

**Synopsis of the main developments reported in leading newspapers.
January 22, 2024 – February 02, 2024**

Key Developments

Rail projects in state get ₹13,810 crore

Bengal has received an allocation of Rs 13,810 crore in the 2024-25 interim railway budget. Southeastern Railway has got Rs 5,508 crore, while the break-up for two other railway zones in Bengal — Eastern Railway (headquartered in Kolkata) and Metro Railway — will be available once the Pink Book, the railway ministry's comprehensive allocation, is released in the next two or three days. In the next one month, three Metro lines are gearing towards launch. The chief commissioner of railway safety (CCRS) Janak K Garg is supposed to conduct the final inspections of the India's first under-river Metro (the East-West Metro's 4.8 km Esplanade-Howrah Maidan stretch), the Joka-Esplanade's Phase II (1.2 km extension beyond Taratala to Majerhat) and New Garia-Aiport's Phase 1 (the 5.4 km stretch from New Garia to Ruby).

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Bengal may emerge as e-3-wheeler hub.

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman's ambitious plans in interim budget 2024 strengthening the electric vehicle (EV) ecosystem in India may further propel the spread of Kolkata's electric vehicles, particularly electric buses, and Bengal's emergence as a major e-three-wheeler hub. The emphasis is on infrastructure expansion and support for manufacturing, with a particular focus on promoting e-buses for public transport, aiming to generate employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. Bengal accounts for 15% of the e-3wheeler manufacturing hubs in India, with over 12% of all such EVs produced in the country. The success is attributed to the state's EV policy, which prioritised manufacturing and research and development over focusing solely on adoption through subsidies and incentives.

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Tech support: 500 state schools in city to get free wi-fi connection.

Over 500 state-run upper primary, secondary, and higher secondary schools in the city will be provided with free wi-fi connections by the state school education department. The process will be conducted in a phased manner. There are a number of heritage institutions in the city like Hare School, Bethune School or Sakhawat Memorial School that don't have any proper wi-fi connection for regular work — either official or academic. Free internet will help schools that are housed in remote areas but at the same time, data entry operators are also required to distribute the workload.

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1,000 poor students in Bengal get computer training via 'magic box'.

Fourteen-year-old Piyush Jaiswal, a Class VII student of Liluah Shishu Vidyapith, knows about various software applications and can identify different hardware devices in photographs. His classmate Anokhi Singh has also learnt file management, text processing, formatting, and e-mailing along with other applications by watching videos on a magic box installed in the classroom. These two are among over 1,000 students from economically disadvantaged sections, who have been exploring the world of computers with magic boxes installed at their schools in Howrah and Darjeeling, including Liluah Shishu Vidyapith, Samaritan Public School and Cornerstone Public School. Computer Shiksha, a Gurgaon-based charitable trust, which has been giving magic boxes to schools across the country for computer education among the children of marginalized sections for the last couple of years, has reached out to eight schools in Bengal so far – two in Howrah and six in Darjeeling.

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MoUs soon to bring non-network hosps under cashless plan.

Insurance companies have asked different third party administrators (TPA) to talk to non-network hospitals for signing MoUs with them to expedite 'cashless everywhere' scheme in Bengal. There are around 200 network hospitals in the city that already offer cashless facility, while the number of non-network is around 225-250. Some of the big names not under cashless network includes Sri Aurobindo Seva Kendra, Bhagirathi Neotia (Park Street) and Ramakrishna Mission Seva Prathisthan and Nightingale, among others. Most of the big hospitals are in the cashless network. There are some hospitals that are not under PPN but may be part of a private insurer's network for offering cashless facility. So, this can be broadened. Only those that don't come under any network, a fresh MoU has to be signed, as said by Kasturi Sengupta, GM NIC.

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New Town set to get 10-lane high-speed corridor.

The Hidco has started work to add four lanes to the 2-km long southern arterial road from Biswa Bangla Gate in New Town to Sector V, connected by the new bridge over the canal, making it a 10lane high-speed corridor, as was drawn on the original masterplan of the township. Once done, New Town-bound vehicles, getting down from the new bridge at Mahisbathan, would no longer have to veer into a smaller road before entering the township. The vehicles would be able to drive straight into New Town. The southern arterial road, connecting the bridge with New Town was earlier a six-lane corridor. The stretch was marked as a 10-lane high-speed corridor in the township's original masterplan. Accordingly, the space was kept with the median divider.

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Bengal's biggest water plant to serve 20L in Hooghly.

The Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority (KMDA) is set to start a new water treatment plant — built at a cost of Rs 1,760 crore and the biggest in the state since Independence — at Uttarpara-Kotrung in Hooghly in February. The new plant, with a capacity of 55 million gallon per day, will mitigate water woes of nearly 20 lakh people in seven municipal and six panchayat areas. The water treatment plant is spread over a 10-acre land that had been earlier chosen for a film city project. Though the land originally belonged to KMC, it was later handed over to KMDA for construction of the plant. The areas, where people will get potable drinking water under this project, include Uttarpara-Kotrung, Konnagar, Rishra, Serampore, Baidyabati, Champdani, Dankuni and Raghunathpur, among others. The work of the plant, which has 60 overhead tanks and seven underground reservoirs, had started in 2019. An intake jetty has been installed on the river.

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Titagarh Rail pact with Amber for train parts

City-based Titagarh Rail Systems Limited (TRSL) and the Amber group of Delhi-NCR have formed a strategic alliance to enter into train components and subsystems business in India and Italy. Under the agreement, TRSL and the Amber group, through its wholly owned subsidiary Sidwal Refrigeration Industries Pvt Ltd, will invest Rs 120 crore to acquire equal control in the special purpose vehicle for setting up the business. This SPV will setup a new facility in India to manufacture critical railway components and subsystems used in the manufacture of railways and metro coaches and will also make fresh equity investments into Titagarh Firema SpA, Italy, an associate of the Titagarh Group, along with new investment to be made by government of Italy's investment arm, Invitalia, for which an in-principal nod has already been obtained.

<https://epaper.telegraphindia.com/textview/459751/45720145/71.html>

Coal India syngas unit in Burdwan

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on Wednesday approved a proposal of Coal India Limited to invest in a coal-to-SNG (synthetic natural gas) project in a joint venture with GAIL at the mines of its subsidiary Eastern Coalfields Limited in Bengal. The Rs 13052-crore syngas project will come up at Sonapur Bazari Area of Eastern Coalfields in Burdwan district of Bengal. CIL will set up the two coal gasification plants with a view to achieving the target of 100MT coal gasification by 2030. The government on this week also approved an outlay of Rs 8,500 crore as financial assistance for promoting coal, and lignite gasification projects.

<https://epaper.telegraphindia.com/textview/459643/31746924/71.html>