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KOLKATA

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Morning India

SUVENDU meets party workers amid torrential rain

MI News Service, Belda: West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari conducted a public outreach program in Belda on his way to attend the Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya training camp for the Ghatol organizational district. Amid torrential rains affecting various parts of the state, he met and engaged with party workers and local residents to strengthen connections and review local issues.

Following his visit to Belda, Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari is scheduled to hold a high-level administrative meeting on Sunday, in Nandigram. The administration is preparing for a key event at the Shiv Mandir ground in Reyapara, where he will present a comprehensive report card of the state government's recent work.

Despite heavy and continuous rainfall, State Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari met local party workers and supporters in Belda in West Medinipur district. Braving the adverse weather conditions, the Chief Minister reached out to party workers and interacted with



Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari at Belda on Sunday.

them.

The Chief Minister's arrival amid the rain sparked enthusiasm among party workers and supporters gathered at the venue.

During the interaction, he took stock of the situation in the area and discussed various organisational activities and local issues being faced by residents.

Party workers also shared

their concerns with the Chief Minister and brought several local issues to his attention.

Adhikari discussed ways to further strengthen the organisation at the grassroots level and stressed the importance of maintaining regular contact with the general public. The presence and enthusiasm of party workers despite the heavy downpour added significance to the meeting.

The Chief Minister's decision to meet workers despite the torrential rain became a topic of discussion in Belda. The interaction was viewed as an important effort to strengthen communication with party workers and reinforce grassroots-level contact despite the challenging weather conditions.

Mahanayak's Birth Centenary: MODI pays tribute to UTTAM KUMAR on 'Mann Ki Baat'



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Mahanayak Uttam Kumar.

MI News Service, New Delhi/ Kolkata: Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tribute to Bengali cinema icon Uttam Kumar during the 137th episode of Mann Ki Baat on Sunday, ahead of the actor's birth centenary on September 3.

Calling Kumar a "versatile performer", Modi said, "On September 3, we will mark the birth centenary of legendary actor Uttam Kumar. A versatile performer, he captivated audiences with his remarkable portrayals and earned a

lasting place in the hearts of people."

Born Arun Kumar Chattopadhyay in 1926, Uttam Kumar is widely remembered as the Mahanayak of Bengali cinema. Over a career spanning more than three decades, he worked as an actor, director, producer, composer and screenwriter.

Modi also highlighted Kumar's association with filmmaker Satyajit Ray, particularly their landmark collaboration Nayak: The Hero (1966).

"Film lovers believe that Mr Satyajit Ray wrote the entire script of the film 'Nayak-The Hero' keeping the great hero Uttam Kumar ji in mind," Modi said.

Kumar made his silver screen debut with a supporting role in Drishtidan in 1948, but several of his early films failed at the box office. His fortunes changed with Basu Paribar in 1952, followed by Sharey Chuaator in 1953, which became a major success and launched his celebrated pairing with Suchitra Sen.

The Uttam Kumar-Suchitra Sen duo went on to become one of Bengali cinema's most iconic screen partnerships, starring together in films such as Agni Pariksha, Harano Sur and Saptapadi.

In 1967, Kumar became the first recipient of the National Film Award for Best Actor in a Leading Role, recognised for his performances in Antony Firingee and Ray's Chiriyakhana.

Uttam Kumar died of a heart attack on July 24, 1980, aged 53.

Dr. Swapan Dasgupta will bring Viksit Bengal: SITHARAMAN

MI News Service, Kolkata: The Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman was in all praise for Dr. Swapan Dasgupta, the Finance Minister of West Bengal as she graced a programme in Kolkata recently in the honour of the latter. Sitharaman said " Bengal needed a brave, scholar, meticulous and honest person like Swapan to lead Bengal in its economic revival mission. " According to the Union Minister, Bengal has not contributed significantly in the last 50 years to Indian economy. To her, " time has come to change the tide and Swapan Dasgupta is the perfect person to guide it all the way". Sitharaman candidly assured that the Union Finance Ministry would be always there to cooperate West Bengal in its economic resurgence.

'Janatar Darbar' to be held at govt offices; Nabanna announces dates

MI News Service, Kolkata: The state government is taking a significant step to listen to the concerns of the common people. Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari himself hears the grievances of the public once a week, ensuring prompt resolution of issues. Now, government officials are also required to listen to the people—and not merely listen, but resolve matters quickly. To this end, a 'Janata Darbar' (public hearing) will be held within government offices. Chief Secretary Manoj Agarwal has already issued directives to this effect, clearly mandating that government officials must meet directly with the public on two designated days each week. This initiative extends beyond urban areas, bringing field-level officers from various departments—ranging from the district to the block level—under its purview.



West Bengal State Govt headquarter Nabanna.

According to the guidelines issued by the Chief Secretary, members of the public can directly visit the relevant departments to meet officials and seek solutions to their grievances. Specific days and times have been designated for this purpose: every Tuesday and Thursday from 10:30 AM to 1:00 PM. No prior permission or appointment is required to

meet the officials; one can simply visit the office on the scheduled days to present their issues directly. This initiative involves field-level officers from various departments, including District Magistrates, Sub-Divisional Officers (SDOs), Block Development Officers (BDOs), Municipal Commissioners, and police officials. To ensure that officials are available to attend to the public during these hours, instructions have been issued to avoid scheduling meetings, official tours, or other engagements during this time as much

as possible. That is not all; keeping public convenience in mind, the email addresses and mobile numbers of officials must be provided. Relevant departments must display this information prominently so that it is accessible to everyone, and the same details must also be published on government websites. Furthermore, a notification issued by Nabanna explicitly states that departments must announce in advance—via public notices—the specific days and times when officials will meet

with the general public. However, the responsibility does not end merely with hearing a grievance; officials are also required to maintain a record of the actions taken in response. To facilitate this, the system for logging complaints and subsequent actions on the 'Apanar Sarkar Apanar Pashe' (Your Government by Your Side) portal is being strengthened. If necessary, senior officials will review the status and progress of grievance resolutions. This administrative initiative creates an opportunity for direct access to officials alongside existing online services. The administration considers this system particularly important for members of the public who are not yet comfortable with digital platforms.

The Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms will regularly monitor whether officials are meeting the public at the scheduled times and track the progress of grievance resolutions. In essence, modeled after the Chief Minister's 'Janatar Darbar' (People's Court), the administration is now opening the doors of government offices to the public at various levels, rather than the administration itself having to go door-to-door.

Will prepare road map regarding Deocha-Pachami: SUVENDU

MI News Service, Birbhum/ Kolkata: The Suwendu Adhikari-led maiden BJP government in Bengal has turned its focus to former chief minister Mamata Banerjee's dream project, the proposed Deocha-Pachami coal mine project in Birbhum.

The Suwendu government will prepare a road map for the proposed coal mine project that ran into multiple hurdles during its execution by the previous regime, including corruption charges and questions on its feasibility.

"I will come to Birbhum in the last week of September. We will prepare a concrete road map regarding Deocha-Pachami and inform you about it," Suwendu told.

Mamata had announced the project in 2016, claiming it would come up as the world's second-largest coal mine and generate at least one lakh job opportunities.

In February 2025, Mamata

announced the project's execution programme by getting a layer of basalt excavated, coinciding with the Bengal Global Business Summit.

The start of the project triggered immediate protests among tribal residents. Several outfits and tribal people moved court against the project.

Work on the project was subsequently halted a few months before the 2026 Assembly elections, in which the BJP unseated the 15-year-old Trinamool government and came to power.

There have been several controversies and allegations surrounding the project, many of which Suwendu raised as the leader of the Opposition, particularly focusing on alleged corruption in land acquisition and the allocation of government jobs in exchange for land.

One of the prominent questions raised by the BJP and the CPM was whether coal could actually be excavated from

the proposed 3,500-acre Deocha-Pachami mine. The coal layer is located far beneath the primary basalt layer. Many alleged that the then Trinamool government planned to earn revenue from basalt under the guise of executing a coal mine.

The Mamata government had offered a package that included compensation for land, rehabilitation and government jobs for land-losers. The BJP accused the then government of transferring tribal people's land to ineligible people and illegally providing government jobs.

Suwendu said a drive to cancel illegal land transfers had begun. "In Birbhum's Deocha-Pachami, tribal land was given through pattas (lease) to Trinamool Congress leaders from Burdwan. Those pattas have now been cancelled," he said. "Jobs obtained by producing those pattas have also been cancelled.... If anyone has committed theft, there will be no escape," said Suwendu.

Chief Minister to visit South Dinajpur ahead of Puja; airport work to gain momentum



Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari.

MI News Service, Kolkata: Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari is likely to visit South Dinajpur on October 2, ahead of the Puja festivities. Residents of the district are hopeful that this visit will lead to the implementation of several projects. It is reported that, in addition to inspecting various projects, the Chief Minister is scheduled to hold a meeting with the district administration. This marks the Chief Minister's first visit to South Dinajpur district since the change of government in the state; consequently, preparations for the visit of the state's administrative head are already underway.

Meanwhile, the current government has announced the operationalization of the Balurghat Airport, which underwent renovation during the tenure of the previous administration. Additionally, preliminary work on the South Dinajpur Medical College—a project announced by the current government—has commenced at the Balurghat District Hospital. Several other initiatives are also underway, including plans to relocate the South Dinajpur University to a government-owned site. It is expected that the implementation of these projects will be expedited following the Chief Minister's visit.

In this context, Sukanta Majumdar, the MP for Balurghat and a Union Minister of State, stated, "The Chief Minister is scheduled to visit Balurghat on October 2. That is the current plan; any changes will be communicated." It is reported that the Chief Minister will arrive at Balurghat Airport around 12:00 PM that day. She will inspect the airport facilities, specifically looking into the requirement to extend the runway by another 90 meters. Additionally, she will review the preliminary aspects of the proposed medical college to be established at Balurghat District Hospital, examining the planned locations for various units within the hospital premises. Finally, she will hold a review meeting with the district administration. It is understood that, alongside assessing the operations of various administrative departments, she will review the implementation status of both state and central government schemes.

PM MODI receives UZBEKISTAN'S highest honour

MI News Service, Tashkent: Prime Minister Narendra Modi was on Sunday conferred Uzbekistan's highest state honour, the Order of "Oliy Darajali Dostlik", by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, which he dedicated to the centuries-old friendship and shared heritage between India and Uzbekistan.

Modi, who is on a two-day state visit to Uzbekistan, thanked Mirziyoyev for the honour and described the visit as memorable, praising the Uzbek President for the warmth extended to him and his delegation.

"My friend, the father of the friendly revolution in Uzbekistan, who has served as a role model across this entire region in scaling new heights of development—this two-day visit of mine will always be remembered," Modi said.

"The warmth with which my delegation and I were welcomed made us feel right at home, and for this, I express my deepest heartfelt gratitude to the President," he added.

Reflecting on the honour, Modi said Mirziyoyev's words had captured India's thousands-of-years-old heritage, its spirit of universal brotherhood or 'Vishwa Bandhutva', and the enterprising and hard work of its



Prime Minister Narendra Modi receiving Uzbekistan's highest state honour "Oliy Darajali Dostlik" from President Shavkat Mirziyoyev

1.4 billion people.

"I may only be a medium for all your words, but the true recipients are my thousands-of-years-old heritage, and the perseverance and hard work of 1.4 billion countrymen—they are the true deserving bearers of this honour," he said.

Calling the award a moment of "immense pride", Modi highlighted the significance of the word "Dostlik", meaning friendship, saying it reflected the sentiment at

the core of India-Uzbekistan relations.

"This honour does not belong to just one individual; it belongs to 1.4 billion people of India," he said, thanking the people and government of Uzbekistan and Mirziyoyev for the recognition.

Modi said he accepted the honour with "utmost humility" and dedicated it to the longstanding friendship and shared heritage of the two countries.

He also credited Mirziyoyev's

"visionary leadership" and friendship with India for the steady strengthening of bilateral ties, which have now been elevated to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

The Prime Minister said the honour also carried a greater responsibility and assured the people of Uzbekistan that India would remain committed to the friendship between the two countries.

"An award certainly

brings pride and respect, but I am well aware that an award also brings with it a great responsibility," Modi said, adding that India would "honour this friendship in every way".

Advertisement He further said India and Uzbekistan would work together as a "united voice" for the Global South and make every effort towards its welfare and the welfare of humanity.

"Together, both our nations will become a united voice for the Global South with complete dedication," Modi said, adding that the two countries would work towards the welfare of the Global South and "all humanity".

Earlier, Modi held talks with Mirziyoyev, following which the two countries agreed to elevate their ties to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. His visit focuses on strengthening cooperation in areas including trade, clean energy and connectivity.

Modi is scheduled to travel from Tashkent to Kyrgyzstan to participate in the 26th Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit on August 31 and September 1.

He concluded his remarks by expressing his "heartfelt gratitude" to Mirziyoyev

NEPAL: Death toll reaches 768; nearly 2,500 still missing



MI News Service, Kathmandu: The death toll from flash floods in Nepal rose to 768 on Sunday, with more bodies being recovered, even as more than 2,500 people are still missing.

Bodies have been recovered from all eight affected districts as rescuers race against time to search for those missing and rescue those stranded on the fifth day since the disaster.

An ice-rock avalanche following a glacial collapse near the Nepal-Tibet border sent a torrent of water, mud and debris downstream, wiping out towns and villages, damaging crucial infrastructure and washing away hydropower stations through central Nepal on Wednesday.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority said the death toll of the tragedy has surged to 724.

So far, 264 bodies were recovered from Chitawan district, 194 from Nawalparasi East, 100 from Nawalparasi West, 58 from Gorkha, 50 from Dhading, 52 from Nuwakot, 37 from Tanahu and 13 from Rasuwa, officials said.

The NDRRMA further said, at

least 2,502 people are still missing, while 8,730 people have been rescued from flood-hit areas so far.

Rescuers have so far evacuated 8,186 people from the affected districts, including 227 foreigners, it said.

While more than 143 stranded citizens reached India safely by train and flights—with more expected to arrive Sunday morning—60 of the 404 total tourists and pilgrims remain untraceable. After establishing contact with them, 37 flew back to Mumbai on Saturday evening, while 102 are scheduled to reach Nagpur at 4.30 am on Sunday; four reached Nagpur on Saturday.

On Saturday, a rapid deployment team from the UK arrived in Nepal to provide support for Britons and their families.

The team, comprising specially trained crisis response staff, will work alongside the British embassy and local authorities. They will help co-ordinate assistance for British nationals arriving at and departing from the airport, support those seeking information about missing relatives, liaise with local authorities and emergency responders, and reinforce existing consular operations on the ground.

Forming part of the UK's wider response to the flooding, which includes £5 million of humanitarian support for relief and recovery

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15.6kg gold haul in Nadia puts cross-border smuggling network under scanner

MI News Service, Nadia : A suspected attempt to smuggle gold worth nearly Rs 25 crore into Bangladesh through the India-Bangladesh border in Nadia has put a possible organised cross-border network under the scanner, with BSF personnel of the 32nd Battalion recovering around 15.607kg of gold from the Banpur border area and detaining a woman allegedly linked to the operation.

The seizure followed intelligence inputs that a large consignment of gold could be moved through the Banpur sector. Acting on the information, BSF troops intensified surveillance in the area and maintained a prolonged watch during the night. During the operation, personnel noticed the suspicious movement of a local woman and intercepted her.

According to preliminary information, questioning of the woman allegedly led investigators to the suspected smuggling plan. A subsequent search resulted in the recovery of the gold weighing around 15.607kg. The consignment, valued at approximately Rs 25 crore, was seized and the woman detained for questioning.

The scale of the seizure, however, has raised questions beyond the role of the detained woman. Investigators are now trying to establish where the consignment originated, who arranged its movement to the border and who was supposed to receive it after it



crossed into Bangladesh. The key question is whether the woman was merely a carrier or part of a larger local network facilitating cross-border movement of high-value consignments. Investigators are expected to examine her communications, financial transactions and contacts to identify possible links with other members of the network.

Banpur has figured in previous gold-smuggling operations. In February 2025, the BSF's 32nd Battalion had arrested a suspected smuggler in the

same broad border area after receiving intelligence about a possible gold-smuggling attempt. Around 1.745kg of gold, valued at nearly Rs 1.49 crore at the time, was recovered.

In another operation in May 2025, BSF personnel from the 32nd Battalion's Banpur outpost recovered 12 gold biscuits weighing 1.662kg after an alleged attempt to move packets across the border.

The recurrence of such cases has brought the Banpur sector under renewed scrutiny. While the latest seizure is substantially larger, investigators will now have to determine whether the incidents are isolated attempts or point to an established corridor being repeatedly exploited by organised smugglers.

Another crucial line of inquiry is the intended destination of the latest consignment. Investigators are likely to examine whether the gold was meant to be handed over

to contacts immediately across the border or transported further into Bangladesh through an established network.

For the BSF, the seizure also underscores the challenge of detecting high-value contraband movements in densely populated border areas, where smugglers can potentially rely on local contacts and multiple layers of carriers.

The detained woman is being questioned to establish the wider network and identify the alleged handlers behind the consignment. Officials are also examining the source of the gold and the possible route through which it reached the border.

The immediate seizure may have stopped a Rs 25-crore consignment from crossing the border. The larger test for investigators, however, will be whether the operation leads them to the network that financed, transported and was allegedly waiting to receive the gold.

Tribal Culture Takes Centre Stage in Dantan on World Tribal Day; Grand Dance Competition Held to Preserve Tradition

MI News Service, Kharagpur : The vibrant colours of tribal culture and tradition came alive in Dantan on the occasion of World Tribal Day, with a special dance competition organised to promote and preserve the region's rich indigenous heritage and folk traditions.

The event was organised by the Ganapara Nabajiban Welfare Trust in the Ganapara area of Bamanpukur under Dantan-I block in West Medinipur district. Several tribal dance teams from different parts of the area enthusiastically participated in the competition. The performers presented glimpses of their rich cultural heritage through traditional attire, indigenous dance forms and tribal music. The entire programme was conducted in keeping with tribal customs and traditions. The main objective of the event was to pass the tribal community's folk culture, traditional dance forms and centuries-old customs on to the younger generation



and create greater awareness about the need to preserve them. Through their performances, the artists also portrayed their distinct cultural identity and traditional way of life in an impressive manner. Their colourful presentations added a festive atmosphere to the programme and highlighted the diversity and richness of tribal heritage. Father Lawrence, trustee of Ganapara Nabajiban Welfare Trust, said the dance competition was organised with the aim of

keeping tribal culture and heritage alive in rural Bengal. He said similar competitions and various social and cultural programmes centred around tribal culture would continue to be organised in the coming days. The World Tribal Day programme not only provided tribal artists with a platform to showcase their talent but also conveyed a strong message about preserving and promoting their rich cultural heritage and introducing it to society and future generations.

Medinipur Swimmer Afireen Jabi Receives CSR Support for Catalina Channel Mission; SP Papiya Sultana and Rashmi Group Extend Assistance



MI News Service, Kharagpur : alented swimmer Afireen Jabi from West Medinipur is gearing up to represent India in the upcoming Catalina Channel Expedition 2026, and has received a major boost in her preparations with continued financial support from the Rashmi Group. At a programme held at the Sangam Conference Hall of the West Medinipur District Police Superintendent's Office, District Superintendent of Police Papiya Sultana and Bhaskar Choudhury, Executive Director of Rashmi Group, jointly handed over a cheque of 5.25 lakh to Afireen. Senior police officials of the district and representatives of the Rashmi Group were also present on the occasion. Earlier, Rashmi Group had extended financial assistance of 5 lakh to Afireen. With the latest contribution, the company's total support for her Catalina Channel campaign has reached 10.25

lakh under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative. Speaking at the event, Rashmi Group Executive Director Bhaskar Choudhury said that supporting athletes who bring pride to the nation remains one of the organisation's priorities. He also expressed gratitude to the District Superintendent of Police for providing the opportunity to contribute to Afireen's international sporting mission. District Superintendent of Police Papiya Sultana praised Rashmi Group's initiative and emphasized that sportspersons are among the nation's greatest assets. She said society and institutions should come forward to support talented athletes and wished Afireen success in her upcoming expedition. Expressing her gratitude, Afireen Jabi and her father thanked Rashmi Group for its generous support. Afireen's father noted that participation in the Catalina Channel Expedition involves significant expenses and said the financial assistance would play a crucial role in meeting preparation and training costs. Rashmi Group stated that it would continue to fulfil its social responsibilities through CSR initiatives in various fields, including sports, education and community welfare. The support is expected to strengthen Afireen's preparations as she aims to take on the challenging Catalina Channel and represent India on the international stage.

'Run for Krishna' Marathon Organized at ISKCON Newtown on the Occasion of Janmashtami

MI News Service, Kolkata: On the auspicious occasion of Sri Sri Krishna Janmashtami, ISKCON Newtown enthusiastically organized a special 'Run for Krishna' Marathon on Sunday. Around 800 participants took part in the event across three categories—10 km, 5 km, and 3 km.

Apart from Kolkata and its surrounding areas, many people participated in this special marathon

from different districts and distant regions of North Bengal.

Shruti Singh, Hon'ble Civil Judge, Jhargram Judges' Court was the Guest of Honour in this event.

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From Jhulan Goswami to Sujata De: Krishnanagar cricketer earns India A call-up

MI News Service, Nadia : Nadia's association with Indian women's cricket has received another boost, with Krishnanagar's Sujata Dey earning a place in the India A women's T20 squad for the upcoming three-match series against Australia A.

The series, beginning September 12, will provide the left-arm bowling all-rounder with an opportunity to test herself at the national A-team level and stake her claim for a bigger role in Indian women's cricket.

Sujata, a resident of the Krishnanagar Road Station area, started playing competitive cricket relatively late. She took up the sport seriously at the age of 17 after joining the coaching camp at Krishnanagar District Stadium. She trained under coaches Benedict Gomes, Ritabrata Choudhury and Abhijit Choudhury.

Her progress through Bengal's domestic system has been gradual but consistent. Sujata has represented Bengal at junior and senior levels besides playing for the Bengal Under-23 side. She has also featured in the CAB-organised Bengal Premier League, gaining experience in a more competitive T20 environment.

A left-arm bowling all-rounder, Sujata brings value with both bat and ball. Her ability to contribute in two departments has been one of the key features of her domestic career and has helped her progress through the Bengal system.

Interestingly, her entry into cricket was almost accidental. As a child, Sujata would see her elder brother's friends come home to call him out to play. When her brother was reluctant to go, Sujata began accompa-



nying them instead. What started as an informal introduction to the game eventually developed into a serious sporting pursuit.

Her selection is also significant for Nadia, a district that has already produced one of India's most prominent women's cricketers, Jhulan Goswami, the former India fast bowler from Chakdaha. Sujata's inclusion in the India A setup adds another name from the district to the national women's cricket pathway.

For Sujata, however, the India A call-up is only the beginning. The Australia A series will be an important opportunity to demonstrate that her domestic performances can translate to the higher level. A strong showing could strengthen her case for progressing towards the senior India squad.

Sujata's father, Subrata Dey, is a government employee. Her selection has brought considerable pride to the family and excitement among the cricket fraternity in Nadia.

With an India A jersey now within reach, the Krishnanagar cricketer will be looking to make the most of her opportunity against Australia A and take the next step towards senior international cricket.

Special discussion of Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha held at Dakshineswar



MI News Service, Kolkata : A special discussion of the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha was held at the auditorium of Dakshineswar Ramakrishna Sangha Adyapeeth on Sunday.

Brahmachari Mural Bhai, General Secretary and Managing Trustee of Dakshineswar Ramakrishna Sangha Adyapeeth was present in the meeting along with monks and Maharajs from various religious institutions. Gautam Ghosh, repre-

senting the West Bengal chapter of the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha as its Convener and President, stated that their mission is to build a strong India through a united and empowered Hindu community.

We desire a life in the present and future world where we can live proudly with our Sanatani Hindu identity.

We aim to awaken the Sanatan Hindu community through such discussions in the days ahead.



A new political party came into being in Bengal in the name of Aam Janta Awami Dal. On the occasion of Eid Milad, this party was inaugurated in Metiabruz where Aam Janta Awami Dal President Shahnaz Begum, Secretary Advocate Shabnam Khatun, Intiaz Sahab etc. were present. On the occasion of the birth of the beloved Prophet, food will also be distributed among the needy. Pic: Sajid Parwez

Sugar squeeze leaves Nadia's batasa, mishri makers with wafer-thin margins

MI News Service, Nadia : A sharp rise in sugar prices has squeezed the margins of traditional batasa, nakuldana and mishri makers in Nadia, with manufacturers saying they are struggling to absorb higher input costs without proportionately raising prices.

The crisis comes ahead of Vishwakarma Puja and Durga Puja, when demand for these traditional sugar-based products usually picks up. But for the small manufacturers, higher festive demand may not necessarily translate into higher earnings as labour, fuel and other production costs continue to rise.

A trader who has been in the business for nearly four decades said sugar is currently costing around Rs 67 a kg. Yet, batasa is being sold in the wholesale market at around Rs 75 a kg. After accounting for labour charges, fuel and other production expenses, the effective margin is often only Rs 2-3 a kg, he claimed. At times, manu-



facturers are forced to sell at a loss to retain their market, he added.

The manufacturers said sugar prices have risen by around Rs 25 a kg over the past few years, while they have been able to raise the price of batasa by only around Rs 15-20 a kg. The gap has left little room for manufacturers to absorb rising production costs.

At present, batasa is selling at around Rs 75 a kg and first-grade mishri at around Rs 80 a kg in the wholesale market. Retail prices are around Rs 85-90 a kg. Manufacturers, however, said the higher retail price does not translate into a corresponding in-

crease in their earnings, as costs accumulate across the supply chain.

Sugar is not the only pressure point. Prices of other raw materials and production-related chemicals have also risen, while higher wages and fuel costs have added to the cost of manufacturing. For small units operating on thin margins, passing the entire increase on to consumers is difficult, particularly in a price-sensitive market.

The timing has added to the concern. With the festive season approaching, manufacturers are likely to face higher orders even as their ability to ex-

pand production remains constrained by rising costs. An increase in sales, therefore, could result in higher turnover without a corresponding rise in profits.

For many families associated with the trade for years, the issue is no longer simply about the price of sugar. It is about whether a traditional small-scale business can remain viable when input costs rise faster than the prices of finished products. Manufacturers fear that another increase in sugar prices could push more units towards reducing production or exiting the trade altogether. They are, however, hopeful that recent government measures to improve sugar availability and contain the price rise will bring some relief to the market before the major festivals.

For Nadia's batasa and mishri makers, the festive season could therefore bring a paradox: more orders, but little or no improvement in the bottom line.

Fraud involving lakhs of rupees under the pretext of providing jobs! Trinamool leader close to Abhishek arrested

MI News Service, Bankura: Rajib Ghoshal, a Trinamool leader close to Abhishek Banerjee, has been arrested on charges of financial fraud under the pretext of providing jobs. He is known as a Trinamool leader from Bankura. He was arrested from Dum Dum area of Kolkata on Saturday. Later, the arrested person was brought to Bellatore police station. On Sunday, when Rajib was being taken from the police station to be produced in court, slogans were raised against him. Eggs were also thrown at him. BJP alleges that Rajib used to send money obtained through job-related fraud to top-level Trinamool leaders as well. BJP leadership demanded their arrest as well. According to police sources, in 2025, Rajib took money from several job seekers in the name of providing jobs. But after taking the money, the jobs were not given. Even the money was not returned. After shifting to another state, the cheated filed a complaint against Rajib at the police station.

Durga Puja: Voices unite against Child Labour



MI News Service, Kolkata: Movement against Child Labour gains momentum in West Bengal, especially after BJP coming into power. Even this narrative has got its place in this year's Durga Puja as well. Movement against Child Labour would be the theme of this year's Durga Puja for Tollygunj Shanti Pally.

Tollygunj Shanti Pally has been doing Durga Puja for decades and they have always maintained their philanthropic heritage while celebrating Durga Puja. This year Tollygunj Shanti Pally would be celebrating their 88th year.

According to Kalyan Kumar Pal, President, Tollygunj Shanti Pally, "Practice of child labour is a social menace. This custom should not be tolerated in this age. Through Durga Puja we wish to give the society a message of awareness to get rid of this hateful practice at the earliest."

Meeting Held on Social Welfare Initiatives

Nurul Islam Khan: Hooghly district committee of the All Bengal Imam-Muezzin Association and Charitable Trust organised a meeting at Sheoraphuli in Hooghly on Sunday.

The meeting discussed various issues, including religious, social and organisational matters. Issues concerning the census, mosques, madrasas and several other matters were also raised. Discussions were held on the overall development of society, the role of imams and muezzins in the community, and ways to work for the welfare of underprivileged people. Several participants also raised questions regarding the SIR.

A new ad hoc committee was formed during the meeting. Those present included the state secretary of the All Bengal Imam-Muezzin Association, Maulana Nizamuddin Biswas; Hooghly district secretary Hafiz Maulana Rafiqul Islam; ABMA's state president, Maulana Abu Afzal Jinnah; advocate Mokshed, among others.

The meeting also conveyed a message to further strengthen the organisation's programmes and activities in the days ahead.



Camac Street Clash:
Police Move Against
Trinamool Leaders

MI News Service, Kolkata: Trinamool Congress national general secretary and Diamond Harbour MP Abhishek Banerjee has been summoned by Kolkata Police in connection with the violence that erupted outside the party's Camac Street office over the demolition of an allegedly unauthorised billboard. Police have asked Abhishek to appear at Shakespeare Sarani police station at noon on Tuesday.

The development follows last Thursday's confrontation, when civic officials arrived with police personnel to remove the disputed hoarding. What began as an administrative exercise quickly escalated into a face-off, with Trinamool workers allegedly obstructing municipal personnel and clashing with police. Abhishek and party MP Derek O'Brien reached the spot as tensions mounted. Three separate cases were registered, with the summons to Abhishek issued in one of them. Derek has also been summoned and has been asked to appear on Monday. Police personnel visited Derek's residence on Sunday morning to serve the notice. He was reportedly away, and a member of his household received the summons on his behalf. The confrontation has already triggered a legal battle. Abhishek approached the Calcutta High Court, alleging that the civic authorities had proceeded against the billboard without serving notice. The matter came before Justice Raja Basu Chowdhury on Friday. The court, however, observed that the matter did not survive for interim protection as the disputed structure had been demolished. The police action follows allegations that the confrontation turned physical. Trinamool workers were accused of manhandling a uniformed police officer, including allegedly pulling his collar and assaulting him. Abhishek was also accused of allegedly harassing a civic worker. These allegations remain subject to investigation. The Camac Street office has become the centre of a property dispute. The building's owner has alleged that the party occupied two floors in violation of an agreement and subsequently issued a legal notice to Kalighat Trinamool. According to the allegations, the agreement concerning the premises at 9 Camac Street was signed in 2020 between the owner and Trinamool Youth Congress, with jailed party leader Debraj Chakraborty signing it on behalf of the organisation. With summons now issued to two Trinamool leaders, investigators are expected to question them over the sequence of events, the alleged obstruction of civic work and the clashes. The proceedings could add another dimension to the dispute surrounding the party's Camac Street office.

Midnight Gunshot

MI News Service, Kolkata: A late-night shooting in the heart of the city has triggered alarm after a man was allegedly shot at point-blank range following a prolonged family dispute. The victim, identified as Santosh Chowdhury, suffered a bullet injury to his stomach and was rushed to Calcutta Medical College, where he is undergoing treatment in critical condition.

The incident occurred on Saturday night in the Mandal Street area under North Port police station. Police have identified the alleged shooter as Kartik Sonkar, also known by the nickname 'Khargosh'. Kartik and Santosh are brothers. Following the firing, the accused reportedly fled the area on a scooter and remains absconding.

NEPAL: Death toll
reaches 768

Continued from Pg 1: efforts, the team will also work with families in the UK concerned about loved ones in the affected area.

The US State Department pledged 3.6 million dollars (£2.6million) in a statement on X on Saturday.

Two teenagers, a 13-year-old girl and a 14-year-old boy, are among the 33 British nationals believed to be unaccounted for.

Others with links to the UK who are missing include an NHS nurse, a Hindu priest from south London who was leading a tour in the region and an 18-year-old from Surrey who had recently finished his A-Levels.

Rescue efforts had previously been hampered by fears of more flooding from a lake formed by the glacier collapse which sparked the flooding on Wednesday.

The District Administration Office in the Nepalese district of Chitwan said it had been able to identify only four of the 233 bodies recovered. It said DNA samples were being taken from the bodies which were "in a state of decomposition and no longer identifiable".

The UK's £5 million support package will support Nepal's response efforts, including a combination of UN, Red Cross and NGO interventions.

Whitewash at Jadavpur University
after Suvendu Adhikari's warning

MI News Service, Kolkata: Suvendu Adhikari had issued a warning regarding the campus culture at Jadavpur University during the 'Vande Mataram' programme. Action followed immediately after that warning! Today, a coat of white paint was applied over controversial slogans and graffiti in parts of the Jadavpur University campus. The move to erase these controversial slogans has sparked a fresh political debate. The SFI and the Left camp point out that Suvendu—once a close associate of Kishenji—is now ordering the removal of Maoist slogans from the university walls! The SFI has also issued a direct challenge to the Chief Minister regarding student union elections. Meanwhile, the TMCP has raised its voice against both the controversial slogans and the interference in the democratic space.

Jadavpur University authorities have initiated action regarding controversial wall graffiti and slogans. University sources report that work has begun to remove anti-national and objectionable slogans and graffiti from various locations across the campus; the controversial writings have been painted over with whitewash.



A controversy had previously arisen over the words "Red Salute Kishenji" painted on the wall of the university's Arts Hostel. Questions had also been raised regarding various other graffiti and slogans found across the campus.

Recently, Suvendu Adhikari spoke out on the issue while addressing a "Vande Mataram" event at the SB bus stand in Jadavpur. Speaking before a crowd of approximately 10,000 people, he questioned the presence of such wall graffiti within the university premises. He called for the promotion of nationalism and warned that action would be taken against controversial slogans.

Adhikari asserted that

being labeled 'anti-national'? Is a slogan like 'We want education for all; we want jobs after education' also anti-national? The Chief Minister recently claimed that the slogan 'Kishanji Zindabad' appears on the walls of Jadavpur. Why should there be a slogan supporting a Maoist leader? But I would like to remind everyone that she was the very person who first raised the 'Kishanji Zindabad' slogan in West Bengal. There is evidence regarding her connection to Kishanji and the politics of Jangalmahal; I will make it public if necessary."

SFI State Secretary Debanjan Dey clearly stated in a Facebook post, "History cannot be erased by whitewashing walls!" He also addressed the Chief Minister, urging her to hold student elections and allow students to democratically choose their campus representatives. Debanjan had previously voiced similar sentiments following student clashes at Jadavpur University, accusing the ABVP of attempting to establish political dominance on campus through brute force. However, the Chief Minister has given assurances regarding student elections, confidently declaring, "The ABVP will win everywhere, and saffron *abir* (colored powder) will fill the air."



The 5th West Bengal State Chess Selection Championship 2026 for visually impaired players is being held at the NILD Auditorium in Bonhoogly, Kolkata, on Sunday.

Smart meter rollout begins across Govt office

MI News Service, Kolkata: The implementation of prepaid smart electricity meters in government offices is gathering momentum, with the installation drive being undertaken in a phased manner under the Centre's Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS). The initiative is aimed at modernising electricity distribution infrastructure and strengthening systems for monitoring and managing power consumption.

The move to introduce prepaid smart meters follows the guidelines laid down under the RDSS framework. In accordance with these provisions, the process of installing smart meters in government establishments has already begun and is being carried out in phases, ensuring that the transition takes place systematically

across different offices and administrative units. Unlike conventional electricity meters, smart meters are designed to facilitate more efficient monitoring of electricity consumption through digital technology. The prepaid mechanism is expected to bring greater visibility to power usage while enabling electricity consumers to manage consumption and payments through a more structured system. Government offices are among the establishments being covered under the ongoing implementation programme. The phased approach allows the concerned authorities and power distribution agencies to undertake installation work in an organised manner, while ensuring that existing electricity services continue to function during the transition. The rollout

also reflects a broader effort to strengthen electricity distribution systems through technological intervention. Smart metering forms an important component of the distribution-sector modernisation process envisaged under the RDSS, with the objective of improving operational efficiency and bringing greater transparency to electricity consumption and billing mechanisms. The installation of prepaid smart meters in government offices is therefore being viewed as an important step in the wider transition from conventional metering systems to digitally enabled electricity management. As the programme advances, more government establishments are expected to come under its ambit in accordance with the applicable guidelines and implementation schedule. Of-

ficials and agencies involved in the exercise are proceeding with the installation work in phases, with attention being given to the requirements of individual government establishments. The process is expected to gradually expand the coverage of smart metering and integrate more public offices into the modernised electricity distribution framework. The RDSS-backed initiative marks a significant shift towards technology-driven power management in government establishments. With smart meters being introduced in a phased manner, the ongoing exercise is set to reshape the way electricity consumption is monitored and managed across public offices, while strengthening the broader infrastructure supporting efficient and accountable power distribution in the state.



Workers clean the statue of legendary Bengali actor Uttam Kumar ahead of his centenary birth anniversary in Tollygunge, Kolkata, on Sunday.

Man jumps from Vidyasagar setu, body found after 2 days

MI News Service, Kolkata: A 45 -year -old man, who allegedly jumped into the Ganga from Vidyasagar Setu and Family -related distress, was found dead nearly two days later after his body nearly two days later after his body was spotted floating near Beja Kadamtala Ghat on Sunday morning. The recovery brought an end to a search operation launched following reports of the incident on Friday night.

The deceased has been identified as Mohammad Salam. According to police and local sources, a report was remained in contact with his family, who had reported him missing. The deceased has been identified as Mohammad Salam. According to police and local sources, a report was received at around 10pm on Friday that a man had jumped from the Second Hooghly Bridge into the river. The Disaster Response Force and River Traffic Police launched a joint search operation across the Ganga. Despite sustained efforts, there was no imme-

diate trace of Salam. The search continued as police remained in contact with his family, who had reported him missing. On Sunday morning, River Traffic personnel noticed a body floating near Baja Kadamtala Ghat. The matter was conveyed to the West Port police. Officers reached the spot, recovered the body and initiated the identification process. Family members of Salam were called to the police station. They identified the recovered body as that of the missing man, confirming the family's worst fears. During the preliminary investigation, police indicated that family-related disputes or unrest may have contributed at this stage to Salam's decision to take the extreme step. However, investigators have not ruled out other possibilities at this stage. Police are examining the circumstances leading up to the incident and are attempting to establish a clear sequence of events before drawing any final conclusion. The recovery has raised questions over whether the case was

suicide or whether other circumstances remain. Investigators are proceeding cautiously, with the circumstances surrounding Salam's death under scrutiny. The body has been sent for post-mortem examination to determine the precise cause and manner of death. The West Port police have registered a case of unnatural death and begun a detailed investigation. Police are examining evidence and gathering information from family members and other relevant sources. The post-mortem report is expected to provide crucial evidence for investigators and may help establish the exact circumstances in which Salam entered the river. As the investigation continues, police officials said any further police conclusion whatsoever would be drawn only after the evidence, witness accounts and medical findings have been examined. If you want, I can also make this more dramatic and punchy in a Bengali newspaper-style English tone, with a stronger headline and sharper opening.

BCP Appeals for Unity and Mutual
Respect Across Communities

MI News Service, Kolkata: The Bangiya Christiya Pariseba (BCP), the united state-level forum representing Christian denominations in West Bengal and affiliated with the All India Christian Council and the United Christian Forum, convened a significant meeting in Kolkata, bringing together intellectuals, writers, journalists, artists, secular personalities and human rights activists to deliberate on issues concerning the Christian community and the wider social fabric of the state.

The meeting focused on concerns, differences and challenges faced by the Christian community in West Bengal, while underscoring the need for sustained dialogue and collective initiatives to promote an inclusive, peaceful and socially cohesive society. Participants stressed that dialogues within and between communities must be addressed through democratic engagement, mutual understanding and respect rather than confrontation. Addressing the gathering, BCP adviser Gautam Sarkar underlined the contribution of missionary educational institutions to the state's educational landscape. He said missionary schools provide education to students irrespective of their religion or caste, highlighting what he described as the institutions'



commitment to extending educational opportunities across social and religious boundaries. The deliberations also placed considerable emphasis on the preservation of peace, human dignity, communal harmony and mutual respect among different sections of society. Participants called for the formation of a broad-based public opinion capable of safeguarding these principles and strengthening social cohesion at a time when constructive engagement among communities remains essential. The BCP said the meeting was conceived as a platform to bring together representatives and voices from diverse sections of society and facilitate meaningful discussion on matters affecting communal harmony and the broader social environment in West Bengal. The organisation maintained that sustained interaction among civil society members, intellectuals, media professionals, artists and hu-

man rights activists could help create greater understanding and reduce social divisions. The meeting concluded with an appeal for collective responsibility in preserving the state's pluralistic character and fostering an atmosphere in which people of different faiths and social backgrounds can coexist with dignity and mutual respect. The participants reiterated that peace, dialogue and constitutional values should remain central to efforts aimed at building a healthy and inclusive society in West Bengal. The BCP said it would continue encouraging such platforms for dialogue and public participation, with the objective of strengthening social harmony and promoting a culture of peaceful co-existence across communities across the state, collectively. If you want, I can also make this more hard-hitting and newspaper-front-page style, with a stronger headline and sharper opening paragraph.

Archaeologists dig out Kashmir's BUDDHIST past

MI News Service, Srinagar: The 100-day excavation at Bara-mulla's Zehanpora site aims to uncover a major Buddhist complex, archaeologists started elaborate excavations at the nearly 2,000-year-old Zehanpora ruins, seen as a major leap in uncovering Kashmir's Buddhist past and promising to unearth a priceless trove of the Valley's ancient cultural heritage.

The mounds of Zehanpora in Baramulla district are believed to contain one of the most ancient and largest ruins of a Buddhist site, further cementing expert opinion that Buddhism was the first organised and the longest dominant religion of Kashmir — spanning over 1,000 years.

Kashmir was part of the Central Asia-based Kushan Empire. They were Buddhists, but Kashmir's encounter with Buddhism is believed to have predated them by centuries.

Jammu and Kashmir chief secretary Atal Dullo, who inaugurated the second phase of excavations on Saturday, said the first phase in November ran for a month and had to be stopped due to the onset of winter.

"What was found (during the first phase) was surprising and interesting," Dullo told reporters. "It is certain that a very big cultural treasure will be unearthed and added to history. The place will be a major tourist attraction." Dullo said the phase would last for 100 days, but full excavations might take five long years.

The Buddhist site was discovered last year by Kashmir University's Central Asian Studies department. An old picture found at a French museum helped unravel the significance of what was largely believed to be part of the natural landscape.

During a visit to France, archaeologist Mohammad Ajmal Shah stumbled upon a photograph in the museum's traveller and archives section, which revealed that the mounds were stupas in Bara-mulla. He said he immediately recognised the landscape and realised they could correspond to Zehanpora mounds. The picture revealed stupas more prominently above the surrounding ground, although they remain largely buried today.

"For years, people had been seeing some tall mounds there. A scientific study of these mounds was initiated. It turned out that these mounds were the remains of a large structure built by humans," the central government's citizen engagement platform had said soon after the first phase excavations.

Shah said the site is located at an ancient route that connected Kashmir with the outside world, mainly Taxila (in today's Rawalpindi in Pakistan).

The archaeologist said the site hosts three large mounds and large walls running beneath, suggesting it was not a small settlement but an important site.



West Bengal Governor R. N. Ravi attends as the chief guest at a discussion on "Vande Mataram: Its Identity as a Symbol of India's National Movement" at the Indian Museum in Kolkata on Sunday.

Be loyal to your Karmabhoomi: RSS CHIEF

MI News Service, Washington/Nagpur: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat said that unity in diversity is in Bharat's DNA, underscoring that it has to be "celebrated, respected and accepted." Addressing over 6,000 members of the Indian-American community and interfaith leaders at a mega rally at Infosys Theatre in the iconic city Madison Square Garden, Bhagwat gave a clarion call to embrace diversity and support communities. "When we say America, United States of America, one word is often discussed frequently, that is pluralism. And when we say Bharat, another phrase is discussed: unity in diversity," he said, drawing applause from the attendees at the 'Universal Oneness Celebration' organised by the American Hindus For Engagement and Dialogue (AHEAD) forum.

"For Bharat, this unity and diversity, both are in the DNA," he said, citing Swami Vivekananda's message that every nation has a mission to accomplish, a destiny to fulfil.

"What is the destiny given to Bharat? Bharat is there to realise, and from time to time, make the world realise this unity in diversity. We are one, and due to this diversity, that oneness is decorated," the RSS chief said.

"Diversity has to be celebrated, respected, accepted, and at the same time, we must keep in mind this feeling of oneness. It is a very real feeling," he further said in the nearly hour-long address.

The Universal Oneness Celebration event brought together people from 39



RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat

states, 853 cities, with over 250 students from various universities and 250 organisations from the US.

Bhagwat emphasised the need to embrace diversity, saying that "we belong to each other", and stressing the need to give back to the community and the world.

"We owe everything to someone else. We take from the world, and so we have to give back. How much we earn is not important, how much we distribute is important."

"Stay loyal to karmabhoomi"

The 75-year-old also called on the Indian diaspora in the US to remain loyal to their "karmabhoomi" (land of action).

"What is our duty? We are in America. We live in America. We earn in America. So we are America, and we should behave true to America," he said to applause from the attendees.

"The diaspora, Bharatiya diaspora, they have a duty to their karmabhoomi. They must fulfil that. They should be loyal to their karmabhoomi," he said.

"Because Bharat is their janmabhoomi (motherland), if they have an urge to do something and they can do that after fulfilling

their duty to their karmabhoomi, it is not prohibited, but it is not obligatory. Your janmabhoomi expects you to live the values it has imparted to you. The value is oneness," he added.

"Bharat expects you to live, as Bharat has given you the idea of life, because that is the model of sustainable living of human beings," he said.

The RSS chief stressed that a nation is not just a geographical piece of land.

"All nations have a destiny to fulfil. This is the Bharat destiny. Let us awake as Bharatiyas to that destiny and fulfil our duties in our karmabhoomi as well as our janmabhoomi. If we do that, that will be a boon for the world struggling with all these problems and stumbling at every step. We have to give sustenance. We have to give some sort of support to this world," he said.

"Hindu wanting Muslims out of India won't remain a Hindu"

Noting that there is no difference between human beings and that various religious paths lead to the same goal, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat on Saturday said that "if any Hindu

thinks that there should be no Muslim in Bharat, he will not remain Hindu".

"If any Hindu thinks that there should be no Muslim in Bharat, he will not remain Hindu. If you want to call yourself Hindu, you must believe that all paths are leading to the same goal and that every human has dignity. There is no difference between human beings," he said.

He then recounted an instance. "I had a lecture, and Muslim brothers were also there. And they asked me a question: 'You are a Hindu organisation, you say Hindu Rashtra, what about us Muslims? Would you drive us out?' I said, 'No, that is not Hindutva'."

He cited another instance from Haryana in India: "Our swayamsevaks (RSS volunteers) serve everywhere, equally... Two planes collided over Haryana, which is part of Bharat, over the place named Dadri... Most of the passengers were Muslims. Our swayamsevaks reached there first. And they served, treating the wounded -- there were very few; all others were dead - and recovering bodies, arranging last rites." He said the RSS volunteers "never thought at that time that 'these are Muslims'."

He was apparently referring to what's considered the deadliest mid-air collision in aviation history, from 1996, that left all 349 passengers and crew dead. The disaster involved Saudi Arabian Airlines Flight 763 (a Boeing 747) and Kazakhstan Airlines Flight 1907 (an Ilyushin Il-76), which collided reportedly due to miscommunication with air traffic control due to a language barrier.

Espionage: Terror groups using PORN SITES, says Intel Report

MI News Service, New Delhi: After exposing the misuse of online gaming platforms by terror groups, security agencies have uncovered a new operational tactic adopted by terrorists and their handlers who are now using pornography websites and niche encrypted applications to communicate secretly, officials said on Sunday.

The covert channels are being used by terror outfits and Pakistan's intelligence agency, ISI, to convey instructions to recruits in Jammu and Kashmir while evading surveillance on conventional social media platforms.

Officials said these pornography platforms feature real-time chat tools, operating under the guise of helping users find dates nearby, which handlers exploit to broadcast messages and coordinate activities.

Security agencies have placed a wide array of specialised digital tools under scrutiny. Terror handlers are relying on Tor-based messaging applications like Coatex and Conion to route data through encrypted nodes and obscure user identities.

Access to the APK for Conion reportedly faces restrictions within India. An APK file (Android Package Kit) is the file format used by the Android operating system to distribute and install mobile apps.

Additionally, they are using privacy-focused platforms such as a France-based app that allows end-to-end encrypted messaging without requiring a SIM card or phone number, making user attribution difficult.

Agencies are also monitoring Vietnam-based apps alongside anonymous platforms like Moonchat, which includes PGP-encrypted versions with suspected Chinese origins that bypass traditional registration. This app has many versions used for finding singles in your vicinity.



Though several of these porn applications are banned in India, they are downloaded illegally using Virtual Private Network (VPN). A VPN creates a secure and encrypted connection over the internet by masking Internet Protocol addresses and encrypting online traffic, making it more difficult to track online activity and access data.

Security experts feel that many platforms using the Tor network present unique tracking challenges by bouncing encrypted traffic through multiple volunteer-run relay nodes globally to hide both the origin and destination of the data.

While Tor is maintained by the US-based non-profit, The Tor Project, for legitimate privacy and anti-censorship efforts, its anonymity features are increasingly being exploited by clandestine networks including terror groups.

The officials said that security agencies continue to adapt their cyber-surveillance frameworks to map and intercept these off-grid communication channels.

Justifying the ban on these apps, the officials said terror groups were increasingly using the encrypted instant messaging applications of porn sites in recruiting and radicalising youths in Jammu and Kashmir.

In a departure from the use of conventional social media, handlers are now reaching out to

prospects through these platforms which, in order to evade detection, differ from each other in terms of the level of security they provide.

While some apps offer basic encryption features, others employ end-to-end encryption, self-destruct messages, and the RSA-2048 encryption algorithm that processes data on the user device without any third-party interference.

RSA is an American Network Security and Authentication company founded in 1982 by US-born Ron Rivest and Leonard Adleman and Israeli-born Adi Shamir. The acronym RSA is used worldwide as the foundation key in the crypto-system.

The trend has witnessed terrorists moving away from commonly used social media apps like WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and Signal, the officials said.

The security officials observed that both handlers and recruits from the Valley had been relying on specific applications which work even when there is a slower 2G or EDGE network speed. Some of these applications do not even require a phone number or email from the user while registering.

The new tactics were uncovered as security forces strived to combat the use of foreign-generated virtual SIM cards. Developed by foreign-based companies, virtual SIM cards enable the computer to generate phone numbers that can be used on smartphones through specific applications, leaving negligible digital traces.

It was first exposed during the investigation into the 2019 Pulwama terror attack in which 40 CRPF jawans died. The detailed investigation done by the NIA found that more than 40 virtual SIM cards were used by the Jaish-e-Mohammed suicide bomber and his accomplices in the attack.

INDIA emerges as key petrol supplier to RUSSIA

MI News Service, New Delhi/ Moscow: India has emerged as a key supplier of gasoline (petrol) to Russia amid a surge in Russian fuel imports triggered by Ukrainian drone attacks on refineries, ship tracking data showed.

Russia's seaborne gasoline imports surged to a record around 125,000 barrels per day (kbd) in August, equivalent to a projected 470,000 tonnes for the month, as repeated attacks on its refineries disrupted domestic fuel production, according to energy analytics firm Vortexa.

Indian refiners supplied as much as 1 million barrels of gasoline in the last two months, trade sources said. The supplies essentially came from Vadinar refinery in Gujarat, operated by Nayara Energy, which is half owned by Russia's Rosneft.

Since 2022, India has pivoted towards Russia to meet a bulk of its crude oil -- raw material for making fuels like petrol and diesel.

India's purchases of Russian crude oil hit a record high as the conflict in the Gulf squeezes supply from other sources. India imported more than 2.6 million barrels per day of Russian crude in June and July, up

from a low of 1 million bpd in February and accounting for more than half of the country's crude imports.

It's likely that fuel exported to Russia may have been made from Russian crude.

Russia, one of the largest crude exporters, has to import gasoline after Ukrainian drone attacks on its energy infrastructure led to up to 70 per cent drop in domestic production. This has triggered a fuel supply crunch that has forced Moscow to import petroleum products while continuing to impose restrictions on fuel sales across the country.

India, Turkey, and Morocco supplied gasoline to Russia in August, as Moscow grappled with a growing mismatch between domestic fuel supply and demand.

Russia in July extended its full export ban on gasoline for both producers and non-producers through the end of January 2027. Its diesel export ban was extended through September 1, 2026.

Around 55 per cent, or about 260,000 tonnes, of Russia's imported gasoline in August arrived on sanctioned tonnage, Vortexa said.

"All India-origin gasoline

cargoes Russia imported in August were carried on sanctioned fleets and involved dark ship-to-ship (STS) transfers in the Mediterranean," it said.

Overall, around 40 per cent of Russia's August gasoline imports moved via ship-to-ship transfers, with the majority conducted in the dark, with vessels switching off their automatic identification system (AIS) signals.

While gasoline imports have surged, Russian diesel exports remain severely constrained by the export ban, refinery damage and disruptions at fuel terminals.

Vortexa said 32 attacks were carried out on Russian refineries during July and August, roughly one every other day.

Russia's seaborne diesel/gas oil exports were around 150,000 bpd in August through August 25, flat month-on-month but down 610,000 bpd from a year earlier and 81 per cent below the five-year seasonal average, Vortexa said, adding that Russia is likely to continue importing some gasoline volumes in the near term, reflecting its historically lower gasoline-to-diesel production yields.

INDIA & UZBEKISTAN enhance trade, defence & energy ties



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being accorded a ceremonial welcome, in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev is also seen on August 30, 2026.

MI News Service, Tashkent/ New Delhi: India and Uzbekistan on Sunday decided to elevate their ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership and are in the process of establishing a framework for long-term supply of uranium, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said.

The prime minister made the remarks during his talks with Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in Tashkent.

Modi is on a two-day state visit to Uzbekistan from August 29 to 30 at the invitation of Mirziyoyev. This is his fourth visit to the Central Asian country.

Modi received a ceremonial welcome as he arrived to hold delegation-level talks with Mirziyoyev, with the two leaders discussing ways to further deepen the India-Uzbekistan strategic partnership and advance their shared developmental visions of 'Viksit Bharat' and 'Yangi Uzbekistan'.

The talks covered a range of areas, including trade and investment, digital connectivity, defence and energy, according to the Indian side.

New Delhi has been looking at procuring uranium from Uzbekistan to produce nuclear energy for civilian purposes.

"We are celebrating the 15th anniversary of our strategic partnership. I am delighted that, on this special occasion, we are elevating our ties to the level of a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership," Modi said in his opening remarks at the bilateral talks.

"We will move forward by setting concrete goals within this framework," he said in Hindi.

The prime minister also made a mention of the "productive talks" he had with the Uzbek president over dinner last night.

"We had a productive discussion over dinner last night and took several important decisions," Modi said.

"We will establish a Coordination Council at the level of foreign ministers to provide direction to all aspects of our cooperation through close coordination," he said.

The prime minister said both sides will also elevate their existing joint commission from the level of secretaries to that of ministerial level.

"Both sides will jointly organise a business summit featuring business leaders from both nations."

"We will also establish a long-term arrangement for the supply of uranium," he said.

Modi had earlier said the India-Uzbekistan strategic partnership had witnessed significant advancement in recent years and expressed his desire to further deepen cooperation in key sectors.

The prime minister on Sunday also witnessed a yoga session hosted by the Yoga Federation of Uzbekistan.

"Yoga has immense appeal in Uzbekistan. It is bringing people and cultures together and strengthening people-to-people ties between India and Uzbekistan," the Ministry of External Affairs said in a post

on X.

After attending the session, Modi said Uzbekistan had been a "proud participant" in the first-ever World Yogasana Championship held in Ahmedabad earlier this year and some of the medal winners were present at the session.

Modi arrived in Tashkent on Saturday and received a warm welcome from Mirziyoyev at the airport.

After his arrival, the prime minister visited Yangi Uzbekistan Park and laid a wreath at the Independence Monument along with the Uzbek president.

He also interacted with members of the Indian community at a hotel in Tashkent, where he witnessed Kathak and Andijan Polka performances by the diaspora and a dance by Uzbek children to the Indian song "Ude Jab Jab Zulf Teri".

Modi also watched a fusion performance of tabla with traditional Uzbek instruments Doira and Chang.

The prime minister is scheduled to travel to Kyrgyzstan from Tashkent to participate in the 26th Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit on August 31-September 1 at the invitation of Kyrgyz President Sadyr Zhaparov.

The summit will mark the 25th anniversary of the SCO. Modi will address the summit and highlight India's priorities of "Security, Connectivity and Opportunity", besides holding bilateral meetings with SCO leaders on the sidelines.

He will also attend the opening ceremony of the sixth World Nomad Games.

Why integrating perinatal mental health in national programmes is important

New Delhi : There is an urgent need to integrate perinatal maternal mental health into national programmes to help fight postpartum depression, anxiety and other such conditions among new mothers, said health experts on Monday.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), worldwide, about 10 per cent of pregnant women and 13 per cent of women who have just given birth experience a mental disorder, primarily depression.

India has more than 25 million births per year, but most women with mental health problems during pregnancy and one year after birth (the "perinatal period") go undetected and untreated, especially in rural areas.

A recent systematic review among perinatal women in India found that the prevalence rates for perinatal depression ranged from 14-24 per cent in community-based studies, while some meta-analyses reported a pooled estimate of around 22 per cent for postpartum depression.

Although maternal mortality in India has reduced by over 50 per cent since the early 2000s to 97 deaths per 100,000, maternal



suicide constitutes an increasing proportion of maternal deaths. A recent report in Kerala estimated that maternal suicide accounted for nearly one in five maternal deaths in 2020. "There is an urgent need to integrate perinatal maternal mental health into

national programmes in India," said Prof. Rajesh Sagar, AIIMS. Speaking at an expert consultation on perinatal mental health in the national capital, the expert raised concerns over the lack of a dedicated initiative to support new mothers facing mental health

issues.

"While women's mental health is mentioned in policies such as the National Mental Health Policy 2014, the Mental Health Care Act 2017, and others, there is no dedicated programme or screening mechanism in place," Sagar said.

The experts, including Prof. Prabha Chandra from NIMHANS, highlighted gaps in training for doctors, nurses, and ASHAs, the lack of culturally relevant tools, and the stigma that prevents women from seeking psychological help even when screened positive. They called for state-specific strategies, collaboration across states, capacity building, and mandatory history-taking during antenatal care.

"It is critical to ensure that perinatal mental health is not seen as a standalone as this might increase the stigma and discrimination that women with perinatal mental health problems face; rather it should be included within the routine antenatal and postnatal care that pregnant and lactating women receive, thus making it sustainable," said Dr. Y.K. Sandhya, Program Lead - Mental Health, The George Institute for Global Health India.

Paracetamol's link to autism not supported by strong scientific evidence: Experts

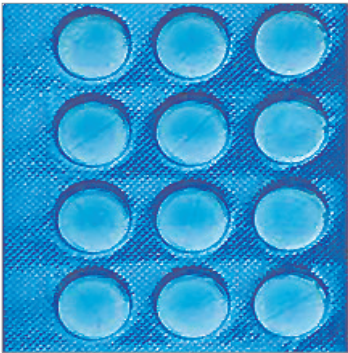
New Delhi : There is no strong scientific evidence to prove that paracetamol is linked to autism, said health experts on Tuesday, after US President Donald Trump linked the painkiller to the neurodevelopmental condition.

Autism, also known as autism spectrum disorder, is a condition characterised by differences or difficulties in social communication and interaction.

Speaking at a White House event on Monday, Trump called on mothers-to-be to "tough it out" rather than take acetaminophen (also known as paracetamol) -- the main ingredient in Tylenol.

"President Trump's suggestion that acetaminophen (Tylenol) use during pregnancy may cause autism is not supported by strong scientific evidence," Dr Manish Narang, Director-Professor, Department of Pediatrics, University College of Medical Sciences and Guru TegBahadur (GTB) Hospital, Delhi, told IANS.

"Existing studies are limited and inconsistent and do not establish a causal link; major medical and research organisations warn that such claims can unnecessarily alarm



parents while clinical guidance continues to recommend discussing pain-management choices with a clinician," he added. Acetaminophen is the most commonly used over-the-counter medication taken during pregnancy, with more than 50 per cent of pregnant women using the medicine worldwide. It is widely used for headaches, pain, or fever by pregnant women.

It has been recommended by regulatory and clinical agencies as safe to use in pregnancy.

But Trump noted that "taking Tylenol is not good", while also urging pregnant women to "fight like hell not to take it." He added that

only an "extremely high fever" could justify its use.

Even as Trump's statement raised health concerns among pregnant women, DrSoumyaSwaminathan, a paediatrician and former World Health Organization (WHO) Chief Scientist, said paracetamol is a proven safe drug, and there is no need to panic about its use.

Speaking to the media, she also cited the lack of "proven scientific evidence" on paracetamol's association with autism.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists has long cited acetaminophen as one of the safest painkillers during pregnancy. Dr Steven Fleischman also shared with the media that, more often than not, treating fever during pregnancy may cause "more adverse effects". Dr. AbhaMajumdar, Senior Consultant, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, at a city-based hospital, stated that people must not stop using treatment out of fear, "but we also need to be mindful about limiting potential harm and risk".

"Very frequent and prolonged use of crocin during pregnancy could raise a potential risk.

Generic medicines, price ceilings led to better hypertension control in India: WHO

New Delhi : Free medicines distribution, use of generics, and price regulation enabled a better control of hypertension -- a known risk for heart disease -- in India, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Tuesday, lauding the country's efforts to combat blood pressure.

In its Global report on hypertension 2025, during the 80th United Nations General Assembly, the WHO shared the example of India for its successful pricing approaches for essential hypertension medicines.

"India's comprehensive approach to improving hypertension care, including its National Free Drugs Service Initiative, the promotion of the use of generic medicines, and the imposition of price ceilings on essential antihypertensive medicines, has yielded substantial public health gains and improved blood pressure control rates," the WHO said.

Launched in 2018-2019, the government's India Hypertension Control Initiative (IHCI) ensured a reliable supply of free, quality-assured generic antihypertensive medicines in public sector clinics. It was also supported by simple, protocol-driven treatment regimens and robust medicines procurement systems.

In addition, the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) also set the price ceilings for essential medicines, including antihypertensives, under the Drug Price Control Order and the National List of Essential Medicines.

The NPPA calculated these ceiling prices based on average market prices, ensuring medicines remain affordable while allowing fair profit margins for manufacturers. The approach kept out-of-pocket costs low for patients and thus enabled



the public health system to provide a reliable supply of affordable, quality-assured generic medicines, the report said.

The WHO said that studies indicate that when hypertension medicines are procured and dispensed through public sector channels or Jan-Aushadhi generic medicines stores, annual costs per patient can be up to 80 per cent lower than in the private sector, further enhancing affordability and access.

The report stated that before these reforms were initiated, hypertension control rates in India were low -- only about 14 per cent of hypertensive adults achieved blood pressure control.

However, "recent programme data from Punjab and Maharashtra show that among patients retained in care and treated according to protocol, blood pressure control rates rose to 70-81 per cent at follow-up, with mean systolic blood pressure reductions of 15-16

mmHg", the WHO said. "These improvements demonstrate that public investment in affordable, accessible antihypertensive medicines not only enhances clinical outcomes but also reduces the economic burden of cardiovascular disease, offering a high value return by preventing costly heart attacks, strokes, and related complications," the global health body said. Meanwhile, the WHO report showed that 1.4 billion people lived with hypertension in 2024, yet just over one in five have it under control either through medication or addressing modifiable health risks.

The analysis of data from 195 countries and territories shows that 99 of them have national hypertension control rates below 20 per cent. Only 28 per cent of low-income countries report that all WHO-recommended hypertension medicines are generally available in pharmacies or primary care facilities.

Study finds how new type of cell therapy help ARDS patients



LOS ANGELES : A novel form of cell therapy may help patients who are critically ill with acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) brought on by severe COVID-19, according to a study.

Professor Justin Stebbing of Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) is a co-senior author of a recent study that examines the application of agentT-797, an allogeneic, unmodified invariant natural killer T (iNKT) cell treatment developed by MiNK Therapeutics.

The work was published in the journal Nature Communications.

The iNKT cell therapy has the effect of rescuing depleted T cells and inducing an anti-inflammatory cytokine response, perhaps activating antiviral immunity to assist these patients fight infection while also reducing severe, pathogenic inflammation of the lung.

The new research was carried out at three medical centres and found that agentT-797, which is also under investigation in cancer trials, could be manufactured rapidly, had a tolerable safety profile and appeared to have a positive effect on mortality among critically unwell COVID-19 ARDS patients receiving intensive care.

The exploratory trial included 20 mechanically ventilated patients with severe ARDS secondary to Covid-19. Of the 20 patients in the trial, 14 survived (70 per cent) at 30 days (compared to a control group of 10 per cent), and there was an 80 per cent lower occurrence of bacterial pneumonia amongst those who received the highest dosage of agentT-797, compared to those who

received fewer cells.

Twenty-one patients were treated overall (the main trial, plus one under compassionate use), which included five who were also receiving venovenous extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (VV-ECMO), known as 'the most aggressive salvage therapy' for critically ill patients with ARDS. In VV-ECMO, deoxygenated blood is pumped through a membrane lung and returned to the body via a cannula.

This trial is believed to be the first immune cell therapy of any type to be used in critically unwell patients undergoing VV-ECMO. Survival of the VV-ECMO cohort was 80 per cent after 30 and 90 days, and 60 per cent after 120 days. This compares favourably to the overall survival of 51 per cent for patients with Covid-19 who were treated with just VV-ECMO at the same institution, during the same timeframe.

Joint senior author Justin Stebbing, Professor of Biomedical Sciences at Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) in Cambridge, England, said, "During this small, exploratory study we observed that MiNK's iNKT cell treatment, which is also being advanced for people with cancer, triggered an anti-inflammatory response in ARDS patients.

"Despite a poor prognosis, critically ill patients treated with this therapy showed favourable mortality rates and those treated at the highest dose also had reduced rates of pneumonia, underscoring the potential application of iNKT cells, and agentT-797 in particular, in treating viral diseases and infections more broadly.

Why might nonfermented milk increase heart disease risk in women?

A board-certified interventional cardiologist and medical director of the Structural Heart Program at MemorialCare Saddleback Medical Center in Laguna Hills, CA, who was not involved in this study, spoke with Medical about its findings.

Reflecting on why there would be an association of an increased risk in women who consume nonfermented milk developing heart disease or heart attacks compared to men, Chen said it remains unclear.

"It is possible that sex-specific differences in the metabolism of milk components such as lactose result in differences in degradation products, which can potentially cause differences in oxidative stress and inflammation," he suggested. "This could then lead to increased risk of developing heart disease."

Chen also discussed how fermented milk could potentially offer heart-protective benefits.

"Fermented milk products such as yogurt are rich in bacteria (for example, Lactobacillus) that influence the composition of our gut microbiome," he explained. The beneficial effects of yogurt are likely related to its benefit to the microbiome.

Chen further noted that while more research is needed about the microbiome and heart health, "many studies have found that different compositions of the microbiome can help with decreasing the risk of high blood pressure, diabetes, and even heart disease."

a cardiologist at UTHealth Houston, also spoke with MNT about the study.

Higgins, who was not involved in this research, did not find the study results on nonfermented milk surprising. He told us that:

"Given that there are effects of increased inflammation, especially in women, that is not surprising. Men appear to be [better able] to break down some inflammatory products in the non-fermented milk."

He also spoke on how fermented milk could offer more cardiovascular benefits, noting that "fermented milk is loaded with vitamin B12, D, riboflavin (B2), calcium, magnesium, and protein, which has been associated with reduced inflammation."

"Also, it promotes an improved microbiome (gut health), improved immunity, reduced stress, and helps maintain blood sugar levels," he added.

While the study authors say more research is necessary, the study does lend to the possibility of dietary guidelines one day being changed to include fermented milk.

"Fermented milk products appear to be safe for both men and women, so they probably should be preferred in future guidelines," Higgins said.

Nepal warns of more possible floods as communities grapple with devastation

MI News Service, Kathmandu: Authorities in Nepal are warning of possible fresh flooding on Sunday and urged residents in flood-affected districts to remain on high alert after water levels rose in the Bhotekoshi River.

Flood warning notices were sent to people's phones throughout Sunday morning, as rescue crews worked to clear a major highway connecting Kathmandu to one of the areas worst-hit by Wednesday's catastrophic floods.

In the town of Galchhi, a group of residents sought higher ground on a nearby bridge and watched as the river roared by. People pointed to enormous rocks that had been washed down river during the earlier floods, as others standing



on a suspension bridge over the water were warned off with whistles.

Along the river entire homes, vehicles and farm tractors could be seen jutting from the thick grey-brown sediment that has enveloped entire villages in the worst-hit flood areas. Rice terraces along riverside had experienced

landslides, dropping parts of their field into the river.

The combined toll in Nepal and Tibet rose to 750 dead and over 3,000 people missing after the latest updates on Sunday. Nepal's disaster agency said the death toll had climbed to 734 with 2,498 people missing, while Chinese authorities reported

16 deaths and 546 missing, including over a hundred Nepalis and people from over a dozen countries.

The latest warnings came after Chinese authorities informed their Nepalese counterparts of increased water flow upstream, Dharam Raj Uprety, chief executive of Nepal's National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority, told the media.

But residents of the flood-hit villages said they were struggling to make sense of near-constant alarms they've received since the initial floods.

"Sometimes they say a flood is coming, then we have to run again to higher ground, even at night. There is also rain," said local resident Govind Shreshtha. Large concrete

and smaller suspension bridges were destroyed, leaving communities on the other side of the river less easy access.

"Those that are there are now stuck there. Those who are here are stuck here. It's going to be very difficult," said Sattan Singh Tamang, 47, who was working near a bridge when Wednesday's the floods came.

Homes and businesses left intact after the flooding were still without electricity on Sunday, as twisted power line poles and wires lay tangled in the mud.

Prithivi Highway is crucial supply route for food, fuel and other goods entering Kathmandu from other parts of the country. While most of the highway is operational, other parts still face repair challenges.

Niger capital rocked by mutiny

MI News Service, Niamey: Mutinous soldiers in Niger attacked the airport and the presidency in the capital, Niamey, early on Saturday, triggering hours of gunfire and explosions and briefly knocking state television and radio off air.

By late morning, Niger's defence ministry said the armed forces were gradually retaking sites seized in the overnight attack, but security sources said mutineers were still at the airport in the afternoon and the overall situation remained unclear Saturday night.

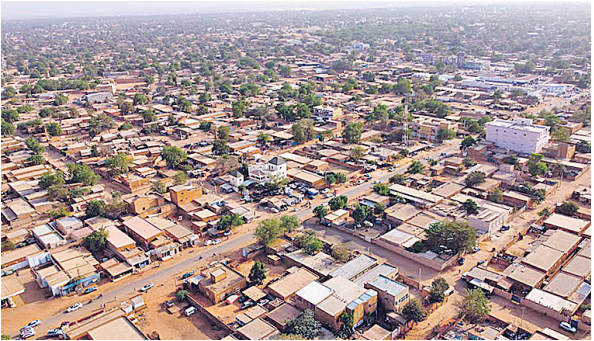
The attack marked the latest threat to the rule of Abdourahamane Tiani, who seized power in a 2023 coup. Tiani had pledged to improve security in the Sahel nation, a major uranium producer, but jihadist attacks have persisted.

State television, after resuming broadcasts, aired a message saying mutinous soldiers from a base in Niamey had opened fire on "sensitive sites" in the city.

Security forces had reacted quickly and "contained this disturbance", it said.

Earlier this year, affiliates of al Qaeda and Islamic State carried out attacks on the civilian airport and military airbase. Some security observers initially suspected militants were behind Saturday's assault.

Tiani made no public appearances on Saturday. Even if he survives the mutiny, the unrest raises the prospect that resources otherwise spent fighting jihadists will need to go towards policing internal threats, said Heni Nsaibia, senior analyst for West Africa of Armed Conflict Location & Event Data



(ACLED). "The jihadist groups will be the only winners in this situation," he said.

According to sources, gunfire at the airport and military airbase, where Russian and Italian forces are stationed, and heavy explosions in the pre-dawn hours.

As of 0900 GMT, the presidential palace appeared to have been secured by loyalist troops but the area around the airport was still contested, two security sources and a diplomat said.

The defence ministry statement referred to an effort by the mutineers "to detain some of their comrades" at the military airbase, without providing details.

Two sources said loyalist troops had been dispatched to retake control of the airport, either through negotiations or by force.

The Alliance of Sahel States (AES), made up of Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso, voiced support for Niger's military and said in a statement on Saturday night that the mutineers had been thwarted. It was unclear whether Mali and Burkina Faso provided any concrete military support to Niger on Saturday.

The mutineers' operation also involved soldiers from the localities of Qualam, Tera and Dosso in the

southwest, according to a Niger security source and Yvan Guichaoua, senior researcher at the Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies.

Troops in this area have sustained heavy casualties in battles with the regional Islamic State affiliate. Analysts and security sources say frustration with the government is mounting within frontline units.

"Just a week ago, some 18 soldiers were killed in an attack on their position in the southern Dosso region. These mass-casualty overrun attacks on the Nigerien military are becoming commonplace and will continue to fuel unrest and aggravate tensions within the army ranks," Nsaibia said.

It was not clear how many troops allied with the mutineers had entered Niamey or where they had deployed.

Niger, a West African nation rich in uranium, oil and gold resources, has been ruled by military officers since the July 2023 coup that ousted President Mohamed Bazoum.

Like its neighbours Burkina Faso and Mali, it has failed to turn the tide in its battle against Islamist insurgencies linked to al Qaeda and Islamic State despite pledges by military rulers to improve security.

Eastern Railway Ensures Remarkable Pilgrim Amenities And Seamless Train Operations During Shravani Mela 2026



MI News Service, Kolkata: Eastern Railway, under the dynamic leadership of General Manager Ms. Gitika Pandey, has successfully executed comprehensive operational planning and robust passenger amenity management during the Shravani Mela 2026. Demonstrating high-level ground oversight, Gitika Pandey, General Manager, along with DRM Asansol Shri Sangrah Maurya and DRM Howrah Shri Vishal Kapoor, Principal Head of Departments (PHODs), and senior officers, conducted extensive field inspections across key stations and festival zones. During these visits, top management inspected facilities firsthand and directly interacted with thousands of visiting devotees to gather real-time feedback and ensure a comfortable, safe, and seamless pilgrimage.

Eastern Railway achieved impressive pilgrim handling outcomes across its network during the festival period. Up to August 28, 2026, a total of 75.2 Lakhs (7,521,710) pilgrims were handled across six key reporting stations, reflecting a 10.54% growth over the 2025 cumulative total of 6,804,716 pilgrims. Growth was especially strong at Basukinath

(+24.67%), Tarakeswar (+19.91%), and Deoghar (+15.45%). Peak single-day handling included 159,108 pilgrims at Tarakeswar on August 3, 2026, and 92,898 pilgrims at Jasidih on August 17, 2026.

To manage the heavy surge of devotees smoothly, Eastern Railway deployed extensive operational infrastructure across all major stations. Dedicated holding and assembly areas were provided to regulate crowd movements, including 84,500 sq ft at Jasidih, 30,000 sq ft at Deoghar, 12,000 sq ft at Basukinath, 5,800 sq ft at Baidyanathdham, approximately 1,700 sq m (assembly/arrival/temp.) at Sultanganj, and 1,480 sq m at Tarakeswar with a capacity for 6,000 passengers. To prevent overcrowding at booking offices, augmented ticketing was arranged through UTS, ATVM, and mobile UTS (M-UTS) counters across the network. A total of 49 UTS, 28 ATVM, and 49 M-UTS counters were operated across the six stations. Ensuring tight security and surveillance, a total of 309 CCTV cameras were installed across the six stations. Command and control arrangements included a Command & Control Cen-

tre at SHE, alongside War Rooms at Tarakeswar and Sultanganj, supported by 890 RPF personnel deputed for special mela duty—comprising 410 personnel at Tarakeswar, 120 at Sultanganj, 270 at Jasidih, 30 at Deoghar, 15 at Baidyanathdham, and 45 at Basukinath. Comprehensive medical, sanitation, and accessibility support was arranged across the network. A total of 9 medical assistance booths, 9 ambulances successfully attending to 16,063 medical cases. Additional passenger conveniences included water booths/coolers, pay-and-use toilets, mobile bio-toilets (including 20 mobile bio-toilets at Tarakeswar and high-capacity mobile units at Jasidih, Deoghar, Baidyanathdham, and Basukinath), Divyangjan toilets, May-I-Help-You booths, TIB/CIB displays, and station-level passenger guidance deployed as per location.

To facilitate seamless transport, Eastern Railway operated a cumulative total of 2,075 Mela Special train trips. The operational approach integrated capacity augmentation, intensive surveillance, station war-room monitoring, passenger information, medical and sanitation support, and additional train services to handle heavy peak-day pilgrimage traffic safely and smoothly. Reiterating the railway's commitment to passenger welfare, Shri Bram Majhi, Chief Public Relations Officer of Eastern Railway, stated: "The seamless execution of Shravani Mela 2026 reflects Eastern Railway's unwavering dedication to passenger safety, comfort, and operational efficiency."

RPF Seizes 22.64 kg of Suspected Cannabis at Howrah Railway Station; One Arrested

MI News Service, Kolkata: Under the guidance of Geetika Pandey, General Manager, Eastern Railway, and the leadership of Amiya Nandan Sinha, IG-cum-Principal Chief Security Commissioner, Eastern Railway, the Railway Protection Force (RPF) intercepted a suspect and seized 22.64 kg of suspected Cannabis (Ganja) at Howrah Railway Station's Old Complex as part of an ongoing drive against illegal trafficking.

Acting on specific source information regarding the movement of narcotic substances through the station premises, an intensive preventive checking operation was conducted by the RPF Crime Intelligence Branch (CIB), Howrah, in coordination with local RPF officers. During the operation, RPF sniffer dog "MARCO" gave a positive indication toward a sky-blue trolley bag carried by a male passenger proceeding toward Platform No. 08. The individual was immediately detained near Platform No. 08, Pillar No. 02, and identified as 22-year-old Rabiya, a native of Cooch Behar, West Bengal, currently residing in North-West Delhi.

A search of the trolley bag was carried out in the presence of senior officials



and independent witnesses, revealing 11 tape-wrapped packets containing the contraband substance, weighing a total of 22.64 kg. A mobile phone and personal items carried by the individual were also taken into custody alongside the illegal drugs. The suspect failed to produce any valid license, permit, or legal documentation for possessing or transporting the substance. The arrested individual, along with all seized items, has been handed over to the Government Railway Police (GRP), Howrah, for formal arrest and action under the relevant sections of the Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985. Commenting on the operation, Shri Bram Majhi, Chief Public Relations Officer, Eastern Railway, stated, "Eastern Railway remains committed to maintaining zero tolerance towards illegal activities across all station premises and ensuring secure transit for passengers."

Liluah Workshop Sets National Benchmark in Sustainable Railway Engineering with Automated Bio-Tank Overhaul Line & Zero-Discharge STP

MI News Service, Kolkata: The Periodic Overhauling (POH) of coach bio-tanks at the Carriage & Wagon (C&W) Workshop, Liluah, Eastern Railway, marks a monumental transition from hazardous manual cleaning to a standardized, mechanized, and sustainable ecosystem, carried out under the visionary leadership and guidance of Ms. Geetika Pandey, General Manager, Eastern Railway. By coupling custom motorized manipulators with an integrated 40 Kilo-Liters per Day (40 KLD) Sewage Treatment Plant (STP), the workshop achieved a complete 'Worst to Best' operational turnaround by eliminating occupational health risks, ensuring biological tank rejuvenation, and maintaining zero direct effluent release.

To modernize operations under the steadfast direction of Shri Yatish Kumar, Chief Works Manager / Liluah,

Liluah Workshop upgraded four core domains. Cleaning shifted from legacy manual scraping of pathogenic sludge to 360-degree motorized rotational manipulators with high-pressure jets. Environmental safeguards replaced uncontained runoff with closed-loop drainage to an on-site 40 KLD STP. Component refurbishment moved from superficial

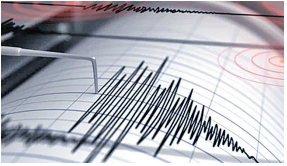


patching to structural arc welding, leak-proof neoprene rubber gaskets, and fresh Poly Grass matrices. Biological recharging was standardized via regular anaerobic bacterial dosing to ensure immediate digestion efficacy. The Motorized Bio-Tank Manipulator operates with a Safe Working Load (SWL) of 1000 kg at 3 to 4 RPM, driven by a 5 HP, 3-Phase, 415 V motor. It maintains a 250 mm ground clearance and uses a two-stage air compressor with a 500-liter tank operating at a maximum pressure of 9.0 kg/cm².

The overhaul operates across six dedicated zones. In Stage 1, detached bio-tanks arrive at the 'Unclean Serviceable / Repairable Zone', where top covers are unbolted using pneumatic power nut-runners for inspection. In Stage 2, tanks are shifted by forklift to the 'Cleaning Zone' and clamped into the manipulator for 360-degree rota-

tion and high-pressure jet washing. In Stage 3, technicians in the 'Repairing Zone' carry out arc welding, angle grinding, and neoprene gasket installation. In Stage 4, depleted substrate is replaced at the 'Poly Grass Changing Zone' with fresh PVC matrices. In Stage 5, high-activity anaerobic bacterial inoculum is added at the 'Bacteria Top Up Zone' to convert waste into water, methane, and CO2. In Stage 6, tanks are reassembled, stenciled, and mounted back onto coach underframes.

The 40 KLD STP isolates wash water using chemical flocculation, split aeration tanks (2.00 m x 1.00 m x 2.25 m with 0.5 m freeboard), and multimedia sand and carbon filtration. The facility uses strict color-coded piping: Green for Water, Red for Fire Fighting, Yellow for Gas, Brown for Sewage/Effluent, Blue for Compressed Air, and Orange or Grey for Electrical Con-



particularly in the Hindu Kush region, which lies in a highly active seismic zone, according to the Red Cross.

Afghanistan's vulnerability to earthquakes is linked to its location along the collision zone between the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates. A major fault line also passes through parts of the country, including the Herat region.

Temporary Stoppage Of Trains At Sarsawa Station Over Northern Railway



MI News Service, Kolkata : Due to citing convenience for huge number of Sangat expected during the Sat-sang period, Railway has decided to provide temporary stoppage of following trains at Sarsawa station over Northern Railway as under:

13151 Kolkata - Jammu Tawi Express (journey commencing on and from 30.08.2026 to 01.09.2026), 13152 Jammu Tawi - Kolkata Express (journey commencing on and from 30.08.2026 to 01.09.2026) & 13042 Jammu Tawi - Howrah Himgiri Express (journey commencing on 30.08.2026 and 31.08.2026 will arrive Sarsawa station at 23:58 hrs., 05:15 hrs. & 06:25 hrs. respectively and will stop for 01 minutes.

Augmentation Of Additional Coaches In Kolkata – Ahmedabad – Kolkata Express

MI News Service, Kolkata : The augmentation of additional coaches in popular express trains is an ongoing initiative aimed at improving overall travel experience for passengers. Accordingly, for better comfort & to clear the extra rush of the passengers, Railway has decided to augment additional Air-Conditioned & Sleeper Class coaches on temporary basis with Kolkata – Ahmedabad – Kolkata Express.

One AC-3 tier & one Sleeper Class coach will be augmented with 19413/19414 Ahmedabad – Kolkata – Ahmedabad Express leaving Ahmedabad with effect from 02.09.2026 to 25.11.2026 (on nominated days) and leaving Kolkata from 05.09.2026 to 28.11.2026 (on nominated days). The train will run with 22 coaches instead of 20 coaches.

Major Operational Upgrade at Sealdah Yard: Successful 7-Hour Mega Block Completes Critical 60 kg Diamond Crossing Conversion

MI News Service, Kolkata : In a major boost to safe, smooth, and reliable train operations, Eastern Railway successfully executed a 7-hour mega traffic block in the Sealdah (SDAH) Yard during the night of August 29/30, 2026. Under the guidance of General Manager, Eastern Railway, Ms. Gitika Pandey, the infrastructure upgrade was carried out from 00:00 hrs to 07:00 hrs at DNML in KM 0/19-0/20 within the Sealdah Station limits. The core engineering work focused on converting Diamond Switch Point No. 208B/219A from 52 kg to 60 kg rail with complete fittings, incorporating 34.71 meters of 60 kg rail and 7 nos. of 60 kg prefabricated glued joints (6.5 m each). Despite space constraints at the site, old-age point machines were replaced alongside associated ground fittings to complete a full track-structure upgrade.



to an IRS point machine, replaced two old-age point machines (including ground fittings), laid a new JP-to-point-machine tail cable, changed 9 glued joints, replaced 20 track and cross jumpers, and renewed 44 bond wires prior to full S&T testing and commissioning. Simultaneously, the TRD team liquidated 2-3 years of overdue maintenance in Power Block Section E/S = X-17 / Dum Dum (DDJ) Yard Line 5 & 6, conducting Annual Overhaul (AOH) between Location Nos. 5/29E and 5/23E (attending 4 cantilevers and cleaning 8 insulators), plumbing 2 displaced cantilevers at Location Nos. 5/23E and 5/25E, and removing 2 bird nests from the portal upright at Location No. 5/25E.

The seamless execution of all engineering, S&T, and TRD works and the right-time cancellation of the traffic block at 07:00 hrs reflect high operational efficiency and teamwork across departments. Commenting on the achievement, Chief Public Relation Officer, Eastern Railway, Shri Shri Bram Majhi stated: "This successful mega block exemplifies perfect inter-departmental coordination, seamlessly upgrading critical Sealdah Yard infrastructure to heavier 60 kg standards while ensuring zero unnecessary disruption to overall train operations."

Demonstrating exemplary inter-departmental synergy, the Signal & Telecommunication (S&T) and Traction Distribution (TRD) wings utilized the engineering traffic block effectively to execute critical shadow works without requiring separate traffic interruptions. Under the direct leadership of Divisional Railway Manager, Sealdah Division, Shri Rajeev Saxena, the S&T team converted Point No. 208B from a Siemens

Duleep Trophy: Kaverappa’s four-for helps South Zone bowl out North Zone for 195

BENGALURU : Pacer Vidhwath Kaverappa picked a disciplined four-wicket haul to help South Zone bowl out North Zone for a modest 195 on the day one of their Duleep Trophy semi-final clash at the BCCI Centre of Excellence Ground 2 on Sunday.

Opting to bat first after winning the toss, a strategy similar to their quarter-final victory against West Zone, North Zone failed to build substantial partnerships as South Zone’s disciplined attack kept taking wickets at regular intervals.

Opening batter Qamran Iqbal provided the sole resistance for North Zone by compiling a gritty 76 off 182 balls.

However, he found little support from the other end. Number three batter Ayush Doseja struck five boundaries during his 23-run knock before being dismissed by Kavuri Saiteja.

North Zone slipped into trouble early in the opening session, losing Doseja, Sanat Sangwan, Ayush Badoni and Abdul Samad in quick succession to be reduced to 95/4. Captain Kanhaiya Wadhawan attempted to rebuild the innings alongside Iqbal, stitching together a 66-run partnership for the fifth wicket, which proved to be the highest stand of the North Zone innings.

The resistance ended



when spinner Tanay Thyagarajan castled Wadhawan for 35. Iqbal was left to wage a lonely battle with the tail, but Kaverappa returned for a lethal second spell to slice through the lower order. Unlike the quar-

ter-final, there was no lower-order rescue act from Anshul Kamboj, as North Zone lost their final five wickets for just 21 runs.

Kaverappa finished with impressive figures of 4-66, while Thyagarajan (2-31) and MD Nidheesh (2-38) made their contributions to dismantle the North Zone line-up. In reply, South Zone reached 40/2 at stumps, trailing North Zone by 155 runs.

Wicketkeeper-batter N. Jagadeesan played an aggressive unbeaten knock of 34 off 31 balls to survive through the tricky final passage of play, while skipper Tilak Varma was not out on one off three balls.

North Zone managed to strike back late in the day, as Kamboj and Gurnoor Brar took out Ricky Bhui (5) and Shaik Rasheed (zero) before bad light brought an early end to the day’s play. Day two will tell if South Zone manage to take the lead or whether their contentious call to not play Karun Nair will come back to hit them hard.

Brief scores: North Zone 195 in 59.1 overs (Qamran Iqbal 76, Kanhaiya Wadhawan 35; Vidhwath Kaverappa 4-66, Tanay Thyagarajan 2-31) lead South Zone 40/2 in 18 overs (N. Jagadeesan 34 not out; Anshul Kamboj 1-9, Gurnoor Brar 1-12) by 155 runs

Chelsea sign Emi Martinez from Aston Villa on three-year deal

NEW DELHI : Chelsea have signed Aston Villa goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez on a three-year deal a day before the transfer deadline closes.

Martinez joins the Blues for three years after having spent six years with Aston Villa, during which he won the UEFA Europa League. He is a 2022 FIFA World Cup winner and also received the Golden Glove for a stellar tournament.

"I'm delighted to be at this football club," Martinez said in a statement from Chelsea. "Coming to Chelsea, for me and my family, was an easy decision to make and I'm just over the moon - I can't wait to get started."

"I want to be successful here. I'm someone who wants to win at everything I do and I want to bring that here to this football club because it's a football club that wins titles, so I think it's a good match. I'm all passion and I play with my heart. I will give 100 per cent every game, every training session to make the club, my teammates and the supporters proud," he added. Martinez started his youth career in Independiente before completing a move to Arsenal in 2010. He spent several seasons on loan to gain first-team experience and later became an Arsenal regular in 2019/20, when he won the FA Cup. The Argentine then made a move to Aston Villa, for whom he made 213 appearances and also went on to make his international debut in 2021. He has since been Argentina's top-choice goalkeeper and was the cornerstone in their 2022 win, including some spectacular saves in the final against France. Martinez also played a crucial role as Argentina made it to the final of the 2026 World Cup, where they eventually lost to European powerhouse Spain in the showdown. Martinez was awarded the title of the world's best-performing goalkeeper at the 2023 and 2024 Ballon d'Or ceremonies.

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi takes over as stand-in captain of East Zone after Kishan picks up blow

BENGALURU : Teenage sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi got his first captaincy role in senior first-class cricket when he took over as the stand-in captain of the East Zone side for their Duleep Trophy semi-final against Central Zone on Sunday.

Sooryavanshi, the incumbent vice-captain of the East side, donned the captain's hat on Day 1 of the semifinal when regular skipper Ishan Kishan walked off the field. Kishan picked up a blow to his right thumb while keeping wickets during Central Zone's batting innings.

The East Zone skipper was replaced by Kumar Kushagara behind the stumps, while Sooryavanshi took over as the stand-in captain of the zonal side temporarily.

Sooryavanshi has been in focus in the Duleep Trophy. The teenage sensation scored only eight runs in the quarter-final against North East



Zone but had an enjoyable outing with the ball.

The teenage sensation discussed his switch of hats during the match and shared how he felt when bowling and taking two wickets in the second innings of the game, which his team won by an innings and 210 runs on Tuesday.

"If you ask any batter, they always enjoy bowling. A batter always enjoys bowling and a bowler always enjoys batting equally,"

Sooryavanshi said in a video posted by BCCI Domestic.

Sooryavanshi, who was appointed vice-captain of the zonal side and deputy to Ishan Kishan, opened up about the skipper's decision to bowl him and described himself as a "wicket-taker".

"Opponent team's wickets weren't falling, so I was asked to bowl two or three overs. Ishan Bhaiya felt like he was taking a risk, but he didn't know that I am a wicket-taker," he added.

Golfer Pranavi slips to 15th at rain hit Irish Open

COUNTY KILDARE : India's star Pranavi Urs carded her third consecutive sub-par round but slid out of the top ten to settle for a tied-15th spot after a rain-marred moving day at the 2026 KPMG Women's Irish Open here. The Mysuru professional added a two-under-par 70 on Saturday, taking her 54-hole cumulative score to a commendable seven-under-par (69-70-70) with just the final round left to play on Sunday.

Urs, who was the lone Indian to make the cut, as compatriots Diksha Dagar, Tvesa Malik, and Avani Prashanth missed the halfway cut, endured a roller-coaster start under testing, wet conditions at the Palmer South Course at The K Club.

The Hero-supported golfer launched an aggressive charge with back-to-back birdies on the second and third holes. However, she surrendered the early advantage immediately by dropping successive shots on the fourth and fifth. Refusing to let the



setback derail her campaign, Urs fought back with a birdie on the par-4 seventh before picking up another stroke on the 10th hole. She concluded her resilient afternoon with eight straight, steady pars to sign for a 70. At the top, South Africa's Casandra Alexander looks poised to capture a wire-to-wire victory after carding a fine three-

under 69. The 27-year-old weathered a 45-minute weather delay caused by heavy downpours to move to a commanding 18-under-par overall, maintaining a clear three-shot cushion over her nearest challenger. Alexander, currently leading the Ladies European Tour (LET) Order of Merit and ranked World No. 38, fired an explosive front-nine 33 before rain halted play. Upon resumption, she endured a quiet stretch of six consecutive pars before birdieing the short 16th. A late bogey on the par-3 17th marginally trimmed her lead, but she remains the firm favourite to claim her second career LET title following her breakthrough at last year's Tisport Czech Ladies Open.

Chasing the South African is the Czech Republic's Sara Kouskova, who holds solo second place at 15-under-par. The two-time LET winner fired a flawless, bogey-free five-

under 67, punctuated by three birdies and a spectacular eagle on the par-5 seventh hole. Two strokes further back sits the in-form Swede, Kajsa Arwefjall, who turned in the performance of the week with a jaw-dropping nine-under 63. Arwefjall's masterclass included eight birdies and an eagle on the par-5 10th, rocketing her back into title contention just two weeks after a heartbreaking runner-up finish at the Swiss Ladies Open. Meanwhile, home favourite and Solheim Cup star Leona Maguire delighted local galleries by ripping the course apart with nine birdies for a 63, surging into a tie for sixth at 11-under-par. Maguire's and Arwefjall's scores will not stand as official course records due to preferred lies being in place. Maguire remains tied with Sweden's Louise Rydqvist and Corinne Viden, who sit locked at 12-under-par heading into Sunday's high-stakes finale

US Open 2026: Djokovic, Medvedev Williams headline action-packed Day 1

NEW YORK : Twenty four-time Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic will resume his quest for the elusive 25th Major as he gears up for his 20th appearance at the US Open. Djokovic, a four-time winner in New York, will face Argentina's Mariano Navone in the first round as he remains among the headline starters on Day 1 in Flushing Meadows.

There will be another former winner in Daniil Medvedev, who will open his campaign in New York on Day 1 as the 2021 champion meets France's Hugo Gaston in his opener. Veteran Venus Williams will also mark her 26th main-draw campaign underway on an action-packed opening day as she meets compatriot Sofia Kenin in her opener.

Elsewhere, another American, Jessica Pegula, will begin her quest for her maiden Grand Slam title after having fallen short on the final hurdle in 2024 in New York to Aryna Sabalenka. The 32-year-old is slated to meet Belgium's Elena-Gabriela Ruse on Day 1.

Meanwhile, home favourite Ben Shelton, fresh off winning the Montreal title earlier this month, will embark on his journey for his maiden Major title. The 2023 US Open semifinalist will be up against the Netherlands ' Coleman Wong vs. [20]



Tallon Griekspoor in his first clash.

The likes of defending champions Carlos Alcaraz and Aryna Sabalenka will be in action later, as will be the French Open 2026 winner Alexander Zverev.

Here's the Day 1 schedule of the US Open 2026 (All matches as per IST):

Sunday, 30 August
Arthur Ashe Stadium
Day session - from 9:30 p.m
[3] Jessica Pegula vs. Elena-Gabriela Ruse
[7] Daniil Medvedev vs. Hugo Gaston
From 4:30 a.m (Monday)
Mariano Navone vs. [4] Novak Djokovic
Venus Williams vs. Sofia Kenin
Louis Armstrong Stadium
From 8:30 p.m.
[19] Jasmine Paolini vs. Verinika Erjavec
Coleman Wong vs. [20]

Kairav Roberson, Rehan Khan Rasheed win titles

CHENNAI : The inaugural IAME Series India 2026 concluded at the floodlit Madras International Karting Arena in a blaze of spectacular fireworks while the sharp showers that caused a stoppage did not dampen the competitiveness of the fifth and final round which concluded close to midnight on Saturday.

The first-ever day-night competitive karting at the MIKA, organised by the Madras Motor Sports Club (MMSC), proved to be challenging, with a slippery track dotted with water puddles, but the young drivers, especially those in the Mini and Mini Under-10 categories, displayed plenty of pluck and courage in countering the conditions. However, the number of laps in the finals in all classes that were run on resumption was reduced.

In the process, Chennai's Kairav Roberson (MSPORT), who topped all the sessions, and Rehan Khan Rasheed (Momentum Motorsports) emerged as overall winners in the senior and junior classes, respectively.

Shiv Neel (NKRA by KKM), son of India's first Formula One driver Narain Karthikeyan, from Coimbatore, swept to a title triumph in the Mini category, and little Aruthran Prabhu from Kumaraburam (Kartkrew Motorsports) bagged the title in the Under-10 class.

All four overall winners received a ticket to participate in the IAME Asia Finals in Macau, scheduled for 11-13 December 2026.

The team titles were won



by Kartkrew Motorsports (Seniors and Under-10), Momentum Motorsports (Juniors), and NKRA by KKM (Mini).

Kairav Roberson comfortably won the Super Heat and, along with it, the title in the class. Later, he topped the Finals too without much of a challenge.

Rehan Khan Rasheed effectively sealed the title in the Junior class when he finished second behind Pune's Abhisht Barse (Crest Motorsports) in the Super Heat. Later, after the rains, Rehan drove impeccably in the wet for a brilliant win in the finals.

The Juniors were first out after proceedings resumed following a lengthy stoppage due to rain. The slippery tarmac tested the drivers, a few of whom slid and spun, but not Rehan,

who kept his composure for a handsome win.

Shiv Neel had to work hard for his overall title in the mini class. He edged out Rudra Gokulnath by the proverbial whisker in the Super Heat to extend his points advantage going into the Finals. Rudra avenged the loss in the Finals, but Shiv Neel picked up sufficient points by finishing second and with that the title.

In contrast, Aruthran Prabhu sealed the title in the Under-10 class, though he finished second behind Ayansh Patil in the Super Heat. The P2 finish saw Aruthran taking an unsailable lead over Ayansh ahead of the Finals. Aruthran was in a league of his own in the Finals, as he won virtually unchallenged in his class.

J&K pacer Auqib Nabi likely to represent Surrey in ongoing County Championship

NEW DELHI : Jammu & Kashmir fast bowler Auqib Nabi is likely to turn out for English county side Surrey for a brief stint in the ongoing County Championship Division One season.

Nabi, who finished as the leading wicket-taker in the last Ranji Trophy season with 60 wickets at an average of 12.56 to lead J&K to their maiden championship triumph, is expected to be available for Surrey's upcoming fixture against Yorkshire, starting on September 2 at The Oval.

It is followed by games against Sussex and

Glamorgan in Hove and The Oval on September 8 and 15 respectively. "Yes, Auqib has got his visa for going to England, after all the paperwork was done. It is understood that he's expected to depart for England from New Delhi today. If all goes well, he may be available from the game starting on September 2." The main purpose of this stint is also for the Indian team management and selectors to check if Nabi can swing the ball well there in England, as the climate in New Zealand for the Test series will need for him to do that in conducive conditions



with the red Kookaburra ball in hand," a source familiar with the development told IANS on Sunday.

The Indian team management and national selectors are keen on providing Nabi exposure to seamer-friendly conditions and the red Kookaburra ball, keeping in mind the upcoming Test tour of New Zealand.

Nabi was part of India's recent 1-0 Test series win over Sri Lanka, but did not feature in any of the two matches. He is now set to join several Indian players currently plying their trade in the English domestic season. Left-arm spinner Manav Suthar, who picked

16 wickets in Sri Lanka, is rejoining Warwickshire, while left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav will return to turn out for Yorkshire. Right now, Surrey has India leg-spinner Rahul Chahar and uncapped batting all-rounder Mahipal Lomror in their squad. Once his county championship stint is over, Nabi is expected to link up with the India 'A' squad for two red-ball matches against Australia in Puducherry, starting from September 22. It remains to be seen if he will join J&K for the Irani Cup clash against Rest of India in Srinagar from October 1 to 5, considering

the second India 'A' game in Puducherry starts on September 29. Meanwhile, IANS understands that there could be a possibility of India seamers Mohammed Shami and Mukesh Kumar turning out in later stages of the county championship. Both Shami and Mukesh are currently turning out for East Zone in the ongoing Duleep Trophy semi-final against defending champions Central Zone at the BCCI Centre of Excellence (CoE) Ground 1 in Bengaluru. "The full details are yet to be known, but there's a possibility they might play there," added another source.