

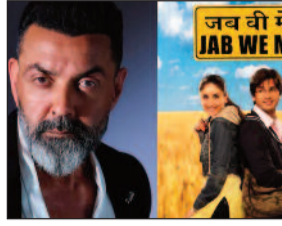
**Kedarnath Yatra temporarily halted due to bad weather in Uttarakhand**

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## Bengal Eyes Massive Infrastructure Push as 42,000 Crore Flows : Suwendu Adhikari Seeks New Development Partnership with Centre

Kolkata, 31 May : West Bengal's development agenda received a major boost this week as Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari announced that the state has secured more than ₹42,000 crore in central assistance within just three weeks, describing the funding as the beginning of a new phase of cooperation between Kolkata and New Delhi. The announcement came during a meeting with Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, where both leaders discussed plans to accelerate infrastructure, urban development and power-sector reforms across the state. Addressing a gathering in Kolkata, Adhikari said the state government would work closely with multiple Union ministries to unlock investment and modernize public infrastructure. He emphasized that Bengal was now positioned to benefit from what the BJP describes as a "double-engine government" model, under which the state and Centre coordinate development initiatives more closely. According to officials, a significant portion of the newly announced financial support is linked to major national schemes, including water supply projects, healthcare expansion and urban infrastructure programs. The state government said agreements worth nearly ₹39,000 crore have already been linked to projects under the Jal Jeevan Mission, while additional al-

locations have been approved for healthcare initiatives under the National Health Mission and Ayushman Bharat. During the discussions, Adhikari urged Khattar to support a broad



urban transformation strategy covering municipalities across Bengal. The Chief Minister also sought assistance from the Centre's proposed Urban Challenge Fund, a large-scale initiative aimed at improving urban infrastructure through competitive project financing. Sources familiar with the meeting said discussions focused on expanding metro connectivity, upgrading civic infrastructure, strengthening power distribution networks and promoting renewable energy adoption. The state government is reportedly preparing detailed project reports for future metro systems in rapidly growing urban regions and exploring ways

to expand rooftop solar coverage in rural and tribal areas. The event also featured the launch of a citizen-focused sanitation application designed to improve waste management services in

selected municipalities. Officials said residents would be able to upload photographs of garbage accumulation sites, allowing civic authorities to respond more quickly to complaints. Khattar assured the state government of cooperation in implementing infrastructure and development projects, stating that pending initiatives could be expedited through stronger coordination between the Centre and the state administration. Political observers view the development as a significant shift in Centre-state relations after the 2026 Assembly election, with both governments emphasizing collaboration on investment, welfare delivery and infrastructure ex-

pansion. Analysts say the success of these initiatives will depend on how quickly projects move from announcements to execution on the ground. As Bengal prepares its next phase of development planning, the flow of central funds and the emerging partnership between the state leadership and Union ministries are expected to remain at the center of the state's political and economic conversation in the months ahead. Size that maintaining public trust is crucial for food security and social welfare programs, as millions of households depend on these schemes for their daily needs. Even minor rumors can sometimes trigger widespread concern. From this perspective, the government's swift response carries significance both politically and administratively. Opposition parties, however, contend that the prevailing anxiety stems from a lack of administrative transparency and insufficient public communication. They argue that assurances alone are not enough and that clear guidelines, along with sustained public awareness campaigns, are necessary. The government, on the other hand, maintains that protecting the interests of citizens remains its primary objective and insists that no eligible beneficiary will lose access to benefits. Meanwhile, district administrations have reportedly been instructed to closely monitor the situation.

## Bengal Rolls Out Smart Cleanliness Drive with 'Swachha App'; Citizens Can Now Report Garbage in Real Time

Kolkata, 31 May : In a major step toward improving urban cleanliness and civic services, the West Bengal government has launched the Swachha App, a new geo-tagged digital platform that allows residents to report garbage accumulation, overflowing drains and other sanitation-related issues directly to municipal authorities. The initiative has been introduced as a pilot project across 10 municipalities and urban local bodies, with plans for statewide expansion in the coming months. The app enables citizens to upload photographs of civic problems from their neighborhoods, automatically attaching location details to help authorities respond more efficiently. Municipal teams are expected to address complaints within a fixed time frame and upload photographic proof once the issue has been resolved, creating a transparent monitoring system. The project was jointly launched in Kolkata by Suwendu Adhikari and Manohar Lal Khattar as part of a broader push to modernize municipal governance and strengthen cooperation between the Centre and the state on urban development initiatives. Officials



said the pilot phase covers municipalities including Asansol, Durgapur, Basirhat, Madhyamgram, Krishnanagar, Contai, Nalhati, Baidyabati, Pujali and Tufanganj. If successful, the platform will gradually be extended to more than 120 urban local bodies across West Bengal. The launch also forms part of a wider cleanliness campaign that includes public awareness drives, expanded waste collection infrastructure and stricter enforcement against littering. Authorities believe citizen participation through digital reporting can significantly improve sanitation standards and help create cleaner, healthier urban environments. Government officials described the Swachha App as a key tool in building a more responsive

civic administration, where residents can play a direct role in monitoring cleanliness and ensuring accountability in municipal services. In a pointed warning that appeared directed not only at political opponents but also at public representatives across party lines, he stated that anyone found collecting illegal money, exerting unlawful pressure, or exploiting public office should face legal consequences. The message carried particular significance because it included elected lawmakers themselves. According to Bhattacharya, MPs, MLAs, municipal leaders, and local representatives should be held to higher standards of conduct than ordinary citizens because they have been entrusted with public responsibility.



People take part in an awareness rally on the World No Tobacco day, in Kolkata, Sunday.

## Trump-Iran Talks End in the Deadlock After Marathon White House Meeting; Military Escalation Fears Rise

New Delhi, 31 May: A high-level marathon meeting led by former U.S. President Donald Trump on Iran has ended without any breakthrough, as negotiations failed to produce a final agreement on ending the ongoing conflict and nuclear tensions. According to officials, Trump convened a prolonged Situation Room session with top advisers to decide the next steps in the standoff with Iran. However, despite intense discussions and multiple draft proposals, no final deal or ceasefire framework was approved. Trump has reportedly insisted on stricter conditions in any agreement, including Iran's complete rejection of nuclear weapons development and tighter security controls over strategic waterways. Iranian representatives, meanwhile, continue to resist key demands, particularly those involving uranium stockpiles and sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz. The failure to reach a consensus has fueled speculation of possible mili-

tary escalation. U.S. defense officials have indicated that American forces remain "fully prepared" for renewed operations if diplomacy collapses entirely. Trump, however, has maintained that he is still open to a "strong deal," but emphasized that Washington will not accept what he described as a weak or incomplete agree-



ment. With negotiations stalled and both sides holding firm positions, international observers warn that the situation remains highly volatile, with the risk of renewed conflict still on the table. Bottom line: Talks have collapsed for now—but diplomatic channels remain open as military

pressure builds. Iran's Strategic Position in the Middle East One of Tehran's greatest strengths lies in its geographical location. Situated at the crossroads of the Persian Gulf and key international shipping routes, Iran occupies a position that gives it considerable influence over regional security and global energy mar-

kets. The Strait of Hormuz, through which a significant portion of the world's oil exports passes, remains a crucial strategic chokepoint. Any disruption in this narrow waterway could have immediate consequences for international energy prices, supply chains, and economic stability across

multiple continents. Even without direct military engagement, the mere possibility of instability in the region can trigger market volatility, making Iran's geographic position a major factor in strategic calculations by global powers. Expanding Missile Capabilities Over the past two decades, Iran has invested heavily in developing a sophisticated missile program. These capabilities have become a central pillar of the country's defense strategy. Military analysts believe Iran's arsenal includes a variety of short-, medium-, and long-range missiles capable of targeting military installations and strategic assets across the region. Unlike conventional air forces that require extensive infrastructure and logistical support, missile systems provide Iran with a relatively cost-effective means of deterrence. The existence of these capabilities means that any military action against Iran could potentially trigger responses extending beyond its immediate borders.

## Karnataka Leadership Transition: D.K. Shivakumar Takes Charge as Congress Recalibrates Strategy

New Delhi, 31 May: In a significant political development, the Congress party has ushered in a new chapter in Karnataka by elevating D.K. Shivakumar to the state's top leadership position, marking the end of Siddaramaiah's tenure at the helm. The transition is being viewed as a carefully planned move aimed at strengthening the party's organizational structure and preparing for future electoral challenges. Senior Congress leaders described the leadership change as part of a broader strategy to balance governance experience with political mobilization. Shivakumar, widely regarded as one of the party's most influential leaders in Karnataka, is expected to focus on accelerating development projects, reinforcing grassroots networks, and maintaining party unity. While Siddaramaiah steps away from the state's highest office, party insiders emphasized that his experience and political stature remain invaluable to Congress. The leadership transition is being projected not as a re-

placement, but as a redistribution of responsibilities intended to maximize the strengths of both leaders. Political analysts believe the move sends a clear signal that Congress is prioritizing long-term leadership planning while seeking to retain its support base across



urban and rural constituencies. The development has sparked widespread discussion about the party's future strategy and the evolving balance of power within Karnataka Congress ranks. As Shivakumar assumes his new responsibilities, attention will now turn to how

the leadership reshuffle impacts governance, party cohesion, and Congress's prospects in upcoming elections. The transition marks one of the most closely watched political developments in Karnataka this year, with implications that could extend beyond the state and influence the party's national trajectory. The INDIA alliance, which brings together a broad spectrum of regional and national parties, has been attempting to maintain cohesion while addressing differences that naturally arise within a multi-party coalition. Leaders believe that regular consultation and dialogue are essential for ensuring that the alliance remains politically relevant and capable of presenting a coordinated voice on issues ranging from governance and federalism to economic policy and social welfare. Political analysts note that the reported conversation between Mamata Banerjee and Rahul Gandhi carries significance beyond routine political communication.

## Mithun Chakraborty Pledges 12 Air Conditioners for the Alipurduar District Hospital Amid Rising Heat Concerns

Kolkata, 31 May : Veteran actor and BJP leader Mithun Chakraborty has announced that he will donate 12 air conditioners to the Alipurduar District Hospital to improve comfort for patients struggling with intense summer heat. During a visit to the hospital on Saturday, Mithun toured several general wards, met patients and spoke with hospital authorities about healthcare facilities and infrastructure needs. Many patients reportedly raised concerns about high temperatures and the lack of adequate cooling arrangements in the wards. Responding to these concerns, Mithun said he would arrange eight air conditioners for the maternity wards and four more for the child ward after returning to Kolkata. He also expressed his desire to see air-conditioning facilities expanded across general hospital wards in the future. The visit came shortly after his inspection of a regional cancer centre in Cooch Behar, where he had promised efforts to revive healthcare services and improve medical infrastructure. According to Mithun, essential hospital equipment including beds, computers and printers were delivered soon after that visit. Following the hospital inspection, Mithun attended discussions with local elected representatives and government officials on developmental issues affect-



ing North Bengal. He also highlighted the region's tourism potential and said a detailed development report would be submitted to party leadership. His visit attracted large crowds across Alipurduar, with residents gathering along roads to welcome the popular film star-turned-politician. The announcement has been widely viewed as a step toward improving patient care and hospital infrastructure in the district. While no formal announcement has been made regarding any specific project, the statement has drawn significant attention because of Singur's historic place in India's industrial and political landscape. Singur remains a Symbol of Bengal's Industrial Debate for nearly two decades, Singur has represented one of the most significant chapters in West Bengal's economic and political history. The proposed Tata Motors small-car project once promised

to transform the region into a major manufacturing hub, attracting ancillary industries, creating thousands of direct and indirect jobs, and positioning Bengal as a key destination for industrial investment. However, political opposition, land acquisition controversies, and prolonged unrest eventually led to the relocation of the project, an event that many industry observers continue to cite as a turning point in the state's investment narrative. Since then, Singur has remained more than a geographical location—it has become a symbol of competing visions of development, land rights, industrial policy, and economic growth. Samik Bhattacharya's Message Focuses on Industrial Confidence According to Bhattacharya, Bengal's economic future depends on restoring confidence among investors and creating an environment where industries can operate without uncertainty. He emphasized that industrial development is not merely about attracting a single company but about building a larger ecosystem that supports manufacturing, innovation, infrastructure development, and job creation. Political observers note that the BJP has increasingly sought to position itself as a party focused on economic expansion and industrial revival in West Bengal.