

October–December 2016 • ₹ 20

# WEST BENGAL

22nd KIFF  
WITH RENDEZVOUS

WORLD  
CINEMA



Bengal CM  
leads  
nationwide  
campaign  
against

**DEMONETISATION**

# THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

## CHAPTER IVA

### Fundamental Duties

#### ARTICLE 51A

Fundamental Duties—It shall be the duty of every citizen of India—

- (a) to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem;
- (b) to cherish and follow the noble ideas which inspired our national struggle for freedom;
- (c) to uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India;
- (d) to defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so;
- (e) to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women;
- (f) to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture;
- (g) to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers, wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures;
- (h) to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform;
- (i) to safeguard public property and to abjure violence;
- (h) to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievement.



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#### 22ND KOLKATA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL RENDEZVOUS WITH WORLD CINEMA

# 21



On the 11th of November this year the 22nd edition of the Kolkata International Film Festival got off to a grand beginning in presence of a galaxy of stars as hundreds of people from different parts of the state made a beeline for the Netaji Indoor Stadium in the autumn afternoon to witness the inauguration of the week-long film festival. The ceremony was presided over by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

### HIGHLIGHT

#### BENGAL CM LEADS NATIONWIDE CAMPAIGN AGAINST DEMONETISATION

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“One move that has taken the country backwards by twenty years,” this is how Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee described demonetisation at a press conference in New Delhi. “This policy of demonetisation, unprecedented of its kind since Independence, that too implemented without any planning, has left the country’s economy as completely shattered,” she said. She also wrote a letter to Urjit Patel, the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, making him aware of the ground reality of the people’s plight as an aftermath of demonetisation.



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Cover Design: **SUBHRO CHAKRABORTY**

# Bengal CM leads nationwide campaign against demonetisation



One move that has taken the country backwards by twenty years. This is how Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee described demonetisation at a joint press conference with Congress Vice President Rahul Gandhi at New Delhi's Constitution Club on December 27 last. "This policy of demonetisation, unprecedented of its kind since Independence,



Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee speaking on behalf of other national leaders on deputation in front of President Pranab Mukherjee at Rastrapati Bhavan



**Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee speaking against demonitisation at a Kolkata rally**



that too implemented without any planning, has left the country's economy as completely shattered," she said.

It may be recalled that on the 8th of November, the union government demonetised the ₹ 500 and ₹ 1000 currency notes, which threw the country into financial crisis. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was the very first to have reacted strongly against this move of demonetisation instantly, and tweeted urging the union government to "withdraw this draconian decision" expressing her deep concern for the "common people" and the "small traders" as to how they would buy the essentials commodities from the next day.

"This is a financial chaos and disaster let loose on the common people of India," she wrote on her Twitter page, backing it up with another equally bold tweet the next day, which read, "Please save people from this disaster. Roads are closed, markets are

shut, patients are not being admitted to private hospitals, millions are affected. Chaos everywhere. This is like an all-India unannounced strike. Those who hoard large amounts of black money will be protected. The poorest of the poor and middle class are crying. I once more appeal to the (union) government to withdraw this hasty decision. First do a plan of action and only then do proper implementation. This is a complete disaster."

Raising her pitch further, the Chief Minister described the move of demonetisation as a "financial anarchy" and urged all the right-thinking forces to unite against this. She also shared on her Twitter page an example of how the demonetisation affected the marginalised section of the population, saying, "There are millions of real stories across cities, towns, villages about #NoteBan affecting the marginalised. Here is only one example. Tea garden owners

have expressed difficulty to pay wages on time. This could lead to frustration among poor workers, most of whom are tribals." What should their destiny be, she asked, "Desperation? Starvation?"

Having observed that only the money launderers are actually profiting due to the "black decision" of demonetisation, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said that she was ready to share platform and work unitedly with all the political forces cutting across ideologies "to save the country" from the fallouts of demonetisation.

"I personally visited several banks today to listen to the tales of hardship of the common people. More than two lakh ATMs are closed, money is not available, people are facing lot of problems," said she.

In a bid to check the hike in prices of essential goods due to demonetisation of higher denomination currency notes, Chief Minister Mamata



**Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee addressing the media on reaching Lucknow**



Banerjee almost immediately announced that no agricultural tax would be imposed on the entry of trucks to Bengal from other states for the next three days. The decision was taken so that vegetables and other essential items loaded in trucks, which are stuck at different border entry points for failing to pay the tax, do not perish. The supply of essential goods is likely to fall if trucks remain stranded at the borders for next few days.

The Chief Minister, in this connection, stated: "Thousands of trucks carrying vegetables and other essential products are stuck at different state borders because they cannot pay toll tax, facing huge cash shortage crisis. This issue will become even more serious and push essential prices up beyond control. Quick action is needed. To save farmers and commoners, perishable

vegetables should not be allowed to rot."

Reports on trucks loaded with goods, including perishable ones, stranded at borders led to panic among traders in the state. They apprehended a hike in price of essential goods due to short supply as the trucks were not able to enter the state without paying the tax. At the same time, goods like fishes and vegetables worth crores of rupees were perishing in the trucks itself. It would leave a deep impact on the market.

The shortfall in the supply of essential goods would lead to inconvenience to the people as on the one hand they do not have the required money while on the other the prices of essential goods may go up.

The truck owners and traders in the state heaved a sigh of relief with the Chief Minister's announcement on

exemption of agricultural tax. They felt that the decision was crucial and timely or they had to stop bringing in goods from other states.

On the 16th of November, the state Chief Minister called on President Pranab Mukherjee at the national capital and submitted to him a memorandum protesting against demonetisation. Later, talking to the media, she lamented, "The Centre has not thought about thousands of villages where there are no post offices and banks," adding, "Four out of five villages in India don't have a bank."

Describing the situation as "very grave", she elaborated, "In a year, the three months from December to February are the most fruitful time for construction and development projects. But now everything is shut, and progress is halted.



**Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee speaking against demonitisation at the Lucknow rally**

The tea garden and jute mill workers are not receiving their salary and are in distress. The transport sector too has been badly hit.”

In a space of just over a week, on November 24, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee once again met President Pranab Mukherjee at the Rastrapati Bhavan and apprised him about the “critical” condition prevailing in the country. She was accompanied by several opposition leaders.

After the visit, the state Chief Minister said, “We told him (the President) about the situation of labourers in the country. In our state, paddy labourers are not getting salary. Many shopkeepers, traders, even salaried employees, are not getting money. We cannot access the money lying in our accounts.”

Apart from visiting the President as well as several

like-minded political leaders from all over the country, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee also took to the streets in leading the protest endeavours against demonetisation. On November 28, she led a rally of lakhs of people in Kolkata. At the conclusion of the march, which started from College Street and finished at Dorina Crossing, she gave a speech that received a vociferous applause from the huge gathering.

“Every decision needs planning, instead demonetisation has been totally unplanned and done in haste,” she said.

“Daily life has been hampered severely. This is a people’s movement, not a political movement,” she asserted.

Following the Kolkata rally, she addressed two other public rallies in two days, both

outside Bengal, one in Lucknow on the 29th and another in Patna on the 30th, thus emerging as the most prominent leader in the nationwide campaign against demonetisation.

“After 60 years of independence, people’s independence has been taken away by force,” Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said at the rallies, adding, “It is the responsibility of a government to work for the welfare of the people, not to cause suffering for them. Does the Centre think that workers, labourers and housewives have black money? I strongly object to this kind of concept”.

Harping on the fact that many noted economists had already criticised this move, the Chief Minister said, “Several eminent economists said demonetisation is a bad move. From Nobel Laureate



**Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee speaking against demonitisation at the Patna rally**



Amartya Sen to the World Bank economists to former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who is also an acclaimed economist in his own right, have criticised the move. The country's economy has slowed down. Industrial production has slowed down. The earnings of the farmers and the labourers have been snatched away."

Echoing the Chief Minister's voice of criticism, state Finance Minister Amit Mitra too expressed his views of objection to the decision of demonetisation. Taking stock of the situation after a month of the imposition of notes ban, the Finance Minister observed that India could lose as much as ₹ 4.7 lakh crore in its GDP.

"Ever since the demonetisation of old high denomination notes has been in force," the Finance Minister said, "long queues are being witnessed at bank branches

and outside ATMs for cash withdrawal. Just imagine for ₹ 400 crore of supposedly fake money, according to the government itself, you kill or demonetise over ₹ 14.5 lakh crore or may be ₹ 15 lakh crore. I mean what kind of policy is this? Another serious question, we recently saw some new fake money, I am told according to reports. What does this mean? This is horrendous."

Calling demonetisation "the biggest scam that is about to happen", Mitra further said, "It will provide no gain, but only acute pain. If these figures (deposits of old notes in banks) are right because what it seems to me is if all the money comes back there was not enough black money. This has two serious implications. One, it could be that the government was purely ignorant because it does not

consult anybody or they have in effect facilitated some people from converting black into white, effectively ending up with no RBI surpluses."

Mitra also slammed the Centre for trying to enforce cashless economy without preparing grounds for it.

"Don't they know 86% people have no means to go to cashless economy? In our country 92% villages are unbanked as per RBI figures. There are 21000 unorganised mandis in the country, 383 lakh unorganised units in MSME, which obviously use cash. A major part of any big economy is in cash. To move them into cashless economy is a major task. This cannot be done by destabilising the economy."

The Bengal Finance Minister, who is also the Chairman of the Empowered Committee of State Finance Ministers on GST, further



opined, "The whole tax architecture will have to change, which is a huge challenge in the form of destabilisation. Can we not move GST a little bit on so that when the economy stabilises and people come back to normal living conditions, you bring in another disruption?"

Meanwhile, under the instruction of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, on December 5, the Bengal Agriculture Minister and the Agriculture Marketing Minister visited several wholesale and retail markets in Kolkata to assess the situation with flow of money yet to improve since the demonetisation started. They were also accompanied by the local MLAs.

The Ministers spoke to both the farmers who come to the markets from different villages to sell their produce and wholesale traders who import onions and potatoes from other states.

The state Agriculture Minister, after the visit, said, "I spoke to an onion wholesaler who procured the vegetable from South India. He said that his per day sale was around 100 kg and now it has gone down to 40 kg. I found stock of comparatively bigger size onions in Koley Market. These onions would perish if not sold within the next few days. The traders would incur huge loss if they cannot clear the stock. Still the price of vegetables are under control, but I apprehend price rise if the situation doesn't improve soon."

Pointing out that the visit was "essential to know the real picture", the Minister summed up saying, "We will submit the report of our inspection visit to the Chief Minister and steps will



**State Finance Minister Amit Mitra**

be taken accordingly to reduce the suffering of the farmers."

Later, while taking stock of the government departments at a meeting, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said, "Our state suffered a ₹ 5,500-crore revenue loss. A total of 1.70 crore people have been hit hard, with 81.5 lakh losing their jobs.

The Chief Minister feared that worse is in store for the state. "What you are seeing now isn't the bottom of the crisis. The worst is yet to happen. How long can industries operate without funds? They are running out of

working capital. People have money in banks but they can't withdraw it. The farmers, bidi workers, tea plantation workers, those working in the jute mills, artisans, weavers and jewellery makers are the worst hit. The Centre had promised ₹ 2,500 crore to cooperative banks. But they have only got ₹ 300 crore. The cash crunch has taken a toll on Rabi crops and potato farming too," she said, adding that the slump in farming would lead to a spike in commodity prices in the near future, and the country would be heading towards famine. ■

# CM writes to RBI Governor enclosing state govt's memorandum to him

**O**n the 15th of December, state Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee wrote a letter to Urjit Patel, the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, making him aware of the ground reality of the people's plight as an aftermath of the union government's move of demonetisation.

"The farmers of our nation are going through a trauma never seen before and that too not due to natural calamity but due to a man-made disaster of massive demonetisation," the Chief Minister wrote in the letter, in which she stressed on the misery of especially the state's tea workers and jute workers who have been suffering from non-payment of wages and even loss of jobs.

The Chief Minister, with her letter, enclosed a memorandum of the state government in this regard to the RBI Governor.



The full texts of the Chief Minister's letter and the state government's memorandum here follow.

## CM's letter to RBI Governor

No. 1225-CM/2016

December 15, 2016

Dear Mr Patel

**The whole country is going through an unprecedented misery and suffering due to the cruel misadventure of demonetisation which has not been seen in any modern democracy. You are perhaps aware that already five crore of workers across the country and across the sectors are facing unemployment and hunger. Unorganised sector of the country, which provides two-thirds jobs in the country, has literally collapsed. The small and medium enterprises are shutting down shops in lakhs. The massive trading sector of the economy has been brought down to its knees due to cash crunch, unable to conduct its business. Shops and establishments are suffering from no sale and no revenues. The farmers of our nation are going through a trauma never seen before and that too not due to natural calamity but due to a man-made disaster of massive demonetisation. Even the middle and larger industries have dropped their production by at least 50%.**

**The tea workers of West Bengal are dying due to non-payment of wages over a fortnight. The jute workers of our state have lost their jobs and going back to their villages with nothing in their hands but hunger.**

**Agriculture, food sector, vegetable sector, small traders to shopkeepers, small vendors to 100-day MNREGA workers, small scale to big industry, unorganised to IT sector, it is everywhere, the common people across the board are deeply suffering. All development works have also come to standstill due to cash crunch. You also know that plastic card is not full-proof and 92% of the villages in the country have no banks.**

Every major economist including Nobel Laureates have come out strongly against demonetisation, cutting across theoretical leanings.

You are aware that the economy is getting derailed and growth rates of GDP are being revised downwards every other day.

As the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, an autonomous institution with a great history, which issues currencies to the nation, we expect you to stand up against this demonetisation onslaught against the common people of the nation at this moment of crisis, rather than falling silent and remaining opaque.

We would also like to know from you the nature of allocation of new currency to each of the states in a spirit of transparency and accountability, since there are serious concerns of political discrimination amongst states.

Our government is enclosing a pointed memorandum of specific problems which need to be addressed immediately by the RBI in our state for the sake of people cutting across all nomenclatures of work and incomes.

With regards,

Urjit Patel  
Governor  
Reserve Bank of India

Yours sincerely,  
sd/  
(MAMATA BANERJEE)  
Chief Minister  
West Bengal



# Memorandum of Government of West Bengal to RBI Governor

## 1 Severe Cash Crunch of Currency of Smaller Denomination

(i) The supply of new denomination of ₹ 500 was started in the state only after four weeks from the date of announcement of demonetisation and that too in woefully inadequate quantity. Still the banks and ATMs across the state are mainly dispensing ₹ 2000 and are virtually starved of ₹ 500 and ₹ 100 notes. This has brought the trade and businesses and other transactions to a virtual halt as lower denominations are the main medium of exchange. Adequate quantities of currency of smaller denominations, especially ₹ 500 and ₹ 100, should be urgently made available in the state.

(ii) Even after more than a month since the announcement of demonetisation, RBI has not devised any MIS for information sharing with the state government. The state government is totally in dark about the availability of currency in different denominations in different parts of the state.

(iii) There is also no information about the supply of currency to different states. The state government has every reason to believe that there is discrimination in the distribution of currency between the states.

## 2 Agriculture Sector in Severe Stress

- No cash for Kharif crop purchase
- No cash for potato seed purchase
- No cash for Rabi crop inputs purchase

The main source of credit for rural sector, the Cooperative Banks, are being starved of cash:

(i) The cooperative sector has been very badly hit. As against the total requisition of ₹ 2903 crore, the State Cooperative Bank has till date received only ₹ 565 crore. This shortfall in currency in the cooperative sector has severely affected agriculture and agricultural credit. It may be mentioned that cooperative banks cater to more than 30% of the total rural credit in the state. In the backward districts of the state, where the formal banking sector is inadequate, the share of cooperative credit is 50-60% of the total rural credit.

(ii) RBI has in its directive dated November 14, 2016, prohibited the District Central Cooperative Banks (DCCBs) from exchanging specified bank notes (SBN) and also accepting deposit of such notes (₹ 500 and ₹ 1000). It has also prohibited DCCBs from depositing the old currency with the RBI. As a result, a huge amount of ₹ 291 crore in SBNs is lying with the Cooperative Banks which are not being accepted by the authorised banks/chests. This has led to a crisis rendering the farmers unable to either get or repay loans and depositors to deposit SBNs into their valid accounts. This order of the RBI should be immediately revoked to provide relief to the farming community.

### **3 MSME, Unorganised and Informal Sectors are Collapsing**

(i) MSME sector has been very badly affected. Sectors like leather, garments, handloom, zari, handicraft, jewellery under MSME sector, are dependent on cash for a) procurement of raw materials, b) payment of daily wages, c) sale in local market. All these three are severely affected for lack of cash. More than 15 lakh people involved in these sectors are passing through severe hardship.

(ii) Bengal has been a traditional source for hiring skilled workers in these sectors all over India. Since the SME units all across the country are working at reduced levels or have shut down, these workers (more than 2 lakh) are coming back to Bengal and becoming jobless.

### **4 Dislocation of Payment of Wages to the Tea Workers: A case of Discrimination**

(i) There has been a severe dislocation in the payment of wages to tea garden workers where there is hardly any presence of banking services as these are in far-flung hilly and terai regions in north Bengal. The Assam model (payment through District Magistrates), which was adopted to facilitate wage payment, was discontinued in West Bengal by the RBI whereas it is still continuing in Assam. This is a case of grave discrimination of the state by the RBI.

(ii) The problem of non-payment of wages to tea workers is still very severe. West Bengal should be allowed to follow the Assam model as it ensures delivery of cash for wage payment at the offices of the tea estates. In the interim period, the existing arrangement, which was allowed only for two fortnights, should at least be continued till March 31, 2017.

(iii) The RBI has allowed withdrawal of money for payment of wages on the basis of a formula which is "limited to area in hectares  $\times$  2.5  $\times$  ₹ 1400 per fortnight". The amount does not cover full wages and other requirements such as cash disbursement for medical expenditure for patients referred for outside treatment covering clinical tests, doctor fees, hospital diet etc. The banks should allow the tea management to withdraw as per their actual requirement. They may put in place necessary checks and balances to prevent misuse of the system by the tea management.

(iv) Workers have been agitating in several gardens demanding arrangement of disbursement of wages in tea estates as banks are located far away. It is requested that till the required infrastructure of installation of ATMs/Micro-ATMs or CSP/business correspondent is put in place, banks should make available the cash for wage payment at the tea estates.

In the meantime, RBI should ensure that the gaps in banking services in these areas in the form of presence of bank branches, ATMs/Micro-ATMs, CSP, business correspondents (BCs) is established.

### **5 Inadequate Banking Network/Services in the State**

(i) Out of 37,468 villages in the state, only less than 10%, ie, 3,570 villages have bank branches.

(ii) Out of 3,354 Gram Panchayats in the state, 717 Gram Panchayats are unbanked and do not have any bank branch. Our efforts in the last five and a half years to open at least one Brick and Mortar branch in these Gram Panchayats have not yielded desired results. The state government on its part offered all support and assistance to the banks to open branches in the unbanked Gram Panchayats. Office space at a nominal annual rent of 1 was offered in the Gram Panchayat buildings. RBI should take necessary steps to have a bank branch in all the unbanked Gram Panchayats of the state. ■





# State restructures government departments, focuses on e-governance in administrative reforms

**F**or the achievement of greater efficiency, reduction of cost in the running of the government and ensuring better delivery of public services, the state Cabinet, in a meeting held on December 16 last, took a resolution of taking some new administrative initiatives. These are:

- 1) In administrative reforms, e-governance will be given a major focus, and the subject will be transferred to the present department of Personnel & Administrative Reforms, which will thereafter be designed as the department of Personnel, Administrative Reforms & E-Governance.
- 2) The directorate of Sericulture under the department of MSME&T will be merged with the department of Agriculture.
- 3) The following 21 departments will be merged into 10 newly created departments, the details of which are given in the box below.

1 Home Department 2 Department of Hill Affairs	1 Home & Hill Affairs Department
3 Department of Youth Services 4 Department of Sports	2 Department of Youth Services and Sports
5 Department of Land and Land Reforms 6 Department of Refugee Relief and Rehabilitation	3 Department of Land and Land Reforms and Refugee Relief and Rehabilitation
7 Department of Women Development & Social Welfare 8 Department of Child Development	4 Department of Women and Child Development and Social Welfare
9 Department of Disaster Management 10 Department of Civil Defence	5 Department of Disaster Management and Civil Defence
11 Department of Higher Education 12 Department of Science & Technology 13 Department of Biotechnology	6 Department of Higher Education, Science & Technology and Biotechnology
14 Department of Urban Development 15 Department of Municipal Affairs	7 Department of Urban Development and Municipal Affairs
16 Department of Planning 17 Department of Statistics & Programme Implementation	8 Department of Planning, Statistics & Programme Monitoring
18 Department of Finance 19 Department of Excise	9 Department of Finance
20 Department of Public Enterprises and Industrial Reconstruction 21 Department of Commerce and Industries	10 Department of Large Industries and Enterprises

4) With the merger of these 21 departments into 10 new departments, the number of state government departments will come down by 11, from 63 to 52. ■

# INDIA INTERNATIONAL TRADE FAIR 2016

## Bengal highlights success of indigenous skill



**T**he role of new and emerging technologies in ensuring a better, faster and more transparent public service delivery system and bringing overall improvement in the quality of lives of people was the highlight of the West Bengal pavilion at the two-week-long India International Trade Fair 2016.

The pavilion also exhibited Bengal's great artistic and cultural heritage, its superb handicrafts and handloom products, its prowess in Power Generation, Industry, Agriculture, Tourism and Education sector as well as its present achievements and future opportunities at the exposition, held from the 14th

to the 27th of November at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi.

In keeping with the catchphrase of *Egiye Bangla* (Bengal Ahead), the state pavilion fascia, inaugurated by Partha Chatterjee, the Minister for School Education, Higher Education and Parliamentary Affairs, on November 14, 2016, projected the iconic symbol of



Biswa Bangla connected to the images of different walks of life, signifying the digital revolution that has ensured faster and more transparent public service delivery, speedy disposal of grievances and

most significantly, enhanced the ease of doing business for industries with the help of effective e-governance initiatives, stronger online infrastructure, integration of administrative departments

though information technology and digitization of government records.

The signature development projects of the state government found a pride of place in the fascia, including





the internationally acclaimed Kanyashree scheme for girl child empowerment and the Sabooj Sathi project for distribution of bicycles to the students of class IX to XII in schools run, aided and sponsored by the government.

The theme area outlined the growth trajectory of Bengal with emphasis on “powering progress, empowering people”. Various departments such as Information and Cultural Affairs, Commerce and Industries, Higher Education, Minority Affairs, Animal Resources Development etc also highlighted their achievements in the pavilion.

The Tourism section, apart from visually portraying famous tourist destinations of Bengal, such as Mandarmani, Murshidabad, Purulia and Sundarban, depicted the

Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, which has been accorded with the World Heritage status by the UNESCO. Live demonstration by handicrafts artisans was also a special attraction here.

The pavilion, with a total floor area of 22,000 sq ft, featured around 50 stalls representing small scale industries and 23 others from Self-Help Groups.

The state Agriculture Marketing department operated a stall to promote aromatic rice and processed food items. Bengali sweets were also there to tickle the taste buds of the visitors.

Besides, darjeeling tea and Bengali books were on sale at the Oxford Book Store Cha Bar stall.

As a regular annual feature of the IITF, the West Bengal Day was celebrated this

year on November 26. On the occasion, Amit Mitra, the Minister for Finance, Commerce & Industries and Excise, addressed a press conference at Pragati Auditorium in the afternoon.

Addressing the representatives of the national and vernacular media, Mitra elaborated on the reasons why Bengal has been becoming the preferred investment destination. He, in this connection, highlighted the government’s industry-friendly policies including the Investment & Industrial Policy, the Policy on PPP, the Policy on Renewable Energy, the Incentive Scheme for Tourism, the Township Policy and the Start-up Policy.

Later in the evening, the Minister was present as the chief guest at the West Bengal



Day cultural soiree in the 3000-seat Hamsadhvani Theatre at Pragati Maidan. An

ensemble of colourful folk cultural programmes, comprising Khol Badya,

Sherpa Dance, Chandi Dance and Natua Dance, enthralled the capacity crowd at the



venue, bringing out various aspects of the rich cultural heritage of Bengal, which are

now being actively promoted, publicized and preserved by the state government under its

Lok Prasar Prakalpa. ■

**SUNANDITA DASGUPTA**

# SINGUR

## CM recommences farming by sowing seeds



**S**ingur is smiling once again! Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee led the farmers to resume farming after a decade on October 20 last on the land that had been given to the Tata Motors's Nano car project by the erstwhile government.

She sowed seeds of mustard on those plots of land to mark the formal recommencement of farming.

The process of giving physical possession of the land in Singur to around 4,000 farmers also got off to a start on the day with the Chief Minister handing over plots to the tune of 103 acres to the respective farmers for cultivation. She also inaugurated the first of the 66 deep tubewell pumps that the state government would install for proper irrigation of the 997

acres of farm land. Besides, she handed over seeds and agricultural equipment to the farmers, too.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister stressed that the state government has strictly followed the Supreme Court order and has spared no efforts in making the land cultivable again.

Underlining the pivotal place of the Singur movement



in the history of agitation for land rights, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee reflected, "The Singur movement will become an international model for land rights," adding, "The Singur Movement teaches us that we should never run away from a fight".

She thanked all who had helped the state government

in bringing the land back to its original state. "I thank every officer and the local people for their help in getting the land ready for farming," she said. She also thanked all the luminaries and activists from the intelligentsia who "wholeheartedly supported" the movement. "We will make a monument to commemorate the

sacrifice and the hard work of the people of Singur," she stated.

With the observation that "good governance depends on team work, transparency and fulfilling promises", the Chief Minister said that she was very happy as "Singur is smiling again" since they had got their forcibly snatched away land back.





Thousands of people from different parts of the state, including those involved with the movement, had turned up in Singur on the day to witness the historic moment when the Chief Minister completed the process of giving physical possession of the plots to the farmers.

A colourful cultural function was also organised on the occasion that added to the spirit of festivity to a big way.

It may be recalled here that during her last visit to Singur on September 14, a few days after the Supreme Court verdict in favour of the farmers, Mamata Banerjee had distributed the deeds of right



to the plots of land to their respective owners. The task of converting the land into

cultivable form had begun within a day of the Supreme Court's passing of the order. ■

22nd KOLKATA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

# Rendezvous with world cinema



**Amitabh Bachchan lighting the ceremonial lamp in presence of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Shah Rukh Khan, Sanjay Dutt, Kajol, Parineeti Chopra and others at the inauguration of the KIFF 2016** Photo: Papan Ghosh

**N**ovember is the happiest month for the cine lovers, bringing all the colour and glamour of the world of cinema back to the city as it's the month of the Kolkata International Film Festival, one of the gorgeous annual events of the country's cultural capital.

On the 11th of November this year the 22nd edition of KIFF, the Kolkata International Film Festival, was inaugurated in presence of a galaxy of stars including Amitabh Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan, Jaya Bachchan, Kajol, Sanjay Dutt, Parineeti Chopra and host of stars from the

Bengali film industry. Also present on the occasion were the international jury members as well as the representatives from the Chinese delegation to the event as China happened to be the Focus country of this year's KIFF.

The inaugural ceremony was presided over by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said, "I extend my heartiest greetings to all the delegates present here today. This is a festival of the people, by the people, for the people. Nowhere in the world so many people come



**Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee speaking at the inauguration of the KIFF 2016**

Photo: Protik Sett

together for a film festival. We show films in every neighbourhood. Cinema speaks a language that no other medium can”.

The grand inaugural function began with a wonderful musical performance by Pandit Tanmoy Bose and folk artistes of Bengal and beneficiaries of the state’s Lok Prasar Prakalpa. Shah Rukh Khan enthralled the audience by delivering a speech in Bangla while Amitabh Bachchan too started his address in Bangla and then went on to speak at length, in his masterly English, on how women’s issues have been portrayed in Indian cinema over the ages. During the course of his speech, he congratulated the Bengal Chief Minister for naming a flyover in Kolkata as *Maa* and also praised Bengal’s internationally acclaimed Kanyashree Prakalpa.

The inaugural film of the 22nd KIFF was *Benche Thakar Gaan*, a Bengali film directed by Sudeshna Roy and Abhijit Guha.

The KIFF this year showcased 155 films from 65 countries across 105 screens at 13 venues such as Nandan I, II, III, Rabindra Sadan, Sisir Mancha, Roxy Talkies, Navina, Mitra and Star Theatre in the city proper, Nazrul Tirtha in New Town and Purbasree, Inox and Carnival in Salt Lake.

The festival was divided into 20 sections including three competitive ones.

The International Competition of Films by Women Directors section had 15 entries from 13 countries and the Chairperson of the Jury Board was Marion Hansel while the other members of the Jury were Aleksandra Biernacka, Ibolya Fekete, Li Shaohong and Archana.



**Amitabh Bachchan (top) and Shah Rukh Khan (bottom) speaking at the inauguration of the KIFF 2016**

Photo: Protik Sett



The Asian Select (NETPAC Award) section featured 10 films from nine countries. The Chairperson of the Jury Board in this section was Azizuddin Deildaar. Other members of the Jury were Sharafat Arabova and Urmi Chakraborty.

This year a new competitive section, Innovation in Moving Images, was included with a view to patronise and encourage new directors working on new forms in the realm of cinematic exposure. This section had got nine films from seven countries while the members of the Jury for this section were Dan Wolman (Chairperson), Massimo Lechi and Saibal Chatterjee.

The Special Tribute section this year had 10 films by the veteran filmmakers including Ken Loach from the United Kingdom and Arturo Ripstein from Mexico as also India's very own Adoor Gopalakrishnan and Buddhadeb Dasgupta while the Great Master section was dedicated to Kenji Mizoguchi, the celebrated



director from Japan, six films of whose were screened this year.

The customary Centenary Tribute was paid this year to eight eminent film personalities from all over the world like Gregory Peck, Masaki Kobayashi, Satyen Bose, Bert Haanstra, Bikash

Roy, Kanan Devi, Molina Devi and Ramananda Sengupta.

The festival also observed the 450th death anniversary of William Shakespeare by screening three of the major film adaptations of his works—*Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *Othello*—in the section called Literature and Cinema.

In its usual Homage section, the KIFF remembered four cine celebrities who passed away since its last edition, and they were Andrej Wajda, Paul Cox, Abbas Kiarostami and Jacques Rivette.

Three films—*Summertime*, *Three Worlds* and *Ambitious*—directed by French filmmaker Catherine Corsini were shown in this year's Special Screening section.

As China was selected as the country for the Focus section of the 22nd KIFF, this year the Kolkata cine buffs got to see the most number of films from the neighbouring nation in a single edition of the event, seven, which included films



acclaimed by critics such as *Black Coal Thin Ice* and *The Monster Hunt* directed by Diao Yinan and Raman Hui, respectively.

The largest section of the festival, as always, was Cinema International, which showcased 51 contemporary films from 44 countries.



**Top: Sanjay Dutt speaking at the inauguration of the KIFF 2016**  
**Above: A still from the inaugural film *Benche Thakar Gaan***

Photo: Protik Sett

Indian films, too, held a prime position in this year's showlist. Apart from the Indian Select section, which featured seven films, there were a brace of separate sections for the Indian movies in the vernaculars containing eight films in the Bengali Panorama section and five films in the Regional Focus was on Marathi Cinema section.

As the 22nd KIFF aimed at 'Cinema for all, all for cinema', a special feature of the carnival, 'Paray Paray Cinema', aimed to spread cinema to the streets of the city and to bring cinema closer to the audience breaching all gaps.

There was also a non-competitive section on Biopic documentary, which too is a latest addition to the list. Apart from these, there were 15 films in Short Competition group and 79 films in Short Non-competition group. Also 12 films in Documentary Competition group and 27 films in Documentary Non-competition group were shown.



An important part as well as a major attraction of the KIFF over its last few editions, the Satyajit Ray Memorial Lecture, was delivered this year by Mohan Agashe, a renowned film and theatre personality and also a psychiatrist by profession. As Goutam Ghose, noted filmmaker and festival



**Adoor Gopalakrishnan (top) and Mohan Agashe, flanked by director duo Sumitra Bhawe and Sunil Sukhtankar from Maharashtra (above), addressing press conference at Media Centre**

Photos: Protik Sett

Chairperson, formally introduced Agashe on the occasion. Agashe, in his lecture, elaborated on his method of teaching the psychiatry students by using clippings from Ray's films.

Like every year, the daily press conferences were held this year too at the Media Centre, at Nandan IV. One of the major attractions of this year's press conferences was Adoor Gopalakrishnan, a great cine maestro of the present time. His latest film *Pinneyum* (Once Again) was screened at the 22nd KIFF in its Special Tribute section.

The long list of other film personalities who interacted with the people from the media includes Rohan Perera from Sri Lanka, director-duo Sumitra Bhave and Sunil Sukthankar from Maharashtra, Dan Wolman from Israel, Joshy Joseph from Kerala who is presently living and working in Kolkata, Mahua Chakraborty from Kolkata, Mili Ben Hayl from Israel, Adnan Osman from Iraq, Nahid Hassanzadeh from Iran, Vassilis Kulkaleni from Greece, Abigail Hadeed from Trinidad & Tobago, Lucas Valenta Rinner and Nicolas Payueta from Argentina, Tauqir Ahmed from Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, on the 17th of November, the penultimate day of the festival, Atri Bhattacharya, the Director General, and Yadab Mondal, the Director, of the festival, introduced Adrien Majourel, Project and Festival Manager, International Federation of Film Producers



**Madhabi Mukherjee inaugurating the exhibition on Uttam Kumar (top) and an installation at Nandan (bottom)**  
Photos: Papan Ghosh

Associations (FIAPF) to the media at a special press conference.

The KIFF, over the years, is never complete without its another feature and one of the great





A still from the film *Another Time*



A still from the film *Yesterday Once More*



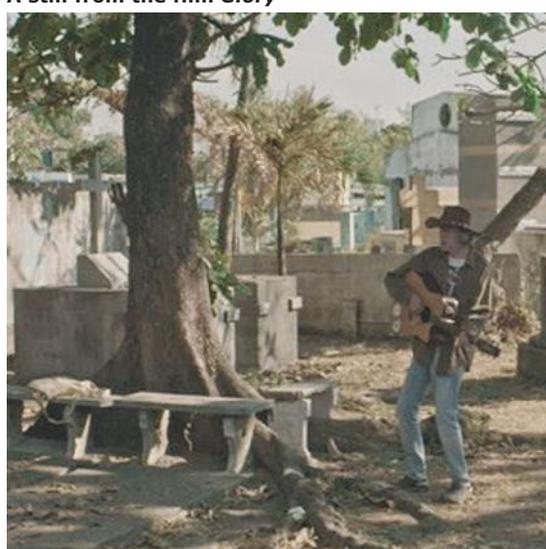
A still from the film *Cheer Me Up*



A still from the film *Glory*



A still from the film *My Father's Wings*



A still from the film *Singing In Graveyards*



A still from the film *Lady Of The Lake*

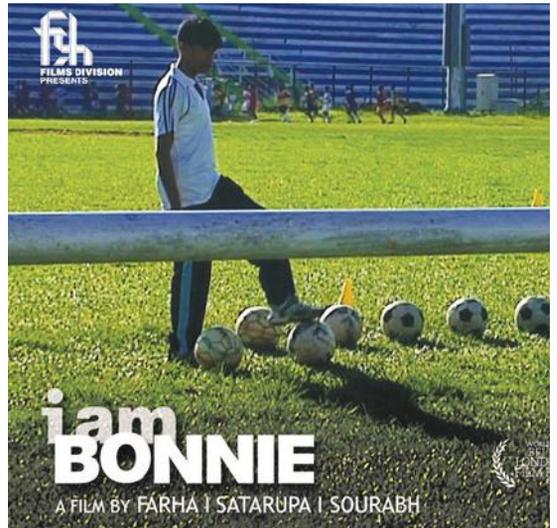


A still from the film *Seed*

attractions of the event: the exhibition curated by the Information & Cultural Affairs department of the state government at the Gaganendra Shilpa Pradarshashala. This year the subject of the exhibition was the great matinee idol from Bengal, Uttam Kumar. The exhibition titled *Nayak: The Hero* was formally inaugurated on November 12 by veteran actress Madhabi Mukherjee. This year happens to be the golden jubilee of the famous Satyajit Ray film *Nayak* that featured Uttam Kumar as the protagonist, and hence the titling of the exhibition, which had put up many rare photographs, posters and original lobby cards of Uttam Kumar starrer films. The photographs were clicked by Nemaï Ghosh,

**Director Nahid Hasanzadeh**

Photo: Papan Ghosh



A poster of the film *I Am Bonnie*

Mona Choudhury and Subinoy Das, and some of the posters were designed by none other than Satyajit Ray himself.

On the 18th of November, the festival came to an end with a gala closing ceremony at the Nazrul Mancha. State ministers including Amit Mitra, Subrata Mukherjee, Aroop Biswas, Firhad Hakim were present on the occasion while the guest of the evening was noted Bollywood actress Raveena Tandon. The Golden Royal Bengal Tiger awards were handed over at the closing ceremony in presence of the jury members of the respective categories. ■

**R CHAKRAVARTY with inputs from ARINDAM BASU**



GOLDEN ROYAL BENGAL TIGER AWARDS 2016

# And the awards go to...

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## INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION: WOMEN DIRECTORS' FILMS

<b>Best Film</b>	<i>Another Time</i> (Iran, 2016) Dir: Nahid Hasanzadeh
<b>Best Director</b>	Yao Tingting Film: <i>Yesterday Once More</i> (China, 2016)
<b>Jury Award: Special Mention</b>	<i>Cheer Me Up</i> (Israel, 2016) Dirs: Mili Ben Hayl Tamar Shippony

## INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION: INNOVATIONS IN MOVING IMAGES

<b>Best Film</b>	<i>Glory</i> (Bulgaria & Greece, 2016) Dirs: Kristina Grozeva Petar Valchanov
<b>Best Director</b>	Kivanc Sezer Film: <i>My Father's Wings</i> (Turkey, 2016)

## NETPAC AWARD FOR ASIAN COMPETITION

<b>Best Film (joint winners)</b>	<i>Singing In Graveyards</i> (Malaysia & Philippines, 2016) Dir: Bradley Liew
	<i>Lady Of The Lake</i> (India, 2016)

## NATIONAL SHORT FILM COMPETITION

<b>Best Film</b>	<i>Seed</i> Dir: Ashok Veilou
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## NATIONAL DOCUMENTARY FILM COMPETITION

<b>Best Film</b>	<i>I Am Bonnie</i> Dirs: Farha Khatun Satarupa Santra Sourabh Kanti Dutta
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# Bengal's *Sukanya* girls excel at Kickboxing World Cup in Russia

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's pet project, *Sukanya*, to provide self-defence training to girls in the state achieved a significant feat after five beneficiaries of the project from Kolkata won five gold, two silver and two bronze medals at the Kickboxing World Cup 2016 held in Russia from September 21 to 28. The five girls—four from schools and one from college—were a 62-member India team that participated in the WAKO (World Association of Kickboxing Organisations) event.

Anushka Nath of the Taki Government Girls' High School won a gold medal in Light Contact segment and Kick Light segment each. Alisha Khan, a student of the St Thomas' Girls' School, won a silver medal in Light Contact and a bronze medal in Kick Light segment. Sahisnuta of the Brahma Girls' School, secured one gold medal in Kick Light and a silver medal in Light Contact segment. Dipanita Roy of the Surah Kanya Vidyalaya won a gold medal in Kick Light and a gold medal in Light Contact segment. And the seniormost of the five, Priya Das, a student of the Behala Girls' College,



won a Bronze medal in Light Contact segment.

Besides the students who received training under the *Sukanya* project, Pragya Sharma, who was supported by the Howrah Police Commissionerate, also won a gold medal in Kick Light segment and a silver medal in Point Fight segment.

The project *Sukanya* had been initiated as per Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's will in 2014 by the Kolkata Police in collaboration with the state Women Development and Social Welfare department.

The project had started with only 646 students in some schools in the city. The number had shot up to 2,248 in the second year itself, and in the third year some students from some colleges have joined the programme besides the schoolgirls, which took the number of participants to 2,500.

All the five girls selected for the Russia World Cup had won gold in both the state level and national level championships.

When asked, one of the winner girls from the city, Sahisnuta Sinha, said that they practised at least four to five hours a day. They go to New Alipore for practice from 6 in the morning and continue till 9 am. Then they need to leave for their schools and colleges, and again they had another practice session for a couple of hours in evening.

All of them appreciated the move of the state government for taking initiative to provide self-defence training to girl schoolgoers as it helped them to find a way for a bright future.

"I want to build my career in kickboxing. I want to be a trainer in future," said Dipanita Roy, who had won two gold medals in the national championships before making it to the World Cup.

Their coach Mantu Das, who also accompanied the girls in Russia, reacted to the feat, saying, "We are happy that we could make our country proud in the international arena, that too at the topmost level, the World Cup." ■



# Jindal to make fresh investment in state

## China also keen on investment in Bengal



Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Sajjan Jindal at the press conference at Nabanna

**O**n October 17, Sajjan Jindal, head of the JSW Group, announced at a joint press conference hosted by Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at Nabanna that the company is going to make fresh investments worth ₹ 3,400 crore in Bengal. The joint press conference followed Jindal's meeting with the Chief Minister where he intimated her of the company's plans for

the state. It was attended by high-ranking government officials, including Chief Secretary Basudeb Banerjee.

The high-capacity cement plant in Salboni in Paschim Medinipur district was cleared during the meeting. A 200,000-kilolitre capacity paint plant is also coming up in the state to cater to the whole of eastern India.

The Chief Minister, at the press conference, said that

employment opportunities for about 4,000 people would be created as a result of the investments. "There is no alternative to hard work," she asserted.

JSW will also be providing skill training to local youths. "This is a welcome move," observed the Chief Minister.

As part of the company's CSR (corporate social responsibility) activities, JSW will set up a farming



**Finance and Industry Minister Amit Mitra speaking at the interactive session with the Chinese business delegation**



cooperative with farmers who gave land in Salboni for the cement plant. Latest technologies will be used to make the farming viable and profitable, and the profits will be shared with the farmers.

The Chief Minister was happy for the series of investments announced, and said, "We are grateful to them as we take the proposals as their Bijaya gift to Bengal," adding that Sajjan Jindal has been invited for the Bengal Global Business Summit in 2017.

The Chief Minister reiterated that Bengal has been the main destination for investments at present, and that the state has been the gateway to north-eastern India as well as to the neighbouring countries Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar.

In another development, the day before, state Finance and Industry Minister Amit Mitra chaired a meeting with a

**Sajjan Jindal is going to make fresh investments worth ₹ 3,400 crore in Bengal. A 200,000-kilolitre capacity paint plant is also coming up in the state to cater to the whole of eastern India.**

**China is looking at Bengal as an investment destination and is interested in solar energy, hydro-power and green energy, infrastructure, real estate and heavy machine production sectors.**

Chinese business delegation at Nabanna.

It may be recalled here that a 21-member Chinese delegation representing 13 companies from that country had surveyed the state's industry infrastructure and expressed their desire to invest in Bengal. They also took part in an interactive session titled Opportunities in Bengal with state Finance and Industry Minister Amit Mitra on September 19.

"China is looking at Bengal as an investment destination, and the country feels that business environment in the state has improved over time," said Gao Haubing, the Executive Director of the Global Communications Exchange Centre and the leader of the delegation. "China is interested in solar energy, hydro-power and green energy, infrastructure, real estate and heavy machine production sectors of Bengal," Haubing stated. ■



# Jangalmahal to become a major tourism hub



Jhargram Rajbari

**A**fter being known as a Maoist hotbed, Jangalmahal, now an oasis of peace, has become a major tourist destination by promoting the unexplored locales as tourist attractions. The Bengal Government is creating tourism packages covering the Jangalmahal circuit, which includes areas of Paschim Medinipur, Purulia and Bankura districts, by not only putting up infrastructural facilities like cable cars, heritage hotels and lodges but also inviting private investors to be a part of the endeavour.

The development of the tourism circuit is to take off with Jhargram and the heritage spots around the area. The

project involves investments to the tune of ₹ 65 crore.

The West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation (WBTDC) has already started overnight packages that take tourists around the unexplored areas of Jhargram like Belpahari, Khagra Falls, Kakrajhor, Laljal and others.

WBTDC is also promoting trekking and other adventure tourism in Kakrajhor. There are not-yet-promoted places in Jhargram like Rameshwar Mandir, the banks of the river Subarnarekha and Tapavan, which is believed to be Rishi Valmiki's burial place.

The tourists are put up at the year-old Jhargram lodge

and given access to the Jhargram Rajbari. The package comes with a discount on accommodation.

Alongside the tourist lodge that has 22 cottages, and is being expanded, WBTDC is also putting up another eight tourist facilitation centres, each of which will consist a cafeteria, restrooms and four rooms for boarding. There's more in the pipeline for the area. Negotiation with the owners of Chilkigarh Rajbari is on for developing a heritage hotel project at the royal palace located 15 km from Jhargram. It will soon become a palace resort with 10 rooms for guests. ■

# NEW TOWN

## The happening township



**N**ew Town is fast emerging as the most happening place in urban Bengal. In a recent development, a new e-Health centre at New Town was inaugurated by state Urban Development Minister Firhad Hakim on October 18. NKDA, the New Town Kolkata Development Authority, will run the service mainly for the people of low income group.

The e-Health service will now be available in three areas of New Town.

An e-health centre will have a general physician and paramedical staff. The centre is charging only ₹ 50 for its service. A patient can undergo preliminary check-ups and consult a doctor online from e-health centre. It will cater to first-aid and other basic primary healthcare requirements, like blood sugar and blood pressure tests. The reports will be sent online to the doctors, and then the doctors will give necessary advice.

New Town, being a satellite township, will also house some private hospitals, which are in the making.

To keep pace with the changing times, the New Town authorities are also making the best use of latest technology. A brand new 'Smart City New



Town app' will be launched to ensure residents and visitors of New Town get easy access of locations and keep track of the events taking place and the services on offer. The app will be developed by HIDCO, the West Bengal Housing Infrastructure Development Corporation, which plans and executes development projects in New Town and has already taken up the mammoth task of beautifying the township.

Selected among the Smart Cities in the list rolled out by the union ministry of Urban Development, New Town has been a major point of attraction for tourists from

home and abroad. The app will provide citizens and tourists in New Town information about all the places of interest, along with relevant details of those places.

Using the app, one will be able to locate any address, view bus schedules and buy books from the digital library. They will also be able to book tables and cottages at Cafe Ekante. Through the app, users can also listen to 'audio tours' about various places of interest. All the features have been mentioned in the app.

The idea behind is to have a mobile app to spread awareness among the



residents and visitors about the various happening places in New Town, locations of those places, guides to reach there, information about the events happening at places like Eco Park, Rabindra Tirtha, Nazrul Tirtha and many others.

Meanwhile, many services in New Town have now been digitised. Payment for many products and services can now be done via e-wallets. Both debit and credit cards are accepted through POS (point of sale) machines at places like Cafe Ekante, New Town Business Club, Nazrul Tirtha and Mother's Wax Museum.

A popular show booking website enables visitors to buy tickets for movies at Nazrul Tirtha and theatres in Rabindra Tirtha. Moreover, a major e-wallet company is operational at

Eco Park, Mother's Wax Museum, Cafe Ekante and Nazrul Tirtha. Tourists can even book Ekante Cottages through its website and transfer payments through internet banking.

The New Town Kolkata Development Authority (NKDA) is planning to make all applications for the 100 residential plots available online and to provide net-banking facility for depositing application money. Besides, payment to several agencies is being done through the real-time gross settlement systems (RTGS) and other net-banking options. For the Smart City New Town app, various other developments will be incorporated. The app can be downloaded in Android and iOS devices.

Besides all these, HIDCO has begun an initiative in

regard to conservation of handicrafts and artworks that were created by various Durga Puja organisers. It will also display the beautiful handicrafts and artworks across the already famous Eco Park there.

While artworks made out of fibreglass, stone, steel and similar materials will be kept outdoors at Eco Park, those made out of wood, cotton and earth will be kept indoors.

For outdoor installations, a brick and cement foundation with spotlights and fencing will be built by HIDCO. For indoor objects, an air-conditioned facility would be set up at the Mother's Wax Museum-II, which is to be commissioned shortly. Till then, these are to be kept in storage rooms within Eco Park. ■

## AITC sweeps bypolls

All India Trinamool Congress swept the by-elections held for the Tamluk and Coochbehar Lok Sabha constituencies and the Monteshwar Assembly constituency, which had gone to polls on November 19. The victory margin for the party were 1,27,127 votes in the Monteshwar Assembly seat while 4,97,525 votes and 4,13,231 votes in the Lok Sabha seats of Tamluk and Coochbehar, respectively. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee described this victory as the people's mandate in favour of her party's stand against demonetisation. ■

## Swasthya Sathi

Volunteers of the Civic Police and Green Police, and workers of the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) and accredited social health activists (ASHA) are now receiving financial benefits up to ₹ 5 lakh in case of critical ailments under *Swasthya Sathi* scheme introduced and implemented by the state government in its department of Health & Family Welfare. The main features of the Scheme are:

- (i) The scheme will have basic health cover for secondary and tertiary care up to ₹ 1.5 Lakhs per annum.
- (ii) There will be no cap on the family size.
- (iii) Critical illness like, cancer, neurosurgeries, cardiothoracic surgeries, liver diseases, blood disorders etc will be covered up to ₹ 5 lakh.
- (iv) All pre-existing diseases will be covered.

(v) The entire premium will be borne by the state government with no contribution from the beneficiaries. ■

## Awards for mountaineering

Youth Services department conferred the Radhanath Sikdar-Tenzing Norgay Award and the Chhanda Gayen Bravery Award to 11 successful mountaineers at a function on November 23 at Moulali Yuba Kendra, Kolkata.



The awards—the former for the men and the latter for the women—were introduced by the state government in 2013 and are considered the highest state level awards in the field of adventure sports. Besides, 50 organisations promoting mountaineering were provided with financial aid at the function. ■

## Sufal Bangla

Agriculture Marketing department has taken up a program to train youth from families of farmers to ensure sufficient supply of fresh fruits



and vegetables to *Sufal Bangla* outlets. The youth are being trained in sorting, grading and preservation of their produce. They are also being trained in

ways to supply the vegetables at the earliest and fresh condition to the outlets of *Sufal Bangla*. The training is helping the youth to develop their skills in retail marketing, maintaining proper accounts and managing businesses. The Agriculture Marketing department has also introduced the *Amar Fasal Amar Gari* scheme for farmers, allowing a subsidy of ₹ 10,000 to buy hand-pulled vans and perforated poly-crates to take their agricultural produce, mainly vegetables, to markets. The department has a target of setting up around 80 *Sufal Bangla* stores across the state by the end of March 2017 and steps have also been taken to introduce app-based online home delivery of vegetables and fruits. ■

## Free food for destitutes

Food Supply department has taken up a scheme to provide free food to street dwellers living in areas under Kolkata Municipal Corporation. This is for the first time that any state government is preparing a detailed scheme to ensure food security for pavement dwellers and beggars. Ration Cards will be prepared for these pavement dwellers so that they can get free food grains. More than 4,000 pavement dwellers have been identified in the city initially, who would be given special food packages. Rice, wheat and other food grains will be provided to them free of cost. The pavement dwellers from the districts will also be included in the scheme in the course of time. ■





# CM joins in Durga Puja festivity

Like previous occasions, this year too Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee joined the public in the celebration of Durga Puja, the biggest social festivity of the state, by pandal-hopping and of course inaugurating several pujas across the length and breadth of the city of Kolkata.



# CM hands over Biswa Bangla Sharad Samman 2016, also initiates immersion carnival

At a grand function at the Nazrul Mancha on November 8, the state government honoured the Best Durga Pujas with Biswa Bangla Sharad Samman 2016. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee gave away the prizes to the Puja Committees while noted vocalist Pandit Ajay Chakraborty, Dwijen Mukhopadhyay and actress Madhabi Mukhopadhyay along with the state ministers, the Director General of Bengal Police, the Commissioner of Kolkata Police and other dignitaries were present on the dais.



This year, Durga pujas organised in foreign countries were included in the list of awardees. The Dubai Bong Connection and the Hong Kong Bengali Association along with the Bangladesh Society for Puja and Culture in Sydney got Biswa Bangla Sharad Samman 2016 for organising the best Durga pujas overseas.

Altogether 173 community puja committees were awarded in as many as 11 categories including best idol, best pandal, best lighting, best theme, best theme song, best environment awareness and best Biswa Bangla branding.

Earlier, the names of the awardees had been announced on the 11th of October, and on the day of Bijaya, October 14, a special procession of around 40 award-winning Durga Puja committees from Kolkata was organised on Red Road on the way to the immersion of the idols.

From the graceful and minimalist moves of Manipuri dancers to the energetic and exaggerated leaps of Chhau dancers, from the rhythmic beats of dhaks to the soul-stirring sounds of dhamsas and madals, from frames that captured Kolkata's built heritage of a bygone era to the memories of the past—the inaugural edition of the immersion carnival on Red Road was a feast for the senses.

The programme was streamed live on Mamata Banerjee's Facebook page too, of course apart from having been telecast live on the electronic channels.

Follows here a colourful photo gallery that captures a glimpse of the award-giving ceremony and also the immersion carnival on Red Road.



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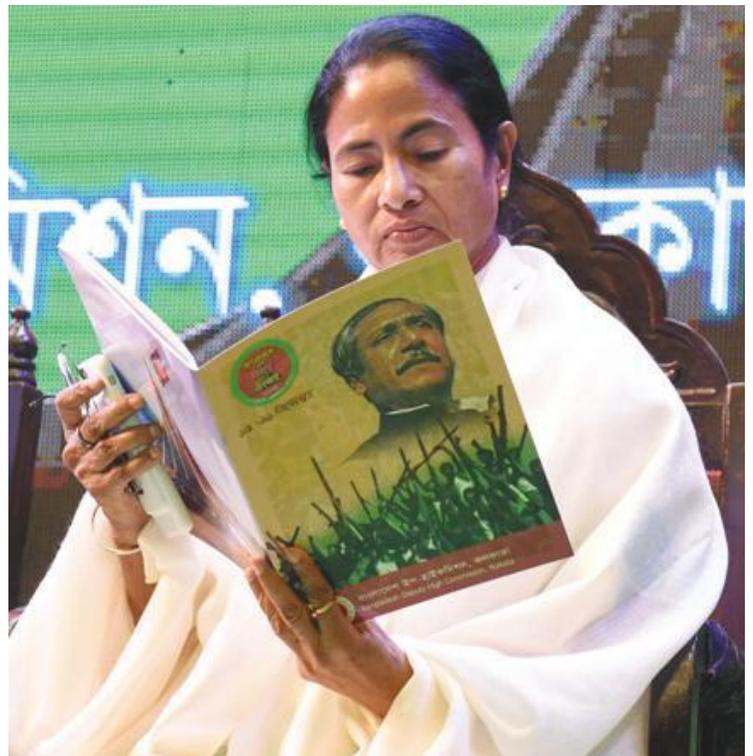




# CM attends Bangladesh Victory Day function in Kolkata

“People of Bengal have special love and affection for Bangladesh, and the close ties between India and Bangladesh will remain forever. The two countries are politically divided but the cultural affinity of Bengal and Bangladesh has removed all the differences. Just as we cannot divide Rabindranath and Nazrul, the people of Bengal and Bangladesh cannot be separated,” said state Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at a function organised by the Bangladesh High Commission at the Netaji Indoor Stadium, Kolkata, on December 16, the victory Day of Bangladesh. She graced the occasion as the chief guest while the Bangladesh Transport Minister inaugurated the celebrations. A photo exhibition was also put up at the venue.

In the photos on this page and overleaf, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is seen speaking on the occasion, leafing through the Victory Day brochure, taking a round of the Victory Day exhibition and writing on the Visitors Book.





# J Jayalalithaa passes away

## Mamata Banerjee writes a personal tribute



is somewhat similar. She emerged a winner solely because of her political wisdom, administrative expertise and strength of character," the Bengal Chief Minister wrote.

"An incident of death is always sad. We never want anybody to die. Rather, we wish for a long life. But, truth is to be accepted, however shocking it is. There are some deaths which not only make us sad, but also rip our heart," she lamented.

Jayalalithaa's stature was "extremely unfortunate", and observed, "Jayaji attained this position for herself through a life of struggle. It takes a lot of time and hard work to create such an illustrious legacy. Specially in 'public life', it needs a lot of strength, courage and toughness to earn the trust of people by working for them and to lead a political party from the grassroots level to achieve success in Assembly as well as Parliamentary elections."

**J**ayalalithaa Jayaram, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, breathed her last at a Chennai hospital on December 5 following nearly two and a half months long illness that had led to multi-organ failure. She was 68. The next day she was laid to rest at the Marina Beach right beside the tomb of M G Ramachandran, her political mentor.

On hearing the news Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee immediately sent a condolence message to the Tamil Nadu government. Later on, she also wrote a personal tribute to the deceased leader where she recollected tales of their close association.

"I understand how fighting against all odds feels like. I have been facing a volley of abuses and conspiracies myself for some time now. Jayaji's struggle



Describing Jayalalithaa's demise as "somewhat untimely", Banerjee wrote, "Jayaji could have stayed with us for a few more years. She infused a spirit of dynamism in everyone through her actions."

Banerjee reflected that the passing away of a lady of

The Bengal Chief Minister, in her tribute, further wrote, "The Tamil people lost their Amma, the country lost a mass leader and AIADMK lost its matriarch. An empty space has been created in politics. With Jayalalithaa, we have lost an able and courageous administrator."■

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