>LIGHT RAIN DURING THIS TIME OF THE YEAR WHEN THE LAND IS PARCHED COULD INSTEAD PROVE BENEFICIAL FOR THE CROPS

Rain brings relief for Kolkatans

SMILE This is the highest rainfall that the city has experienced in a single day in March since 2009

KOLKATA: An overnight shower that lingered till the late hours on Wednesday forced the maximum temperature to drop by quite a few degrees, a respite which every Kolkatan was looking forward to. The mercury level had been soaring above the 34 degree Celsius mark over the past few days.

The local met department assured that weather in the city would remain 'very comfortable' over the next 48 hours at least.

"The trough of low pressure that triggered the sudden rain has faded. Kolkatans would be able to enjoy a rather charming weather with a lot of sunshine over the next two days," said GC Debnath, director of Indian Meteorological Department's regional office

The day's temperature which was hov ering above 34 degrees Celsius plummeted to 28 degrees on Wednesday afternoon. In fact it would remain around the 30-degree mark till Friday at least.

A cyclonic circulation had developed over Madhya Pradesh and Chattishgarh a few days ago. The weatherman had predicted that the



system could trigger light to moderate rain in some of the districts in the western parts Chances of a shower in Kolkata was

however remote. But the system faded on Monday.

"Instead a trough of low pressure suddenly

developed over Uttar Pradesh and Chattisgarh on Tuesday and this triggered rain in Kolkata and several parts of the state unexpectedly, said Debnath.

Met officials said the city received around 17.6 mm of rain over the past 24 hours. This is the highest rainfall that the city has

experienced on a single day in the month of March since 2009. On March 12, 2009 the city received around 29 mm of rain.

Agriculture scientists and exporters of fruits and vegetables, however, assured that such light to moderate rain in isolated areas won't inflict any major damage on

"Such light rain won't cause any damage to the crops. Had it continued for at least two to three days it would have caused severe damage as many of our summer fruits and vegetables are still in the blooming stage," said Chittaranjan Kole, vice-chancellor of Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswavidyalaya in

Experts said fruits such as mango and litchi were still in developing stages. They would have withered away had there been a heavy shower accompanied with a storm. But luckily that didn't happen.

"A light rain during this time of the year when the lands are still parched could instead prove beneficial for the crops as it would add some moisture to the soil," said Mrinal Saha, general secretary of West Bengal Fruits and Vegetable Exporters' Welfare

METRO SERVICES HIT

KOLKATA: Metro rail services were disrupted for

90 minutes on Wednesday morning after an air

conditioned rake developed a snag at Gitanjali

station. Around 8.57 am a Noyapara-bound

train reached Gitanjali station and got stalled. "The AC rake suddenly stopped and refused

to move. Investigations revealed the third rail

connect converter (TRCC) of the train devel-

oped a snag. TRCC helps to extract current from the third rail and transfer it to the wheels of

the coaches that help the train to move," said

Finally it was decided to evacuate the com-

muters and restore the snag.
"Metro services got disrupted till 10.25 am

when Metro engineers sorted the problem out. Till then, there were truncated services

between Noyapara to Mahanayak Uttam

Kumar," a railway official said.

Commuters from the southern fringes of the

a Metro official.

FOR 90 MINUTES

Surai Pradhan, the younger brother of

GTA chairman, 10 others held

tion seems to be made up of copper and is round in shape. "East India Company 1818 is engraved on it," said Verma. Kirtania lodged an FIR against Pradhan and others with Pradhan Nagar Police Station and Tuesday night's raids led to the arrest.

The arrest has come as a second major embarrassment for GJM, that runs the

Pradip alleged that the administration had conspired against his brother. "My brother was asked to come to a hotel at Darjeeling More on Tuesday night and was arrested immediately by the police who were already there at the hotel," said

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French team flags off Chandernagore heritage conservation drive

Snigdhendu Bhattacharya

KOLKATA: A Paris-based heritage conservation agency has decided to launch a website detailing the remnants of French heritage in Chandernagore to let the world know about the former French

The website, to be launched in July this year, will not only feature digital images of the sites but would also offer visi-tors a peek through journals, periodicals and other publica-

tions of the French era.
"Despite having great potential for attracting tourists from abroad, including France and other European countries, Chandernagore is lagging behind as a tourist destination because hardly any effort was given to preserve its heritage sites," Philipe Toussaint, president of Vieilles Maisons Françaises (VMF), one of the biggest heritage conservation gencies in France, told HT on Wednesday.

"We have been instructed by the UNESCO to undertake this project. It is part of conserving French heritage all over the world," said Toussaint, who visited Chandernagore



Institute in Chandernagore

along with two other members from VMF on Wednesday to discuss with the authorities of the French Institute in andernagore on this project

While digital archiving of the existing heritage struc-tures is on its way, digitisations of various French-era documents are yet to be done. The town has five sites declared as heritage by the West Bengal Heritage Commission – Thistle Hostel, Nitya Gopal Smriti Mandir, Main Building of Chandernagore Govt. College, Liberty Gate and Prefecture

However, there are plenty

other sites and private residential places bearing the legacy of the French era and its architectural marvels. The town's French connections date back to 1673 and, between the fall of Saptagram and rise of Kolkata in the eighteenth century was

the premiere European trading

hub in Bengal. It also served as a hideout for Bengal's extremist freedom fighters who were on the run from the police. Chandernagore got Independence from France in 1950, three years after the rest of India. The VMF team plans to raise awareness about the town's heritage to engage locals in heritage conservation

"We carried out a survey in 2011 during which we identified 99 heritage sites in Chandernagore. Sadly, the state government has not been able to conserve any one and some of those buildings have already disappeared. If we don't digitally documen these sites even now, an impor tant part of history would be lost forever," said Aishwariya Tipnis, a New Delhi-based architect who is collaborat ing with VMF.

Chandernagore's added advantage as a potential tourist destination, the experts said, lies in its proximity with other European settlements like the Dutch Chinsurah, Portuguese Bandel and Danish Serampore

According to members of VMF, a packaged tour of the European settlements along the Hooghly would draw the attention of many a foreign

'This mini Europe on the Ganges can definitely attract tourists from abroad should there be a minimum level of heritage conservation and minimum tourism infrastructure. But if the heritage is lost, why should people come here?' Toussaint asked.

Members of a French heritage conservation team at the French

21 new swine flu

cases on Wednesday

HT Correspondent

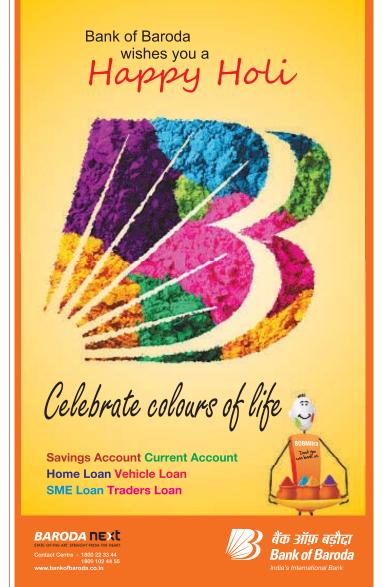
KOLKATA: On Wednesday, the highest number of new swine flu cases was reported on a single day in the state this year. Twenty-one H1N1 positive cases were reported in the city and the districts on the day, taking the total number of swine flu patients to 167. Eight persons, including three children, have died across the state.

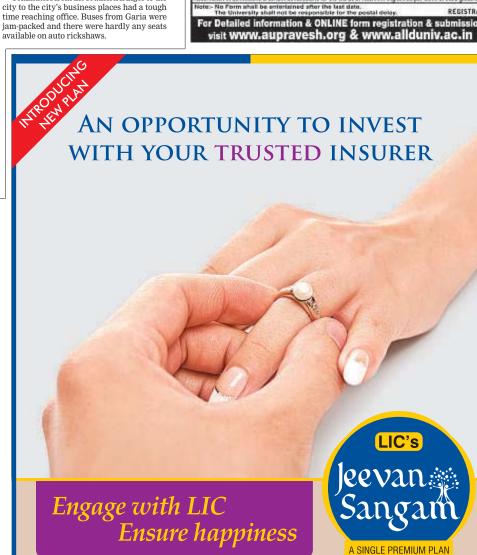
'Twenty-one more persons are down with the H1N1 virus according to the reports of their throat swab samples that were tested at the National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) in Kolkata. Eightynine people have been discharged while 70 others are undergoing treatment at different government and private hospitals in the city," the director of health services, Dr BR Satpathi, said.

"Eight out of the 21 new cases tested positive at the NICD labora-tory on Tuesday. The remaining 13 tested positive on Wednesday. Apart from the NICD, Peerless hospital has been given permission to conduct swine flu tests at its laboratory. No private laboratory will be allowed to conduct swine flu tests without the government's approval," Satpathi said. The health department has already directed a private hospital laboratory in Dhakuria in this regard because it was conducting swine flu tests without taking approval from the government.

"Following our directive, the private lab has stopped the tests. The NICD experts have visited the laboratory to verify the infra-structure required for testing throat swab samples of suspected swine flu patients to find the presence of H1N1 virus," he added.

A team of officers of the director general of health services under the Union health ministry and the All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health here visited the state-run Infectious Diseases (ID) Hospital, BC Roy Memorial Hospital for Children in Beliaghata, private hospitals and NICD lab on Monday.





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