

BRIEFLY



Immersion of a Jagadgauri idol under way on Saturday
—Abhijit Aditya

Rlys medical conferences in city

Kolkata: The 11th Annual Conference of Association of Railway Surgeons of India and the 41st Annual Scientific Seminar of Indian Railways Medical Service Association was inaugurated by V K Ramteke, director general, Railway Health Services. Ramteke mentioned that railways have decided to modernise their hospitals with latest medical equipment. He said the seminar would help exchange experiences in treatment and develop skills. —BP

Physicians discuss cardiac imaging

Kolkata: A two-day conference on clinical cardiology is being held at Swabhimani in the city. The conference is being organised by the state chapter of Indian Association of Clinical Cardiologists. The meet will discuss clinical cardiology and cardiac imaging as well as provide feedback about the actual scenario in various parts of the country. Future plans and policies will also be discussed at the seminar. —BP

Al flight passengers stranded for 3 hours

Kolkata: Passengers going to Guwahati from the city on an Air India flight were stranded for three hours at Dum Dum airport after a malfunction in the aircraft. The right wing of the aircraft was damaged after hitting an aero-bridge while entering the taxi bay. The 59 passengers were later transferred to another Air India flight. —BP

Promises to wrap up work soon

Union minister to oversee Thakurbari renovation

Jhilmam Karanjai

Kolkata: Union minister of state for culture Kumaresh Selja will meet all the officials of Rabindra Bharati University and personally take stock of the renovation on Sunday in an attempt to accelerate the restoration work at the Jorasanko Thakurbari.

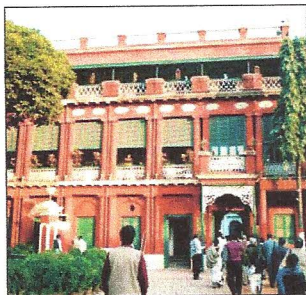
"I want to see the work's progress. I shall be going to check the work at Jorasanko Thakurbari personally on Sunday," said Selja on the sidelines of a visit to the Science City on Saturday.

The Jorasanko Thakurbari in north Kolkata is the ancestral home of Rabindranath Tagore. It is currently located on the Rabindra Bharati University campus. Built in the 18th century by Prince Dwarakanath Tagore (Rabindranath's grandfather), it is the place where the Nobel laureate was born in 1861.

Thakurbari, which also houses the Tagore Museum, had been restored earlier in order to showcase how the family members used to stay there.

The museum now offers details about the history of the Tagore family, including its involvement in the Bengal Renaissance and special relationship with Raja Ram Mohan Roy's Brahmo Samaj.

"Thakurbari has been in a



The Tagore House at Jorasanko

bad shape for quite some time now and requires restoration," said the minister. The committee has already issued clearance to the renovation plan long back. Funds have been taken from programmes earmarked to celebrate Rabindranath Tagore's 150th anniversary," said Union culture secretary Jawahar Lal.

"Work could not begin at once since many agencies were involved in it and required to be included in a single contract. By the time all parties, including the Union government, state

government, university and corporations, were roped in, the work stalled," added Sircar.

The Union culture secretary said a roadmap would be prepared at Sunday's meeting about the way forward for which a budget of ₹2 lakh has been earmarked.

"Now, we have planned to start work at one portion of the house since a large footfall is expected during the anniversary celebrations. Once this ends, we will try to finish the rest of the work as soon as possible," said Sircar.

CM for improved social infrastructure

Subhamoy Chatterjee

Kolkata: Chief minister Mamata Banerjee did not just rave and rant at the Left Front regime for leaving the state in a financial mess at the recent National Development Council (NDC) meeting. She also made a fervent plea before the Centre and the Planning Commission to help the state take a quantum leap in the social infrastructure sector.

The CM pleaded for more central funds to increase the number of hospital beds and create more posts of medical and paramedical personnel so that 70 per cent of the state's rural population could avail of government health services. She pointed out that the state currently has only nine medical colleges, needed eight more to ensure one hospital for every 50 lakh.

"Our focus is on health centres, primary health centres and community health centres at the grass roots. These would be connected through a hub-and-spoke model of interface between each other and with district hospitals along with sub-divisional multi-specialty hospitals," said the CM, also hoping that the National Urban Health Mission would help the state greatly.

Our Correspondent

Kolkata: Strengthening the state government's resolve to re-establish peace in strife-torn Jangalmahal "at all costs," chief minister Mamata Banerjee announced her administration's decision to fight violence with development in the three districts of West Midnapore, Bankura and Purulia.

"We take a pledge to resist terrorist activities at all costs and re-establish peace," she said. The CM also announced that henceforth all victims of Maoist violence would be given the honour of martyrs, while paying homage to Jitu Singh Sardar, the Trinamool Congress leader from Purulia's Ghatbera, who was killed by the Maoists late on Thursday.



Chief minister Mamata Banerjee pays homage to slain TMC leader Jitu Singh Sardar—Rahul Bhattacharya

"We will have to stop terror and bring peace in the state. The state government

is responsible for all-round development. The bodies of those dying of terror attacks will be brought to Kolkata and the state government will pay homage to them," said Banerjee while paying respect to Sardar's body, which was brought to the city and placed next to the Gandhi statue on the Maidan on Saturday.

"We have started the peace process in the state. Those who are indulging in the act of violence in the state do not want development to take place. The state government will not tolerate any act of violence, and we will exterminate those indulging in that. The state government's initiative for a dialogue should not be taken as its weakness," said senior Trinamool leader Mukul Roy.

State PWD minister and transport minister Subrata Bakshi pointed out that Banerjee had tried to restore peace in both North Bengal and Jangalmahal in the last five months that the Trinamool has been in power.

"Those who are spreading violence are against any development in the state," he said.

Sardar's body was taken from the Peace Haven mortuary to the Gandhi statue, where the homage was organised. The service was attended by all the top Trinamool leaders, who condemned the "politics of violence by the Maoists" including mayor Sovan Chatterjee, Union minister of state for health Sudip Bandyopadhyay and others. See P 4

Food and supplies dept to pay farmers MSP by cheques

Our Correspondent

Kolkata: The state food and supplies department will pay the minimum support price (MSP) for paddy to farmers by cheque in a bid to do away with middlemen dabbling with the purchase.

At a seminar on the procurement of rice for the 2011-12 kharif marketing season (KMS) at Nandan here on Saturday, state food and supplies minister Jyotipriya Mallick said the move would benefit farmers.

"Rice millers in the state stand to gain from the new method of paying the MSP as middlemen would be eliminated and rice millers would get a fair price," said Mallick. He also discussed the public distribution system reforms in the state.

At a seminar on rice procurement for KMS 2011-12, state minister for food and supplies Jyotipriya Mallick said the move would benefit farmers

A no-frills bank account would be opened after the food and supplies department verifies the identity of the farmers in whose names the account will be opened.

"The MSP for rice millers in the state has also been revised and fixed at ₹1,080 per quintal and ₹1,110 per quintal for common variety of rice and grade A variety respectively for the 2011-12 KMS. The state government will reach out to farmers through newspapers and the mass media," said Mallick. "The state has made an increase in production of rice and it is estimated to top 150 lakh metric tonne this year," said Ghosh.



Actors Prosenjit & Ranjit Mallick at a press meet for the Kolkata Film Festival on Saturday—Prabir Bhattacharya

NGO wants fast-track consumer court for victims of medical negligence

Our Correspondent

Kolkata: The indictment of 17 leading doctors in the city along with awarding the highest compensation (the National Consumer Forum awarded ₹1.73 crore to Kunal Saha) in India's medical history for medical negligence has brought to the fore a need to provide the consumer a forum with more teeth.

Hence, a growing demand for such a platform is expected to reach chief minister (CM) Mamata Banerjee soon in the form of an appeal.

The demand received impetus after a city-based NGO "People for Better Treatment (PBT) geared up to urge the CM to set up a fast-track consumer court

mean for victims of medical negligence. The NGO would also demand a new medical council which would comprise members from a non-medical background to keep the system of checks and balances in place.

"We have sent a memorandum to Banerjee and state health secretary Sanjay Mitra asking for a separate council to handle cases of medical negligence so that people can approach the council whenever they want to," said Kunal Saha, president of PBT.

The president of the patients' rights body pointed out that medical practitioners are usually lenient towards people

belonging to their own profession. Hence, several cases of medical negligence get treated in a biased manner. This has happened earlier when licenses of errant doctors were demanded to be cancelled.

"We want people from a non-medical background who remain neutral and deliver justice to patients to be part of the court," said PBT secretary Malay Ganguly.

A fast-track consumer court meant for victims of medical negligence would cater to their exclusive demands, address necessary issues thereby delivering justice. These courts would work like any other fast

Cultural hub in Tagore's memory gets Centre's nod

Our Correspondent

Kolkata: Chief minister Mamata Banerjee's dream of setting up an international cultural hub in the city, named after Rabindranath Tagore, could soon become a reality as the Centre has assured funds for the same.

The proposed Rabindranath Tagore International Cultural Centre (ITICC) will be built inside the premises housing Nandan, Rabindrina Sadan and Bangla Akademi. Plans for the proposed hub were discussed at a meeting held between the chief minister and Kumaresh Selja, the Union minister of state for housing and poverty alleviation, at Writers' Buildings on Saturday.

"We are planning to set up the Centre to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Tagore for which we require funds worth ₹1,000 crore. We had requested her (Kumaresh Selja) for the same to which she has given her consent," Banerjee said.

The CM said the state government will set up a committee under renowned architect patron Rakhi Sarkar which will prepare a detailed project report. That would, in turn, be sent to the Centre to work out modalities for the funds. She also said that Selja has been requested for funds for renovation of the Rabindra Bhawan in various districts. While the total project cost would be ₹66.5 crore, Banerjee has asked Selja for allocation of some funds towards these projects as well. "We pointed out to her that while Madhya Pradesh had been allocated ₹45 crore on Tagore's 150th birth anniversary, West Bengal received only ₹10 crore," said the CM.

● I will do whatever I can to assist the state in this regard. Congress president Sonia Gandhi and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh asked me to provide maximum help for poverty alleviation in West Bengal

—Kumaresh Selja
Union minister of state for housing & poverty alleviation

"I feel Kolkata is the cultural capital of India and we are celebrating Tagore's 150th birth anniversary across the country," Kumaresh Selja said.

"She also promised to provide maximum assistance for poverty alleviation in the state. The chief minister requested her to make the Rajiv Gandhi Awas Yojana scheme more flexible for the state and also provide some help to avail of it. A request has also been made for providing shelter to the poor minorities, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes alike."

"I will do whatever I can to assist the state in this regard. Congress president Sonia Gandhi and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh asked me to provide maximum help for poverty alleviation in West Bengal," Kumaresh Selja said.

She further stated that she had agreed to make the norms of central schemes more flexible and the concerned minister from the state could visit New Delhi to sort things out.

State plans large-scale ration reforms

Our Correspondent

Kolkata: With the state government planning large-scale reforms in Bengal's public distribution system (PDS), there will be sea change in the ration network.

The process has already started with the decision to cancel all existing ration cards and issue fresh ones. The state food and supplies department has also set up a vigilance committee to streamline the PDS.

"A committee has been constituted for PDS reforms under the chairmanship of chief secretary Sanjay Mitra would have to make recommendations on fixed margins for fair price shops as well as appointing of agencies to run these shops."

The minister said that in order to make the PDS accountable and transparent, the whole system would be computerised.

An order of the department dated October 10 outlined the steps in PDS as well as outlined the terms of reference for the committee. The order said: "The system in the present form is highly inadequate for achieving its objectives and needs through reform."

The state government has invited recommendations from the committee on making a central database of ration cards and on ration cards under the e-district programme. The committee has also been asked to make recommendations on fixed margins for fair price shops as well as appointing of agencies to run these shops.

The order pointed out that the "major inadequacies are inclusion and exclusion errors in the selection/identification of beneficiaries and the existence of bogus and ghost ration cards."

Meanwhile, Anuradha Talwar, advisor to the office of the Supervisory Court Commission, however, said that unless the PDS was completely de-privatised and de-centralised, reforms would be incomplete.

The Bengal Post FOLLOW-UP