

Malda trade strike called off after talks

Soumya De Sarkar

Malda: One of north Bengal's largest trade bodies, the Malda Merchant Chamber of Commerce (MMCM), called off its business strike scheduled for Monday.

The strike was called to protest against the partial demolition of 11 shops at a commercial building in Englishbazar a few days ago.

The decision to withdraw the strike was taken after senior state government officials held a virtual meeting with MMCM leaders at the district police headquarters on Saturday evening.

Controversy erupted after the rented shops at the private commercial building were partially razed using earthmovers around 1.30am on February 10.

The owner of the building, who did not want to be named, refused to comment on the incident.

Shop owners alleged that a section of promoters attempted to forcibly evict them and demolish the structures after failing to get them vacated through legal means.

The incident triggered widespread protests in the district's trading and business fraternity.

MMCM office bearers rushed to the spot soon after the demolition. Two earthmovers were detained and police complaints were lodged against two individuals.

Police later arrested the owner of one of the earthmovers and another person in connection with the incident.

However, protests continued, with MMCM members alleging an "evil nexus" between certain influential Trinamool Congress leaders and a section of promoters behind the "illegal" demolition.

The chamber organised sit-in demonstrations and protest meetings before announcing the strike scheduled for Monday.

The matter was subsequently taken up by the district administration and police.

MMCM president Jayanta Kundu explained the reason for the strike and for calling it off. "We had announced the strike in the interest of the security of our members. The strike was unanimously resolved in the meeting of all our affiliate organisations. However, since the request to withdraw the strike came from the top level of the state government with assurances that the culprits will not be spared, we are calling it off," he said.

Kundu also said that electricity supply to the affected shops had been disconnected earlier.

"However, the state government has assured us that power will be restored," he said.

Huge queues across Bengal on Day One

Forms roll out for jobless youth dole

Subhasish Chaudhuri

Calcutta: The Bengal government on Sunday began distributing application forms for Banglar Yuva Sathi scheme, a monthly financial assistance scheme for unemployed youths, in what is being seen as a major welfare pitch ahead of the Assembly polls.

Initially planned for August, chief minister Mamata Banerjee hastened the launch of the scheme from April 1.

The scheme, which will offer eligible jobless youths a monthly sum of ₹1,500, has generated visible enthusiasm among Trinamool Congress supporters, who believe that after the immense success of Lakshmir Bhandar, the new scheme could become another decisive welfare plank for the Mamata government.

At the same time, long queues of applicants across districts have fuelled sharp criticism from the Opposition, which says the crowds are a "stark reflection of Bengal's persistent unemployment crisis".

Trinamool sees the turnout as a sign that the scheme has struck an emotional chord among the youth. Opposition leaders alleged that Trinamool was trying to "glorify a shame".

Hundreds of unemployed youths gathered at camps across the state from the very first day to collect application forms, with many highly educated jobseekers seen waiting in queues.

Trinamool leaders and workers described the response as proof that Mamata correctly gauged the aspirations of a generation struggling with economic uncertainty.

Announced in the state government's vote-on-account earlier this month, the "Banglar Yuva Sathi" scheme has been pitched as a transitional support mechanism for unemployed individuals aged between 18 and 41, who have completed secondary education. Beneficiaries will receive the monthly stipend for five years to help sustain themselves while searching for jobs. The government has allocated ₹5,000 crore for the initiative.

Those availing benefits under certain state welfare schemes such as Lakshmir Bhandar or Kanyashree will not be eligible, though recipients of scholarships like Aikyashree, Medhashree and the Swami Vivekananda merit-means scholarship can apply.

Trinamool spokesperson and minister Sashi Panja said: "This scheme is launched out of our responsibility towards unemployed youths. They have started attending camps



Youths queue up for the Yuva Sathi application forms at a camp in Nadia's Santipur on Sunday. Picture by Abhi Ghosh



A huge crowd in front of a Burdwan camp for Yuva Sathi forms on Sunday. Picture by Munshi Muklesur Rahaman

in large numbers, which indicates that they have accepted Mamata Banerjee's initiative. We now simply want to implement the scheme as early as possible."

Her colleague, state finance minister Chandrima Bhattacharya, called the scheme a morale boost for unemployed youths.

She claimed that the new welfare initiative unsettled Opposition parties, arguing that even those who once criticised Lakshmir Bhandar were later compelled to accept its popularity and promise to replicate the scheme with higher payouts if they were voted to power, indicating the BJP.

The political messaging around the scheme has been unmistakable. Within Trinamool circles, Yuva Sathi is being viewed as a potential game-changer in the electoral landscape, particularly among first-time voters and unemployed youths. Welfare schemes centred on direct financial assistance have historically delivered electoral dividends for the ruling party, and leaders believe Yuva Sathi could consolidate that base further. Yet the optics of massive queues have simultaneously sharpened the Opposition narrative — that while the scheme may bring immediate relief, it also underscores the scarcity of jobs and the widening gap between education and employment in Bengal.

Leader of the Opposition Suwendu Adhikari accused Mamata of using dole as a political tool when nearly 3.8

lakh government posts remained vacant due to a lack of recruitment drives.

"Since 2013, chief minister Mamata Banerjee and her government have been cheating educated unemployed youths with such schemes," Adhikari said, recalling the earlier Juvashree initiative and Employment Bank.

"In October 2013, the state government announced the scheme and received 17 lakh applications, but nothing was done. Later, in the 2017-18 budget, no funds were allocated," he alleged.

Adhikari further claimed that the BJP state unit would reach out to applicants to highlight their experiences. "They will prove how anti-employment Mamata Banerjee and her government are. This government not only showed the door to Tata Motors but also damaged employment prospects in the private sector," he said, launching a campaign titled "Chakri Chai Bangla (Bengal wants jobs)".

The CPM dismissed the scheme as a pre-election sop. Senior CPM leader Sujon Chakraborty said: "In Bengal, there is no Employment Exchange now, there is no scope of job opportunities for unemployed youths. The Yuva Sathi scheme is actually an open admission that the government cannot provide jobs."

He added that the initiative also contradicted earlier claims of large-scale job creation.

Echoing similar concerns, Suman Roy Chaudhuri, Congress spokesperson, said financial assistance could not be a permanent solution. "We are not against financial empowerment, but for how long? This is no proper solution. It may be a temporary measure, but where is wealth generation? Where are scopes of job creation and industrialisation? There are opportunities in agro-based industries, fisheries and manufacturing, but is there any indication of that in Bengal?" he asked.

The scheme's rollout also witnessed scuffles at Chanchal in Malda and Chopra in North Dinajpur. As crowds swelled on Chanchal College Ground, where camps for multiple welfare schemes were being held simultaneously, there were scuffles as Yuva Sathi form distribution began, prompting local leaders and police to intervene and restore order. Chanchal MLA Niharranjan Ghosh later said: "It is a new project, so there is major eagerness among youths."

In Chopra, some of those who came to submit applications at the BDO office got involved in a scuffle with an on-duty constable.



Workers of Madhu Tea Estate gather for voluntary maintenance work in Alipurduar's Kalchini on Sunday morning. Picture by Anirban Choudhury

Workers care for shut tea garden

Anirban Choudhury

Alipurduar: Workers of a closed tea estate in Alipurduar district, in a show of collective resolve, have begun maintaining the garden free of cost to save it and their livelihoods since last Friday.

The Madhu tea garden in Kalchini block, around 32 km from the district headquarters, had 952 workers. However, a new buyer took over operations last year and retained only 650 workers, while the rest were laid off. Several sought employment elsewhere, with some leaving the region. The owner allegedly left the

garden on May 18, 2025, following workers' demands for payment of pending dues and the estate has remained shut since.

Workers have not received benefits under the state government's Financial Assistance to Workers of Locked Out Industries (Fawloi) scheme either. Every worker of a closed tea garden is entitled to ₹1,500 per month under the scheme.

The workers convened a meeting a few weeks ago and decided to maintain the tea bushes to ensure that production does not suffer when the plucking season begins. "If the bushes are not maintained and

the leaves are not sold during the season, we will not earn a single rupee," a worker said.

A committee — Madhu Bagan Sramik Bachao Samity — was formed, and around 300 workers have been cleaning the undergrowth and pruning the bushes.

Ritu Lakra, the secretary of the committee, said: "We waited in hope that a new owner would come and take charge of the garden. But that did not happen. Although it is late, we have unanimously decided to maintain the tea bushes ourselves."

"If any prospective buyer visits the garden, they will find

it in workable condition. And if the garden remains closed but the bushes are healthy, we can at least sell green leaves and earn something," Lakra added.

The workers have informed the Hasimara police outpost of their initiative and will inform the deputy labour commissioner on Monday, a source said.

Binoy Kerketta, adviser to the committee, said: "We welcome the workers' decision, which is rare in the tea industry. When workers come forward for such a noble cause, we stand with them. Whatever steps we take will be communicated to the administration."

TMC leaflets for brew belt

Our Correspondent

Alipurduar: The tea estates of the Doorgas have emerged as a crucial battleground ahead of the Assembly elections, prompting the Alipurduar district unit of the Trinamool Congress to launch a focused outreach campaign, highlighting the state government's welfare initiatives for the brew belt.

Tea garden workers play a decisive role in almost all five Assembly constituencies in the district. In 2021, the BJP had bagged all five Assembly seats. Trinamool has printed around 65,000 leaflets outlining the party's achievements and promises.

The leaflet, with the slogan "Abar jitbe cha sramikra (Tea garden workers will win again)", written in Hindi to ensure accessibility among garden workers, will be distributed door-to-door across all 65 tea gardens in the district by Trinamool trade union leaders.

"We will reach out to the tea workers and their families and tell them that it is only Trinamool that keeps its promises. The leaflets mention the initiatives taken by our leaders and the promises made by them to prove that we could meet expectations. Unlike the BJP, we do not make hollow promises," said Prakash Chik Baraik, the Alipurduar district Trinamool president.

The leaflet highlights some of the welfare measures undertaken or promised by the state government and Trinamool, including wage increase, primary health centres and crèches and schoolbuses.

"If Trinamool returns to power, the daily wage of tea garden workers will rise from ₹250 to ₹300 a day," reads the leaflet.

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33.76KM-LONG PROJECT IN 'CHICKEN'S NECK' AREA

Underground railway line plan

Our Correspondent

Siliguri: The Union railway ministry has decided to construct a new underground railway line along the Siliguri corridor, a strategic area of the Indian sub-continent called the "Chicken's Neck" for being the slimmest part of the country perched between Bangladesh and Nepal, with China and Bhutan borders nearby.

"The alignment has been planned primarily as an underground corridor to ensure secure, uninterrupted and resilient connectivity in the strategically sensitive Siliguri corridor, which connects the Indian mainland with the northeastern states through a narrow stretch of land that is approximately 22 kilometres wide," said K.K. Sharma, the chief public relations officer (CPRO) of the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR).

A day after the Union budget was tabled in the Parliament on February 1, Union railway minister Ashwin Vaishnaw referred to this new project.

NFR sources said the proposed underground railway line along the Tinnilehat-Rangapani-Bagdogra stretch will be 35.76 kilometres long. Of that length, the



Ashwini Vaishnaw. (PTI picture)

Tinnilehat-Rangapani stretch will alone be 33.40 kilometres long.

"Considering the corridor's proximity to international borders as well as its vulnerability to natural disasters, congestion and security-related disruptions, the underground railway line will be of immense importance," said a railway official.

The underground alignment, he said, will provide a protected and non-visible alternative route, enabling uninterrupted movement of defence personnel, military equipment and emergency relief materials during exigencies.

"The project will also support air-rail logistics integration due to its proximity to Bagdogra Air Force Station and the Bengdubi army cantonment of the 33 Corps of the Indian army, which has its headquarters



Harsh Vardhan Shringla. File picture

in Sukna (which is located around 10 kilometres from Siliguri)," said a source.

For the project, the railways will adopt modern technology and advanced engineering practices, which include a sophisticated electrification system, automatic signalling with VOIP (voiceover Internet protocol)-based communication on OFC and quad cables, bridges to bear axle load standards and twin tunnels with New Austrian Tunnelling Method (NATM).

In recent times, the Narendra Modi government at the Centre is focusing on railway services and infrastructural development across Bengal.

al mode. Vaishnaw also flagged off a MEMU service between Asansol and Bokaro, the steel city in the neighbouring state of Jharkhand.

"It is evident that the BJP wants to draw votes by using the new train services and the railway infrastructure across Bengal. Trinamool, on the other hand, is raising questions over the execution of such ambitious projects like the proposed high-speed rail corridor between Varanasi and Siliguri," said a political observer.

Underpass plea

Harsh Vardhan Shringla, the Rajya Sabha member, has recently demanded a railway underpass in the Kharibari block under the Siliguri sub-division of Darjeeling district.

Speaking at the Upper House in Parliament on February 9, the MP said that the underpass was needed in the Binnabari panchayat area of the block under the Phansidewa Assembly constituency.

"He highlighted that 50 to 60,000 people face hardships and had to take longer routes to reach markets, schools and hospitals, which are on the other side of the railway tracks," said a source.

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SL No	Account Name & Address of the Borrowers / Guarantors	Description of the Immovable Properties Mortgaged, Owner's Name (Mortgagors of property(ies) & Possession	A) Date of Demand Notice u/s 13 (2) B) Date of Possession C) Outstanding as on the date of 13(2)	A) Reserve Price B) EMD C) Bid Increase Amt (In Rs.)	Date & Time of E-Auction	Details of the encumbrances known to the secured creditors
20.	B/o: 020620-DURGAPUR Account: AMIYA INDUSTRIES Borrower/Guarantor/Partner: M/s Amiya Industries, Proprietor: Mr. Falguni Kumar Mitra, No1 Ambedkar Sarani, City Centre, Durgapur Paschim Bardhaman, West Bengal-713216 Falguni Kr Mitra 1 Ambedkar Sarani, City Centre Durgapur Paschim Bardhaman, West Bengal-713216 Tapas Kumar Sarkar (Guarantor) Purbu Nutan Pally Durgapur Paschim bardhaman, West bengal-713101	All the pieces and parcels of the land and building located at 27 Ambagan Bhiringi Ward – 19, PS Durgapur 713213 West Bengal with survey no – Mouza Bhiringi JL NO 119, Khatian No- 9079 & 9080, Plot/Dag No. – 1733 (1394 within DMC, Paschim Bardhaman, West Bengal- 713213, Area 2912 Sq ft. as per deed no I-2071 for the year 2008 in the name of Falguni Kumar Mitra & Tapas Kumar Sarkar.	A) 03.08.2024 B) 20.11.2024 C) Rs. 95,19,136.44 (Rupees Ninety-Five Lakh Nineteen Thousand One Hundred Thirty-Six and Paise Forty-Four Only)	A) Rs. 10679000/- B) Rs. 10679000/- C) Rs. 50,00,00,00	18-03-2026 From 11.00 AM to 04.00 PM.	Not Known to Bank
21.	BO: Raniganj Branch Account: NEEL MINING AND TRADING AGENCY Borrower/Guarantor: *M/s Neel Mining and Trading Agency Prop: Smt Nisha Singh, *Haribhushan Singh *Pinaki Singh *Nisha Singh DVC Para Pandaveswar, Paschim Bardhaman 713346 *Amlendu Chakraborty S/o Late Janaki Mohan Chakraborty, gopal Nagar, PO- Kalla (C-14) PS Asansol North, Paschim Burdwan-713302	All that piece & parcel of landed property situated at Dist. Paschim Bardhaman, PS- Asansol (S), Mouza- Mohishila, JL No. 37, Kh No. 124, R.S. Plot No. 2557, Area- 33.00 decimal under Asansol Corporation in the name of Nisha Singh covered by Deed No. I-12731 of 2010. **Possession Constructive** All that piece & parcel of landed property situated at Dist. Paschim Bardhaman, PS- Asansol (N), Mouza- Uttar Dhadka, J.L. No. 26, LR Kh No. 349, Plot No. 606, area- 38 decimal under Asansol Corporation in the name of Amlendu Chakraborty covered by Deed No. I- 3559 of 2002 **Possession Constructive**	A) 12.07.2014 B) 09.03.2015 C) Rs. 2,30,33,711.42 (Rupees Two Crore Thirty Lac Thirty-Three Thousand Seven Hundred Eleven and Paise Forty-Two Only)	A) Rs. 21.60 Lakh B) Rs. 2.16 Lakh C) Rs. 10000.00 A) Rs. 61.20 Lakh B) Rs. 6.12 Lakh C) Rs. 10000.00	18-03-2026 From 11.00 AM to 04.00 PM.	Not Known to Bank

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