

KOLKATA ON

WHEELS

AUTOVENTURING GUIDE AROUND THE CITY



5

BEST INDIAN EXPORTS



UPCOMING CARS
Nissan Gravite

MY TRIP
Spiti in Winter

CAR REVIEW
2026 MG Hector



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Automobile Association of Eastern India

Presents

Kolkata Vintage & Classic Car Rally 2026



Sunday , 8th February 2026

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Editor	Joydip Sur
Editorial Advisors	Abhijit Dasgupta Pradeep Gooptu Tarun Goswami Pradip Chopra
Photography	Ranadip Mandal Subha Sengupta Pooshan Deb Mallick Sarbjit Mookerjee
Art Direction	Kamil Das
Graphic Design	Bappa Das
Accounts	Prasenjit Basak
Marketing	Sayonika Karmakar
Circulation	Santosh Halder
Digital Marketing	Kaushik Bhattacharyya
Technical Team	PiedPiper Futuristic (OPC) Pvt Ltd



Team WHEELS

Suchandan Das, Basudev Ghosh, Subroto De, Debopam Banerjee, Krishnendu Basu, Sandip Hunday, Aritra Sardar, Debraj Dey, Ranadhir Sinha, Sarbjit Mookherjee

☎ +91-9830370371/9830224784

✉ kowteamwheels@gmail.com



Advisory Committee

Chief Advisor - Sandeep Sardar
Technical Advisor - Ashish Kumar Bagchi
Socio-Cultural Advisor - Sudip Kumar Ghosh
Team Wheels Advisor - Partha Laha

☎ +91-9830988656



Voice of Wheelers

Jayant Basu (Chairman), Sandip Hunday, Shambenu Basu, Arindam Bhanja, Arijit Chakraborty, Rahul Dutta, Sourav Nandy, Arindam Mukhopadhyay

☎ +91-9830432377

Published by

Aruna Ghosh
Guide India Publication
19-B Allenby Road
Kolkata 700020
Ph: 9830370371
kolkataonwheels@gmail.com



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KolkataonWHEELS

HELPLINE

+91-9830370371

Email: info@kolkataonwheels.com

EDITORIAL

India's automotive export prowess continues to grow, with 8,58,000 units shipped in 2025 alone, marking a 15% rise and more than doubling volumes from five years prior. Models assembled in Indian factories dominate this outbound flow, blending affordability, reliability and modern features to capture demand in diverse global markets. In this edition's 'Car Tech' column, we look at five cars powering India's rise as a key exporter to regions like Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, Japan and Europe.

Nissan's all-new game-changing seven-seater B-MPV will be called Gravite and will be launched in early 2026. It is the first product to be rolled out under the brand's refreshed and strategically curated line-up for India. Purpose-built for modern Indian families, the Gravite delivers exceptional versatility and modularity, redefining convenience for value-conscious households while accelerating the expansion of Nissan's revitalised product portfolio. More on that in this edition's 'Upcoming Cars' column.

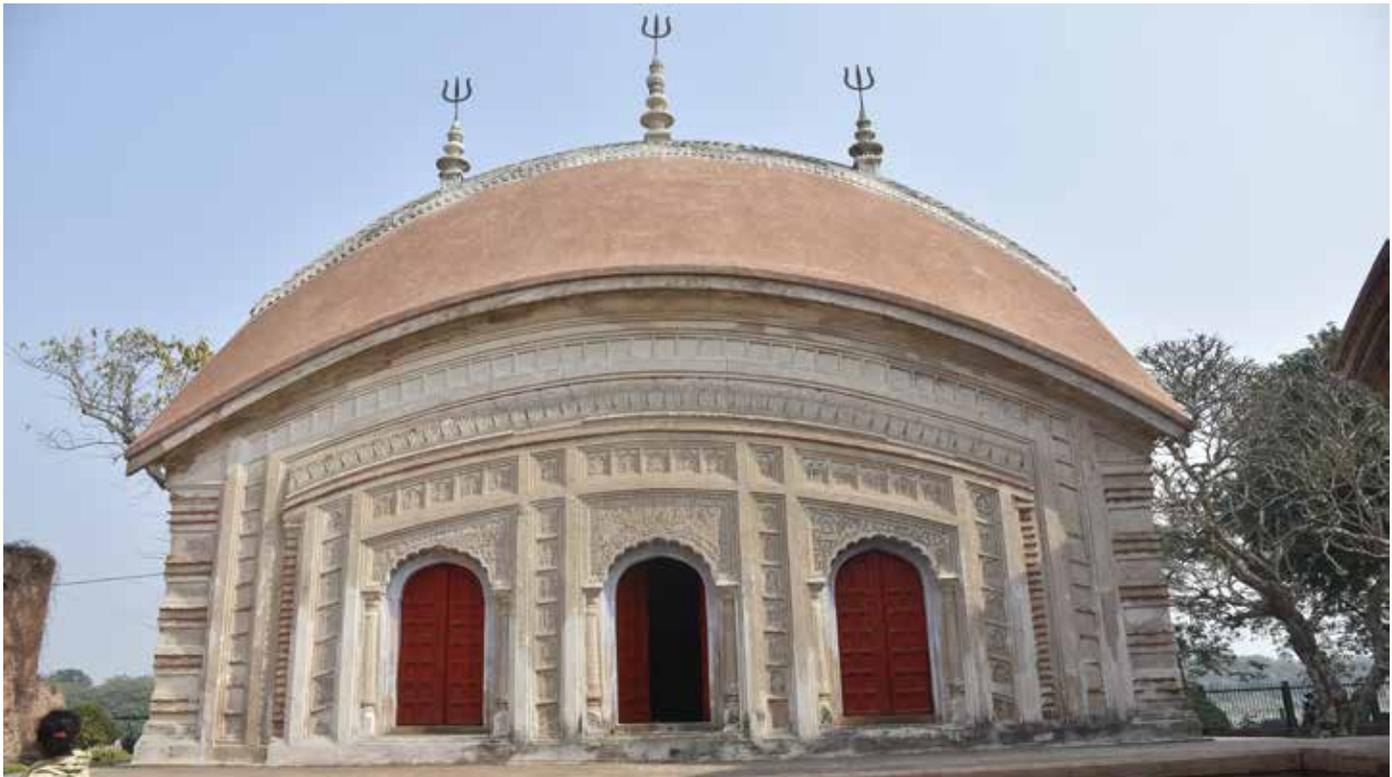
From intuitive technology to a commanding new design, the 2026 MG Hector brings together innovations that leave a lasting impression. Launched with a competitive reduced base price of INR 11.99 lakhs, the new MG Hector is all set to take the market by storm. But what is new in the 2026 Hector when compared to the outgoing model? Join Team WHEELS as we highlight the new features in the all-new Hector in this edition's 'Car Review' column.

Happy reading!



Joydip Sur
Editor





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What's New in the 2026 MG Hector?



From intuitive technology to a commanding new design, the 2026 MG Hector brings together innovations that leave a lasting impression. Launched with a competitive reduced base price of INR 11.99 lakhs, (INR 2.1 lakhs cheaper than the outgoing model) the new MG Hector is all set to take the market by storm. But what is new in the 2026 Hector when compared to the outgoing model? Join Team WHEELS as we highlight the new features in the all-new Hector.

AURA-HEX GRILLE - DESIGNED TO OUTSHINE

The striking Aura-Hex Grille gives the all-new

Hector a powerful, modern face. Precision geometry meets road-owning presence for a magnificent arrival.

Other exterior design highlights in the 2026 MG Hector include the Aura bolt alloy wheels, Aura sculpt bumpers and LED connected tail lights.

INDIA'S LARGEST-IN-CLASS 35.56 CM (14 INCH) HD PORTRAIT SCREEN INFOTAINMENT SYSTEM - DESIGNED TO LOOK PREMIUM, FEEL PLUSH

A screen this big deserves smarter control. India's largest HD screen now comes with segment's first gesture control bringing



convenience to every drive.

The interior of the 2026 MG Hector also features dual tone ice grey interiors in the 5-seater variant with an option of dual tone urban tan interiors in the 6- & 7-seater trims and a dual pane panoramic sunroof which adds a style quotient to the Hector.

AUTOMATIC POWERED TAILGATE - DESIGNED TO BE YOUR SAFE SPACE

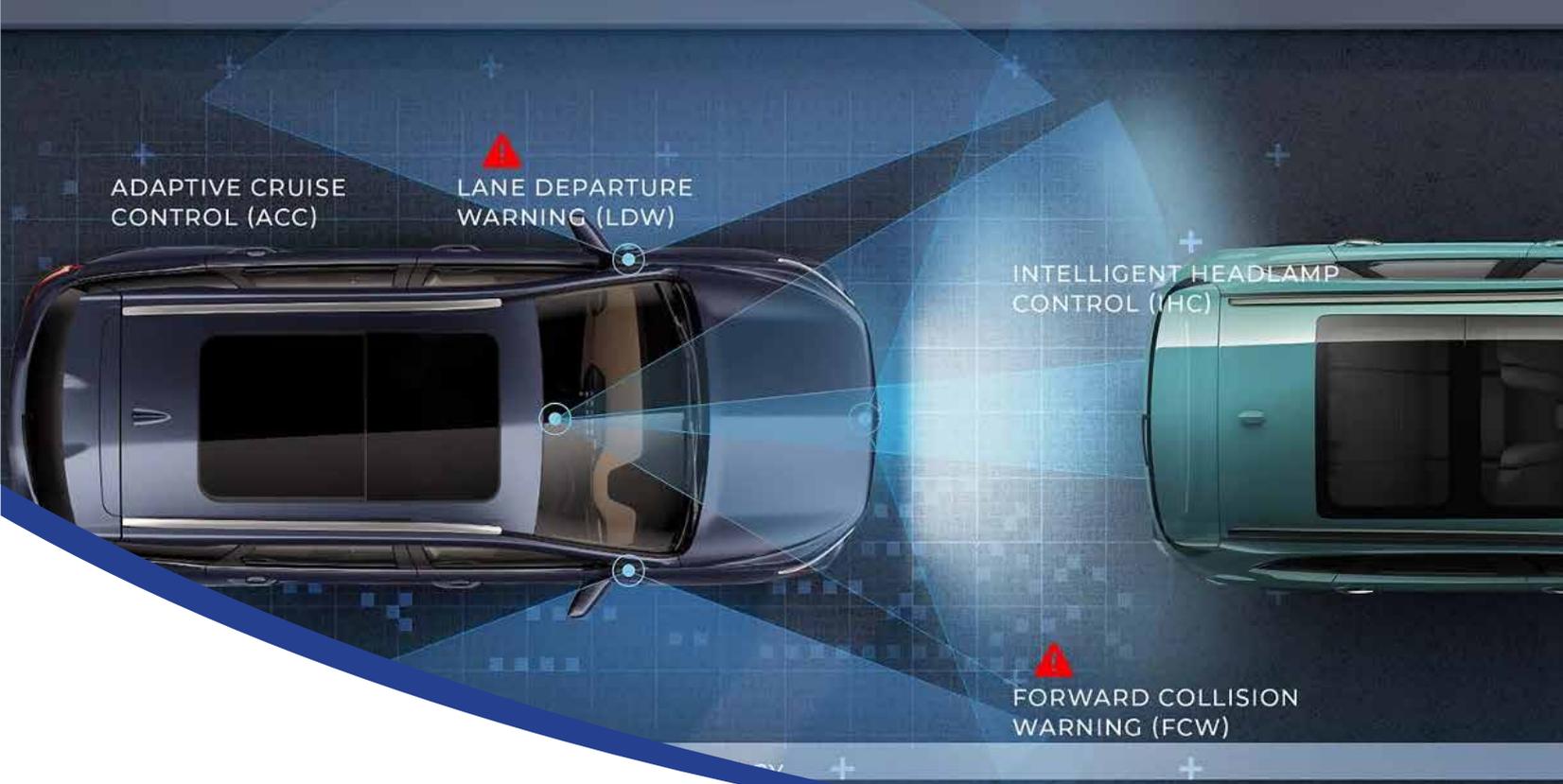
The all-new Hector is always ready to assist. The automatic powered tailgate lets you access the boot space with effortless ease.

Other comfort features in the 2026 MG Hector include front ventilated seats, air purifier with PM 2.5 filter, and 6-way power adjust driver seat.

I-SWIPE TOUCH GESTURE CONTROL - DESIGNED TO MAKE EVERY COMMAND EFFORTLESS

Innovation designed around convenience with segment's first gesture control. Adjust AC temperature, fan speed, music, and volume with intuitive hand swipes. No buttons, no distractions. Just seamless control.





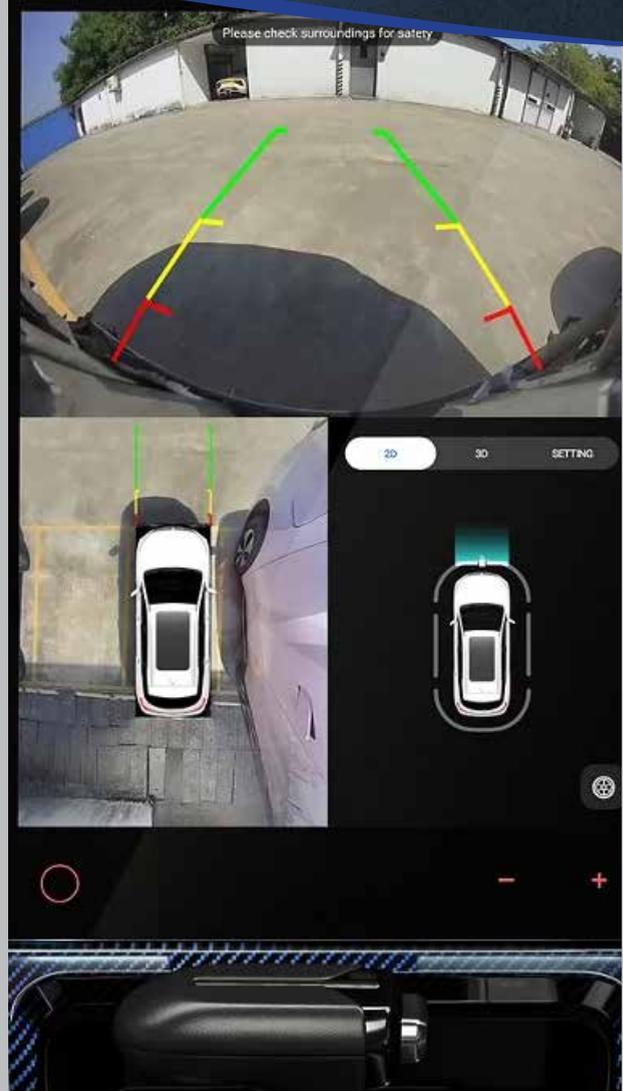
The 2026 MG Hector also comes with digital Bluetooth car key, 70+ connected car features and 100+ voice commands making your drive seamless, effortless and comfortable.

ADAS AUTONOMOUS LEVEL 2 - DESIGNED TO KEEP YOU SAFE

All-new Hector is built with one thing in mind – to raise your driving experience and safety with the most cutting-edge technology on offer. The 11 Autonomous Level-2 features of the Advanced Driver Assistance System (ADAS) are a giant leap in this direction, which keep an eye out for you at every turn and straight.

360 AROUND VIEW (HD) CAMERA SYSTEM WITH WHEEL VIEW- DESIGNED TO KEEP YOU SECURE

The 360* around view HD camera system with wheel view lets you see precisely what’s around your wheels and helps you navigate tight spaces, obstacles, and parking spots with complete confidence.



Murshidabad Heritage Festival 2026

A Living Legacy of History, Culture and Community



Pradip Chopra

Where History Breathes and Culture Lives

As the Murshidabad Heritage Festival (MHF) 2026 approaches, the district once again prepares to welcome historians, heritage lovers, artists, policymakers, students, travellers, and the local community into a landscape where history is not preserved behind glass but lived, celebrated, and shared. Murshidabad—once the capital of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa—stands today as a rare cultural continuum, where Mughal grandeur, colonial encounters, riverine traditions, crafts, cuisine, and spirituality coexist seamlessly.

The Murshidabad Heritage Festival has, over the years, emerged as the flagship cultural initiative that brings this layered legacy into contemporary focus. Conceived and curated by the Murshidabad Heritage Development Society (MHDS), the festival is not merely an event—it is a movement to reclaim pride, generate livelihoods, revive neglected monuments, and reposition Murshidabad on the global heritage tourism map.

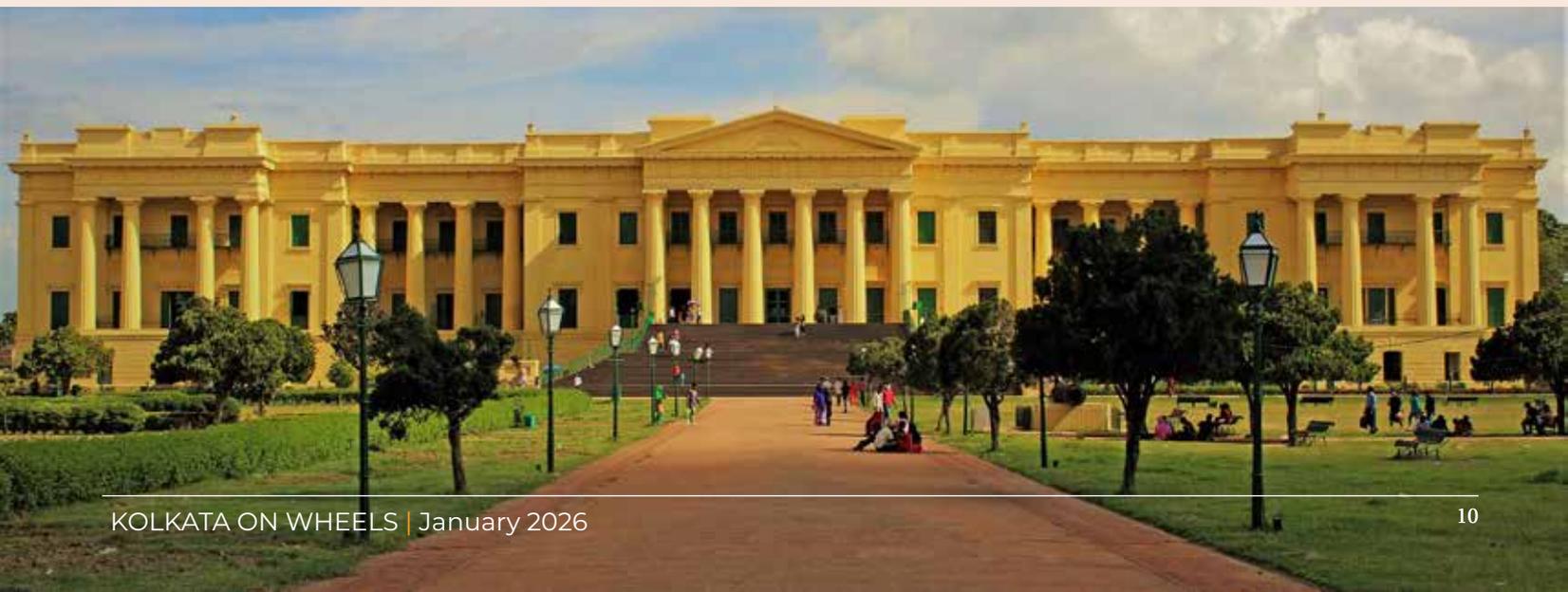
Murshidabad Heritage Festival (MHF) 2026 will be held from 6th to 8th February,

2026. The package includes transportation, accommodation, all meals, sightseeing, entry fees, river cruises, boat activities, and cultural programs—offering exceptional value.

Murshidabad – Where the Story of Bengal Took Shape

Murshidabad was once the capital of undivided Bengal and one of the wealthiest cities in the world, contributing nearly 5% of the global GDP at its peak. The revenue collected from the Murshidabad Suba by the Mughal emperor was the highest in the empire—estimated at almost 20 million silver coins annually. According to Robert Clive, Murshidabad in the 18th century was grander than London, both in wealth and urban sophistication.

The city's palaces and mansions—many owned by the Sheherwali Jain community led by the legendary Jagat Seth, often described as the “banker of the world”—were designed by Italian and French architects. Several of these structures still survive today, restored or renovated. Murshidabad is also home to more than 14 Jain temples, each distinct in



architectural style and interior design, housing Jain idols that are over 2,000 years old. After the Battle of Plassey in 1757, power moved from Murshidabad to Calcutta and the city's lost heritage and grandeur moved out of the limelight.

Looking Back: The Success of Previous Editions

The past editions of the Murshidabad Heritage Festival—especially the 2022 and 2023 festivals—stand as milestones in the region's cultural revival. Hosted across iconic sites such as Motijheel, Kathgola Palace, Hazarduari Palace, Azimganj, and Lalbagh, the festivals transformed heritage spaces into vibrant cultural commons.

Over multiple days, the festival curated immersive itineraries combining heritage walks, curated site visits, craft exhibitions, folk and classical performances, river-based experiences, culinary showcases, and scholarly dialogues. Cultural evenings featuring renowned artists brought together tradition and contemporary expression, while handicrafts melas highlighted the skills of local artisans and weavers.

The festivals witnessed strong collaboration between MHDS, state and district administration, cultural institutions, educational foundations, crafts councils, tourism stakeholders, and the local community. This convergence demonstrated how heritage can serve as a unifying force across governance, education, culture, and enterprise.

The Festival Experience: A Journey through Time

The carefully designed festival itinerary has always been central to MHF's success. Drawing from the earlier programmes, the experience unfolds as a journey rather than a schedule—allowing participants to absorb Murshidabad's rhythm, stories, and landscapes.

Arrival and First Impressions

Guests typically arrive from Kolkata by road, tracing the historical route into Murshidabad. The journey itself sets the tone, transitioning from urban sprawl to riverine plains steeped in memory. After check-in at heritage and local hotels, participants are introduced to Murshidabad through curated site visits.

Key landmarks such as Hazarduari Palace and its gardens, Lalbagh, and surrounding museums offer a sweeping introduction to the Nawabi era, colonial encounters, and administrative history of Bengal.

Living Heritage: Sites That Tell Stories

A defining strength of the festival is its focus on place-based storytelling. Each site included in the festival itinerary reveals a different facet of Murshidabad's layered identity:

- ▶ Kathgola Palace and Temple: A testament to merchant patronage, architectural refinement, and religious coexistence.
- ▶ Char Bangla and Rani Bhavani Temple: Exemplars of Bengal's terracotta temple architecture and devotion.
- ▶ Jagat Seth Museum: Narrating the story of





banking, trade, and power in pre-colonial India. ▶ Nasipur Rajbari and Wasif Manzil: Echoes of aristocratic life and evolving architectural styles. These visits are enriched through guided narratives, allowing participants to connect architecture with people, politics, and everyday life.

Culture in Motion: Performances, Crafts and Cuisine

As daylight fades, heritage spaces transform into stages. Folk performances, classical recitals, and contemporary interpretations animate courtyards and gardens, reviving traditions that once flourished under royal patronage namely Chhau dancers, Raibenshe performers, Baul singers, ghazal vocalists, and Kathak dancers. Students from Sripur Singh College and Dandabhukti College actively participate in performance competitions held at Katgola Palace, making the festival both inclusive and culturally enriching.



Equally significant are the handicrafts melas and artisan showcases. Weavers from Tanti Para, craftsmen, and local entrepreneurs display textiles, artifacts, and culinary traditions—bridging heritage with livelihood generation. Visitors encounter not just products, but processes, stories, and intergenerational knowledge.

The festival cuisine adds another sensory dimension, reinforcing Murshidabad's reputation for refined taste and hospitality. Visitors relish curated tastings of Sheherwali Jain cuisine—a rare and refined vegetarian tradition blending Rajasthani, Mughal, Nawabi, and local Bengali influences.

River, Routes and Rituals

One of the most evocative elements of the festival has been its engagement with the Bhagirathi River. Boat journeys and races from Azimganj to Hazarduari reconnect participants with the river that once defined Murshidabad's political and commercial power.

Heritage walks through Azimganj, visits to Jain temples, Bari Kothi tours, and explorations of Baranagar's terracotta temples expand the narrative beyond monumental history into living neighbourhoods and faith traditions.

Community at the Core

What truly distinguishes the Murshidabad Heritage Festival is its community-centric approach. Residents are not passive hosts but active custodians—guides, performers, artisans, storytellers, and partners in preservation.



The festival has consistently built local pride, encouraged youth participation, and demonstrated how heritage can inspire entrepreneurship, education, and stewardship. Workshops, student engagement, and collaborations with academic institutions further strengthen this ecosystem.

Economic and Cultural Impact

The cumulative impact of previous festivals has been tangible. Increased tourist inflow during festival periods, renewed attention to lesser-known sites, artisan income generation, media coverage, and strengthened public-private partnerships have all contributed to Murshidabad's resurgence.

Equally important is the shift in perception—from a forgotten former capital to a living heritage destination with global relevance.

Murshidabad Heritage Festival 2026: Looking Ahead

The 2026 edition builds upon this strong

foundation with renewed ambition. As heritage tourism gains momentum worldwide, MHF 2026 aims to deepen experiences, expand international outreach, integrate technology and storytelling, and further embed conservation within community development.

With its blend of history, culture, scholarship, and celebration, the Murshidabad Heritage Festival 2026 promises not just to revisit the past, but to shape a sustainable future—where heritage is preserved by being lived.

A Festival That Is Rooted in the Past But Belongs to the Future

Murshidabad has always been more than a chapter in textbooks—it is a living archive of India's cultural imagination. The Murshidabad Heritage Festival stands as a reminder that when communities, institutions, and visionaries come together, heritage becomes a force for renewal.

Murshidabad once again opens its doors—not just to visitors, but to dialogue, discovery, and collective pride in a legacy that continues to inspire. The Murshidabad Heritage Festival is held every year in February.

In 2026, it is scheduled for 6th, 7th, and 8th February. Participation is limited to 250 guests each year, and registrations are filling quickly. Like previous years, we hope to receive enthusiastic participation and build extraordinary memories.





CCFC – EIMG Vintage Car Display 2025

A Rendezvous with Heritage Motoring

 Joydip Sur

*Photographs by
Mohammed Adnan Aslam and Yatharth Sheth*

On Sunday, December 28, Calcutta Cricket and Football Club (CC&FC) set up a special date with heritage motoring. This winter Sunday morning was made even more charming with the presence of 35 fabulous heritage vehicles owned by the members Eastern India Motoring Group (EIMG), that were showcased at the CCFC – EIMG Vintage Car Display 2025.

The CC&CC members and their guests were in for a visual treat as Kunal Banerjee's 1926 Studebaker Erskine,



followed by the 1927 Dodge Brothers, 1928 Ford Model A and the 1929 Essex owned by Surendra Dugar, and Partha Banik's 1930 Ford Model A rounded off the list of the five oldest cars showcased at the CCFC - EIMG Vintage Car Display 2025.

While Krish Ajmera's 1934 Rolls-Royce 20/25, 1937 Rolls-Royce 25/30 owned by the Karnani Family, Avik Naha's 1938 Rolls-Royce 25/30, Azam Monem's 1948 Bentley Mk VI, 1936 Bentley 3.5L and 1938 Rolls-Royce owned by Shrivardhan Kanoria made jaws drop with awe and admiration.

An enviable sight ensued

as one lay their eyes on Swapan Kumar Lahiri's 1948 Plymouth Special Deluxe, 1947 Chevrolet Fleetmaster and 1963 Triumph Spitfire owned by Saikat Dutta, Sumit Periwal's 1954 Land Rover SI, 1958 Mercedes-Benz 180A owned by Prithvi Nath Tagore, 1948 MGTC owned by Himanshu



Ajmera and Gadai Chandra Dey's 1938 Alder Trumph.

Other praiseworthy cars showcased at the CCFC – EIMG Vintage Car Display included Shubhajt Kumar's 1963 Standard Herald, 1937 Ford 7W10 owned by Saurjya Pratim Mitra, Ranajit Gooptu's 1952 Austin Somerset, 1970 Range Rover owned by Vivekananda Chanda and Ahmed Monem's 1987 Land Rover Defender.

A thanking giving ceremony followed by a sumptuous beer luncheon wrapped up the last Sunday afternoon of 2025 in great style and elegance.

The Week Kolkata Became 'ALMOST LONDON'

 Abhijit Dasgupta

With the winter chill touching depths not experienced in over a decade, Kolkatans embarked on their annual, time-honoured ritual - the Great Search for Headgear. Beginning with the humble monkey cap, progressing through golf caps, and culminating in the muffler wrapped in mysterious layers that no one ever quite remembers removing, the city dressed itself in wool with the enthusiasm of a Bollywood extra preparing for a snow scene in Switzerland.

The market responded immediately. Overnight, winter fashion acquired a personality crisis. Caps of all shapes, colours, and philosophical commitments appeared - woollen ones that itch, acrylic ones that trap heat, and those odd half-



caps that warm only the crown, leaving the ears to fend for themselves. Ear covers, once dismissed as eccentric - returned with quiet dignity. It was as if the entire city had decided that dignity is negotiable, but warmth is not.

Fire in the household, as always, arrived in the form of tea. Wives were summoned at odd hours for "just one more cup," a request that occurred precisely when the tea had already been made, the kitchen cleaned, and the kettle placed far beyond reach. Husbands developed a curious inability to walk more than three steps without discovering that they were "suddenly very cold."

Children, wrapped like reluctant parcels, were dispatched to school with dire warnings about pneumonia, fog, and the permanent consequences of removing sweaters in class.





Office commutes became endurance tests. Shivering on a tightly packed bus - where human proximity normally produces tropical humidity, proved surprisingly inadequate against the cold. Scarves were pulled higher, shoulders hunched, and noses reddened into an alarming spectrum of crimson. Conversation thinned. The man who usually discussed politics with evangelical passion now preferred silence. The woman who conducted mobile phone negotiations at full volume suddenly remembered the value of whispering. Winter, it seems, does what decades of etiquette lessons never could.



The early-morning walkers were the first casualties. They braved the fog with admirable optimism, convinced that discipline would conquer temperature. By the third morning, their numbers

dwindled. By the fifth, the park resembled a battlefield after retreat; a few heroic figures pacing like polar explorers, wrapped in layers that made movement look optional. The bench sitters - mostly veterans of both life and cholesterol, continued their routine of discussing ailments and younger days, though their words gradually became inaudible, swallowed by shivering. One gentleman attempted to recount his athletic exploits of 1962 but was reduced to a series of tremors and the occasional word "state level."



Hawkers, meanwhile, discovered that winter is good for business and even better for philosophy. The tea seller at the corner announced that cold weather increases spiritual awareness because "people think more when they cannot feel their fingers." The peanut vendor added roasted peanuts to his menu and insisted they were "imported from Bihar," which in hawker geography means "somewhere beyond the next crossing." Muffler sellers multiplied overnight. They stood at traffic signals waving woollen possibilities in the faces of motorists like benevolent flag bearers of survival. One could buy a scarf long enough to cover the neck, face, and at least one unresolved emotional issue.

The bus drivers, heroes of every season, treated winter as a personal challenge.

Windows remained open in the name of “fresh air,” while passengers performed acrobatics to close imaginary gaps in their clothing. Conductors barked destinations with frosted authority: “Garia! Garia! Anyone for Garia, quickly, it’s cold!” Buses, already famous for their creative suspension systems, now developed a new feature, arctic drafts that found their way through cracks previously unnoticed. The never-ending blast of bone chilling wind entered like an uninvited guest, reminding everyone that comfort is a summer concept.

Auto-rickshaw drivers became philosophers of cold. Refusing rides beyond their chosen boundaries, they offered explanations that ranged from traffic to fate. “Too cold to go that far, dada,” one said gravely, as if discussing a natural disaster. Others demanded winter surcharges, an unspoken tax on survival. Still, passengers discovered that autos provided a curious form of warmth, the shared determination to reach one’s destination before hypothermia set in.

by cold, was received with polite nods and immediate disregard. The chemists did brisk business in cough syrups, lozenges, and the mysterious multivitamins that promise immunity in a capsule.

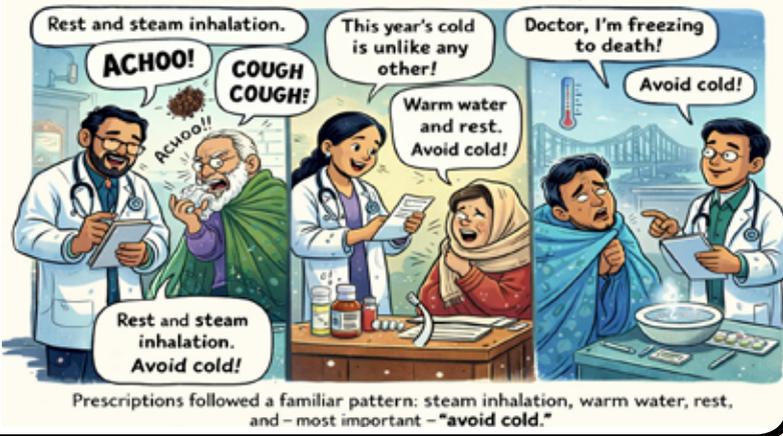


Restaurants, too, adjusted their personalities. Tea became stronger, coffee darker, and soups suddenly appeared on menus where none had existed before. Street-side eateries reported unprecedented demand for hot phuchkas, steaming rolls, and anything fried enough to be considered both a meal and a heating system. Cafés advertised “winter specials,” which often meant the same items at slightly higher prices, served with the comforting suggestion that warmth costs extra. Patrons lingered longer, nursing cups of tea with philosophical seriousness, as if leaving the table would expose them to existential chill.

At home, blankets achieved celebrity status. The humble quilt, long relegated to storage, emerged as the hero of the household. Family negotiations revolved around its allocation; who gets the thicker one, who must make do with the “light winter blanket,” and why the cat has somehow secured the warmest spot. Room heaters made brief, triumphant appearances before being switched off in the interest of electricity bills and moral responsibility. The promise of “only ten minutes more” became the household equivalent of political assurances.

Even language changed. Greetings

Kolkata Doctors: The doctors, predictably, flourished.



The doctors, predictably, flourished. Clinics reported record numbers of patients suffering from what can only be described as “winter in Kolkata.” Symptoms included sneezing, coughing, a dramatic tone of voice, and an insistence that this year’s cold was unlike any other in recorded history. Prescriptions followed a familiar pattern: steam inhalation, warm water, rest, and - most important - “avoid cold.” This last instruction, in a season defined entirely

acquired seasonal modifiers. "How are you?" became "Cold, no?" Advice flowed freely. "Drink more tea." "Don't go out at night." "Wear socks." Kolkata, always generous with opinions, found in winter a perfect excuse to care for strangers.

The markets reflected the mood. Woollen garment sales skyrocketed. Discounts appeared after price hikes of breathtaking creativity. Shopkeepers explained the arithmetic with straight faces: "We increased first, then we reduced. Customer is happy." Thermal wear, once considered a luxury item for tourists was now displayed like precious artefacts. The idea of layering became a civic duty. Even those who insisted that "Kolkata doesn't get real winter" were spotted secretly buying innerwear with the enthusiasm of converts.

Yet beneath the discomfort lay a peculiar charm. Cold sharpened conversations and softened tempers. Tea tasted better. Stories lasted longer. The city slowed just enough to notice itself. A fog-covered street at dawn, a hawker warming his hands over a small fire, a bus conductor offering an extra second for an elderly passenger to climb aboard - these moments stitched warmth into the fabric of the season.

And then there were the rituals. Morning tea became a ceremony. Afternoon naps were justified as "because it is so cold." Evenings invited adda, that most Bengali of institutions, where discussion ranged from politics to poetry, always anchored by a cup of something hot. Winter, for all its inconveniences, encouraged togetherness. People gathered not because they planned to, but because it was too cold to be alone.

Of course, Kolkatans never miss an opportunity for exaggeration. Every conversation now came with at least one solemn declaration that "this is the coldest in fifty years," regardless of whether the speaker was actually fifty. Elders reminisced about the winters of their youth, always colder, longer, and somehow more dignified. The younger lot posted misty-morning photographs as proof that Kolkata was finally becoming "like

the hills," preferably without having to climb any. The city, usually divided on everything from football to fish curry, stood united in one competitive sport: who was suffering the most. Someone even announced, with great civic pride, that the Chief Minister must be delighted - after all, we had finally achieved international standards. "Same temperature as London!" he declared. For one glorious week, Ballygunge became Bloomsbury, Garia became Greenwich, and everyone behaved as though frostbite was a badge of culture rather than a mild excuse to ask for another cup of tea.



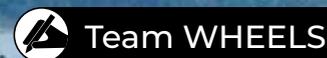
As the days passed, adaptation set in. We learned which bus seats avoided the draft, which cafés were warmest, which hawkers sold the thickest scarves for the lowest price. We mastered the art of holding a cup of tea with both hands, not just for warmth but for emotional reassurance. We discovered that winter, like most things in Kolkata, is best managed collectively - with humour, with complaint, and with an extra layer of wool.

Eventually, of course, the chill will retreat. Caps will vanish. Mufflers will return to their mysterious storage places. Hawkets will replace woollens with umbrellas, doctors will see fewer coughs, and restaurants will quietly remove soup from their menus. We will complain about the heat again, as tradition demands.

But for now, in this brief season of fog, tea, and shared discomfort, Kolkata remains what it always is: a city that turns even the cold into a story worth telling, preferably over another cup of tea.

Azimganj and Jiaganj

The Indomitable Legacy of Sheherwalis



Relocating from Rajasthan to Azimganj and Jiaganj in Murshidabad, wealthy Jains, (most of whom were bankers and financiers), dubbed 'Sheherwali Jains', adapted to the shift from land to sea trade routes from India to western countries. Drawn initially to Shikharji, Jainism's key pilgrimage site, they soon exploited Bengal's 18th century trade boom. Their business prowess led to substantial wealth, enabling them to finance local Nawabs and European traders, including the British, French, Dutch, Portuguese, and Danes. Key investors in the early industrial revolution, their interests spanned coal, railways, banking, shipping, exports, and tea. They financially supported Prince Dwarkanath Tagore as well as other pioneering Indian business leaders.

Influenced by Mughals, Bengal's Nawabs,

and Goriamath vegetarian cuisine, the Sheherwalis created 'Sheherwali Food', a pinnacle of vegetarian Jain cuisine. Their fashion, a blend of Mughal, Nawab, Rajput, and European styles, made a distinct statement. Their language, a melodious Hindi dialect, incorporated Bengali, Urdu, Rajasthani, and European terms.

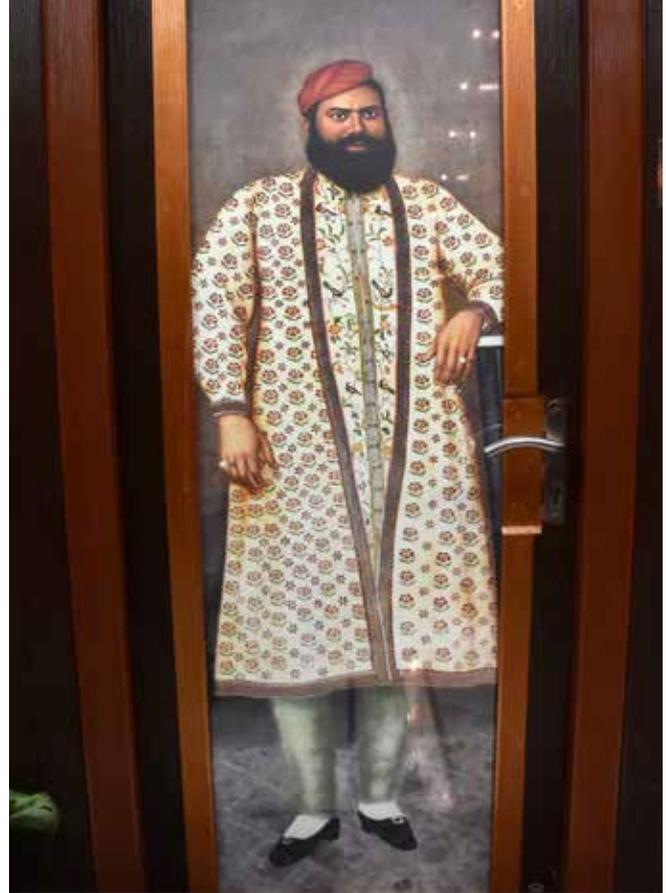
Educationally forward-thinking, they focused on girls' education, establishing schools and colleges. They generously funded national causes, the independence movement, pilgrimage sites, and healthcare institutions. Their support extended to the arts and sciences, influencing people's lives from the 18th century to the present. Join Team WHEELS as we drive down to Azimganj and Jiaganj to trace the history and legacy of the Sheherwali Jains of Murshidabad.

HISTORY OF THE SHEHERWALI JAIN OF MURSHIDABAD

Around 1600, the ancient trade route connecting China to Europe—the legendary Silk Route—began to lose its importance after Vasco da Gama discovered the sea route from Europe to India. Global commerce gradually shifted from overland caravans to maritime trade. Rajasthani merchant communities, long dependent on the Silk Route, felt the impact sharply, facing declining trade and a loss of prosperity.

Hiranand Sahu, the legendary founder of the House of Jagat Seth, left his hometown of Nagore in search of fortune in the east, following the guidance of his guru. His journey first took him to Patna, then a thriving metropolis and major trading centre. There, he established his first commercial operations, founded a banking house, built a Jain temple, and created accommodations for pilgrims. From Patna, he moved on to Dhaka—then the capital of undivided Bengal and one of the richest cities in the world—where his enterprise flourished further. He soon established commercial offices across Bengal, laying the foundations of immense financial influence.

During the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb, dissatisfaction with the administration of his



Member of the Dugar Family

grandson Azimus Khan led him to instruct Murshid Quli Khan to establish an alternative centre of power. Acting on the advice of Nagar Seth Mehtabchand, Murshid Quli Khan set up his headquarters at Maksudabad. By a royal firman of Aurangzeb, the city was later renamed Murshidabad in Murshid Quli Khan's honour.

Nagar Seth Mehtabchand went on to



Parshwanath Jain Temple in Jiaganj



Member of the Dudhoria family



Frontage of the House of Sheherwali

acquire the sacred hill of Shikharji, the site where 20 of the 24 Jain Tirthankars attained enlightenment and nirvana. There, he constructed twenty small temples and one grand Jal Mandir dedicated to the 23rd Tirthankar, Parshvanath. He also built an exquisite temple within his own residence, crafted from rare stones such as kasauti, kapatar, and kusti pathar. To revive and promote pilgrimage to Shikharji, he financed and encouraged Jain communities from Rajasthan and Gujarat to travel there.

Pilgrims visiting Shikharji were often invited to Nasipur in Murshidabad, where Nagar Seth's residence and private temple stood. As merchants from Murshidabad—many formerly engaged in Silk Route trade—arrived, Mehtabchand advised them to settle in Bengal, which had emerged as the new commercial heart after Rajasthan's decline. These families established their business centres in Azimganj and Jiaganj.

By this time, Qasim Bazaar had become Bengal's principal textile trading hub. European trading companies—Danish, Dutch, Portuguese, French, and British—set up procurement centres there, with Warren Hastings serving as the procurement officer for the British East India Company. The immense wealth generated by Bengal's merchant-banking families rivalled—and in many cases surpassed—that of the European mercantile community of the era.

With their prosperity, these families built palatial residences designed by French and

Italian architects. Some rivalled, and even outshone, the grandeur of the Tower of London and Buckingham Palace. However, following the Battle of Plassey, Murshidabad began to lose its political and economic prominence.

As Calcutta emerged as the centre of commerce and the political capital of British India, Murshidabad's glory slowly faded. Though the Sheherwali (Jagat Seth) community continued to prosper through zamindari holdings and banking operations, the city itself slipped into historical obscurity.

THE SHEHERWALI JAIN FAMILIES OF MURSHIDABAD

The Dudhorias

Originating from Ajmer over 125 years ago, the Dudhoria family's history began with Chauhan Kshatriya King Chyawan and later, King Dudhorao, who embraced Jainism in 165 AD. The family eventually made their mark in Azimganj in the 18th century. Their foray into banking in Calcutta and other regions showcased their business acumen. Several members of the family were honoured with the title of "Raibahadur" and appointed as Honorary Magistrates in Murshidabad. The Dudhoria family have left a lasting legacy in the region through the construction of temples, dharamshalas, and schools.



Katgola Palace



The reception of the House of Sheherwali

The Dugars

The Dugar gotra, rooted in the Rajput Chauhan dynasty, dates back to 838 AD with Raja Mallik Devji, whose lineage began with his father Raja Mahipala's conversion to Jainism. The Dugar name emerged from one of Mallik Devji's descendants. In the 18th century, the Dugars established themselves in Murshidabad, where they launched a prosperous banking business and expanded their influence. This success led them to become notable landowners and respected philanthropists, earning accolades from the Emperor of Delhi and the Nawab of Bengal. Their contributions to Jainism were significant, including publishing Jain texts and constructing temples and dharamshalas in Murshidabad.

The Nahars

Originating from the Panwar (Parmar) Rajputs, the Nahar family rose to prominence with Aasdharji, later renowned as Nahar, who embraced Jainism in 717 AD guided by Jain Acharya Shree Mandev Suriji. Raibahadur Sitabchandji Nahar, a scholar in Sanskrit and Persian, established a press and was

honoured for his contributions during a famine. Raibahadur Manilalji Nahar left behind a rich collection of Indian art, known as the Nahar Collection.

The Nowlakhas

The Nowlakha family - coming from Rajasthan - was established in Azimganj in 1750 by businessman Babu Gopalchandji Nowlakha. It has a significant history of prosperity and philanthropy. Gopalchandji's successors, including Babu Harakchandji and Babu Gulabchandji, expanded their business empire across various Indian cities, investing in banking and land.



Shree Neminath Ji Jain Mandir



Member of the Sheherwali Jain Community

EXTRAVAGANT LIFESTYLE AND OPULENCE OF THE SHEHERWALI JAINS

An anecdote from Calcutta adds a layer of fascination to the Sheherwali's narrative. A perfume merchant, unable to sell his inventory for six months, found his way to Jiaganj, a hub of Sheherwali affluence. Here, to his amazement, a single buyer purchased his entire stock, not for personal luxury, but for an unconventional use, perfuming the stables by applying the perfume to the horses' tails. This act of lavishing perfume on horses highlights the Sheherwali's extravagant lifestyle, where even animals basked in the scent of opulence.

Their economic influence is also illustrated by another story of a Sheherwali visit to an English store in Calcutta, who, when turned away and scoffed at being Indian, and therefore probably not well off, boldly purchased the entire establishment, leaving the store owner begging for mercy.

The illustrious Lakshmipat Singh Duggar constructed the Katgola Palace for the purpose of celebrating and entertaining his European guests and members of the Zamindar community.

HOUSE OF SHEHERWALI – MURSHIBADAD'S FIRST MUSEUM HOTEL

On the serene banks of the Ganges, the

House of Sheherwali stands as a timeless confluence of heritage, luxury, and sustainability. This museum-cum-hotel offers more than just an exquisite stay where every corner resonates with stories of artistry and culture.

The heart of this remarkable destination comes with antique treasure, meticulously designed to celebrate the charm of an elegant artefact which offer a glimpse into the past while seamlessly complementing the hotel's sustainable decoration.

As you explore, you will unveil the stories behind these timeless objects, each delivering the legacy and innovation of the vintage eras making your stay both beautiful and memorable.

FAMILY ROOMS IN THE HOUSE OF SHEHERWALI

We spend our entire lives within the comfort of our own homes, sharing moments with our family under the same roof. But when traveling with friends, family, or an extended group, these moments are rare, as traditional hotel rooms often isolate us in separate spaces, confining our interaction with just one or two people.

At House of Sheherwali, they understand the need for togetherness for family and friends. That is why they have designed their luxurious family room — a unique offering in Murshidabad for groups and large families.



A family room at House of Sheherwali



Sheherwali Cuisine

Whether you are a large family or extended group seeking heritage comfort, and togetherness, then explore the beautifully designed family rooms at the House of Sheherwali such as the Nahar Room, Dugar Room, Dudhoria Room, or the Nowlakha Room. Each room carries the essence of Sheherwali heritage offering you a unique blend of comfort and togetherness.

SHEHERWALI CUISINE AT NAUKA GHAR

Murshidabad and Nadia districts have a rich history, notably in 17th century shipbuilding under the Nawabs of Murshidabad. Murshidabad, known for crafting large cargo boats like the 'bajras', was vital in trade, moving rice, salt, textiles, and opium, enhancing the Nawabs' wealth and power. Different boats included the 'manchulas' for heavy cargo like timber, 'jhankis' for passenger travel and small waterways, and 'koshas' for ceremonies and royal processions.

Inspired by this rich history of shipbuilding, House of Sheherwali's in-house restaurant has been named as 'Nauka Ghar'. Serving delicious multi-cuisine pure vegetarian delicacies, the restaurant has been exquisitely decorated with various portraits and artefacts of boats built in this region.

The Sheherwali food is a must-try in Nauka Ghar with preparations like kathal ka tarkari (a vegetable preparation using raw jackfruit), chhaata ka tarkari (vegetable prepared using lotus pod), mocha ka tarkari (babana flower preparation), kathbel chutney (wood apple paste), muri ka laddoo (puffed rice and jaggery sweet), pitha (steamed rice dumplings stuffed



Nauka Ghar - in house restaurant at House of Sheherwali

with khoya), kachche aam ka kheer (raw mango pudding) and borey ka boondiya (a sweet made of white been powder) being distinct to the Bengal region.

MURSHIDABADI MUSLIN AND SILK

The crown jewels of Bengali textiles, muslins were woven from the finest cotton, renowned for their sheerness and ethereal lightness. Dhaka and Sonargaon emerged as the epicentres of muslin production, weaving fabrics so delicate they could reportedly pass through a finger ring. Varieties like "Ab-rawan" (meaning flowing water) and "Shabnam" (meaning dewdrop) aptly captured the muslins' ethereal quality. These fabrics, often adorned with intricate needlework and zari borders, were coveted by royalty and nobility worldwide.

In 18th century Bengal, silk weaving flourished, particularly in Murshidabad, the epicentre of this luxurious industry. Famous for its "Tanchoi" silks interwoven with gold and silver threads, Bengal's silk varieties were epitomes of opulence. "Baluchari" sarees, richly depicting mythological scenes, and the colourful "Phulia" silks, adorned with floral designs, were other notable varieties.

CHAR BANGLA

The Char Bangla Temple at Baranagar is a must see during your visit to Azimganj. This is an exquisite example of Bengal Temple architecture. The temples were built under the patronage of Rani Bhabani of Natore (now in Bangladesh) during the 18th century and draws a large number of tourists

ROUTE: KOLKATA TO AZIMGANJ			
DISTANCE (km)	DIRECTION	ROAD NAME	ROUTE DESCRIPTION
0.0		JESSORE ROAD	Take the left road heading towards Belgharia Expressway
5.7		BELGHARIA EXPRESSWAY	Make a U-Turn and then take left to enter Kalyani Expressway
30.1		KALYANI EXPRESSWAY	Toll plaza. Go straight
40.2		KALYANI EXPRESSWAY	Take left fork. Don't go on to the flyover
40.7		KALYANI EXPRESSWAY	Turn right for Barajaguli
50.2		NH - 12	Turn left from under flyover on to NH-12
54.0		NH - 12	Toll plaza. Go straight
97.4		NH - 12	Cross Bagdia and keep driving straight
111.6		NH - 12	Go on to the flyover
114.3		NH - 12	Go on to the bridge
116.6		NH - 12	Continue driving straight. Left road leads to Mayapur
139.1		NH - 12	Cross Bethuadahari bus stand. Congested area, drive cautiously
142.4		NH - 12	Sali Bamandanga Toll Plaza
163.2		NH - 12	Follow the right bend. Left diversion leads to Plassey
188.1		NH - 12	Railway crossing. Go straight

ROUTE: KOLKATA TO AZIMGANJ			
DISTANCE (km)	DIRECTION	ROAD NAME	ROUTE DESCRIPTION
192.3		NH - 12	Take the right diversion
194.2		NH-12	Take right fork avoiding Baharampur Town
204.6		NAWDAPARA HIGH ROAD	Turn right towards Azimganj
206.3		NAWDAPARA HIGH ROAD	Railway crossing (Noapara Rail Gate). Go straight
206.6		LALBAGH ROAD	Turn left on to Lalbagh Road
208.0		LALBAGH ROAD	Keep driving straight
214.1		LALBAGH ROAD	Keep driving straight
216.3		AZIMGANJ ROAD	Keep driving straight
219.2		AZIMGANJ ROAD	Railway crossing. Keep driving straight
220.5		UPARBY/ NAGAR CHURCH ROAD	Keep driving straight
221.2		ELAHIGUNG-AZIMGANJ ROAD	Go straight
221.8		AZIMGANJ SCHOOL ROAD	Go straight
222.4		RANI BHAWANI ROAD	Turn left and railway crossing on the right
223.0		JAINPATTY ALONG THE RIVER SIDE	Keep driving straight
224.2		JAINPATTY ALONG THE RIVER SIDE	House of Sheherwali on your left

EIMG Indian Heritage Rally 2026

Shines Spotlight on our Motoring Legacy

 Joydip Sur



In the summer of '24, Eastern India Motoring Group (EIMG), a community of heritage vehicle collectors and restorers organised the inaugural edition of the EIMG Indian Heritage Car Rally. The event made history by becoming India's first Indian Heritage Car Rally in the Time-Speed-Distance (TSD) format organised under the guidance of the Federation of Motor Sports Clubs of India (FMSCI) – the apex body of motor sports in the country.

Fast forward to January 2026, as EIMG jointly with Kolkata Automotive Sports Association (KASA), is gearing up to organise the EIMG Indian Heritage Rally 2026, for the third

consecutive year. Around 27 Indian heritage cars participated in this rally making this the biggest event of its kind. The event also received multiple entries from All Lady Teams.

The EIMG Indian Heritage Rally 2026 was flagged off from the Town Hall on Sunday, January 4, 2026 at 10.00 AM. Mr. Debasish Kumar, Honourable MLA & Mayor-in-Council (Kolkata Municipal Corporation) was present at the flag off ceremony as the Chief Guest. He was joined by Mr. Shrivardhan Kanoria, Founder & President (EIMG) and Mr. Swapan Kumar Lahiri, Committee Member (EIMG) who flagged off the bevy of Indian Heritage beauties. The rally will cover a distance of

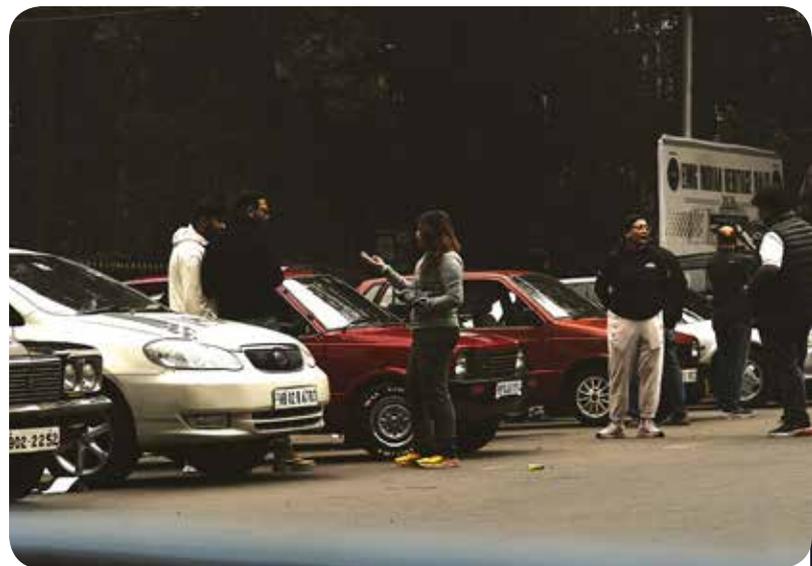
around 35 kilometres culminating near Maddox Square. The gala prize distribution was held at Dalhousie Institute in the evening which was followed by cocktail and dinner.

Time stood stand still as the immaculately restored Hindustan Contessa, Hindustan Ambassador Mark I, Fiat 1100D, Fiat Select, Standard 10, Fiat Super Select, Hindustan Ambassador Mark III, Contessa Classic, and Maruti 800 among several other notable Indian heritage cars were flagged off against the majestic backdrop of the iconic Town Hall in perhaps India's only Indian Heritage Rally to be run in the TSD Format under FMSCI.

The EIMG Indian Heritage Bike Ride 2026 was run parallel to this event. Around 17 Indian heritage two-wheelers took part in the ride. Some beautifully restored two wheelers which took part in the EIMG Indian Heritage Bike Ride 2026 included 1986 Yamaha RX100, 1983 Yezdi D250, 1980 Rajdoot 175, and 1995 Yamaha RX135.

The 1952 Hindustan 14 and 1971 Bajaj 150 was the oldest Indian Heritage Car and Bike to take part in this event and successfully complete the route.

This rally is the brainchild of EIMG Secretary Shubhajit Kumar and has been specifically conceived to address the general apathy



displayed by other motoring organisations towards the Indian Heritage Cars. The EIMG Indian Heritage Rally 2026 aimed to not only celebrates the timeless charm of Indian heritage automobiles but also paid homage to the enduring spirit of Indian motoring culture. As participants navigated through the scenic route, they not only reminisced about the glory days of automotive design but also embraced the camaraderie that united enthusiasts of all generations.

"In essence, this rally will be much more than just a showcase of Indian heritage cars; it will be a tribute to passion, perseverance, and the enduring bond between man and machine", said **Mr. Shubhajit Kumar, Secretary, Eastern India Motoring Group**, the main organisers of the EIMG Indian Heritage Rally 2026.

And as the engines roared and the wheels turned, the EIMG Indian Heritage Rally 2026 left an indelible mark on the annals of Kolkata's motoring history, reminding us all of the timeless allure of Indian heritage automobiles and the joy of the open road.



Overall Results:

CARS MANUFACTURED FROM 1950 TO 1974

Winner: 1959 Fiat Super Select owned by P. S. Basha and driven by Sudip Kumar Ghosh and Arindam Ghosh

First Runner Up: 1968 Fiat 1100D owned by Debaprem Chatterjee and driven by Sourajit Dutta and Suvrajit Dutta

Second Runner Up: 1956 Fiat Super Select owned by Nilanjana Cahtterjee and driven by Arman Hussain and Soham Pal

CARS MANUFACTURED FROM 1975 TO 2000

Winner: 1994 Fiat S1 owned by Debaprem Chatterjee and driven by Sekhar Chowdhury and Souradeep Dutta

First Runner Up: 1975 Hindustan Ambassador Mark II owned by Divisha Chatterjee and driven by Debaprem Chatterjee and Prasenjit Roy

Second Runner Up: 1997 Maruti Zen owned by Mubarak Maseeh and driven by Mubarak Maseeh and Raj Kumar Mundra

Best All Lady Team

Winner: 1990 Hindustan Contessa Classic owned Shubhajit Kumar and driven by Anuja Kumar, Sreerupa Sarkar, Jhilik Dignpati and Antara Majumder

OLDEST CAR TO COMPLETE THE RALLY

Winner: 1952 Hindustan 14 owned by Satrajit Mukherjee

OLDEST BIKE TO COMPLETE THE ROUTE

Winner: 1971 Bajaj 150 owned by Danish Barkati

Photographs courtesy:

Mohammed Adnan Aslam & Yatharth Sheth

Santosh Dutta - The Eternal 'JATAYU'

 Sandip Banerjee

The centenary of an individual is celebrated to commemorate the achievements of that personality in any respective vertical. At the same time the contemporary psycho-social existence of that individual is also a vital parameter. We have a century old history of Indian cinema and almost of same age of Bengali cinema. Many actors and actresses bloomed on the celluloid; many have been temporal in public imagination, but few have withstood the ravage of time. Their presence is still felt even in their absence. In the annals of Bengali cinema, few actors have left an indelible mark quite like Santosh Dutta, whose centenary in 2025 was marked by tributes, statue unveilings, and a resurgence of nostalgia for his iconic portrayals.

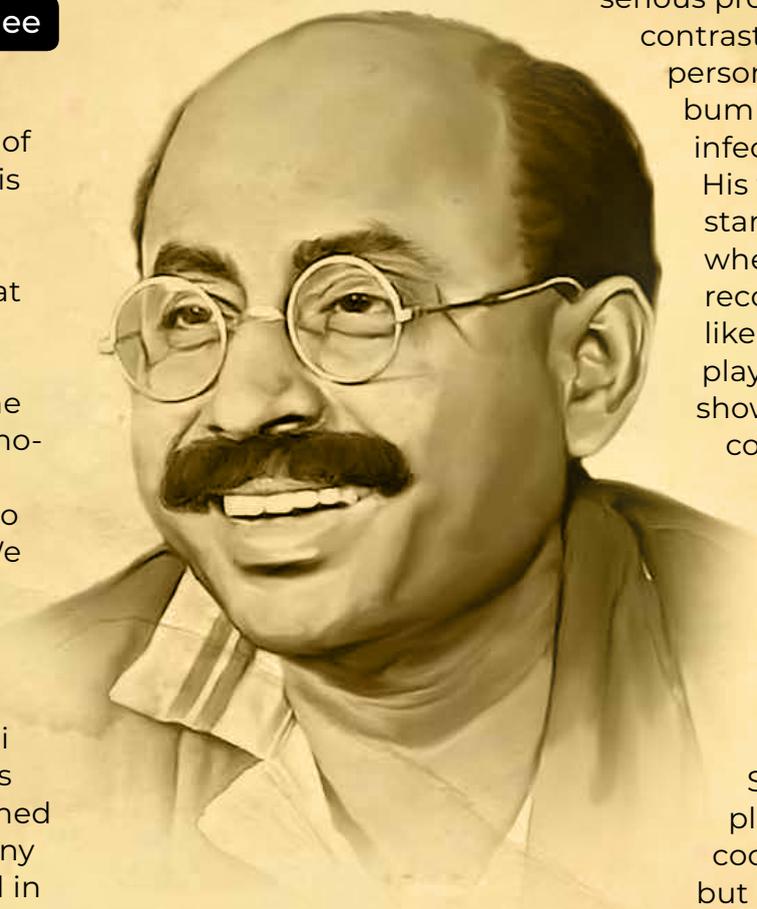
Born on December 2, 1925, in Kolkata (then Calcutta), Dutta was not just a beloved comedian but a multifaceted talent who balanced a successful career

as a criminal lawyer with his passion for acting. His death on February 8, 1988, at the age of 62, from complications arising from lung cancer—including a massive stroke and pneumonia—left a void in the industry that even legends like Satyajit Ray mourned deeply.

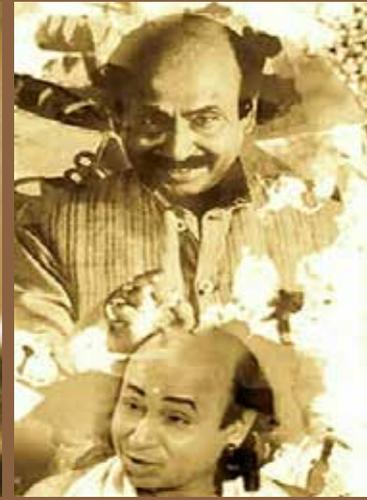
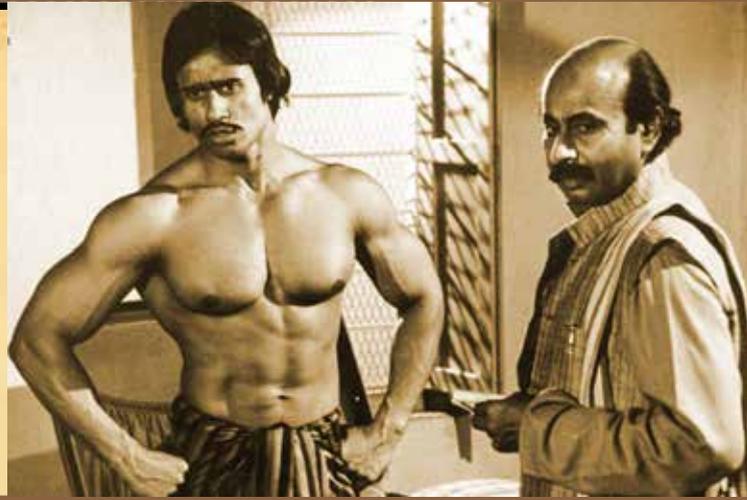
Santosh Dutta's journey began in a middle-class Bengali family, where he pursued law and became a practicing criminal lawyer in Calcutta. This serious professional life starkly contrasted his on-screen persona, often filled with bumbling humour and infectious enthusiasm. His foray into the arts started with theatre, where he gained recognition for roles like Bhabodulal in the play "Cholochitro", showcasing his natural comic timing. Dutta's film debut came in 1958 with a minor role in Satyajit Ray's satirical fantasy "Paras Pathar" (The Philosopher's Stone), where he played a guest at a cocktail party—a small but memorable part that hinted at his potential.

This collaboration with Ray would prove pivotal, elevating Dutta from amateur stages to cinematic immortality.

Dutta's fame skyrocketed with his portrayal of Lalmohan Ganguly, alias Jatayu, the pulp thriller writer and sidekick to detective Feluda in Satyajit Ray's adaptations of his own stories. First appearing in "Sonar Kella" (The Golden Fortress, 1974), Dutta brought Jatayu to life as a wide-eyed, boastful yet endearing



companion, whose malapropisms and faux bravado stole scenes alongside Soumitra Chatterjee's Feluda and Siddhartha Chatterjee's Topshe. His catchphrases, like "এটা আমার" (This is mine), "তং মাং করো" (Don't bother), and "আপনাকে তো cultivate করতে হচ্ছে মশাই" (I have to cultivate you, sir), became cultural staples, often mimicked in everyday Bengali conversations. Ray was so enamoured with Dutta's interpretation that he redesigned Jatayu's illustrations in subsequent Feluda novels to resemble the actor—complete with his rotund figure, moustache, and expressive eyes. Dutta reprised the role in "Joi Baba Felunath" (The Elephant God, 1979), set against the vibrant backdrop of Varanasi, where Jatayu's comic encounters with villains like Maganlal Meghraj (played by Utpal Dutt) added layers of suspense and humour. The film's themes of art smuggling and mystery were enriched by Dutta's performance, which Ray praised for its authenticity. Tragically, after Dutta's passing, Ray declared no more Feluda



films, stating, "Jatayu cannot be thought of without Santosh Dutta."

While Jatayu defined his career, Dutta's versatility shone in over 50 films, often elevating comic roles to nuanced character studies. He appeared in Ray's "Teen Kanya" (Three Daughters, 1961), and other notables like "Agnisanket", "Palataka", and "Abir". Dutta collaborated with directors beyond Ray, including in commercial hits where his impeccable timing turned ordinary scripts into laugh riots. His ability to infuse innocence into eccentricity made him a staple in Bengali cinema's golden era. He was one of Satyajit Ray's favourite actors and Ray could meticulously bring out the different dimensions of Dutta's acting prowess.

When we think about "Goopy Gayen Bagha Bayen", can we forget the double role essayed by Santosh Dutta as the Kings of both Halla and Shundi. The portrayal of the character of the King of Halla was an even more difficult one for since it was a kind of a dual-personality; one that of a peace-loving democrat and the other, coming under the influence of a magical spell is a war-monger and



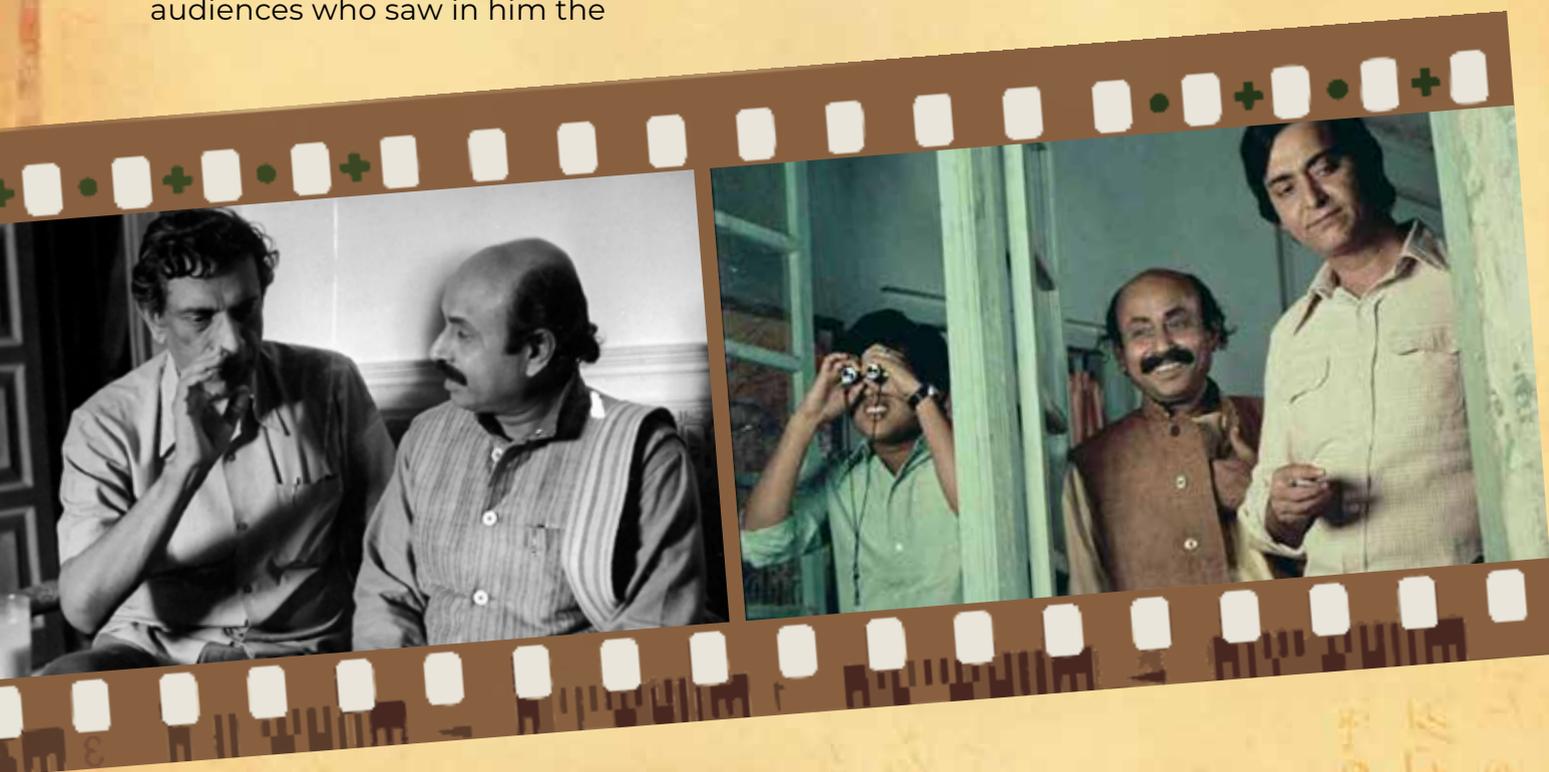
somewhat despotic. Who else could have given such expression as was delivered by Santosh Dutta in the last scene of the movie where he pours the spontaneity of his heart out, while running down the stony path, crying in the most ejaculated manner, uttering words of deliverance – “Chuti, Chuti”.

In “Hirak Rajar Deshe” the experiment maker who could devise out a “Jantar Mantar” is an unforgettable character. His dialogue delivery and voice modulation is noteworthy. The quivering of his eyelids followed by occasional flabbergasted looks was so realistic that we still the pulse of it whenever we see the movie even today. Similar notable performances can be traced in the role of the scientist in Ray’s “Mahapurush” where the student of science is at times puzzled by the so-called mythical powers of the monk. In “Charmurti”, Santosh Dutta essays a different character - one that has an elderly approach to handle situations of crisis, with emotional intelligence.

Dutta's fame transcended screens; he became synonymous with Jatayu, influencing generations of Bengali audiences who saw in him the

quintessential middle-class dreamer. His legacy lies in redefining comedy—not as slapstick, but as sophisticated character-driven humour that mirrored societal quirks. Posthumously, actors like Anirban Chakrabarti in Srijit Mukherji's Feluda adaptations have been compared to him, with fans noting Chakrabarti's ability to “fill those shoes pretty well,” though Dutta remains the benchmark. In Bengali popular culture, Jatayu endures as an icon of affable ineptitude, inspiring tributes in literature, theatre, and even modern films.

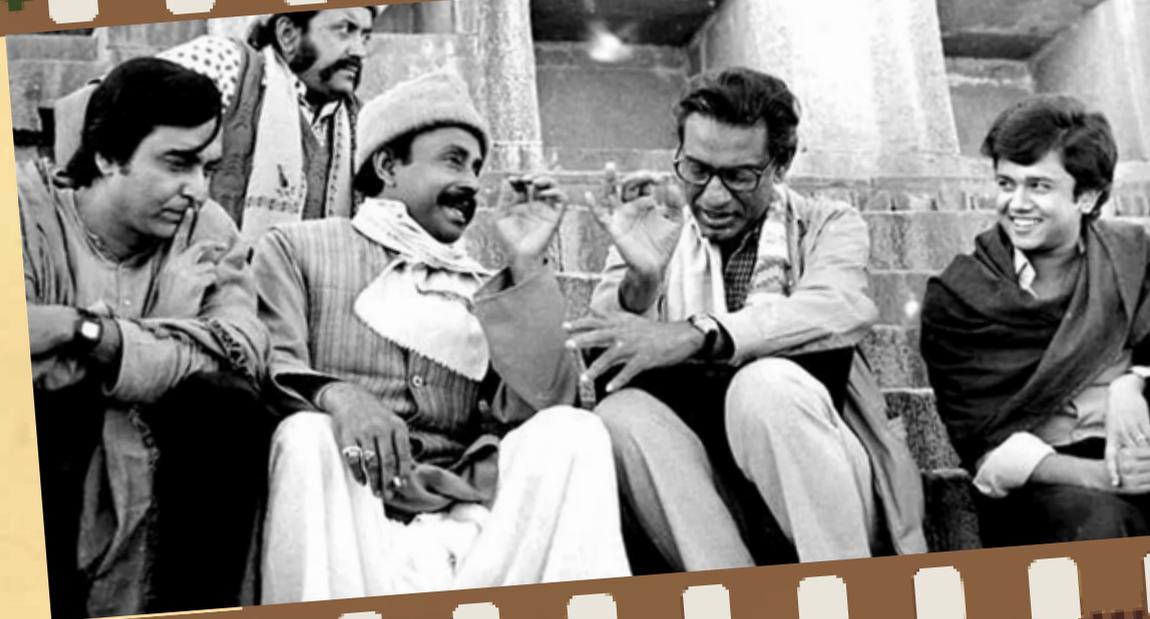
Santosh Dutta is one of such actors who could seamlessly transgress from one type of role to the other. His acting style at times features the art of method acting. He seems to remain absolutely calm even in the eye of the storm in that famous scene of ‘Joy Baba Felunath’ when Jatayu is made the target-practise in the game of throw of daggers. The composure with which he demonstrated his performance is unparalleled. There is hardly any evidence of over-acting in his characterisations of roles. In intense moments like that of chasing the goons in Sonar Kella he could maintain his role without any superfluous emotional



jargon. Such rare acting skill is still to be discovered. What differentiates Santosh Dutta from many others is his natural ability to mould himself as the on-screen character demanded. Very few actors could achieve it; Santosh Dutta excelled in that art as a versatile actor.

Behind the lens, Dutta was a reserved gentleman, far from his boisterous characters—a high court lawyer who argued cases by day and rehearsed lines by night. One fun anecdote from “Joi Baba Felunath” involves co-star Malay Roy (who played bodybuilder Gunamoy Bagchi), who recalled Dutta's off-screen wit: during a tense shooting scene in Varanasi, Dutta quipped in character, lightening the mood and causing the crew to burst into laughter. Neighbours in his Kolkata para (neighbourhood) remembered him as a humble, serious lawyer, often sharing stories of his dual life over tea.

Ray once adjusted a script mid-shoot to incorporate Dutta's impromptu "highly educated" mispronunciation, which became a fan favourite. His love for pulp novels mirrored Jatayu's, adding authenticity—Dutta reportedly devoured thrillers between court sessions. In a lighter vein, during Sonar Kella's Rajasthan schedule, Dutta's fear of camels led to genuine comic takes, as he ad-libbed lines about "desert monsters" that Ray kept in the final cut. These stories paint Dutta as a man whose real-life charm amplified his roles. As expressed by Sandip Ray, son of



Satyajit Ray, on one occasion, despite Ray's approval, Santosh Dutta gently requested another take for a scene. And he delivered it so brilliantly that Ray found himself torn between the two versions and actually had to toss a coin to decide which shot to keep - something he had never done before.

The centenary year of 2025 saw heartfelt celebrations: The Rotary Club of Calcutta East Central unveiled a statue on December 5, honouring his contributions. Neighbourhood events in Kolkata featured screenings, memories from co-stars, and audio stories recounting his life. These tributes underscored Dutta's role in preserving Bengali cultural heritage through cinema.

Santosh Dutta's centenary reminds us of a time when actors embodied characters so fully that they became inseparable. His laughter echoes in every Feluda rerun, ensuring his legacy as the irreplaceable Jatayu lives on in the narrative of Bengali cinema. As we reflect in early 2026, Dutta's legacy endures as a symbol of wit, wise-eccentricity, pristine pleasure and everlasting charm.

The Sridhar Temple of Sonamukhi, Bankura



WHEELER Kinjal Bose

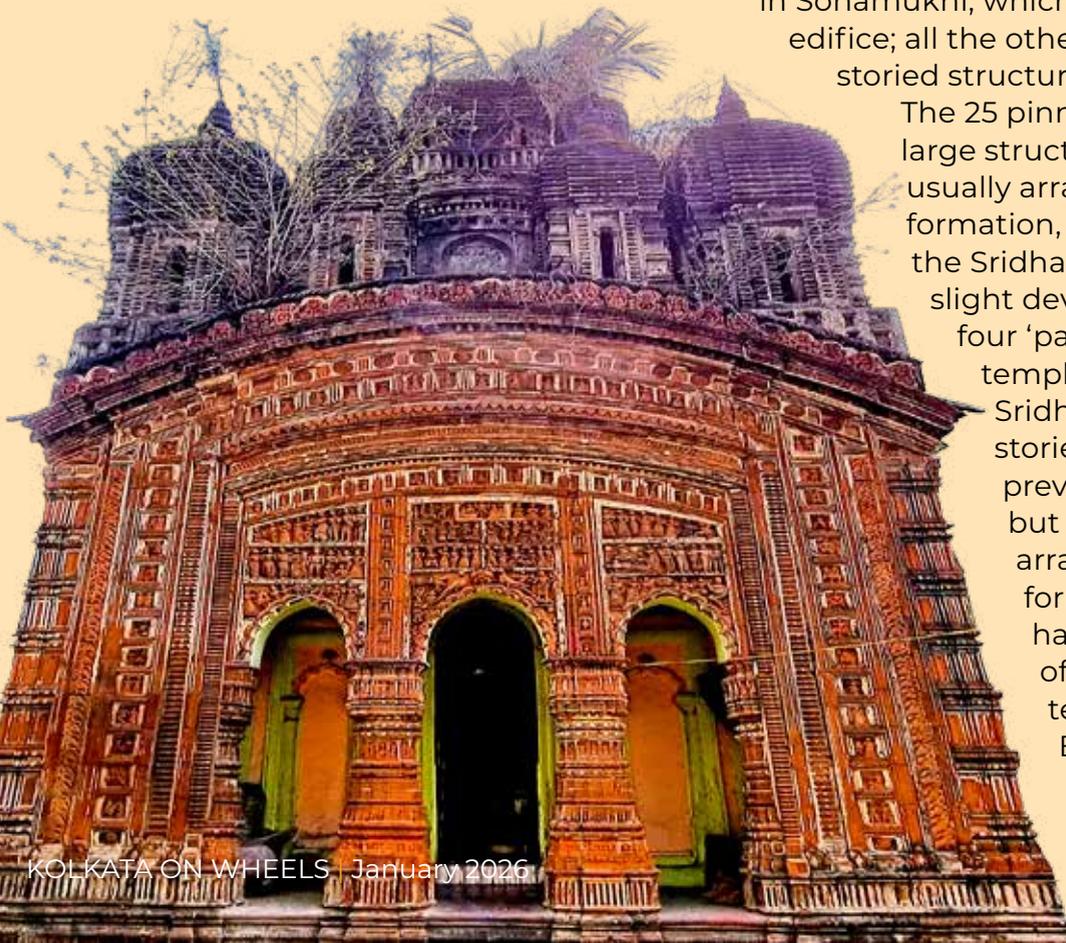
The Bankura district of West Bengal is home to several terracotta temples. In fact, when we speak about terracotta temples, the first name that comes to our mind is about the temples built by the Malla kings of Bishnupur featuring intricate terracotta decoration. But other than Bishnupur, there are other places too where such beautiful terracotta temples can be spotted. One such place is the municipal town of Sonamukhi.

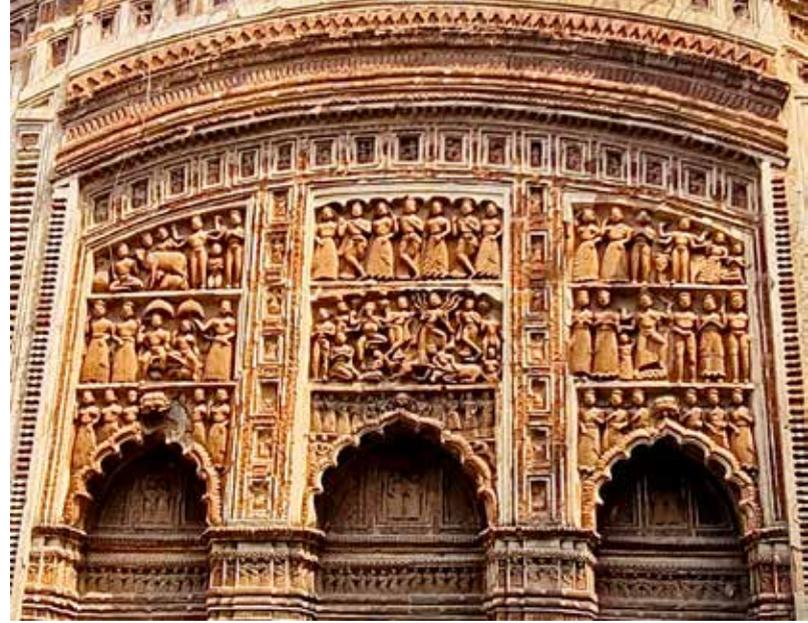
Out of the five 'panchabingswati ratna' or twenty-five pinnacled temples of West Bengal, the Sridhar Temple built in 1845 is situated in Sonamukhi. Three other similar temples – Lalji Temple (built in 1739), Krishnachandra Temple (built in 1751) and Gopalji Temple (built in 1766) – are located



in Kalna in Purba Barddhaman and the Ananda-Bhairavi Temple (built in 1813) is located in Sukharia in Hooghly. With the exception of the Sridhar Temple situated in Sonamukhi, which is a double-storied edifice; all the other temples are three-storied structures.

The 25 pinnacled temples are large structures and the spires are usually arranged in the 12+8+4+1 formation, with the exception of the Sridhar Temple which has a slight deviation from the other four 'panchabingswati ratna' temples. Not only is the Sridhar Temple a double-storied structure as already previously mentioned, but also the spires are arranged in the 12+12+1 formation. This temple happens to be the last of such type of unique temples to be built in Bengal.

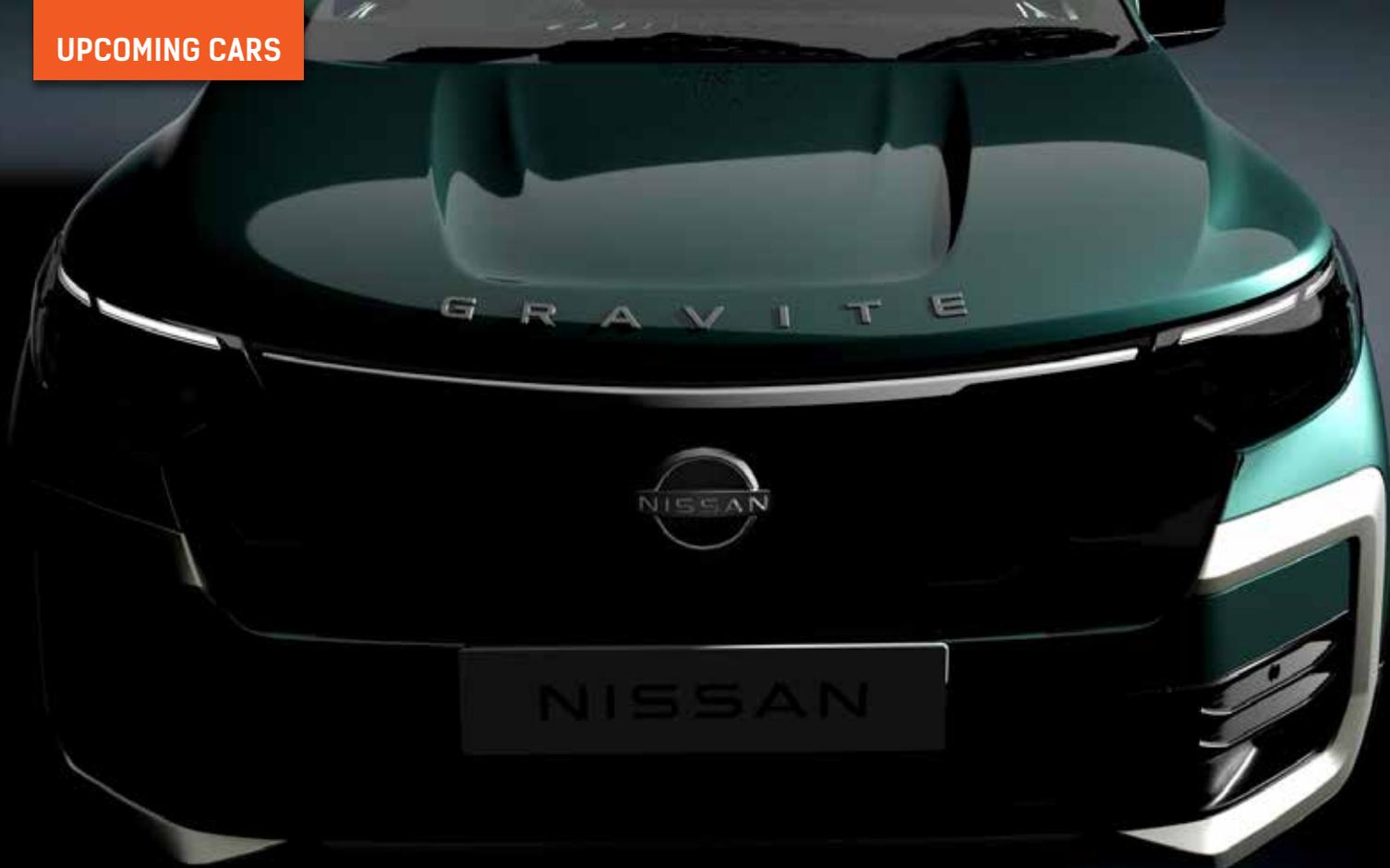




According to the inscriptions on pratistha lipi or the foundation plaque, the Sridhar Temple was built in 1252 Bangabda by Hari Sutradhar. When converted into Gregorian calendar the timeline translates to 1845 AD. Inside the temple sanctum Sridhar salagramasila is worshipped daily. The Sridhar Temple has exquisite terracotta decorations on all the four sides depicting stories not only from Ramayana, Mahabharata, Krishnalila and Puran but there are also depictions from social life as well as images of birds and animals. This temple has rich terracotta works at the base, pillars, facades and even on the arches. The terracotta figurines are lively and has more or less retained their form till date.

The Sridhar Temple is a must see during your visit to Sonamukhi.





Nissan On Track For 2026 Resurgence In India; 7-Seater B-MPV Gravite Teased

 Joydip Sur

Nissan's all-new game-changing seven-seater B-MPV will be called Gravite and will be launched in early 2026. It is the first product to be rolled out under the brand's refreshed and strategically curated line-up for India.

Purpose-built for modern Indian families, the Gravite delivers exceptional versatility and modularity, redefining convenience for value-conscious households while accelerating the expansion of Nissan's revitalised product portfolio.

Announced in July 2024 as the second model in Nissan Motor India's ambitious product offensive, the Gravite underscores

the company's forward momentum. The product roadmap includes the launch of the Gravite in early 2026; followed by the Tekton in mid-2026 and a 7-seater C-SUV in early 2027 — reaffirming Nissan's deep and ongoing commitment to diversifying, strengthening, and revitalising its offering for Indian customers.

A NAME THAT REFLECTS NISSAN'S AMBITION

The name "Gravite" draws inspiration from the word gravity, signifying balance, inherent stability, and powerful attraction. This choice reflects Nissan's core vision of designing

vehicles that perfectly anchor families in comfort, superior versatility, and seamless connectivity. Inspired by 1.4 billion Indians and the 19,000 vernaculars and rituals that form the foundation of the nation, the Gravite is the perfect companion for the aspirational and versatile Indian.

INTERIOR: PIONEERING MODULARITY AND COMFORT

The Gravite transforms family journeys with exceptional cabin roominess and pioneering, class-leading storage innovations. Every aspect has been meticulously crafted for versatility and intuitive use—from ultra-modular seating that effortlessly adapts to changing passenger and cargo needs, to smart space utilisation that makes both daily commutes and extended family road trips equally seamless.

Set for its grand debut in early 2026, the All-New Gravite will be manufactured locally in Chennai. This production milestone reinforces Nissan Motor India's unwavering commitment to deliver vehicles specifically tailored to the evolving demands of Indian customers. As the second critical model

in Nissan's rejuvenated lineup, the Gravite represents a decisive step in the brand's product renaissance in India.

DESIGN AND INSPIRATION

The All-New Gravite establishes a bold and distinct identity aligned with Nissan's global design language. Its signature C-shaped front grille—a defining element of Nissan's DNA—ensures instant recognition and a bold on-road presence. The Gravite's sleek horizontal proportions and confident, muscular stance combine modern elegance with practical and everyday usability.

The Gravite is the only vehicle in its segment to feature distinctive hood branding along with unique rear-door badging—a bold design choice that powerfully amplifies its exclusive identity. The rear fascia continues to echo Nissan's signature C-shaped interlock theme, ensuring the MPV's unmistakable presence on every road.

Massimiliano Messina, Chairperson, Nissan AMIEO (Africa, Middle East, India, Europe & Oceania), commented: *"India continues to be a strong contributor to AMIEO's*





performance, and Nissan Motor India plays a pivotal role in our strategy. Over FY25, we have strengthened our business operations, expanded our portfolio, and delivered on every promise made under our 2024 product offensive. The upcoming line-up—shaped by global insights yet deeply attuned to the needs of Indian customers—reflects our commitment to this dynamic market. With new models developed in and for India, and exports to several international markets, India remains both a growth driver and a strategic hub for Nissan Alliance. The reveal of the GRAVITE demonstrates our continued momentum and reinforces our confidence in the road ahead.”

Saurabh Vatsa, Managing Director, Nissan Motor India, stated: “The All-New GRAVITE is a testament to Nissan Motor India’s renewed focus on the evolving Indian market. Deeply rooted in the fabric of the country, it is designed to be the perfect companion for the diverse needs of our customers. As the second model in our all-new product line-up, the GRAVITE marks a pivotal step in our transformation journey and reinforces our commitment to

delivering vehicles that resonate with the aspirations of Indian consumers.”

To support this growth, Nissan is fast-tracking the expansion of its nationwide dealership network, ensuring greater accessibility and enhanced customer experience across the country.

Building on this momentum, the Nissan Magnite continues to strengthen the brand’s global footprint as one of its most successful ‘Made in India’ models. Now exported to 65 markets across South Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America, the Magnite’s strong acceptance underscores India’s pivotal role as a manufacturing and export hub for Nissan.

Further strengthening its future-ready product roadmap in India, Nissan revealed the Tekton in October 2025—its upcoming premium SUV. With its commanding design and modern technologies, the Tekton sets the tone for the brand’s next phase of growth, complementing today’s introduction of the new Gravite and signalling a robust, multi-segment offensive tailored for the Indian market.



Lucknow



Spiti in Winter

A Dream Driven Across Ice, Memory
and a Vanishing Mountain

 Wheeler Kaushik Bhattacharyya

Since the beginning of the year, Spiti had occupied a quiet but persistent corner of my mind. I planned it the way one plans a promise - slowly, lovingly, with maps revisited and memories replayed. I had been there once before, in 2010, when the mountains felt timeless and untouched. This time, I wanted to return not in summer's comfort, but in winter - when Spiti reveals its most honest self, and when travel itself becomes an act of intent.

The excuse came disguised as a wedding invitation in Delhi. The reason, however, lay far beyond. My recent visit to Sikkim had shown me that the changing and manmade weather conditions were making the Himalayas fragile. Roads vanish now where they once held firm. "Last Chance Tourism," they call it - a phrase that sounds

Fagu



dramatic until you see the mountains literally slipping away.

So, I drove. From Kolkata. No flights, no shortcuts - only roads, weather and faith.

THE LONG WAY NORTH

The early days were about endurance rather than elevation. Kolkata to Topchanchi, where a quiet lake mirrored the hills. Then onward to Varanasi, negotiating Bihar's roads - sometimes abandoning highways altogether, cutting across fields in my Jimny, to escape hours-long traffic snarls. It felt less like travel and more like negotiation.

Varanasi and its captivating beauty slowed me down, as it always does. Dawn on the ghats recalibrates ambition. Lucknow followed - Bhulbhulaiya's winding corridors and an unapologetic food pilgrimage to Dastarkhwan. Mountains can wait, but good food insists.

Delhi arrived, the wedding was attended, rituals completed - but my mind and heart pulled me on towards my heart's desire - Spiti. And then the journey unexpectedly

expanded! A friend from Kolkata, Sanjeev Sharma, another adventurous soul comme moi, joined me, turning a solo chapter into a shared one. Northward again!

CROSSING INTO COLD

From Delhi, the climb was steady- Fagu, just beyond Shimla, a place Europeans linger over apples and silence. Here, silence is the loudest guide! And we experienced the first snowfall! Sangla followed, offering the first glimpse of snow-clad peaks, sharp and luminous against the winter skies.

By the time we reached Nako, winter had fully declared itself. The temperature plunged below zero. Nako Lake had frozen into a sheet of glass. Walking on it felt like stepping into time itself - frozen, breath held, each footfall echoing into silence.

Varanasi



A detour took us to Chitkul - the last Indian village before the Tibetan border. Much of the journey involved off-roading, tyres slipping over ice-polished rocks. Here, roads don't promise safety; they merely offer possibility. We did an off-roading on rock and ice.

Entering Kinnaur, a valley unfolding as a land where breath-taking beauty and elemental forces converged. Perched at the north-eastern part of Himachal Pradesh, it's known for its stunning Himalayan landscapes, apple orchards, and unique culture and pretty girls!

SPITI: WHERE COMFORT ENDS AND ADVENTURE BEGINS

Kaza came wrapped in silence and moon land mountains. Nights dipped between -11°C and -17°C. Water forgot how to flow - buckets froze solid by morning. There was no running water, only electric mattresses and layers of clothing standing between sleep and suffering.

Days, however, were generous. Ki and

Kibber monasteries stood unflinching against centuries of wind. The Chicham Bridge - the world's highest hanging bridge, reminded us how human ambition sways gently against geological time.

In the Kaza market, life unfolded quietly. Tibetans cooked warmth into steaming momos. Bengalis may love their comforts, yet here was one far from Kolkata, selling medicines in icy Kaza! -and even in this pristine wilderness, my city stomach still demanded Enteroquinol, proving you can leave civilisation behind, but not your gut.

Between artefact hunting and spotting rare mountain birds, Spiti revealed itself not in grand gestures, but in human persistence.

THE RIVER THAT ALLOWS ONLY ONE CHANCE

One of the most defining moments came while crossing the Spiti riverbed.

There is a narrow window- barely fifteen days, between post-monsoon retreat and deep winter freeze, when this crossing is possible. Water flow reduces as upstream sources freeze, allowing vehicles to drive across exposed stone and water. Miss the timing, and the river becomes either

Beyond Chitkul Village



Chitkul Offroading





Route to Kaza



Frozen Nako Lake

impossible or unforgiving.

We crossed slowly, deliberately, aware that in Spiti, timing is survival.

Our plan to exit via Kunzum Pass towards Manali was denied. Black ice had closed the route. The mountain had spoken.

So, we turned back.

LISTENING TO THE MOUNTAIN

The detour led us to Sarahan, navigating more black ice while Google Maps calmly insisted the road was closed. Sarahan, quiet and dignified, offered the Bhimakali Temple - and an unexpected notice written in Bengali, a small and deeply human comfort so far from home.

From there, the descent to Chandigarh felt almost indulgent. Roads widened. Oxygen thickened. A friend hosted us at the Chandigarh Club - warmth, conversation, and the surreal feeling of having crossed something unseen.

The return journey folded life back in - a meeting

at IIT Delhi, food pilgrimages to Idrees in Lucknow, sweets packed in Varanasi for friends and family. Then Topchanchi again. And finally, Kolkata.

The odometer finally stopped at 5,101 kilometres.

Spiti Under Snow: A story of Silence, Strength, Survival

This was not just another road trip.

My car was the first Jimny from Kolkata to reach Spiti! We were among the first tourists of the winter season, often the only guests in frozen hotels. We walked on a frozen lake, drove on black ice, crossed a riverbed, stood at the last village before Tibet, and endured nights at -14°C. All

this was possible with an equally experienced and adventurous friend- Sanjeev, you have been a great fellow traveller!

But more than endurance, the journey



Chicham Bridge

demanded awareness.

Spiti is changing. Roads are opening faster than the land can adapt. Winters are becoming unpredictable. The mountains no longer promise permanence - only presence.

Travelling through Spiti in winter strips away the illusion of control. It teaches restraint. It reminds you that some landscapes don't exist to be conquered or consumed - only witnessed, carefully, before they change again.

We had the time of our lives and our adventurous hearts were thrilled at the sight of such an environment - from sub-zero walks across the frozen Nako Lake to thrilling off-roading and driving over ice to Chitkul, and onward from Nako to Kaza through stark, moon-like mountains in -11°C to -17°C , this was adventure at its rawest-braving the cold on electric mattresses, without running water, where even buckets froze solid overnight. This was an adventure of a lifetime!

I had manifested this journey with love and excitement. Spiti returned the favour with honesty.

And that, perhaps, is the most enduring souvenir of all.

Key Monestary



Bye Spiti



Sarahan Bhima
Kali temple



On Spiti Bed



5 BEST INDIAN EXPORTS

India's automotive export prowess continues to grow, with 8,58,000 units shipped in 2025 alone, marking a 15% rise and more than doubling volumes from five years prior. Models assembled in Indian factories dominate this outbound flow, blending affordability, reliability and modern features to capture demand in diverse global markets. In this article we are going to look at five cars powering India's rise as a key exporter to regions like Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, Japan and Europe.

 Promit Hazra



Maruti Suzuki Fronx

The Maruti Suzuki Fronx leads as the top-exported sub-compact SUV from India, with around 69,000 units shipped in FY 2025, becoming the fastest sub-compact SUV to hit 1,00,000 cumulative exports in just 25 months. These compact crossovers head to South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Chile, Mexico and other Latin American and

Middle Eastern markets, where their versatile design thrives in varied conditions. Powered by efficient a 1.2-litre naturally aspirated or a power-packed 1.0-litre turbo-petrol engine, the Fronx delivers agile urban performance and solid highway economy, appealing to budget-conscious buyers seeking crossover appeal.

Hyundai Verna

Coming in second overall is the Hyundai Verna, a sleek midsize sedan that led exports with 52,615 units in FY 2025.

Assembled in India, it's a favourite in markets like Latin America, the Middle East, and parts of Asia, where its premium feel

and features stand out. The Verna comes with a refined 1.5-litre naturally aspirated petrol engine producing around 113 hp, or a punchier 1.5-litre turbo-petrol variant offering about 158 hp and strong mid-range torque, available with manual, IVT (CVT), or DCT automatic options. Performance



is smooth and engaging, with the turbo hitting 0-100 kmph in under 10 seconds and good highway manners, plus solid fuel economy around 14-16 kmpl depending on the variant making it a reliable choice for families and daily commuters abroad.

Maruti Suzuki Jimny



The Jimny ranks third with 47,982 units exported, cementing its status as a global off-road favourite. This compact five-door SUV, produced in India, reaches over 100 countries, including the Middle East, Africa, Australia, Latin America, and Southeast Asia, where its rugged charm and go-anywhere capability shine.

It features a 1.5-litre petrol engine delivering 102 hp and 130 Nm torque, mated to a five-speed manual or four-speed automatic, and equipped with Suzuki's proven AllGrip Pro 4WD system for serious traction. While not the quickest (0-100 kmph in about 12-13 seconds), it excels in low-speed torque for trails and mud, with real-world fuel efficiency of 16-18 kmpl ideal for adventure seekers who value durability and fun over outright speed.

Honda Elevate



In fourth place is the Honda Elevate, a practical midsize SUV that exported 45,167 units in FY 2025. Popular in Japan (badged as the WR-V), South Africa, the Middle East, and other regions, it appeals to families with its spacious interior and Honda's renowned build quality. Power comes from a smooth 1.5-litre i-VTEC petrol engine generating 121 hp and 145 Nm torque, offered with a six-speed manual or CVT automatic for effortless driving. It offers balanced performance with a 0-100 kmph time around 10 seconds and fuel economy of 15-18 kmpl, providing a comfortable, refined ride that's great on highways yet nimble in traffic.

Hyundai Grand i10 Nios

Rounding off the list is the Hyundai Grand i10 Nios, a compact hatchback with 44,760 units exported globally. This affordable, reliable model finds strong demand in developing markets across Africa and Latin America, where its low running costs and easy handling win over budget-conscious buyers. It features a 1.2-litre petrol engine producing around 82 hp, with manual or AMT automatic options, delivering peppy city performance and excellent mileage up to 16+ kmpl. While not flashy, its no-nonsense approach and proven durability make it a practical everyday choice for global markets.





Day Drive Tour

Destination: Krishnanagar

For Wheelers & Guests

Happy Birthday to Wheelers

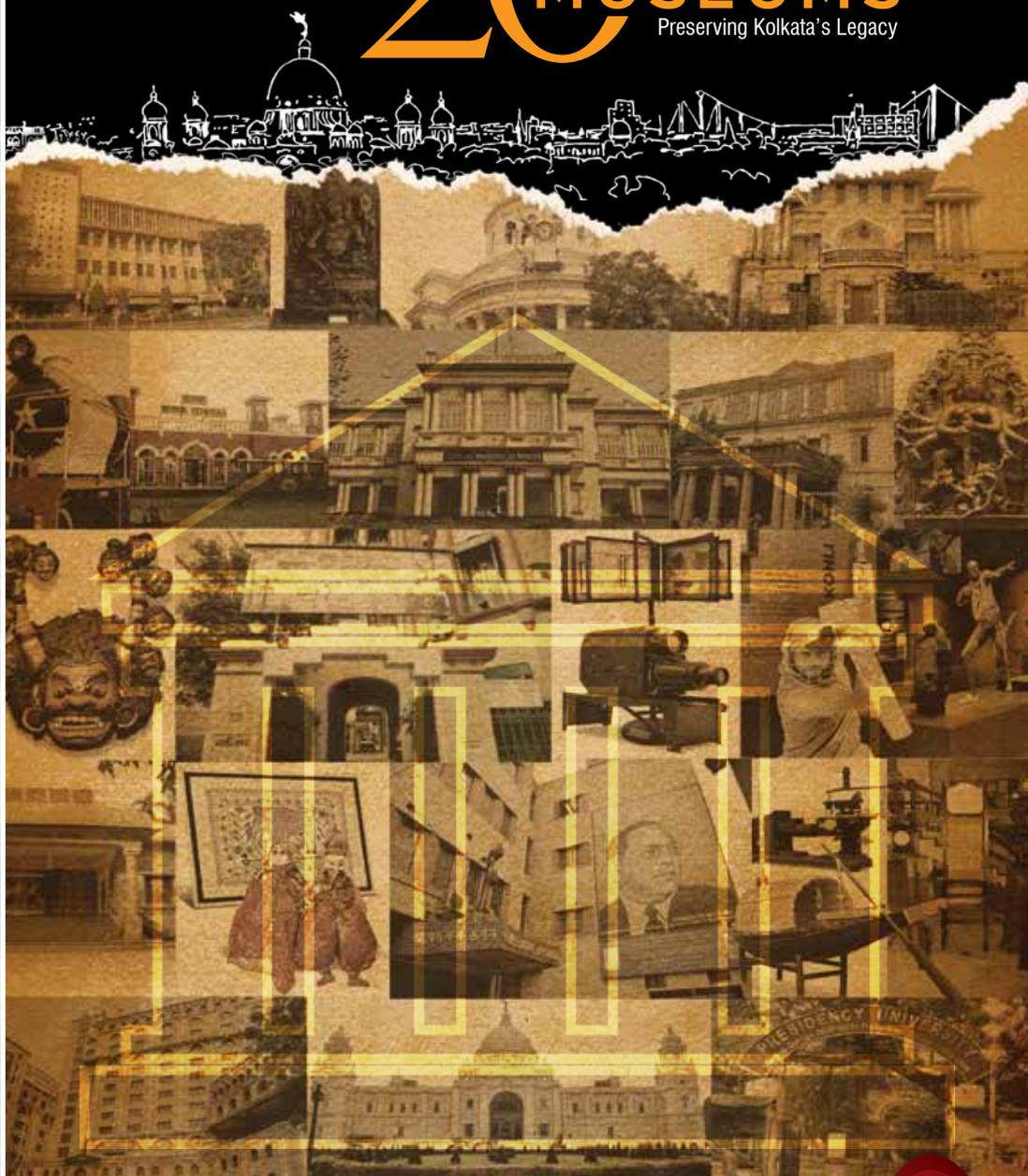
NAME	DATE
Sanjay Dasgupta	1-Jan
Debnath Ghosh	01-Jan
Dr. Debasish Bose	01-Jan
Karan Asopa	01-Jan
Surajit Mitra	01-Jan
Indranil Kanti Chakravarty	02-Jan
Amit Mukhopadhyay	02-Jan
Pratick Sirkar	02-Jan
Rajib Majumder	02-Jan
Chittaranjan Das	03-Jan
Faisal Momen	04-Jan
Shourya Lahiri	04-Jan
Anupam Biswas	04-Jan
Dr.jayanta Kumar Gupta	05-Jan
Shantanu Kumar Roy	06-Jan
Piyas Chakrabarti	06-Jan
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Barun Saha	06-Jan
Biswajit Roy	06-Jan
Pradipta Biswas	07-Jan
Chandan Sur	07-Jan
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Sankari Prasun Bhattacharya	10-Jan
Mohamed Hussain Rawther	11-Jan
Mukesh Mantry	11-Jan
Chandan Gupta	11-Jan
Amit Kumar Banerjee	16-Dec

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Giridharilal Chhachharia	12-Jan
Atindranath Bhaduri	12-Jan
Siddhartha Chakraborty	12-Jan
Obaidullah Babar	14-Jan
Debasish Guha	15-Jan
Pijush Bhattacharjee	16-Jan
Rajat Kanti Sarkar	17-Jan
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Atanu Kar	18-Jan
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Sonia Bhattacharya	27-Jan
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Mohammed Ali	30-Jan
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