful fruits and vegetables, legumes (like beans), nuts, omega-3 fatty acids, and whole grains.

Ultra-processed foods can increase the risk of obesity and



diabetes, themselves risk factors for Alzheimer's disease. Ultra-processed foods often lack the very ingredients found in whole plant foods that keep dementia away, such as anti-inflammatory compounds and antioxidants.

Poverty is an important driver of Alzheimer's disease in the US since ultra-processed foods and meat are cheaper sources of energy than fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and other more nutritious foods, thus promoting obesity. The paper also suggests that Alzheimer's disease rates in the US are projected to increase by 50% from 2018 levels by 2038. This calculation is based on comparing trends of obesity in the US with Alzheimer's disease trends. This comparison shows a 20-year lag between obesity rates and Alzheimer's disease rates. This estimate is very close to the estimate published by the Alzheimer's Association in 2018, an estimate of a 56% increase. Our estimate suggests that the rising trend of obesity, due to consumption of meat and ultra-processed foods high in sugar and refined grains.

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Ultra-processed foods can increase the risk of obesity and

SBI Life launches 'SBI Life - Smart Platina'

Advantage, a life insurance guaranteed savings plan for long-term financial confidence in today's fast-changing world—where aspirations grow alongside responsibilities—financial security is no longer just about finances, but about certainty, peace of mind, and the ability to protect loved ones through every phase of life. Recognising this need, SBI Life Insurance, one of India's most trusted private life insurers, launched 'SBI Life - Smart Platina Advantage', an individual, non-linked, non-participating life insurance savings product that offers long-term guaranteed benefits along with life insurance protection throughout the policy term. Designed to help individuals plan confidently for life's milestones—be it children's education, retirement planning, corpus creation, building second income etc., —SBI Life - Smart Platina Advantage enables individuals to build a disciplined financial corpus with assured guaranteed additions every policy year. The product combines predictability with flexibility, ensuring one to secure defined maturity outcomes while paying premiums for a limited duration. Key features of SBI Life - Smart Platina Advantage are:

- Long-term Guaranteed Benefits with life insurance cover
- Pay premiums for a Limited Period while enjoying life cover for entire Policy Term
- Tax benefits, as per applicable provisions of the Income Tax Act, 1961
- Option to receive maturity proceeds in instalments, offering post-maturity liquidity and financial flexibility.

Early life antibiotic might increases risk of asthma: Study

SELANGOR, MALAYSIA : Early exposure to antibiotics might increase long-term vulnerability to asthma. Importantly, the study team discovered a chemical generated by gut bacteria that might possibly be used in the future as a simple therapy, in the form of a food supplement, to prevent asthma in children, according to recent study from Monash University.

Asthma affects around 260 million people worldwide, resulting in approximately 455,000 deaths each year.

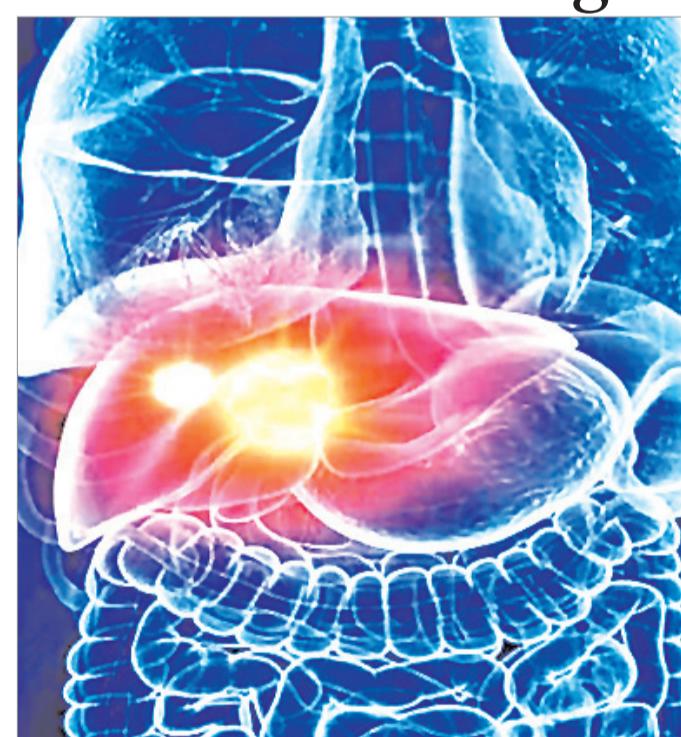
Professor Ben Marsland's study, published today (TBC) in the journal *Immunity*, identified a molecule called IPA as critical for long-term asthma prevention.

Importantly the finding of the

molecule produced by bacteria in a healthy gut provides an explanation as to why the recurrent use of antibiotics increases the risk of asthma, according to Professor Marsland. "We know that recurrent use of antibiotics early in life disrupts a person's healthy gut microbiota and increases the risk of allergies and asthma. We have discovered that a consequence of antibiotic treatment is the depletion of a key molecule that has the potential to prevent asthma. IPA, which we have found is critical early in life as our lung cells mature, making it a candidate for early life prevention of allergic airway inflammation."

The first years of life are important in developing a stable gut microbiota, according to Professor Marsland. "It is shaped first by food intake - both milk and solid foods - as well as genetic

Researchers reveals ways of preventing cancer cells from colonizing liver



change their identity: they free themselves from the surface layer of the intestine, or epithelium, severing their close connections to neighbouring cells.

Once in the bloodstream, the cancer cells resemble those from connective tissue called mesenchyme. Yet once they find their new niche - thanks to the plexin on some liver cells - the cancer cells turn back into their sedentary form. "An epithelialisation process takes place," the researchers wrote in their paper. Moor expands: "You can spot this immediately if you look at the cancer cells, as they form invaginations similar to the folds or crypts in the intestine."

The researchers' discovery will have an impact on more than colorectal cancer patients: further tests have shown that plexin also encourages the formation of metastases in melanoma and pancreatic cancer. For Moor and his team, this throws up many new research questions. One in particular is drawing their focus: when cancer cells cluster together to form a tumour, they also influence cells in their environment. "Cancer cells set up their own ecosystem," Moor explains.

If efforts to inhibit the crucial interaction between plexin and semaphorin succeed, may be possible to prevent the cancer from establishing new tumours in the first place. That's because early on, when the relationships among the cells in this ecosystem have not yet been firmly established, tumour metastases are especially vulnerable, Moor explains. He appears confident that an answer lies within this "critical period of time in the development of metastases", even though the path to any potential treatment is still long.

genetically modified mice, Moor and his team have discovered that the secret lies in certain proteins on the cell surface. When liver cells have a protein called Plexin-B2 and the colorectal cancer cells possess certain proteins from the semaphorin family, the colorectal cancer cells can attach themselves to the liver cells. Cancer cells that have semaphorins on their surface are especially dangerous, as attested by clinical studies cited by Moor's researchers in their paper. The study data shows that colorectal cancer metastasises earlier and more frequently to the liver if the tumour has large amounts of semaphorin. Plexin and its counter-

Iran briefly closes airspace for all flights unless previous permission is given: media



MI News Service, Cairo: Iran issued a notice shutting down its airspace briefly till early Thursday to all flights except international flights to and from Iran with prior permission, according to media reports citing flight traffic information provider FlightRadar24 on Thursday.

The notice is valid for a little more than 2 hours through 00:30 UTC 15 Jan., FlightRadar24 said on social media.

Tit-for-tat response, warns Raja Singh after Hyderabad temple vandalized

MI News Service, Hyderabad: Controversial Goshamahal MLA T Raja Singh warned that there would be retaliation for every incident of temple vandalism, a day after the religious structure was damaged in Hyderabad's Puranapul Darwaza.

In a statement issued on Thursday, January 15, Raja Singh said that the Hindus have woken up and will give a proper reply to every incident of temple vandalism. "On Wednesday night, a Muslim damaged a temple at Puranapul. In retaliation, the Hindus damaged the dargah and the chilla constructed illegally. The Hindus have learnt to retaliate," said Singh.

He said that after every case, the police say the men involved in the desecration of temples are insane. "Now Hindus have also become insane. They can see the mosque and the dargah too," said Singh.

On Wednesday, January 14, night, a temple in Puranapul was vandalised by an unidentified person, leading to violence, where five people were injured and a religious flag, shrine and some vehicles were damaged.

Locals who noticed the vandalism



alerted residents, following which a mob gathered and staged a protest. Police reached the spot and prevented any outbreak of violence.

The police booked two cases, one for vandalism of the temple, and the second against a mob for damaging vehicles, attacking police with stones, damaging a religious flag and graves at Puranapul Darwaza, and attacking people of a particular community.

Senior officials held talks with locals and the damaged portion of the idol was restored, with heavy police deployed in and around Puranapul and its surrounding areas.

NASA crew returns to Earth earlier than planned due to astronaut medical issue



News Service, Angeles: NASA's SpaceX Crew-11 astronauts returned to Earth early Thursday after one of the crew members aboard the International Space Station (ISS) experienced a medical issue last week.

The four-member SpaceX Dragon spacecraft splashed down off the coast of California at about 3:41 a.m. Thursday (1141 GMT) after an approximately 10-hour journey.

The crew includes

Turkiye opposes military operation against Iran, says FM

MI News Service, Istanbul: Turkiye opposes any military operation against Iran and supports efforts to preserve regional stability, Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said here on Thursday. At a press briefing, Fidan said he hoped the United States and Iran would resolve the matter between themselves, either through mediators, other parties, or direct negotiations.

He stressed that dialogue remains the only viable path to resolving disputes, warning that any large-scale instability in Iran would exceed the region's capacity to absorb its consequences.

Emphasizing Turkiye's close ties with its eastern neighbor, Fidan said developments in Iran are of direct concern to Ankara.

Fidan added that Iran must address its internal problems, resolve disputes with neighboring countries, and pursue diplomacy on the nuclear issue to remove the structural causes of its economic difficulties.

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MI News Service, New Delhi: The Delhi High Court on Wednesday strongly reprimanded an organisation named Save India Foundation for repeatedly filing Public Interest Litigations (PILs) alleging encroachment by mosques and religious places in the national capital. A division bench comprising Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyay and Justice Tejas Karia observed that the conduct of the organisation was inappropriate and amounted to a misuse of the PIL mechanism.

The bench remarked, "Do you see only one kind of encroachment? We do not understand this. You are misusing the court process. Every week you roam around the city, spot a religious structure, and file a PIL," emphasising that there are many other ways to serve humanity.

The Chief Justice further said, "Are you trying to get your name into the Guinness Book of World Records? Do you not see any other problems in society? People who do not have access to clean drinking water, people who are dying of hunger—do you not see

them? Do you see only encroachments? Please do not misuse PILs like this; these petitions trouble us."

It was informed that Save India Foundation had filed two PILs in the Delhi High Court on the same day. One petition referred to Jama Masjid, while the other mentioned a madrasa in Giri Nagar. The petitions alleged that these structures had encroached upon government "green/secular" land. Appearing for the petitioner organisation, Advocate Umesh Chandra Sharma argued that no action had been taken against the mosque despite complaints

being filed. On the other hand, Advocate Sameer Vashishth, appearing for the Delhi government, stated that according to local authorities, the structure was an encroachment.

Senior Advocate Sanjay Ghosh, representing the Delhi Waqf Board, argued that the mosque was a registered structure and that the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) had also participated in the demarcation of the land. He further submitted that a High Court judge had earlier noted a pattern in the petitions filed by the organisation, pointing out that religious structures belonging to a particular community were being targeted.

After hearing the case for some time, the bench said it would reconsider the matter on January 21. Meanwhile, the Waqf Welfare Forum has filed a complaint with the National Commission for Minorities against Save India Foundation, questioning the organisation's credibility and legal standing, and raising concerns over whether it is operating to spread social hatred or for personal gain.

During the drive, a total of 446 cases of ticketing irregularities were detected. These included 327 cases of ticketless travel, 88 cases of unbooked luggage, and 31 cases of littering. All offenders were

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Howrah Division, East

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Magistrate Ticket Checking Drive Conducted at Howrah Station

MI News Service, Kolkata, 15 Jan. 26 : Howrah Division, Eastern Railway conducted a Magistrate Ticket Checking Drive at Howrah Station with the objective of strengthening ticketing discipline and ensuring strict compliance with railway rules. The drive was aimed at promoting lawful, responsible and orderly rail travel for the benefit of genuine passengers.

The operation was carried out by a coordinated team comprising 35 Ticket Checking Staff (TCS) along with 2 Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel, ensuring effective monitoring and enforcement across the station premises.

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Owaisi urges Jaishankar to evacuate Hyderabad student stranded in Iran

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The student is a resident of Noorkhan Bazar in Darulshifa in Hyderabad.

India on Wednesday, January 14, asked all its nationals residing in Iran to leave by available means and avoid any travel to the country, as tensions mounted over a possible military intervention by the US following Tehran's crackdown on nationwide protests that reportedly killed over 2,500 people.

In a fresh advisory, the Indian Embassy in Tehran urged all Indians, including students, pilgrims, businesspersons, and tourists, to leave Iran using available modes of transport, including commercial flights.

Protest in Copenhagen voices opposition to U.S. plans on Greenland

MI News Service, Oslo: About 200 protesters rallied outside the U.S. Embassy in Denmark Wednesday, expressing opposition to Washington's plans on Greenland as Danish and Greenlandic officials met with U.S. Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio in Washington.

The demonstration, named "Greenland Belongs to the Greenlanders," began at 4 p.m. local time (1500 GMT) in front of the embassy and was later moved by police to the opposite side of the street. The protest lasted around two hours.

"We only want to be ourselves. We want to belong to Greenland as Greenlanders, and we will stay strong and committed to that," a Greenlan-

der, Andersen, told Xinhua.

"Nobody should be able to take over another country - not because someone thinks they are strong and therefore can take whatever they want," said Simon Vincent Nelson, a Copenhagen resi-

dent, adding that he was "very angry about it and felt offended."

The rally followed U.S. President Donald Trump's renewed remarks to acquire Greenland, which have been firmly rejected by Denmark, Greenland, and NATO allies.

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PLAYERS BOYCOTT DELAYS BPL MATCH, REFEREE STANDS ALONE AT TOSS

DHAKA : The toss for the Bangladesh Premier League's match between Chattogram Royals and Noakhali Express was delayed on Thursday after players refused to show up at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium following a humiliation by Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) finance committee chairman Najmul Islam.

The match was scheduled for a 1:00 pm start, with the toss slated for 12:30 pm and the match alone stands alone in the middle after both captains decided not to appear for the toss.

This came after Najmul insulted the cricketers, stating that only the players stood to lose out if Bangladesh didn't play the T20 World Cup and that the BCB wouldn't compensate the players for the earnings loss.

The players felt humiliated by Najmul's remark, following which the Cricketers Welfare Association of Bangladesh (CWAB) on Wednesday announced that players would not take part in the BPL if Najmul did not resign before the opening game.

CWAB has also called a press conference at a city hotel to outline its position, after discussions between BCB officials and player representatives failed to produce a breakthrough. The talks were held just hours after CWAB had issued an ultimatum, as reported by Cricbuzz.

Islam had earlier described former captain Tamim Iqbal as an "Indian agent" after the former Bangladesh skipper suggested dialogue with the ICC and BCCI over the T20 World Cup venue row. The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) released a statement on Wednesday evening, saying that Islam's comments do not align with their values.

"The Bangladesh Cricket Board wishes to address recent comments made by a member of the Board that have generated concern. "The BCB reiterates that it does not endorse or take responsibility for any statement or remark made by any director or Board member unless issued formally through the Board's designated spokesperson or the Media and Communications Department. Any statements made outside these authorised channels are personal in nature and should not be interpreted as representing the views or policies of the Board," the statement said.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board also makes it clear that it will take appropriate disciplinary action against any individual whose conduct or comments show disrespect towards cricketers or cause harm to the reputation and integrity of Bangladesh cricket," the statement added.

Bhubaneswar to host Women's National T20 Cricket Tournament for the Blind 2026 from January 17

BHUBANESHWAR : The Cricket Association for the Blind in India (CABI) and Samarthanam Trust for the Disabled will host the Women's National T20 Cricket Tournament for the Blind 2026 from January 17 to 22 in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, with a total of 18 teams, grouped into five pools, competing in a high-energy battle for the championship.

The league matches will commence on January 17 and culminate in the grand final on January 22. The tournament will be formally inaugurated on January 16 with a grand opening ceremony scheduled at 7:30 PM at the Hi-Tech Medical College Auditorium. The Hon'ble Minister for Sports, Government of Odisha, along with distinguished guests from corporate organisations and political representatives, are expected to grace the occasion.

Dr. Mahantesh G. Kivadasanavar, Chairman of the Cricket Association for the Blind in India (CABI), said, "Over the past year, there has been tremendous momentum around women's cricket, and national-level tournaments play a crucial role in identifying and nurturing new talent to represent India. The Indian Women's Team's World Cup victory has made the nation proud, and all 16 players from the World Cup squad are participating in the nationals, representing their respective states. They showcased their skills at the national level before earning their place in the Indian team."

"This championship provides a vital platform for players to give their best and demonstrate

MITCHELL STARC BAGS ICC MEN'S PLAYER OF THE MONTH AWARD FOR DECEMBER

DUBAI : Australia's talismanic bowler Mitchell Starc has been named as the winner of the ICC Men's Player of the Month award for December, following his splendid performance against England in the Ashes 2025-26.

The 35-year-old was on a roll in the recently concluded Ashes series, taking 31 wickets and contributing with two half-centuries. His outstanding all-round performance earned him the Player of the Series award.

Australia's left-arm fast bowler was nominated for the Player of the Month award after he took 16 wickets and scored 139 runs across three tests in December.

Starc was proud to have won the award on the back of such a successful home Ashes win.

"It's an honour to be named the ICC Player of the Month, and even more special that it came on the back of such a successful home Ashes. To have played a part in winning such an iconic



series in front of our home crowd is something we will all relish for a long time," Starc said to ICC. "As a team, we've had some

Washington Sundar ruled out of NZ T20Is with rib injury; likely to report to CoE in Bengaluru

NEW DELHI : India all-rounder Washington Sundar has been ruled out of the five-match T20I series against New Zealand, as he is still recovering from a rib injury he suffered during the ODI series opener in Vadodara, sources told IANS on Thursday.

The five-match T20I series, which is set to begin on January

21 at the Vidarbha Cricket Association Stadium in Nagpur, is part of India's preparation for the T20 World Cup, which starts on February 7. It remains unclear whether the all-rounder will recover in time for the marquee tournament.

"Washington is ruled out of the T20Is against New Zealand, as he

would take at least a few more weeks to recover from the injury suffered in the Vadodara ODI. It is yet to be known if he will be fully fit in time for the T20 World Cup," said a source familiar with the matter to IANS.

The source further said, "Washington is likely to report to the CoE in Bengaluru on Saturday and will know more about his recovery timeline once he reaches there."

This is the second injury blow that India have suffered for the T20I series after Tilak Varma, who underwent surgery for a groin injury, was ruled out of the first three T20Is of the five-game series. Earlier, Sundar was also ruled out of the ongoing ODI series after he reported an acute onset discomfort in his left lower rib area while bowling during the first ODI against New Zealand at the BCA Stadium last Sunday and underwent further scans.

The BCCI called up the 26-year-old Ayush Badoni as Sundar's replacement, handing him his maiden national call-up.

Suryakumar Yadav (c), Abhishek Sharma, Sanju Samson (wk), Tilak Varma (unavailable for first three games), Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Axar Patel (vc), Rinku Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Harshit Rana, Arshdeep Singh, Kuldeep Yadav, Varun Chakaravarthy, Washington Sundar, Ishan Kishan (wk)

outstanding performances in the last few years. The focus now is on building that momentum towards a place in next year's ICC World Test Championship Final," he added.

The Australian beat two other impressive performers in West Indies' Justin Greaves and New Zealand's Jacob Duffy.

Greaves had a memorable month in New Zealand, amassing 283 runs at an average of 56.60 over three Tests. His exceptional performance was in the first Test at Christchurch, where he scored an unbeaten 202 in the fourth innings, saving the match and helping his team draw.

While New Zealand fast bowler Duffy led the wickets in the home Test series against West Indies, taking 23 wickets at an impressive average of 15.43 over three matches. He was crucial to New Zealand's 2-0 series win, regularly challenging opposition batters with his swing and precision.

LAURA WOLVAARDT NAMED PLAYER OF THE MONTH FOR DECEMBER AHEAD OF SHAFALI VERMA



DUBAI : South Africa's captain, Laura Wolvaardt, has bagged the Player of the Month award for December after her remarkable performance in the last month of the year 2025, which helped the team register series victories against Ireland in T20I and ODI formats.

Fresh off a commanding campaign in the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025, Wolvaardt continued to showcase her brilliance, rounding off a remarkable year by registering three centuries across formats in just one month.

Wolvaardt was at her destructive best in the opening T20I, blasting an unbeaten 115 at a staggering strike rate of 205.35, an innings studded with 15 boundaries and four sixes. Her dominance carried into the ODI series, where she opened the batting and played a key role throughout. After a steady 31 in the first match, she struck back-to-back centuries, hammering 124 off 111 balls in the second ODI before finishing unbeaten on 100 in the final game to seal the whitewash.

Across the three ODIs, Wolvaardt accumulated 255 runs at a remarkable average of 127.50 and a strike rate of 111.84. In the T20I series, she scored 137 runs at a blistering strike rate of 190.27, losing her wicket only once.

This is Wolvaardt's second Player of the Month Award, having bagged the prize earlier in October 2025, and she felt happy and grateful after receiving the honour.

"I'm delighted to be named the ICC Player of the Month once again. To win it two times in three months is very special and something I'll cherish for a long time. I loved batting throughout Ireland's tour of South Africa, and it was hugely rewarding to contribute with runs across both the ODI and T20I formats," the South African said.

"With the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026 on the horizon, my focus is firmly on carrying this momentum forward. We've shown real progress in recent ICC events, and I'm excited about the summer ahead in England and Wales. I hope to continue playing my part and help take the team all the way," she added.

Wolvaardt beat teammate Sune Luus, who impressed with her all-round performance scoring 323 runs and picking up eight wickets across formats, in the month and November winner Shafali Verma, who scored 241 runs in five T20I games for India, to bag this honour.

Gujarat Titans to roll out Junior Titans programme in five cities starting from Saturday

IANS in an exclusive conversation on Thursday.

This year, the initiative will be in five cities - Surendranagar (January 24), Amreli (January 31), Anand (February 7), and before concluding in Ahmedabad on February 14.

"The idea is very simple to try and cover various regions of Gujarat every year. So if you kind of plot where we started from in the 2023 season, and where we are today, and what we will be covering this year, you will find that we like to go to different parts of Gujarat and not leave any part of Gujarat untouched."

Colonel Arvinder Singh, the franchise's Chief Operating Officer (COO), said the initiative, which has engaged more than 10,000 children so far in 11 cities, will help more and more kids to get into more outdoor sporting activities.

Singh also clarified that it should not be seen as a talent hunt to unearth the next Shubman Gill, Smriti Mandhana or Harmanpreet Kaur. "It is purely aimed as a concept at motivating children - boys and girls - to come out and play, and not just play cricket. Play whatever you want, but do some physical activity. So it's not that we're not reaching out in the small cities to look for the next Shubman Gill. Certainly not - that's not our aim."

"Nor are we trying to teach them how to play cricket, nor are we telling them that you should play only cricket. We are just telling them to come out, do physical activity and play whichever sport. In doing so, we create a curator event for them in their own city, in one of the schools, where, in turn, children from various schools, both boys and girls, come."

"We encourage every school to send an equal number of boys and girls as far as possible to these events of ours, and provide those kinds of facilities there. Again, the intention is not that we're not trying to look for the next Shubman or Smriti," Singh told IANS.

'They play incredible tennis,' Federer hails Alcaraz-Sinner rivalry ahead of Aus Open

MELBOURNE : Swiss tennis great Roger Federer returned to Melbourne Park ahead of the Australian Open and lavished praise on Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner, hailing their rivalry as one of the most exciting storylines in modern tennis.

Federer, who announced his retirement in 2022, makes his appearance at the Melbourne Park ahead of the opening ceremony of the 2026 edition of the hard-court major, six years since the Swiss star played his final tournament.

The six-time Australian Open champion will be participating in the Grand Slam's inaugural ceremony in a special 'Battle of the World No. 1s' game on January 17. He will play alongside fellow Olympic champion Andre Agassi, Australian duo Patrick Rafter and Lleyton Hewitt.

Federer arrived in Melbourne on Thursday morning and received a warm welcome from fans. The tennis icon later spoke about the Alcaraz and Sinner rivalry that has etched itself into the tennis landscape in a similar manner to Federer vs. Rafael Nadal.

The pair have won the past eight major singles titles between them and contested the final three Grand Slam title clashes of 2025, including a remarkable five-set battle at Roland Garros during which Alcaraz saved three championship points in the third set before going on to lift the trophy.

"The rivalry with Alcaraz and Sinner is a great one. They play incredible tennis. I think that French Open final was unreal. I think the game, not that it needed it, but it was great that we had it. I feel like for a second, for a moment, the world stood still in the sporting world and watched towards Paris what was going on in that epic fifth set because it could have ended much, much sooner, obviously, for Jannik," Federer was quoted by ATP Today.

"Then all of a sudden it ended up in this most crazy fashion. Maybe one of the greatest games we've ever had in our sport. It's good we still live off that momentum. Then they backed it up by playing against each other in all those other finals. Everybody is trying to keep up, and they're trying to pull away. What we've seen in terms of their progression in the last years, it's been wonderful. I practised with those guys a little bit. They're incredible ball strikers. There's obviously more to come," he added.

Sinner arrives at the Australian Open this year as the two-time defending champion. Meanwhile, world No. 1 Alcaraz has the chance to become the youngest man to complete the Career Grand Slam (winning all four major titles) if he can lift his maiden trophy at Melbourne Park.



their cricketing talent. The support from IndusInd Bank has been instrumental and is a key driver behind the growth of women's cricket for the blind in India. Their continued commitment has made a meaningful difference in empowering women and transforming lives through cricket for the blind," he added.

"The league stage and quarterfinals will conclude on January 20, after which the four qualifying teams will compete in the semi-finals on January 21 for a place in the final. The grand finale will be held on January 22 at the Hi-Tech Medical College Cricket Ground. A total of 31 matches will be played in the IndusInd Bank Women's National T20 Cricket Tournament for the Blind 2026.

"The winning team will receive a cash prize of INR 15,000, while the runners-up will be awarded INR 12,500. Three players, representing three different sight categories, will be honoured as Players of the Series with a cash award of INR 15,000 each. Additionally, 31 Players of

the Match will receive INR 5,000 each, and every player will be paid a match fee of INR 1,000 per match," said G. Sridhar, Chairman of Women's Cricket and Treasurer of the Cricket Association for the Blind in India (CABI). The President of the Visually Impaired in Odisha (CAVI), Md. Jafar Iqbal said, "CAVI is delighted to host 18 women's teams, and this marks the first time a Women's National Cricket Tournament for the Blind is being held in Odisha. Women's cricket has witnessed significant growth over the years, and we are proud that cricket for the blind continues to empower and transform the lives of women cricketers. I would like to thank the Government of Odisha and the Department of Sports & Youth Services for their overwhelming support over the years in promoting cricket for the blind. The Government of Odisha has always been proactive in providing employment opportunities, cash awards, and recognition to the players. I also extend my sincere gratitude to all our partners for their continued support of the Women's National Tournament."

The 18 teams have been grouped based on their performances in the previous National Tournament. This edition marks the 6th Women's National T20 Cricket Tournament for the Blind.

Madhya Pradesh emerged as the champions of the 5th edition, and all eyes will be on the top teams to see if a new champion will rise in the 6th edition of the Women's National T20 Cricket Tournament for the Blind 2026. Odisha has claimed the title three times in the last five editions, while Karnataka secured the championship in 2022.

The participating teams have been divided into the following groups:

- Group A: Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Kerala
- Group B: Karnataka, Jharkhand, Delhi, Gujarat
- Group C: Odisha, Andhra Pradesh
- Group D: Maharashtra, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh
- Group E: West Bengal