

Briefly

Plan for better school education

Kolkata: The school education department has constituted an advisory council to plan a guideline for development, school education minister Rabindranath Bhattacharya said on Wednesday. The names of the council members would be finalised in consultation with CM Mamata Banerjee, the minister said. — BP

Concrete chunk falls off building

Kolkata: A concrete chunk fell from a three-storied building at Radhanath Chaudhury Road on Wednesday morning. There was no injury reported after the incident. Police informed the matter to the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC). Primary inquiries revealed that earlier KMC authorities demolished had a portion of the building and remnants of the demolished building collapsed. — BP

Nine injured in road accident

Kolkata: Nine persons were injured when a lorry ramed into the back of a mini-truck which was carrying a funeral party to Nimtalla Burning Ghat. The injured were rushed to a nearby hospital. Seven were discharged from the hospital after the first aid. — BP

Long-distance trains to increase speed

Kolkata: The railway department has decided to increase the speed limits of some long-distance trains. The journey time of those trains would now be reduced by 15 minutes to one hour as confirmed by the Eastern Railway. Those trains are Dibrugarh Town to Howrah-Kamrup Express, Malda Town to Sealdah-Gour Express, Saharsa Sealdah-Hatey Bazare Express, Kolkata Garib Rath Express and Kolkata Radhikapur Express. The department also made a change of destinations for some trains. The Kolkata-Sealdah local would be changed to Baruipur instead of the existing destination of Sealdah. — BP

New halt for Patna Express

Kolkata: The Patna Express will now stop at New Farakka and Kahalgaon stations on an experimental basis from July 1 to December, said Eastern Railway authorities. The department also hinted that the frequency of the Duronto Express could be increased. The Sealdah-New Delhi Duronto Express frequency will increase from bi-weekly to four days a week. However, the journey of four suburban trains was extended. The Howrah-Gurap local extended up to Masagram. The Prinsepghat-Habra local extended up to Majerhat, the Barasat-Prinsepghat local extended up to Ballygunge and Majerhat-Barrackpore local extended up to Ballygunge. — BP

Bankura wants police stations

Bankura: The Bankura district administration and the senior police officers has already forwarded a proposal to the state government requesting the authorities to set up five new police stations and 10 police outposts in the district to maintain the law and order machinery in the politically-sensitive and economically-backward district of south Bengal. — BP

Landslide in Bonjemari Colliery

Asansol: Bonjemari Colliery at Salanpur in Asansol witnessed a landslide in its workshop arena on Wednesday. According to coal mine workers, they heard a noise from the machine room at around 11 am. The illegal mining in this area is responsible for the slide, claimed P K Singh, a colliery agent. — BP

Tatas move high court over Singur legislation, but Mamata Banerjee seems more determined than ever to return land

CM sticks to her commitment

Tata Motors moves HC over Singur



Supporters of the Singur Krishi Jami Raksha Committee take out a rally in Singur on Wednesday—BP

Our Correspondent

Kolkata: Chief minister Mamata Banerjee is determined to keep her political commitment of returning land to the unwilling farmers of Singur.

Despite the possibility of a long legal battle delaying the process of returning land initiated by the state government looming ahead, a confident Banerjee on Wednesday instructed party MP and senior

advocate Kalyan Banerjee to team up with advocate-general Anindya Mitra in the legal battle against the Tatas.

"Anybody can go to court, it is his prerogative. No problem. The government has decided to return the land. We will hand over the land to the unwilling farmers. Land is in our possession. It was the decision of the West Bengal government following which a Bill was passed in the Assembly. It was in our election

manifesto. We will go ahead with it," said Banerjee in the capital.

On her way to meet the deputy chairman of the Planning Commission, Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Banerjee reiterated that the process of returning land will not be delayed.

"The Bill is absolutely in accordance with the Constitution. Tatas may be angry. But it will serve the interest of the common people,"

said Kalyan Banerjee, who is also Mamata Banerjee's main legal adviser.

"In this case, I am appearing for the industry secretary. Of course, we do work according to the chief minister's instructions. We also have with us veteran advocate Shaktinath Mukherjee," said Banerjee, confirming that the chief minister had been supervising the matter from Delhi in all earnest.



Medha Patkar in Singur on Wednesday — BP

Patkar marches in solidarity

Singur: Social activist Medha Patkar on Wednesday appealed to Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee to keep in mind the interests of sharecroppers and landless labourers in Singur while returning the acquired land to farmers.

Patkar, who undertook a *padayatra* here at the abandoned Tata Motors project site, said the company should realise the plight of farmers affected by industrialisation.

The Hooghly district administration, meanwhile,

has put up 54 notices signed by district magistrate Sripriya Rangarajan on the walls of the project site with a copy of the gazette notification scrapping the land deal with the Tatas. The private security guards of Tata Motors have vacated the site.

Villagers alleged that a huge quantity of material from the abandoned factory site was stolen on Tuesday night after the security guards left. Officials said no one was being allowed into the abandoned project site.—BP

Security tightened at Tata factory site in Singur

Rathin Bhattacharya

Hooghly: Security arrangements at the abandoned Tata Motors factory were strengthened by the state government on Wednesday following the takeover of the project site on Tuesday.

The government took possession of the land by virtue of the Singur Land Rehabilitation and Development Act 2011, a piece of new legislation aimed at giving back land to dispossessed farmers.

The Hooghly district magistrate stuck 54 notices on the factory gates since the first one was fixed on Tuesday evening.

The Tatas responded by hanging their own notice, stating that the firm needed at least five hours to react to any directive from the state government.

Sub-divisional officer Abhijit Mitra of Chandernagore and sub-

divisional police officer Amitava Maiti went to the site with a large police force to get the land vacated.

About 900 people had already moved out and so had project officer Dilip Sengupta, letting the district police take over the 1,000-acre land.

"Since the land has been taken back by the government, workers are being asked to vacate the area," said Rangarajan.

On the other hand, some people forcibly entered the project site on Wednesday morning and tried to take away a few things from the site. But police chased them away.

Upbeat Singur farmers celebrated yet again, bring out a huge procession of 2,000 people, led by MLA Becharam Manna, who is also a leader of the Singur land movement.

The procession raised the slogan 'Tata tumi pherot

jao, aamader jomi chere dao' (Go back Tata, leave our land). The rally ended at the project's main gate.

"The way the new government has proceeded in the Singur issue, any obstruction by Tata Motors won't harm the proceedings. We will soon give back the land to the 4,600 farmers whose land was forcefully acquired by the erstwhile Left Front government. A committee is being formed on the behalf of the government. The Singur Farmland Protection Committee along with government committee will decide on how to give back the land," said MLA Becharam Manna.

In contrast, those farmers who had given their land for the car factory appeared dejected. They accused Mamata Banerjee and the government of stalling Singur's industrialisation.

Look for profits, industry minister tells PSUs

Our Correspondent

Kolkata: Industry minister Partha Chatterjee on Wednesday instructed heads of 13 state PSUs to prepare action plans for turning the organisations into profit-making units without considering any steps to reduce staff strength. The minister met managing directors of the PSUs for more than two hours at Writers' Buildings. After the meeting, Chatterjee told the media: "I have asked each of them to submit to me a time-bound action plan on turning their units into profit-making units, making sure that the number of employees is not reduced in the process."

The minister categorically pointed out that reducing the number of employees to cut financial burdens through different schemes such as voluntary retirement or a golden handshake was not an option.

When some of the PSU bosses raised the issue of deficiencies in technology, Chatterjee asked them to include specific technological requirements for increasing productivity in the action



Saugat Mukherjee and industry minister Partha Chatterjee at a CII meeting in the city on Wednesday—Prabir Bhattacharya

plan. At the same time, the PSU bosses were told to inform the industry department the amount of bills of each of the PSUs that were pending with the government. "If it helps, I will request chief minister Mamata Banerjee and finance minister Amit Mitra to clear the bills as soon as possible," Chatterjee said.

The industry minister said that such review meetings would be held every three months to take stock of the progress.

Among the PSUs represented at the meeting were Mackintosh Burn, Saraswati Press and Durgapur Chemicals.

IN FOCUS

- Mackintosh Burn
- Gluconate Health
- Durgapur Chemicals Ltd
- Saxby and Farmer Ltd
- Shalimar Works
- Britannia Engineers Neo
- Pipes & Tubes Corp Ltd
- National Iron & Steel Company Limited
- Britannia Engineering Ltd
- Saraswati Press
- West Bengal Spinning Mills
- West Dinajpur Spinning Mills
- Manjusha and Kalyani Spinning Mills

Tired of Left apathy, agriculture scientist shifts base to Orissa

Abhiroop Ghosh Dastidar

Kolkata: Tired of the apathy of the Left Front government at the time, renowned agricultural scientist from the state Dr Debal Deb changed his base from Bengal to Orissa along with his 700 indigenous varieties of rice species. Some of these include species which are drought-resistant. After trying for years, he could not convince the government to provide him with four *bighas* to help him with the conservation of the rice species.

However, the new government has promised to look into the matter. "This kind of an incident is really unfortunate. Our government will try its best to provide him with the necessary help to bring him back to the state and help him with his work," said Malay Ghatak, law minister with additional charge of agriculture.

He added that if necessary, the new government would have a talk with Deb to try to sort out the matter and ensure that he returns to in Bengal. "I have transferred and transplanted all my rice varieties to a farmland in Orissa. All my efforts and requests of acquiring irrigable land in my state failed so I decided to shift my base," he said.

He explained that out of the 700 species of rice, around 500 have been



Dr Debal Deb (extreme right) with Union agriculture minister Sharad Pawar and others at an awards ceremony

collected from Bengal over a period of around two decades. Out of the 500, around 400 of the rice species need proper irrigation while the other 100 were drought-tolerant.

So, to conserve them, he had to look for conducive stretches of land, which he ultimately found in Orissa.

"I needed four *bighas* for conserving all the rice species I have. A stretch of land that costs around ₹5,000 per *bigha* was going for ₹15,000 per *bigha*. I do not have the luxury to spend around ₹60,000 per year on renting land," Deb said.

"This is a labour of love and I am not in a position to do business with it. But I need some minimum help from the

government to preserve this labour of love. In bad times, this collection of mine would come to the government's aid and they should understand this," Deb said. He also criticised farmers for their present approach to farming. "Most of them have developed a very consumerist attitude. They think that they can always buy the rice varieties from the market, which is not true. When there was drought or other crisis periods, I supplied seeds to farmers in many instances but they never preserved them," Deb said.

After not getting the land, Deb finally shifted from Basudha —his erstwhile research centre in Bengal — and went to Orissa. "If the government wants, then I will keep on providing the farmers with the rice and bail them out from crisis situations and serve when needed," Deb said.

Deb has already left the state but the bengal government is keen to bring him back.

In fact, recently a couple of athletes had threatened to leave the state as they were not getting adequate support from the government despite winning laurels in the country and abroad.

However, minister of state for sports Madan Mitra came to their rescue by extending financial initiatives and promising them full facilities to enhance their training.

Our Legal Correspondent

Kolkata: Tata Motors moved the Calcutta High Court on Wednesday challenging the legality of the Singur Land Rehabilitation and Development Act, 2011 enacted by the Bengal government to return land to the 'unwilling farmers' of Singur, whose land was acquired by the Left Front government for a small car factory to be built by the Tatas.

As the matter came up for hearing before the Bench of Justice Soumitra Pal, he refused to hear ex parte Tata Motors' petition and directed the company's counsel, Samaraditya Pal, to serve notice to the state government. After the company followed the court's directive, Justice Pal took up the case in the afternoon.

Tata Motors, however, has clarified that the company did not ask for an ex parte hearing at all, when the Singur matter came up for hearing in the high court. The state government was represented by advocate-general Anindya Mitra along with lawyer Kalyan Banerjee, who is also a Trinamool Congress MP.

The hearing continued till 4.45 p.m. after which court was adjourned till Thursday. The 562-page petition claimed that the Act was "illegal and unconstitutional".

In another dramatic turn, former mayor of Kolkata and prominent lawyer Bikash Bhattacharya, representing a section of the landowners in Singur, appealed to the court to be "an added party to the case".

At the end of the day's hearing, the court observed that the state government should take all necessary steps to maintain law and order in around the abandoned Nano project. It also instructed the state to make adequate security arrangements to protect the machin-

ery and equipment still lying inside the "abandoned" site.

The developments come a day after the Act came into force and the government pasting a notice on the main gate of the deserted project site on Tuesday night.

Tata Motors' counsel Pal met the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court, Joy Narayan Patel, at his south Kolkata residence on Tuesday night and communicated the automobile major's plan to challenge the Act. Considering the importance of the matter, it was assigned to Justice Pal by the Chief Justice.

Arguing for Tata Motors, counsel Pal told the Bench that the company abandoned its plan to roll out the world's cheapest car from its factory in Singur in the wake of a series of violent agitations.

The erstwhile state government failed to maintain law and order as hundreds of protesters laid siege to the factory, Pal pleaded.

"Even employees of the factory were threatened with dire consequences," he argued.

"The project was almost complete. A trial run of the small car was on its way. Tata Motors was determined to roll out the world's cheapest car soon. But relentless agitation forced the company to scrap the project and leave Singur," Pal pleaded.

Pal prayed before the court for a stay on the notification which had asked the company to vacate the land. He also sought the appointment of a special officer to oversee the project area till "the case is disposed of".

On several occasions, there were heated exchanges between the counsels of the two parties. At one point, Pal's submission was interrupted by Mitra and Banerjee and the Bench had a trying time to pacify the two sides. The Bench will hear advocate-general Mitra's submission on Thursday.



Police deployed at Tata project site—Suvojit Basu

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