

KOLKATA ON

WHEELS

AUTOVENTURING GUIDE AROUND THE CITY



VOLVO

EX30 Arrives in Style

UPCOMING CARS
All-New Nissan Tekton

CAR LAUNCH
Diwali Car Launches

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SOURAV GANGULY

Bhi Mantey Hain
Hum Rakhte Hain Saaf Dil Se

Sourav Ganguly



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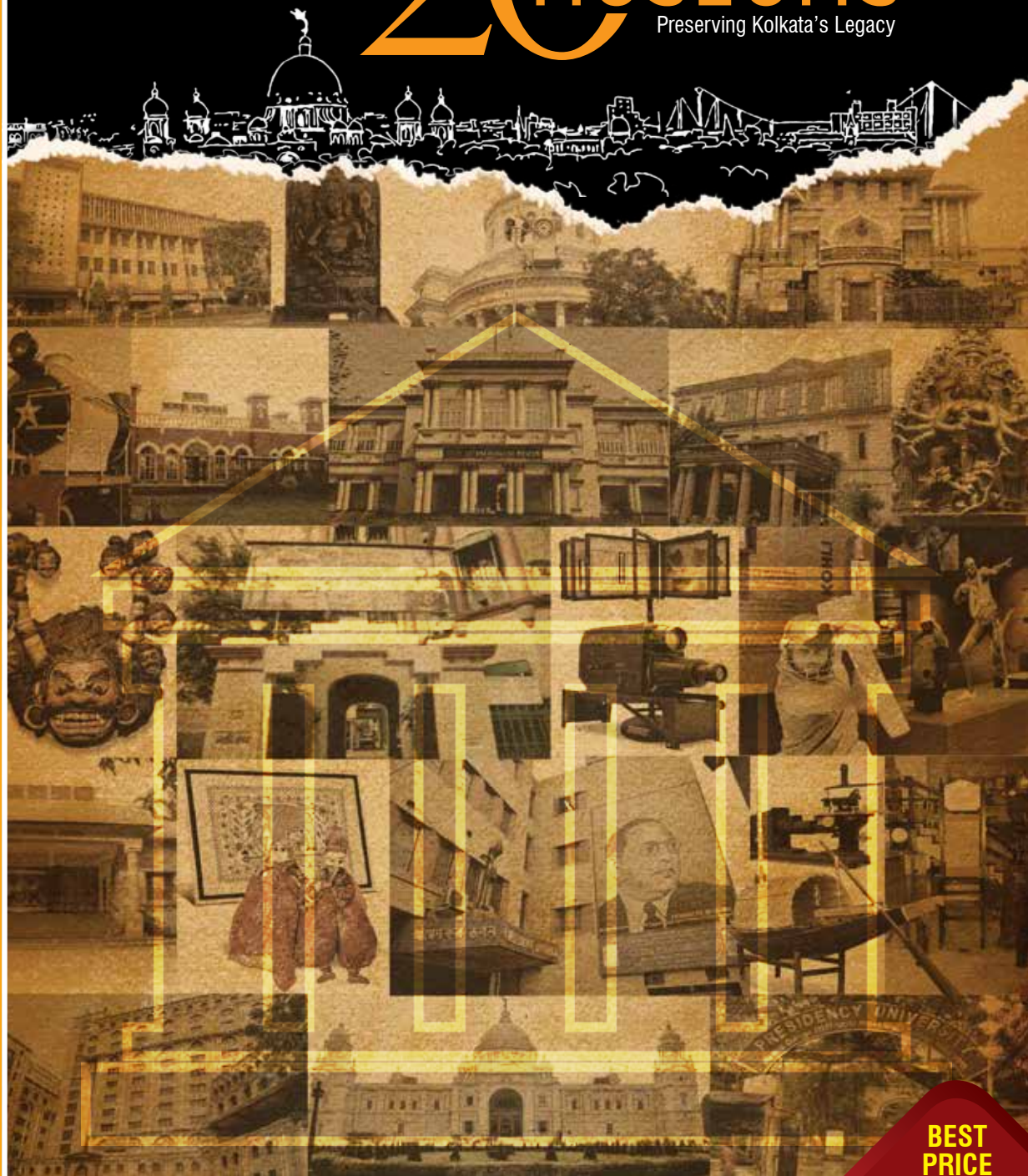
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KOLKATA ON
WHEELS
AUTOVENTURING GUIDE AROUND THE CITY

EDITORIAL

The wait is finally over. Volvo Car India has announced the much-anticipated price of the Volvo EX30, the brand's most sustainable and stylish electric car. With an introductory ex-showroom price of INR 41,00,000, the EX30 is set to make luxury electric mobility more accessible than ever before. This marks the third EV model from Volvo Cars to be locally assembled at the company's plant in Hosakote, Bengaluru. Each EX30 comes with an 11-kW charger as a standard offer. The EX30 embodies Volvo's commitment to sustainable mobility, innovative technology, futuristic design, and uncompromising safety. More on that in this edition's 'Electric Cars' column.

Every monsoon, Kolkata drowns. Not just in rainwater, but in the failures of its governance, the greed of its real estate lobby, and the corruption that masquerades as urban planning. The city's waterlogging problem is no act of God; it is a man-made crisis that worsens with each passing year. At the heart of this tragedy lies the East Kolkata Wetlands. These are no ordinary water bodies. They are the city's natural sewage treatment system, absorbing nearly 1,000 million litres of wastewater every day. Read this edition's 'Special Feature' column to know more.

Happy reading!



Joydip Sur
 Editor

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VOLVO

EX30 Arrives in Style

 Joydip Sur



The wait is finally over. Volvo Car India has announced the much-anticipated price of the Volvo EX30, the brand's most sustainable and stylish electric car. With an introductory ex-showroom price of INR 41,00,000, the EX30 is set to make luxury electric mobility more accessible than ever before.

This festive season, Volvo Car India, together with its dealers, is bringing extra delight by offering the EX30 at INR 39,99,000 for those who pre-reserve the car before October 19, 2025. This special pre-reserve price is for a limited time, and customers can reach out to their nearest dealership for further details. The car will be available in five colour options, and deliveries are scheduled to begin in the

first week of November 2025.

This marks the third EV model from Volvo Cars to be locally assembled at the company's plant in Hosakote, Bengaluru. Each EX30 comes with an 11-kW charger as a standard offer. The EX30 embodies Volvo's commitment to sustainable mobility, innovative technology, futuristic design, and uncompromising safety.

"We are thrilled to introduce the Volvo EX30 to the Indian market at such an exciting price point, with special benefits for those who pre-reserve," said Mr. Jyoti Malhotra, Managing Director, Volvo Car India. "We believe this model will play a significant role in making luxury electric vehicles appeal to a new segment of innovators and achievers, those who appreciate



power, design and sustainable luxury. With its impressive performance, extended range, sophisticated look, and the convenience of a hassle-free ownership package*, the EX30 is set to redefine the EV experience for our discerning customers.”

As the most sustainable car in Volvo’s lineup, the EX30 has the lowest carbon footprint of any fully electric Volvo to date. Its attractive interiors are made from recycled materials, including denim, PET bottles, aluminium, and PVC pipes. Incorporating Scandinavian design and cutting-edge technology, EX30 has achieved a five-star rating in the Euro NCAP safety test. The EX30 also features active safety tools such as an intersection auto-brake to mitigate collisions, a door-opening alert to prevent ‘dooring’ accidents, and the advanced Safe Space



ELECTRIC CARS

Technology, which boasts 5 cameras, 5 radars, and 12 ultrasonic sensors.

The cabin offers an immersive experience with five ambient lighting themes and sounds inspired by Scandinavian seasons. The new Harman Kardon soundbar concept, featuring a 1040W amplifier and nine high-performance speakers, delivers state-of-the-art surround sound. The intuitive 12.3-inch high-resolution centre display includes Google Built-in, 5G connectivity, and Over-the-Air (OTA) updates. This head-turning design has also earned international accolades, including the prestigious Red Dot award: Best of the Best Product Design 2024 and the World Urban Car of the Year 2024.

The EX30 comes with an 8-year battery warranty and a wall box charger. The car reimagines convenience with its digital key functionality. Using NFC, one can simply tap a card to unlock the car, and with Digital Key Plus on the Volvo Car App, your phone acts as the key, providing a seamless and smarter experience.



First Look at the All-New **TEKTON** in India - Nissan's Latest C-SUV

 Joydip Sur



Nissan Motor India has revealed the name and offered a tantalizing preview of the design for the newest edition to the global SUV lineup: the All-New Nissan Tekton.

A NAME THAT REFLECTS NISSAN'S AMBITION

The name "Tekton" is of Greek origin, meaning "craftsman" or "architect". It aligns with Nissan's ethos of precision engineering

and innovation that enriches lives. The name signifies a powerful, premium C-SUV that embodies engineering excellence, performance, and a distinctive design identity. The Tekton will be a choice for those who are "shaping their world" through their careers, passions, or lifestyles.

Ahead of its full unveiling and start of sales in 2026, the Tekton is designed and engineered to disrupt the C-SUV segment. It will be the second product under Nissan's 'One Car, One World' strategy, manufactured in partnership with Renault at the Chennai plant for sale within India and future export to select global markets.

DESIGN AND INSPIRATION

Nissan's newest SUV, the Tekton, draws design inspiration from the company's longest-running and most iconic SUV, the terrain conquering Patrol. When it arrives next year, it will combine bold

aesthetics with robust reliability, premium craftsmanship, and a suite of advanced tech features.

At the front, a powerfully sculpted bonnet and distinctive C-shaped head lamp signature—reminiscent of the Patrol—pair with robust lower bumper to create a commanding and imposing presence that belies the vehicle's size.

The side profile features an imposing, muscular stance, designed to create an unmistakable silhouette on the road. Paying Homage, the front doors of the Tekton feature a 'Double-C' shaped accent, incorporating a subtle mountain range motif inspired by the Himalayas.

At the rear, a red illuminated lightbar spans the width of the vehicle, conveying a sense of sturdiness and connecting the 'C-shaped' dynamic tail-lamps. The Tekton nameplate is prominently displayed across the tailgate below.





Alfonso Albaisa, Corporate Executive, Nissan Motor Co., Ltd says, "The All-New Nissan Tekton draws its design inspiration from our legendary Nissan Patrol. It is designed to disrupt, dominate, and deliver everything today's modern Indian consumer desires. Imposing, stylish, and built to set a new benchmark in India and beyond, the design and build quality are distinctly Nissan—embodying the best of Nissan's SUV DNA."

Saurabh Vatsa, Managing Director, Nissan Motor in India, comments, "The All-New Nissan Tekton is going to be at the centre of the Nissan's resurgence

story and offers a glimpse into the future of our product portfolio in the country. With its commanding stance, bold looks and premium interiors, we are confident that it will be a segment disruptor, appealing to customers seeking a robust yet refined C-SUV. This model will spearhead Nissan's growth story in India."



The Tekton will be key to Nissan Motor India's plans to strengthen its presence and expand its product portfolio in the country. As part of this growth, Nissan Motor India is rapidly expanding its dealership network.

Mountains, Monasteries & The Wild

Wheeler's Journey To Pelling, Yuksom & Buxa



Wheeler Sarbajit Mookherjee

Powered by



As the city of Kolkata slowly woke up to the rhythmic beats of dhaak on Maha Panchami morning, a different kind of excitement was brewing at the IOCL petrol pump in New Town. While the rest of the city was gearing up for Durga Puja festivities, a convoy of nine gleaming cars—each adorned with the spirit of adventure—lined up for ignition. This was no ordinary drive. This was the Wheelers, the esteemed life members of Kolkata on Wheels, setting out on a weeklong mountain and jungle expedition that promised to be as scenic as it was thrilling.

The Flag-Off: From City Streets to the Hills

At precisely 6:00 AM on September 27, 2025, with Indian Oil as the proud Drive Partner, the Wheelers set their wheels in motion. The early morning air was crisp with anticipation as engines roared to life, and the long road north beckoned. The first destination—Siliguri—lay nearly 600 kilometres away. A quick breakfast halt at





Saraikhana Cottage Dhaba in Birohi provided the much-needed refuel, both for the cars and their enthusiastic occupants.

The journey continued along NH-12 and NH-27, passing through Kishanganj, Dalkhola, and Bagdogra, before finally reaching the bustling foothill town of Siliguri around 8:00 PM. After nearly 14 hours on the road, the warm welcome of Mount Amara Hotel & Spa was pure bliss. A hearty dinner and the comfort of beds were all the Wheelers needed before the next day's climb into the mountains.

Up the Slopes: Siliguri to Pelling

The morning of September 28, the convoy began its ascent towards Pelling, winding through the mist-kissed roads of North Bengal and Sikkim. Light rain added a touch of drama to the journey, as the Wheelers navigated the sharp bends and rising



altitudes with practiced precision. By the time they reached Pelling around 8 PM, the headlights cut through clouds as they rolled into Magpie Pachu Village Resort, their mountain home for the next two days.

Morning unveiled magic. As dawn broke on September 29, the mighty Khangchendzonga revealed itself in all its snow-capped splendor. Standing on the balconies of the resort, the Wheelers watched the first rays of sunlight turn the peaks golden—a sight that silenced even the most talkative among them.

After a leisurely breakfast, the day's exploration began with a visit to Pemayangtse Monastery, one of Sikkim's oldest and most revered monastic sites. Its calm aura and ancient murals painted a picture of serenity against the mountain backdrop. From there, the group visited the Sidkeong Tulku Bird Park, where vibrant feathered residents flitted among trees. Some Wheelers opted for a short trek to





the Rabdentse Ruins, once the royal palace of Sikkim's kings, now echoing the whispers of history.

Post-lunch, the day culminated at Pelling Sunset Point, where the golden orb of the sun dipped behind Khangchendzonga's silhouette. Cameras clicked, conversations mellowed, and nature put on a show of colour that lingered in every memory. Back at the resort, a cozy fellowship evening followed under a canopy of laughter, friendship, and drinks.

Into the Heart of Sikkim: The Road to Yuksom

The next morning, September 30, the Wheelers said goodbye to Pelling and started for Yuksom, the historical cradle of Sikkim's monarchy. The road, though shorter in distance, was packed with natural wonders. The first halt came at Rimbi Waterfalls, a gushing cascade where mist danced in sunlight. Then came Khechuperi Lake, also known as the "Wishing Lake", where still waters reflected clouds and mountain peaks. Feeding the sacred fish and soaking in the tranquil setting made this stop a favourite for many.

Lunch by the lake was followed by an adrenaline rush at Kanchenjunga Falls, where some Wheelers took on ziplining—screams of thrill echoing through the valley. Cameras rolled, drones buzzed, and smiles said it all. By 5:30 PM, the group arrived at Hotel Red

Palace, Yuksom. The warm hospitality of the hosts perfectly complemented the charm of this quaint mountain village. The evening unfolded with laughter, music, and stories of the day's adventures in the evening fellowship.

The following morning's itinerary began with a visit to Norbugang Coronation Throne, the birthplace of Sikkim's monarchy where the first Chogyal was crowned. Standing amidst centuries-old stupas and prayer flags, history felt alive. The Wheelers then moved to Elephant Falls, where they enjoyed the rare privilege of solitude—no tourists in sight, just the thundering roar of cascading water. Before heading back, a quiet visit to Kathok Lake amidst drizzle rounded off the day's sightseeing.

As the sun dipped behind the hills, the group gathered one last time at the Red Palace. Over dinner, many spoke of Yuksom's unspoiled charm and expressed a unanimous sentiment—more travellers should visit this hidden gem of Sikkim.

From Peaks to the Wild: Into Buxa Tiger Reserve

October 2, brought a change in landscape—and adrenaline. The Wheelers checked out after breakfast, bound for Buxa Tiger Reserve in North Bengal. A light drizzle soon turned into a persistent downpour, making the roads treacherous. A particularly challenging seven-kilometre stretch tested both vehicles and drivers. Yet, every obstacle added to the thrill. Lunch at Zorethang was a brief pause before nature unveiled a spectacle—two wild elephants crossing the road near Buxa. What could have been a close encounter turned into one of the trip's most unforgettable moments, with





excitement and awe in equal measure.

By 9 PM, drenched but exhilarated, the convoy reached Maa Greenery View, their stay for the night. A warm meal and the sound of rain outside made for perfect rest before the next day's forest adventures.

A Date with the Jungle: Safaris at Rajabhatkhawa and Jayanti

At 5 AM on October 3, the Wheelers embarked on their Rajabhatkhawa Safari. Dawn broke over dense canopies as jeeps rolled into the wilderness. The forest came alive with the calls of peacocks and eagles, and fleeting glimpses of spotted and barking deer added a touch of magic, even though the elusive tiger remained unseen.

After breakfast back at the hotel, the excitement reignited. The group drove through the dense forest once again—this time in their own cars—toward the Jayanti River Bed. The experience of driving through a national reserve forest was exhilarating, a first for many. Lunch was arranged at a local restaurant before setting off for the Jayanti Safari. The trail ahead on the jeeps was muddy, steep, and wild—exactly the kind of thrill the Wheelers love. Though animal sightings were rare, the drive through the thick foliage, riverbeds, and fading twilight made the entire journey surreal. As darkness settled, one couldn't help but imagine unseen eyes of the jungle silently watching them pass.

Back at the hotel, the final dinner of the trip was filled with laughter and reflection. The

jungle may have kept its biggest secrets hidden, but it had gifted the Wheelers something even rarer—an unforgettable communion with nature.

The Journey Home

On October 4, after breakfast and heartfelt goodbyes, the convoy began the homeward journey. A lunch stop at Rupashi Bangla Restaurant near Siliguri served as the final group meal before the roads forked—some cars chose to halt overnight at Golden Park Hotel, Malda, while others pushed on, driving through the night to Kolkata.

Memories Carved in Mountains and Forests

For many Wheelers, this was their first time navigating both steep mountain passes and dense forest tracks in one trip. For all, it was an experience that blended adventure, fellowship, and discovery in perfect measure.

The drive tested endurance, rewarded patience, and reaffirmed the joy of the open road. From the misty monasteries of Pelling to the tranquil lakes of

Yuksom, from the wild calls of Buxa to the quiet laughter around dinner tables—the trip was a celebration of everything Kolkata on Wheels stands for: camaraderie, exploration, and the endless thrill of the journey itself.

As the convoy rolled back into Kolkata, the festive lights of Durga Puja still twinkling in the city, the Wheelers carried with them something more precious than souvenirs—stories, friendships, and the promise of the next great adventure waiting just beyond the horizon.



From Lungs to Loot



Abhijit Dasgupta

Every monsoon, Kolkata drowns. Not just in rainwater, but in the failures of its governance, the greed of its real estate lobby, and the corruption that masquerades as urban planning. The city's waterlogging problem is no act of God; it is a man-made crisis that worsens with each passing year.

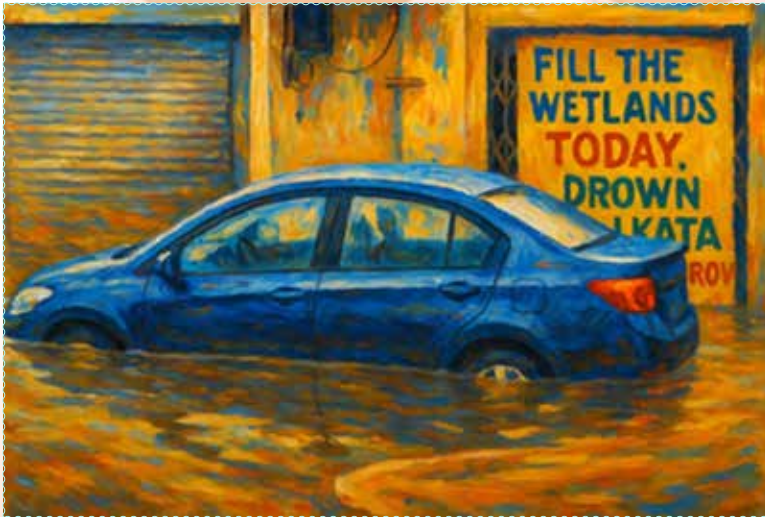


At the heart of this tragedy lies the East Kolkata Wetlands. These are no ordinary water bodies. They are the city's natural sewage treatment system, absorbing nearly 1,000 million litres of wastewater every day. At the same time, they are a fertile aquatic market garden—home to fish ponds and vegetable farms. In fact, wastewater is recycled into food here - fish thrive in sewage-fed ponds, vegetables flourish on the verdant banks and on a long, low hill created by Kolkata's waste. This unique recycling system sustains the livelihoods of more than 100,000 families while making Kolkata the cheapest major city in India.



And yet, this lifeline is being strangled. According to the World Bank, even 20 centimetres of sea-level rise by 2050 would make Kolkata the third most exposed city in the world to flooding. The city's average elevation is only six metres above sea level. Already, rapid and unplanned urbanization has eroded the city's flood-resilience efficiency. Streets that once drained quickly after a downpour now remain waterlogged for days, paralyzing life and commerce.

What makes this worse is that Kolkata has been here before. Half a century ago, when Salt Lake City was built, vast stretches of wetlands were filled in. Then, it was called "organized urbanization." But today's land grab is neither organized nor sustainable—it is outright plunder.



The wetlands were not always so vulnerable. In 1992, after a judge visited the wetlands, Kolkata's High Court delivered a historic verdict: the wetlands would be preserved for fishing and farming. This was India's first major environmental legal victory. In 2002, the wetlands were given Ramsar status, putting them on the global map as wetlands of international importance.

But in Kolkata, paper decrees have always been easy to bend. Politicians have used administrative tricks to redraw maps, moving wetland areas into different parishes, reclassifying them as non-wetlands, and then declaring them fit for construction. Each sleight of hand paves the way for another tower block. Each act chips away at the natural defenses of the city.

Kolkata's East Kolkata Wetlands are not just local ponds and marshes — they are Bengal's ecological lifeline. Yet, corruption has made them a goldmine for profiteers. Despite legal protections, land mafias and developers, hand in glove with local leaders and officials, are filling them with soil and concrete, replacing water bodies with towers and shopping complexes.

The destruction is staggering. In 1991, Kolkata had 91.2 km² of wetlands. By 2023, only 33.4 km² remained — a two-thirds loss in three decades. Between 2000 and 2020, more than 2,700 hectares were converted for fish farms and real estate. This isn't just an urban tragedy; it's a state-wide disaster in

the making. When the wetlands vanish, Kolkata drowns. And when Kolkata drowns, Bengal suffers.

The September 2025 rains proved it. Over 250 mm in a single day submerged Kolkata, halting trains, cutting off highways, and choking supply lines to North and South Bengal. Food from rural districts couldn't reach the city; vegetables and fish prices shot up across the state. Electricity was cut off. In 2017, floods already showed Bengal's vulnerability — killing over 150 people and destroying 1.8 lakh hectares of crops. With wetlands gone, even moderate rains now threaten to paralyze Bengal's economy, from tea estates in the north to rice fields in the south.

This is no longer just about Kolkata's future. If corruption continues to devour wetlands, the whole of Bengal will pay the price — with lost harvests, broken supply chains, collapsing health systems, and drowned lives. The wetlands are Bengal's shield. Letting them vanish is a betrayal of the entire state.

Behind this slow-motion ecological disaster are thousands of families who depend on the wetlands. Fishing communities allege that ponds are deliberately sabotaged, with channels blocked to force them to abandon their livelihoods. Developers—often fronted by so-called “land sharks”—use persuasion, intimidation, or meagre payouts to grab wetland plots. Tower blocks rise where ponds once stood. In some cases, authorities themselves flout their own laws, building corrugated settlements on wetlands to resettle slum dwellers evicted from central Kolkata.

This is not urban planning. This is organized loot.

Every encroachment weakens the city's natural flood buffer. Every drained pond makes it harder for the city to recycle its own waste. Every “smart” suburb built on wetlands turns Kolkata into a swamp waiting to happen.



“Clog the wetlands today—watch your city drown tomorrow.”

Planners and politicians often justify wetland encroachments as the price of progress. But there is nothing progressive about filling up natural sewage systems only to spend crores on artificial ones that often fail to function. There is nothing smart about displacing fishing families for gated apartments that only the wealthy can afford. And there is certainly nothing modern about a metropolis that cannot keep its streets dry during a moderate shower.

The truth is stark- Kolkata's waterlogging is not caused by nature, but by greed and corruption. It is the outcome of political complicity with developers, of short-term gains trumping long-term survival.

Kolkata's future is deeply threatened by its geography and poor planning. Lying on the fragile Ganges delta, much of the city is barely above sea level, making it highly vulnerable to storm surges and tidal inflows from the Hooghly River. Rising global seas and local land subsidence compound this danger, while climate change fuels extreme rainfall and cyclones. Already struggling with outdated drainage, the city faces chronic waterlogging that will only worsen.

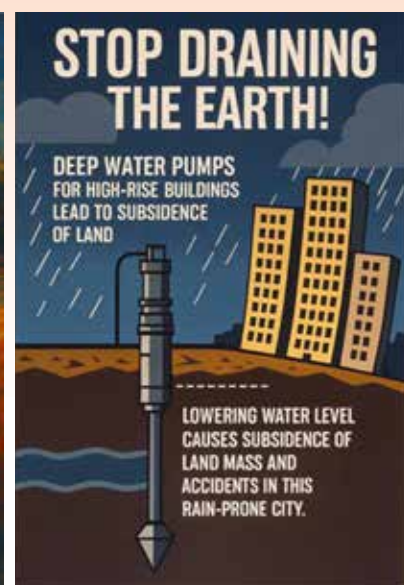
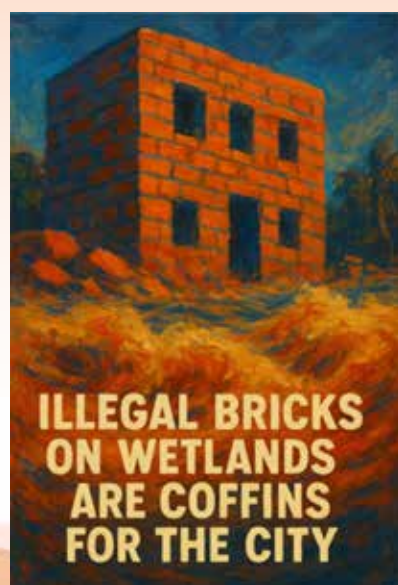
Saving Kolkata from drowning requires more than pumping machines and cosmetic drainage projects. It requires political courage to enforce the law, civic awareness to

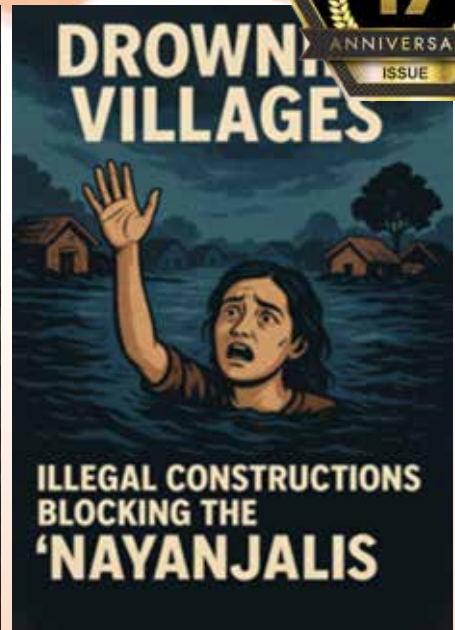
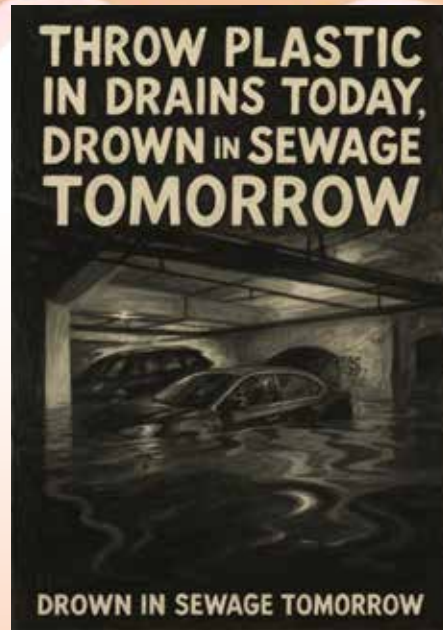
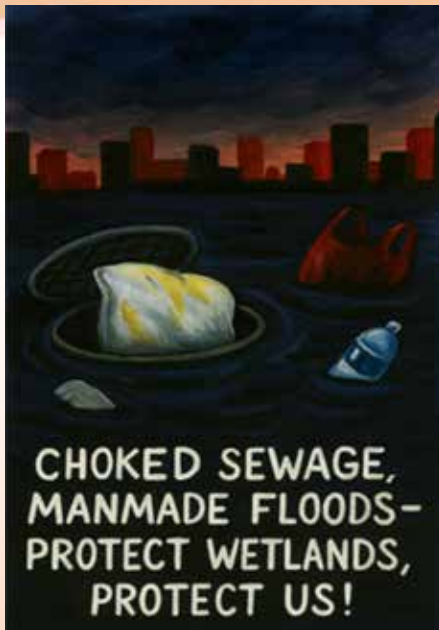
protect what is left, and a rethinking of what development means. Cities around the world are restoring wetlands as climate shields. Kolkata, in its arrogance, is destroying its own.

The rampant construction of high-rises across Kolkata, accompanied by deep tube wells and heavy water pumping, is silently draining the city's groundwater reserves. As these towers rise, they demand enormous daily water supply, far beyond sustainable levels. This reckless extraction lowers the water table, threatening to dry out aquifers that have taken centuries to form. The result will be land subsidence, worsening waterlogging, cracked foundations, and saltwater intrusion in low-lying areas. For a city already vulnerable to floods and climate change, the unchecked thirst of real estate is not just reckless—it is a slow, engineered disaster in the making.

What can be the simple Boroline remedy? The only answer is intensive awareness building drive through educational institutions and social platforms and participative road shows.

Can one imagine that over one thousand cars had to be towed, pushed or taken by crane to workshops just for four hours of rain? Did you ever comprehend that all automobile suppliers combined have failed to supply needed spares to make the cars road worthy again?





The recent spell of torrential rain has left Kolkata grappling with more than just waterlogged streets — over a thousand cars have been rendered ‘junk’. Many vehicles remain stranded or severely damaged, while garages are overwhelmed with repair demands. Replacement of spare parts is taking weeks, and the rising costs are burning holes in owners’ pockets.

But this crisis runs deeper than the flooded East Kolkata neighborhoods. It stems from years of civic neglect and public apathy.

“Each plastic bag in the sewer is a coffin nail for the city.”

Carelessly discarded plastic, thermocol, and even household waste like pillows have choked the city’s century-old British-era sewage network. With no proper dredging of riverbeds, water has nowhere to go but spill into the streets, turning roads into rivers. Kolkata’s tragedy, therefore, is not just about rainfall — it is about systemic failure, civic indifference, and the heavy price the city now pays for neglect.

“Wetlands protect us—plastic destroys us.”

Rural Bengal is reeling under another major threat. The illegal filling of Govt. owned nayanjalis—the network of village canals and drainage lines—has become

a silent disaster across Bengal. Once serving as natural arteries for rainwater and irrigation, these channels are now being encroached upon by unscrupulous builders and land sharks.

Concrete replaces flowing water, choking the lifelines of rural Bengal. The result is devastating - villages sink under sudden floods after heavy rains, vegetables rot in stagnant water, and farmers lose their seasonal crops. These artificial obstructions dismantle the water management systems, turning fertile lands into swampy lands, and pushing already distressed rural communities deeper into poverty and despair.

If Bengal wants to stay afloat, it must realize that wetlands are not obstacles to development and nayanjalis are the veins that drain out the bad blood. The only solution lies in awakening citizens to the calamity caused by their own negligence and that of the authorities. Both are equally to blame. Intensive awareness campaigns, strict waste management enforcement, and a sense of shared responsibility must replace the old attitude of “cholchey cholbe.” How long can Kolkata continue to float on excuses while sinking under its own apathy?

The NH-19 FOOD TRAIL

A Foodie's Delight

 Team WHEELS

For the past 17 years, every month Team WHEELS sets out on a journey to explore a new driving destination – both near and far from the City of Joy. We publish a detailed report of our journey complete with route descriptions, details of accommodation, local sightseeing along with the tulip (road map). This has resulted in the huge popularity of our 'Drive Out' column which quenches the thirst of our readers who are bitten by wanderlust.

This month, we thought of breaking away from the normal convention and combine our love for a long drive with food which led us to NH-19 also popularly known as the Delhi Road. In the past couple of years, the stretch between Kolkata and Bardhaman on Delhi Road has witnessed a huge surge in new food joints which serves lip smacking Indian, Chinese and Tandoor delicacies to the motorists and bikers who travel along this route. Having heard words of praises from friends and family, Team WHEELS decided to explore 'The NH-19 Food Trail' in search of the best that these eateries have to offer. Read on to find out what we discovered.

WHILE DRIVING FROM KOLKATA TO BARDHAMAN:

Your Choice Dine Express

Founded on: 2023

Cuisines served: Indian, Chinese, Tandoor

Business hours: 11.30 AM to 11.30 PM

Top 5 picks (prices are inclusive of GST):

Tandoori Chicken – Rs 430

Chicken Butter Masala – 240

Chicken Tikka Kebab – 290

Chili Chicken – 230

Chicken Fried Rice – 220

Seating capacity: 108

Parking capacity: around 6-7 cars

Meal for two: INR 400 – 500

Bar facility: Available

Distance from Nivedita Setu Toll Tax

Plaza: 17.7 kilometres



Hotel New Hindustan

Founded on: 2021

Cuisines served: Indian, Chinese, South Indian

Business hours: 07.00 AM to 12 Midnight

Top 5 picks (prices are exclusive of GST):

Alu Paratha – Rs 99

Masala Dosa – Rs 129

Veg Thali – Rs 169

Bhetki Paturi – Rs 319

Fish Finger – Rs 400

Seating capacity: 180

Parking capacity: Around 40 cars

Meal for two: INR 400 – 500

EV charging facility: Available

Distance from Nivedita Setu Toll Tax

Plaza: 22.2 kilometres





Labannya

Founded on: 2017

Cuisines served: Indian, Chinese, South Indian

Business hours: 07.00 AM to 11.30 PM

Top 5 picks (prices are exclusive of GST):

Alu Paratha – Rs 120

Chole Bhature – Rs 120

Chicken Tangdi Kebab – Rs 305

Tandoori Pomfret – Rs 390

Paneer Methi Masala – Rs 275

Seating capacity: 250

Parking capacity: Around 200 cars

Meal for two: INR 500 – 600

There is a Monginis store in the vicinity Labannya Resort located just behind the eatery has 31 well furnished rooms, banquets and swimming pool.

Distance from Nivedita Setu Toll Tax Plaza: 22.2 kilometres

Café Coffee Day

Founded on: 2008

Cuisines served: Indian style café fare

Business hours: 06.00 AM to 10.00 PM

Top 5 picks (prices are inclusive of GST):

Devil's Own Cold Coffee – Rs 380

Cappuccino – Rs 240

Smoked Chicken Sandwich – Rs 340

Spinach Corn Sandwich – Rs 225

Sizzling Brownie – Rs 380

Seating capacity: 45

Parking capacity: Around 10 cars

Meal for two: INR 600 - 800

Adjacent to HPCL COCO Pump

Distance from Nivedita Setu Toll Tax Plaza: 33.3 kilometres



Sweet Bowl

Founded on: 2022

Cuisines served: Indian, Chinese, South Indian

Business hours: 07.00 AM to 02.00 AM

Top 5 picks (prices are exclusive of GST):

Masala Dosa – Rs 79

Grilled Chicken Sandwich – Rs 165

Mutton Rogan Josh – Rs 365

Chicken Rara - 265

Fish & Chips – Rs 349

Seating capacity: 180

Parking capacity: Around 20 cars

Meal for two: INR 400 – 500

Distance from Nivedita Setu Toll Tax Plaza: 36.3 kilometres



Highway Mirchi (Vegetarian)

Founded on: 2020

Cuisines served: Indian, Chinese, South Indian

Business hours: 06.00 AM to 12.30 AM

Top 5 picks (prices are exclusive of GST):

Tandoori Paneer Dosa – Rs 300

Pizza Dosa – Rs 320

Benarasi Dum Alu – Rs 320

Veg Nizami Handi – Rs 320

Veg Malai Kofta – Rs 300

Seating capacity: 120

Parking capacity: Around 150 cars

Meal for two: INR 400 – 500

Distance from Nivedita Setu Toll Tax Plaza: 38.6 kilometres

Food Express (Multi-Brand Food Plaza)

Cuisines served: Indian, Bengali, Fast Food, Café Style Food

Business hours: 06.00 AM to 12 Midnight

Food Outlets:

Govindam (Pure Veg)

Flurys

Dewdrop Spa & Café

KFC

Baskin Robbins

Sorshe Posto

Kalkatte Ki Rasoi

Distance from Nivedita Setu Toll Tax

Plaza: 42.1 kilometres



Dal Makhani – Rs 215

Paneer Tikka – Rs 245

Seating capacity: 85

Parking capacity: Around 100 cars

Meal for two: INR 500 – 600

Distance from Nivedita Setu Toll Tax

Plaza: 45.2 kilometres

Azad Hind Dhaba

Founded on: 2006

Cuisines served: Indian, Chinese, Tandoor

Business hours: 24 Hours

Top 5 picks (prices are exclusive of GST):

Alu Do Piazza – Rs 155

Chicken Bharta – Rs 290

Butter Naan – Rs 90



WHILE DRIVING FROM BARDHAMAN TO KOLKATA:

Hotel Samrat

Founded on: 1997

Cuisines served: Indian, Bengali

Business hours: 24 Hours

Top 5 picks (prices are inclusive of GST):

Egg Tarka – Rs 110

Special Veg Thali – Rs 160

Paneer Butter Masala – Rs 260

Chili Chicken – Rs 280

Mutton Kasa – Rs 450

Seating capacity: 130

Parking capacity: Around 30 cars

Meal for two: INR 700 – 800

Distance from Alisha More (Bardhaman):

28.8 kilometres



Hotel Agni's

Founded on: 2017

Cuisines served: Indian, Chinese, Tandoor

Business hours: 11.00 AM to 10.45 PM

Top 5 picks (prices are exclusive of GST):

Mixed Fried Rice – Rs 185

Chicken Chatpata – Rs 260

Special Veg Thali – Rs 170

Chicken Reshmi Butter Masala – Rs 360

Fish Finger – Rs 390

Seating capacity: 84

Parking capacity: Around 30 cars

Meal for two: INR 600 – 700

Distance from Alisha More (Bardhaman):

43.8 kilometres

Surya Hotel & Restaurant

Founded on: 2024

Cuisines served: Indian, Chinese, Tandoor

Business hours: 07.00 AM to 01.00 AM

Top 5 picks (prices are exclusive of GST):

Sabzi Diwani Handi – Rs 299

Paneer Lahori – Rs 349

Chicken Handi – Rs 399

Fish Lasuni Tikka – Rs 440

Chicken Banjara Kebab – Rs 350

Seating capacity: 90

Parking capacity: Around 200 cars

Meal for two: INR 400 – 500

EV charging facility available

Rooms available for lodging

Distance from Alisha More (Bardhaman):

47 kilometres



Hotel Nilachal

Founded on: 2019

Cuisines served: Indian, Chinese, Tandoor

Business hours: 07.00 AM to 02.00 AM

Top 5 picks (prices are exclusive of GST):

Tandoori Chicken – Rs 430

Mutton Kasa – Rs 350

Veg Thali – Rs 140

Chicken Pakora – Rs 170

Fish Finger – Rs 250

Seating capacity: 84

Parking capacity: Around 30 cars

Meal for two: INR 400 – 500

Distance from Alisha More (Bardhaman): 64.5 kilometres

ROUTE MAP KOLKATA – BARDHAMAN

DISTANCE (km)	DIRECTION	ROAD NAME	ROUTE DESCRIPTION
0.0		NIVEDITA SETU (Toll Tax Point)	Set your Trip meter to '0'
1.3		NH - 19	Take right fork on to NH-19 towards Bardhaman/Delhi
2.3		NH - 19	Road joining from right
3.3		NH - 19	Onto flyover keep driving straight
7.6		NH - 19	Dankuni Toll Plaza. Pay Rs. 110 and proceed straight
17.7		NH - 19	Your Choice DINE EXPRESS Restaurant & Bar to on left
19.8		NH - 19	Hotel New Hisdusthan on left
22.2		NH - 19	Hotel Labannaya on left
33.3		NH - 19	Café Coffee Day on left
36.3		NH - 19	Sweet Bowl Restaurant on left
38.2		NH - 19	Turn left to approach Highway Mirchi
38.6		NH - 19	Highway Mirchi on left
41.7		NH - 19	Towards Food Express
42.1		NH - 19	Food Express on left
45.2		NH - 19	Azad Hind Dhaba on left

ROUTE MAP KOLKATA – BARDHAMAN

DISTANCE (km)	DIRECTION	ROAD NAME	ROUTE DESCRIPTION
48.3		NH - 19	Hinduthan Dhaba on left
57.0		NH - 19	Samrat Hotel, Keep Straight
71.1		NH - 19	Palsit Toll Plaza. Pay Rs 110 and proceed straight
86.0		NH - 19	Turn left for Burdwan City. Go under flyover
86.5		NH - 19	Keep straight Road on right Burdwan City
86.8		NH - 19	Turn left for Charnock Hotel & Restaurant

ROUTE MAP BARDHAMAN – KOLKATA

DISTANCE (km)	DIRECTION	ROAD NAME	ROUTE DESCRIPTION
0.0		ALISHA MORE	Set trip meter to 0 at Alisha more & proceed straight
18.4		NH - 19	Palsit Toll Tax Plaza. Pay Rs 110 and proceed straight
28.8		NH - 19	Hotel Samrat on left
48.8		NH - 19	Hotel Agni's on left
47.0		NH - 19	Surya Hotel & Restaurant on left
63.9		NH - 19	Take service road to reach Hotel Nilachal
64.5		NH - 19	Hotel Nilachal on left
68.2		NH - 19	Rejoin NH-19 from service road

KALI PUJA

THE ETERNAL WHISPER IN BENGAL'S MIND



Sandip Banerjee

In the velvet hush of a moonless Kartik night, when the Ganges laps silently against the ghats of Kolkata, the air thickens with the primal throb of dhak beats. Shadows flicker like restless spirits across narrow lanes of North Kolkata, where the scent of burning incense curls upward, mingling with the sharp tang of sacrificial blooms. Here, in the cradle of Bengal's soul, Kali Puja awakens—not with the triumphant fanfare of Durga's autumnal homecoming, but in a fierce, intimate embrace. The goddess descends, her four arms outstretched in a dance of annihilation and grace, her lolling tongue a crimson promise of redemption.

For the old-timers, it's the echo of childhood bonedi barir courtyards, where thakurer bhog steamed on silver thalis under flickering oil lamps. For the young, it's a portal to an ancient fire, a rebellion wrapped in devotion. This is Kali Puja: Bengal's dark heart beating against the chaos of time. Kali Puja is also a festival of lights. Previously, the sound of crackers would deafen the ears but now the changing times, we are led to more sophistry in bursting eco-friendly and less noisy crackers. This festival inevitably invites 'bhoots' and 'prets' and so we observe 'Bhoot Chaturdoshi', a day before Kali Puja.

Diwali often coincides with 'Kali Puja', though the deities worshipped are different. This is followed by the celebration of Bhaiphonta when all the brothers clad in 'Pajama-Panjabi' set forth to take 'phonta' as from their sisters and exchange pleasantries and gifts. On other terms 'Kali Puja' perhaps draws line to the celebratory season that starts with Durga Puja. The festive season being over, people finally return to their business.

Long before the spires of colonial Calcutta pierced the sky, Kali stirred in the shadowed folds of Bengal's spiritual tapestry. Her roots burrow deep into the pre-Vedic soil of the subcontinent, where tribal goddesses of destruction and fertility blurred into the Vedic hymns of blood and rebirth. Etymologically, 'Kali' evokes 'kala'—time itself, the inexorable devourer of worlds. Yet in Tantric lore, she is no mere harbinger of doom; she is 'Adya Shakti', the primordial energy that births creation from chaos. The 16th century marked her ascent in Bengal, when Tantric sage Krishnananda Agamavagisha dreamt of the goddess commanding him to institute her worship on the new moon of Kartik. This was no sanitized ritual; Tantra's esoteric pulse infused Kali Puja with midnight vigils, esoteric mantras, and offerings that danced on the edge of the forbidden—animal sacrifices symbolizing the slaying of ego, the transcendence of duality.

Unlike Durga Puja's radiant celebration of cosmic victory, Kali's festival hums with raw, nocturnal intensity. Durga arrives in splendour, her lion roaring triumph over the buffalo demon Mahishasura; Kali emerges from Durga's furrowed brow, a black fury unleashed to devour Raktabija, the demon whose blood-spilled drops birthed endless clones. Her symbolism is Bengal's own: the fierce 'maa' who cradles the orphan in one hand and wields the sword of justice in the other. Protruding tongue? A blush of modesty after stepping on her lord Shiva, or the devouring flame of life's illusions. Garland of skulls? The ego's severed heads. In her sway over Shiva—the destroyer tamed by his devotee's footfall—lies the Tantric truth: feminine power (shakti) animates the passive male principle (shiva), a duality that mirrors Bengal's rivers, lush yet unforgiving, nurturing yet prone to devastating floods. Legends swirl like monsoon mist around her form. In the Devi Mahatmya, Kali's laughter shakes the heavens as she quells asuras, her matted locks whipping like storm clouds. Yet her motherly gaze softens in Bengal's Shyama Sangeet, where poets like Ramprasad Sen croon, "O Mother, why dost thou forget thy child?" This paradox—terror and tenderness—embodies the Bengali psyche: a



land of Tagore's ethereal verses and Subhas Bose's revolutionary fire, where faith is both a lullaby and a war cry.

By the 18th century, as the East India Company's shadow lengthened over Bengal's verdant plains, Kali Puja flickered from esoteric chambers into the grand halls of royalty. Enter Raja Krishnachandra Ray of Nadia (1710–1783), the visionary zamindar whose devotion transformed a Tantric whisper into a cultural roar. In the opulent Rajbari of Krishnanagar, he instituted the first organized Kali Puja around 1750, blending Vaishnava piety with Shakta fervour. No longer confined to midnight akhadas of wandering siddhas, the goddess was enthroned in thakurdalans, her idol bedecked in gold khats and fed bhog of khichuri and payesh. Krishnachandra's patronage extended to poets and priests, scripting mangal kavyas that immortalized Kali as Bengal's guardian. His grandson amplified the spectacle, drawing pilgrims from across the delta, where the dhak's rhythm mingled with the chants of Raksha Kali festivals—protectors against famine and plague.

This royal imprimatur rippled through Bengal's bonedi families, those aristocratic

lineages whose barir pujo became synonymous with understated splendour. In lanes like those of Shobhabazar or Jorasanko, thakur ghars glowed with 108 earthen lamps, their flames dancing like the goddess' 'tandava'. Yet it was the 19th century's indomitable Rani Rashmoni (1793–1861) who etched Kali's legacy into stone—or rather, into the Hooghly's banks. A low-caste widow turned zamindar empress, Rashmoni defied the Company's tax voracity and Brahminical snobbery alike. En route to Kashi in 1847, a dream halted her: Kali, fierce and resplendent, forbade the pilgrimage, commanding a temple on Kolkata's soil. Thus rose Dakshineswar Kali Temple in 1855, its nine-spined 'navaratna' silhouette a beacon of inclusive devotion. Here, Ramakrishna Paramahansa found his 'maa', and the goddess' 'pith'—a living, breathing icon—drew the downtrodden, blurring caste lines in a sea of proshan.

Under colonial gaze, Kali Puja evolved from private piety to subtle resistance. As British cannons echoed from Plassey to Buxar, bonedi pujas in old havelis preserved Bengal's unbowed spirit. The 1910 Barowari movement, sparked in North Kolkata's akharas, democratized the divine: community committees pooled bhiksha for pandals, turning barir pujo into public exaltation. Post-independence, as Kolkata shed its imperial skin, the festival mirrored the city's rebirth—grittier, more vibrant, with artisans

from Kumartuli crafting idols that fused clay with contemporary critique.

Wander the labyrinthine byways of Kumartuli or Bagbazar, and Kolkata's Kali Puja unfolds like a sepia-tinted pater album. Kalighat Temple, perched on the Adi Ganga's banks, predates the city itself—its origins whispered in 15th-century Mangal Kavyas, marking the spot where Sati's toe fell in grief-stricken dismemberment. Rebuilt in the 1800s, its courtyard still hums with priests chanting 'Karpur Gauram', the air heavy with belpata and the metallic bite of fresh puja. History tells us that when the temple was properly constructed Rani Rashmoni had a role to play for many believed it was ominous for to common belief Kali was not a domestic deity—she was to be worshipped in the resorts of dacoits or mystics, mostly far from the madding crowd. When immediately after the installation of the temple, natural calamity struck the city, the tragic foreboding intensified. However, prejudices gave path to acceptance, as the temple flourished in worship and adoration.

Northward lies Thanthania Kali Bari, a 1703 relic of terracotta filigree and unyielding faith, founded by merchant Shankar Ghosh amid the cacophony of Chitpur's trades. It's 'Siddheswari' idol, eyes wide with primordial knowing, presides over dhunuchi dances that sway like will-o'-the-wisps, evoking the tara—stars—piercing meghe dhaka skies of Ritwik Ghatak's eponymous film. Ghatak's 'Meghe Dhaka Tara' (1960), with its refugee shanties and unspoken longings, captures Bengal's partitioned ache, where Kali's shadow looms as both curse and comforter—much like Uttam Kumar's brooding matinee idols in 'Sagar Sangamey', their gazes turning heavenward in festival reveries. Kali Banerjee, that evergreen bhadralok of the silver screen, lent his earnest fervour to tales like 'Neel Akasher Neeche', where rural piety clashes with urban drift, a microcosm of Puja's migratory soul. Yet woven into these storied stones are lesser-known threads of wonder. In Tiretta Bazaar's Tangra, the Chinese Kali Mandir stands as a cross-cultural enigma—a 20th-century shrine where Hakka immigrants, fleeing opium wars, sought solace in the dark mother. Legend whispers of a fevered boy, laid at a banyan tree's roots in 1924; his



miraculous recovery birthed the temple, its puja blending joss sticks with sindoor, a testament to Kolkata's mongrel heart. Darker still is the lore of Dakat Kalibari in Maniktala, where 19th-century dacoits—highwaymen of the Sundarbans—offered narabali (human sacrifice) to their patroness before raids. Urban whispers persist of a spectral bhoot guarding the garbhagriha, its wails syncing with the dhak on Amavasya nights—a chilling reminder of Kali's untamed edge.

Today, Kolkata pulses with Kali's modern alchemy. From Barasat's sprawling barowari extravaganzas—rivalling Durga Puja in scale—to Fata Kesoto's avant-garde pandals, where artisans like Mintu Pal sculpt thakurs with LED veins and recycled steel, the festival marries antiquity with audacity. The 'Baroma' of Naihati sets the crowd to their feet as they queue almost for indefinite time only to have a glimpse of the idol. Pandals bloom like nocturnal lotuses: Baghajatin's eco-idols from biodegradable clay, Behala's immersive installations narrating climate woes through Kali's lens. The dhakis still command the streets, their beats a hypnotic trance, while dhunuchi dancers' whirl in lungis and bindis, flames leaping from brass censers like liberated souls.

Cultural soirées punctuate the nights: musical recitals under starlit mandaps, or in covered dais. Street-side addas where seniors swap puja yarns over tea and local -bakery biscuits unfolding memories of their childhood when lighting crackers did not have any embargo on it. Amid partition's scars and globalization's grind, Kali Puja embodies Bengal's resilience—a feminine thunderclap against patriarchy's gales, a rebellion cloaked in sari folds. She is the 'nari shakti' of Rani Rashmoni's defiance, the chaotic creativity of Tagore's 'Gitanjali', the unyielding faith that saw Kolkata through cyclones and pandemics.

In the quiet aftermath, as visarjan processions wind toward the Hooghly—idols dissolving into the river's embrace like dreams at dawn—Kali Puja reveals its deepest alchemy. It binds the 'didima' in her bonedi rocker, humming Ramprasad-er padabali to wide-eyed 'pishimas', with the millennial scrolling Insta reels of pandal-hopping. For the elder, it's the nostalgia of thakur



barir atrium, where purohits invoked blessings amid jaggery sweets and kaaju sweets. For the youth, it's a reclamation: Kali as eco-warrior, feminist icon, a digital-age disruptor in a world of filtered facades.

This is Bengal's legacy—a goddess who devours darkness not to conquer, but to rebirth. In her garlanded neck, we see our own severed fears; in her compassionate tread upon Shiva, the harmony of opposites. No wonder Kali Puja had an intricate but meaningful connection with the revolutionary nationalism in Bengal. Many puja organisers used the platform as a hidden transit of revolutionary movement with many nationalists rallying for secret meetings. The British government became suspicious of the growing number of Kali Puja, particularly after the partition of Bengal in 1905. In her brilliant observation on the Goddess Kali, Sister Nivedita found her as a symbol of fearlessness with the Goddess embodying destructive and creative forces, giving direction to ultimate reality. As the dhak beats fades and dawn gilds the minarets of Dakshineswar, one feels it: the eternal night is but a prelude to light. Kali Puja endures, a flame in Kolkata's veins, whispering to generations, "Rise, my child. The dance continues."

Rasmancha of Hadal Narayanpur



WHEELER Kinjal Bose

The twin villages of Hadal Narayanpur located in Patrasayer block of Bishnupur subdivision of Bankura district of West Bengal is home to a number of terracotta temples and a beautiful saptadasratna (seventeen pinnacle) octagonal rasmancha.

A rasmancha is temple-like structure used during the Rasyatra on a full moon day held in the Bengali month of Kartick when the idols of Radha-Krishna are taken out from the main temple and placed here

so that the devotees at large can witness the deities. Compared to a dolmancha, where the idols of Radha-Krishna are kept for a single day, in rasmancha the deities are placed for three days mainly after the evening. The manchas are situated within the temple compound. The walls of these temple-like structures may either have intricate terracotta decorations or stucco works or simply floral motifs.

The rasmancha of Baro-taraf of Mondal family of Hadal Narayanpur is simply unique





in many respects. First of all it is one of the largest of its kind – double storied with a height of about 40 feet. Secondly, all the sides are decorated with rich terracotta works. Thirdly, it may seem from a distance that this tall structure looks like a temple. Fourthly, each corner of the rasmancha has sculptures depicting Gaja Lakshmi; Ram Sita; Krishna Radhika; Anantasayan Bishnu; Gostho-Lila; Mahisasuramardini Durga; Marriage of Shiva; Shiva Nandi-Bhringi.

Placed on a higher pedestal, this saptadasa rasmancha with “rekha turrets” was built in the year 1854. David McCutcheon in his book “Brick Temples of Bengal” mentioned that Sibnarayan Mondal commissioned a person by the name of Narayan Sutradhar of Balsi to build a number of buildings including this spectacular rasmancha which, during those days, cost fourteen thousand rupees.

More or less the sculptures on the walls of the rasmancha are intact but care should be taken to protect it. It is a unique heritage structure. There was an old custom that during the days of Rashyatra all the shalagramshilas of the village were kept here for three days.



DIWALI CAR LAUNCHES



Promit Hazra

As Diwali illuminates homes across India, showrooms across the country are gearing up for a series of thrilling car launches. Automakers are lining up everything from snazzy hatch-sized SUV facelifts to sport sedan revivals, all- electric SUV platforms, and refreshed versions of long-standing off-road icons. Whether you are a tech-loving urban commuter or someone who loves the old-school feel of a mechanical machine, there's something exciting waiting under the festive lights. Here's a look at the five car launches this season.



Hyundai Venue Facelift

Hyundai's Venue has been one of India's top-selling compact SUVs for over half a decade, and the 2025 facelift arriving in early November is expected to make it more stylish and feature-packed than ever. Prices are likely to start around INR 8.2 lakh & go up to INR 13 lakh and the updates aren't just cosmetic. A reworked front fascia with a refreshed grille, new connected LED DRLs, and quad-beam headlamps give the Venue a sharper, almost mini-Creta-inspired look. Inside, there's a slick 10-inch touchscreen, a new digital cluster, and ADAS features, something unprecedented in this segment. Under the hood, it retains its triple-engine lineup, a 1.2-litre petrol (83 PS), a 1.0-litre turbo-petrol (120 PS), and a 1.5-litre diesel (116 PS). Gearbox choices include a 5-speed manual, 6-speed iMT, and



7-speed DCT. With a panoramic sunroof and upgraded safety kit including six airbags and a 360-degree camera, the Venue aims to solidify its position against rivals.



Skoda Octavia RS

Perhaps the most exciting launch for petrol heads, the Skoda Octavia RS makes a roaring comeback this October, priced at around INR 45 lakh (ex-showroom). After a brief hiatus, the Czech brand's cult performance sedan is returning to India as a limited edition with just 100 units up for grabs. Powering it is a 2.0-litre turbocharged TSI engine that belts out 265 PS and 370 Nm, paired with a 7-speed DSG gearbox. That setup takes it from 0 to 100

kmph in a brisk 6.4 seconds, figures that should please anyone who values pure driver engagement. Compared to the older RS 245, this new model gets improved chassis stiffness, recalibrated suspension, and an electronic differential lock for tighter grip during cornering. The visual changes are subtle yet sporty with matte finish alloys, darkened LED tail lamps, and those signature red brake callipers. Step inside, and you will be greeted by sport seats, red accent stitching, and a 13-inch infotainment system with Skoda connect.



Mahindra Bolero 2025

For those who prefer rugged dependability over digital dashboards, Mahindra's Bolero continues its legacy as a go-anywhere workhorse with a dash of modernization. Priced between INR 7.99 lakh and INR 9.69 lakh, the new Bolero retains its 1.5-litre diesel engine generating 75 bhp and 210 Nm, mated to a 5-speed manual transmission. Mahindra hasn't tampered with its ladder-frame toughness, and that's a good thing, this SUV's backbone still has rough-road endurance. The refreshed grille, new graphics, and new paint options bring subtle distinction, while the interiors now get a digital cluster, better seats, and basic comfort features like power windows and a Bluetooth-enabled audio system. The Bolero has never been about tech or flash, it's the vehicle that soldiers across rural India and continues to do what it does best, being unstoppable.

Maruti Suzuki eVitara

Maruti Suzuki steps into the EV market with the eVitara, its first all-electric SUV, expected to debut by mid-December 2025. Based on Suzuki's new eVX platform jointly developed with Toyota, the eVitara will target the growing crowd of electric SUV buyers at a starting price of around INR 15 lakh. Two battery options are planned, 49 kWh and 61 kWh, with the latter promising up to 500 km on a full charge. The powertrain choices include both front-wheel and all-wheel drive, with outputs ranging from 143 hp to 173 hp. The cabin's layout is futuristic dominated



by a wide floating touchscreen, two-tone aesthetics, and features like ventilated seats, regenerative braking, and Level 2 ADAS. This SUV is expected to set the tone for Maruti's new-era mobility direction, competing with the likes of the Hyundai Creta EV and MG ZS EV.



Mahindra Thar 3-Door Facelift

The updated Thar was recently launched at a starting price of INR 9.99 lakh. With styling tweaks and improved comfort, Mahindra's most famous off-roader is looking sharper than ever. Cosmetic upgrades include a new bumper design, smoked DRLs, and refreshed interiors with a larger infotainment screen and improved seat cushioning. Under the skin, the Thar remains a true beast offered with 1.5L diesel, 2.0L turbo-petrol, and 2.2L diesel engines producing between 117 to 150 hp and up to 320 Nm torque. Gearbox options include a 6-speed manual and automatic, with both 4x2 and 4x4 variants available. The latter gets mechanical locking differentials and terrain modes, ensuring the Thar still feels at home both on dunes and in the city.

Faith, Modern Spectacle and Money

 Abhijit Dasgupta



*Durga, our daughter, fierce and strong,
Born to battle what is wrong.
But today you hide in painted light, In
glamour's shade, away from fight.*

*Glitter masks the wounds we know,
While deeper still, the wrongs do grow.
O Mother, when will your fire rise—
With blazing arms and burning eyes?*

*To strike the dark, the filth, the dust,
And cleanse the world of greed and
lust.*

An octogenarian's reflections often become food without spice, no salt— tasteless, yet too stubborn for the trash bin. Here is one.

Durga Puja, Bengal's grandest festival, is far more than a religious observance. It is theatre, carnival, ritual, and memory woven together. For five glittering autumn days, the goddess Uma returns home, and the state transforms into a stage of lights, music, devotion, and artistry. UNESCO's recognition of the festival as intangible cultural heritage has only reinforced its global stature.

Yet beneath the glow of pandal lights and the drumbeat of dhaks lies an older and more complex story; of politics disguised as religion, of superstition masked as devotion, of commerce eclipsing craft, and of myth caught between symbolism and science. To understand Durga Puja is not only to marvel at its splendour but to reckon with the shadows it carries.

The roots of today's spectacle lie deep in Bengal's colonial past. In the 18th century, when the East India Company consolidated power, the festival became a political stage. Wealthy zamindars—flush with land

revenues and eager to curry favour with the new rulers—turned Puja into a theatre of opulence.

The most famous example is Nabakrishna Deb's Sovabazar Puja, where Lord Clive himself appeared after the Battle of Plassey. The irony was cruel: only months earlier, Nawab Siraj ud-Daulah had burnt down Calcutta's only church. Yet now, the British masters sat as honoured guests at a Hindu festival, entertained by banquets and nautch girls, while the goddess became little more than a bargaining token to fulfil the aspirations of the sycophants.

This marked a turning point. What had once been a household worship of Durga, rooted in devotion, was converted into a public display of loyalty and influence. Religion merged with politics, faith bent under the weight of spectacle.

The pattern continues. Where zamindars once wielded banquets and offered 'Nautch' girls from lower castes, modern politicians and corporations use billboards, slogans, campaign songs, and corporate sponsorships. The budgets of many urban

pujas now run into crores, and pandals become platforms for electoral influence as much as artistic expression.

The goddess, instead of being a unifying mother, often serves as a prop in Bengal's theatre of power. Just as in the 18th century, devotion is frequently overshadowed by exaggerated display of pomp and grandeur.

In 1910, two young brothers of the Sardar family were humiliated at the opulent Durga Puja of the wealthy Sarkars. In that era, aristocratic households staged their Pujas as spectacles—lavish banquets for the British, orchestras, fireworks, even nautch performances. To common people, entry was restricted, and devotion became secondary to display. The humiliation stung the brothers not only personally but symbolically; the goddess herself seemed caged within the walls of privilege. They vowed that one day they would host a Durga Puja where the doors would remain open to all.

It took until 1942 for that promise to be fulfilled. Their puja was more than worship—it was a polite protest. In an age when elitism dominated religion, the Sardar brothers reclaimed Durga as the mother of everyone, not just the chosen few.

One of the most powerful traditions of Bengal's Durga Puja is the making of the clay idol. The sacred clay (kumari mati) is collected not only from riverbanks but also from the doorstep of a prostitute's house. This act carries profound symbolism: it erases social boundaries and declares that the Mother belongs to all — high or low, pure or stigmatized. The soil from society's margins merges into the goddess herself, turning Durga into the true "Mother for All."

This tension between opulence and faith had been observed much earlier. Colonial newspapers often commented, sometimes with mockery, on Bengal's "theatrical" Pujas:

In the Calcutta Courier (1857), one article sneered that "Madam Doorga, so long the favourite of native grandees, may vanish altogether should the stream of English patronage be withdrawn." The suggestion was clear: without British approval, the



goddess herself would lose prestige.

The Friend of India papers carried wry accounts of British officers dining at Shobhabazar Rajbari's puja, where Lord Clive once arrived on elephant-back, turning devotion into a political theatre.

Later, Amrita Bazar Patrika and Bengalee began critiquing the same extravagance, pointing out how wealth was squandered while famine and poverty stalked Bengal's villages. These editorials planted early seeds of the idea that true faith cannot thrive under vanity.

The Bhakti saints once sang against ritualistic pomp; the Satnamis rose against exclusion; Gandhi framed Ganesh Utsav as a people's festival rather than a display of aristocratic power. The Sardar brothers, in their modest 1942 puja, stood within this continuum of quiet revolts.

Today, the cycle repeats. With multimillion rupee pandals that mimic palaces or pyramids, and carnival processions - a traveling amusement show, Durga Puja or again risks being consumed by spectacle. It generates money and certainly the poor gain from these. But alongside, there are smaller voices—eco-conscious pandals, rural community pujas, and even some "bonedi bari" traditions that hold on to rituals stripped of extravagance. They stand as reminders

that worship is strongest when it is shared, not staged.

The question is, will Bengal once more hear the call of protest—this time not against zamindar vanity, but against dazzle only culture—so that Durga may again return as the universal mother, unbound by wealth or exclusivity?

Alongside politics, superstition has crept into the heart of the festival. Indoctrinated priests often insist on elaborate rituals—costing devotees fortunes—arguing that without them the goddess's blessings will not descend. Fortune-tellers and self-styled spiritual guides thrive during the season, offering promises of prosperity in exchange for offerings.

The simplicity of faith gets lost in ritualistic excess. Religion becomes transaction. What should be a personal act of devotion turns into a marketplace of invented rites, where the currency is not sincerity but payment, in money, kind or allegiance.

Commerce, too, has transformed the festival. Artisans of Kumartuli, the traditional clay sculptors, spend the year creating idols that sustain the Puja. Yet they remain among the least rewarded. Their craft, rooted in sacred tradition, is diluted by demands for cinema-inspired idols and pandals modeled on global monuments or Bollywood sets.

The traditional ekchala idol—Durga standing with her children in a single frame—faces near extinction, replaced by fragmented, theatrical interpretations. Smuggled Chinese lights illuminating the streets,

squeezing out the art of local craftsmen. In Mumbai, fibre glass Ganesh has become popular.

Thus, the homecoming of the goddess risks turning into exile for the very artisans who gave the form. Even the act of pandal-hopping, once about artistic reverence and quiet awe, increasingly resembles a carnival of fashion shows, celebrity endorsements, and product launches. Pujas compete like film releases—who has the tallest idol, the most elaborate pandal, the boldest theme.

What was meant to be community bonding often becomes borrowed glamour. The festival bends beneath cinema screens and corporate banners, risking a break from the very tradition it claims to uphold.

But Durga Puja is also about stories—stories that keep evolving in every generation. Among them, none is more profound than the tale of Ram's Akal Bodhan.

Traditionally, Durga was worshipped in spring (Basanti Puja). Yet the Ramayana tells us that before his battle with Ravana, Ram invoked Durga in the autumn—akal or untimely—worship. He offered 108 blue lotuses to the goddess. When he found one missing, he prepared to pluck out his own eye—famed as lotus-like—to complete the offering. Moved by his devotion, Durga appeared and blessed him for victory.

This story not only explains why Bengal celebrates Durga Puja in autumn but also underlines a larger truth: that rituals and

calendars may shift, but devotion is

what gives them meaning. Ram's invocation was not about spectacle but about surrender, not about politics but about faith.

In the Akal Bodhan lies a reminder of what Puja could be—an act of simple, profound worship where sincerity matters more than a carnival.

If Ram's invocation represents devotion at its purest, another story from the Ramayana illustrates the risk of confusing symbolism with



science; the tale of the Pushpak Rath.

According to the epic, after defeating Ravana, Ram returned to Ayodhya in the Pushpak Vimana—a flying chariot originally owned by Kubera. For centuries, devotees treated it as poetic metaphor. In the 20th century, however, the Vaimanika Shastra surfaced, claiming to describe ancient aerodynamics. Enthusiasts hailed it as evidence of India's forgotten aviation past.

But in 1974, the Indian Institute of Science examined the designs and declared them aeronautically impossible. The danger here is real: when poetry is mistaken for physics, myth for manual, imagination for engineering. Epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata are cultural treasures, not blueprints for technology.

Hanuman's leap across the ocean, too, may be read as a timeless dream of breaking earthly limits—a metaphor for human aspiration, not an account of space travel.

Yet in today's society, such myths are often packaged as literal truths. Leaders and influencers invoke them not as symbols but as proofs of ancient technological supremacy. In a country where education often means rote learning, where Swami Vivekananda's vision of "man-making education" remains unrealized, superstition finds fertile ground.

Rituals become institutionalized. Breaking coconuts, lighting lamps, or offering costly prayers are sold as solutions to personal or collective crises. For a suffering population, these acts may offer temporary psychological relief. But when endorsed by political leaders or religious authorities, they risk becoming tools of manipulation.

Faith becomes dependency. People lose confidence in their own strength, surrendering instead to ritual prescriptions.

This confusion between myth and fact is not unique to India. Eric von Däniken's *Chariots of the Gods* argued that ancient monuments like the pyramids or the Nazca lines were built with alien help, since humans allegedly lacked the necessary technology. Archaeologists, however, proved

otherwise: Egyptians used copper chisels, ramps, and human ingenuity; the Incas mastered stone-cutting techniques still admired today.

Von Däniken was accused of mistranslating and misrepresenting evidence. Yet his theories, much like claims of Pushpak Vimanas, captivated the public imagination. The risk lies in allowing pseudoscience to replace critical inquiry.

Durga Puja, therefore, stands at a crossroad. On one side is its cultural magnificence: community bonding, artistic innovation, spiritual devotion, and mythic storytelling. On the other side lie its distortions: superstition sold as truth, politics masquerading as faith, commerce overpowering craft.

The challenge is to preserve the former without succumbing to the latter. To cherish mythology without mistaking it for manual. To celebrate spectacle without letting it consume sincerity. To protect artisans and traditions from being buried under imported lights and corporate banners.

Above all, to remember Ram's Akal Bodhan—that true worship is not in the extravagance of offerings but in the devotion of the heart.

Durga's annual visit is meant to be the homecoming of a daughter, welcomed with joy, reverence, and love. If the festival is to remain the soul of Bengal, it must shed the baggage of unnecessary rituals, superstitious manipulations, and commercial greed.

Uma deserves more than being reduced to a stage prop for votes, fortunes, or fashion shows. She deserves what Ram once gave her—sincere devotion, born of faith and courage.

Durga Puja, in its truest sense, is not about power or politics. It is about reclaiming confidence, dignity, and the will to fight against darkness. The 'asura'—whether that darkness is Ravana in myth, colonialism in history, or ignorance and exploitation in the present.



ANNOUNCEMENT



21st Car Treasure Hunt

Venue: Nazrul Tirtha

Open for all



City by the Night

Venue: TBA

For Wheelers & Guests

Happy Birthday to Wheelers

NAME	DATE
Soumik Dutta	1-Oct
Sipra Mukhopadhyay	1-Oct
Subrata Boral	2-Oct
Sanjay Chirania	2-Oct
Raktim Banerjee	2-Oct
Pradeep Kumar Sen	2-Oct
Ravi Choudhary	2-Oct
Abhishek Sarvadhikari	3-Oct
Dr. Sanjay Bhattacharyya	3-Oct
Manas Kumar Majumdar	3-Oct
Sarbani Ghosh	4-Oct
Mouktick Dasgupta	4-Oct
Samarendra Nath Mukherjee	4-Oct
Saikat Konar	4-Oct
Abhiir Daw	5-Oct
Ravindra Wankhede	5-Oct
Sumitava Mukherjee	6-Oct
Shyambenu Basu	7-Oct
Rohit Tulsian	7-Oct
Palash Sen	7-Oct
Harsh Sovasaria	7-Oct
Satyendra Nath Saha	9-Oct
Ajeet Pal Singh	9-Oct
Aditya Vikram Dasgupta	10-Oct
Debapam Ghosh	10-Oct
Sekhar Datta	10-Oct
Tanmoy Roy	12-Oct
Pratap Mukherjee	12-Oct
Debabrata Chakraborty	13-Oct
Suvankar Dasgupta	14-Oct
Sabyasachi Ray	14-Oct
Sanjay Biswas	15-Oct

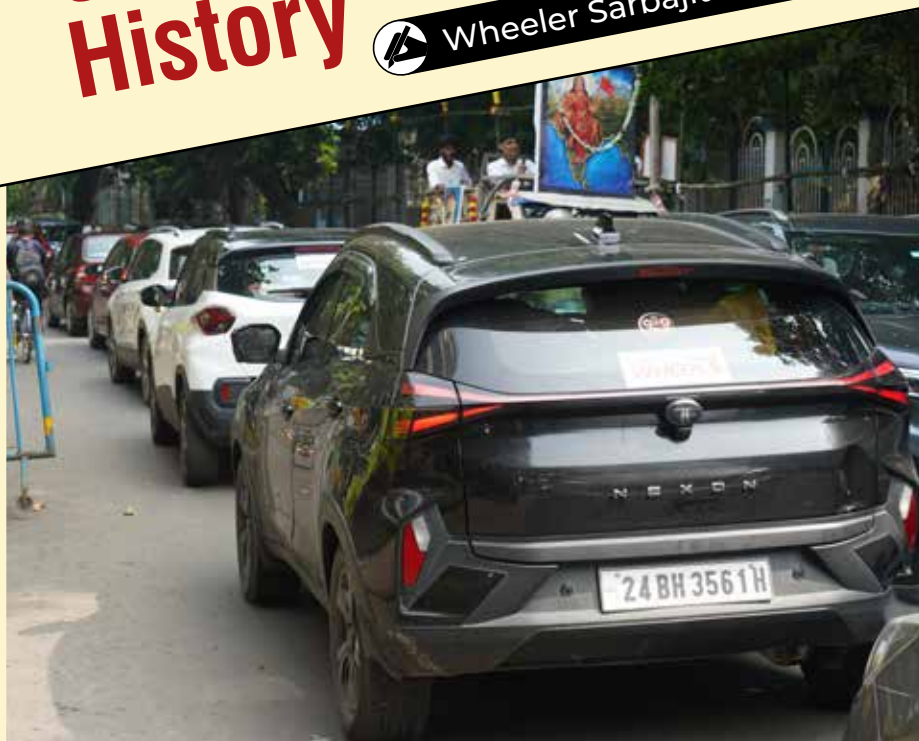
NAME	DATE
Kamalika Bhattacharyya	15-Oct
Partha Sarathi Mondal	16-Oct
Ranjan Mukherjee	16-Oct
Dr. Amit Paul	16-Oct
Jagannath Ghatak	16-Oct
Dr. Amarnath Mukherjee	18-Oct
Arnab Dey	18-Oct
Ashim Kumar Dutta	19-Oct
Rakesh Agarwal	20-Oct
Rahul Shroff	20-Oct
Debaprem Chatterjee	20-Oct
Debangana Bhattacharjee	21-Oct
Abhijit Roy	21-Oct
Debashis Banerjee	21-Oct
Sujoy Roy	23-Oct
Sudipto Gupta	23-Oct
Ujjal Maitra	23-Oct
Rajkumar Bhattacharya	24-Oct
Madhumita Kumar Das Lala	25-Oct
Prateek Das	26-Oct
Anirban Saha	26-Oct
Pushan Kar	26-Oct
Saikat Sarkar	27-Oct
Madhumita Bishnu	27-Oct
Sutanu Ghosh	28-Oct
Moloy Chakravorty	29-Oct
Jit Mitra	29-Oct
Arindam Sarkar	29-Oct
Mostakin Jamadar	30-Oct
Gautam Saha	30-Oct
Biswajit Mukherjee	31-Oct



Eastern India's biggest motoring magazine, Kolkata on Wheels, celebrated Mahalaya 2025 in a truly unique way with a specially curated day drive tour for its life members, fondly known as Wheelers. On September 21, over 160 participants in more than 45 cars drove to Lalit Lodge in Sankrail, Howrah—a historic Banedi Bari belonging to the Paul family. The highlight of the day was the chance to witness the sacred Chokhyudan, where the artist paints the eyes of Maa Durga, breathing life into the goddess's form.

Wheels Mahalaya Drive To Lalit Lodge Wheelers Witness Chokhyudan Amidst History

 Wheeler Sarbajit Mookherjee



drive's final stretch—about 400 meters of narrow road with the mighty Ganga flowing alongside—was a test of patience and precision driving, but every Wheeler negotiated it with ease, eager to reach the destination.

Lalit Lodge welcomed the convoy with its old-world charm. The Paul family's Durga Puja here is nearly 200 years old, making it one of Bengal's heritage pujas. The house, facing both the Ganges and a serene pond, provided the perfect setting for the divine ritual. Participants queued up eagerly for a glimpse of the Chokhyudan, an unforgettable moment of devotion and tradition.

Adding to the day's flavour were engaging partner activities. Nikon, one of the event partners, conducted an exclusive photography workshop, where experts guided Wheelers on technical settings, lens usage, and pro tips for capturing the perfect frame. Meanwhile,

The day began at 8:30 AM as Wheelers gathered at Menoka Cinema Hall. Registration and route briefing were accompanied by neatly packed breakfasts that set the mood for the festive outing. Soon after, the convoy rolled out, drawing curious glances on the city streets. The



Saini Toyota showcased two of their latest cars against the picturesque backdrop of Lalit Lodge, drawing admiration from the crowd. Both partners jointly announced a photography competition for the day, sparking enthusiastic participation as Wheelers captured the ritual, the venue, and each other in creative frames.

History came alive through stories shared by senior members of the Paul family, who recounted tales of their lineage and the origins of their puja. The Wheelers listened with rapt attention, gaining rare insight into

a family tradition preserved for centuries.

No Bengali celebration is complete without a sumptuous meal, and this day was no exception. Lunch was served in three batches to accommodate the large gathering, but the wait was well worth it. Dishes like Dhokar Dalna and Chhanar Dalna won many hearts, yet it was the unique Mochar Paturi that emerged as the unanimous “Dish of the Day.” Rounding off the feast were irresistible Mishti Doi and soft, syrupy Rosogollas, which had everyone singing praises for the caterer.



By late afternoon, Wheelers began their return journey, carrying back memories of a day steeped in culture, camaraderie, and motoring joy. Special thanks were extended to Wheeler Subhankar Pal, whose tireless efforts made the event possible, along with the warm hospitality of the Paul family.

With yet another successful drive completed, Team Wheels looks ahead with renewed enthusiasm. For the Wheelers, the Mahalaya Drive was more than a road trip—it was a celebration of heritage, tradition, and the unbreakable bond that keeps this motoring family together.



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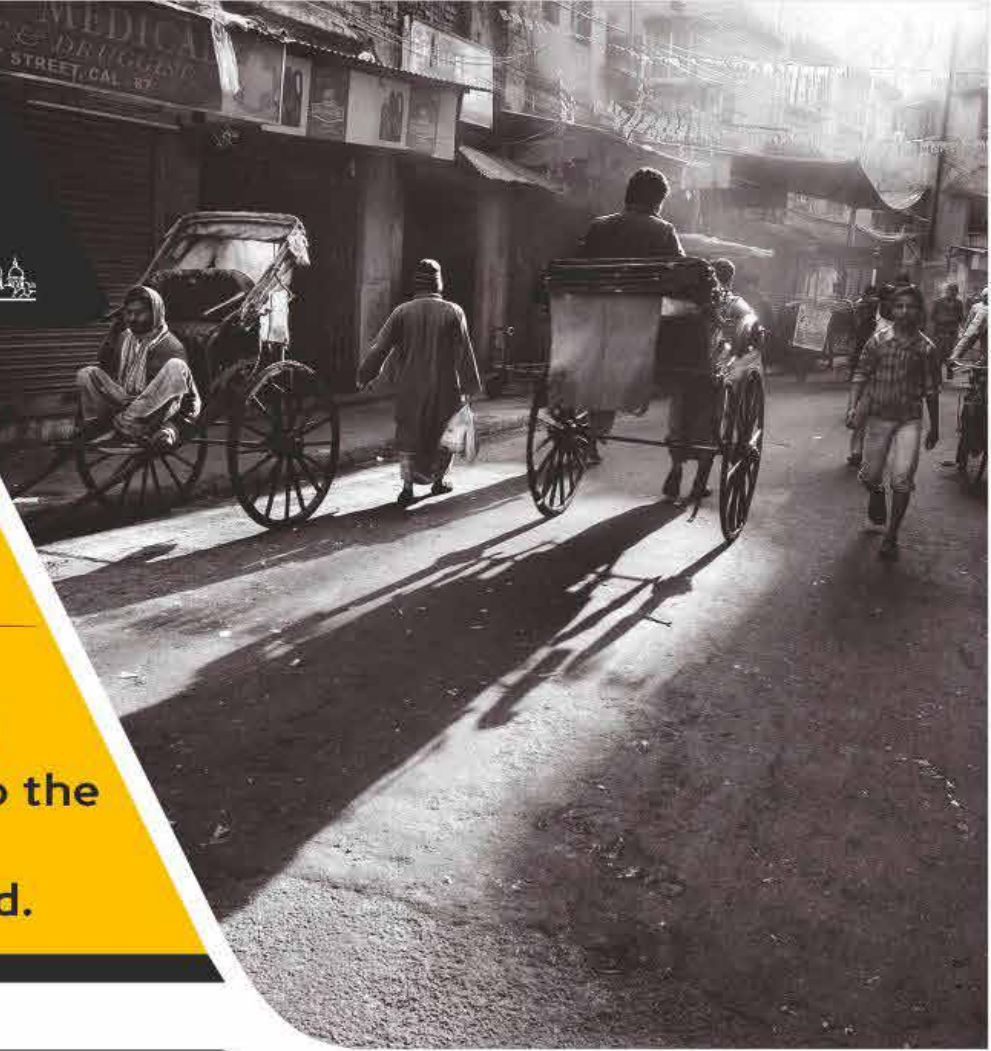


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