

From classrooms to clinics, yoga unites city

SUBHAJOY ROY AND
JHINUK MAZUMDAR

Calcutta: Government employees, teachers from private schools and colleges, healthcare workers, doctors and professionals from various sectors participated in yoga sessions across the city on Sunday to mark International Yoga Day. While many attended the event at Red Road, which Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended, others took part in sessions organised at their workplaces, educational institutions and designated parks.

Some had to wake up in the early hours of the morning and report to their offices to board buses arranged to take them to Red Road. Others participated in yoga sessions organised within their workplaces or at public parks across the city.

The theme for this year's International Yoga Day was 'Yoga for Healthy Ageing'. Participants said that yoga's combination of physical postures, meditation and controlled breathing could improve mental well-being and help maintain physical fitness. However, they stressed that the benefits would be meaningful only if they could practise it regularly throughout the year.

State govt employees

Each department of state government had nominated about 15 employees to remain present at Red Road, the top draw of Sunday's Yoga sessions.

Besides, the departments also organised sessions in their office premises. An official of the state urban development department said that while 15 of their employees went to Red Road, several others attended sessions at Unayana Bhavan in Salt Lake, at Rabindra Sarobar, Subhas Sarobar, and Satyajit Ray Park in Patuli.

The Kolkata Municipal Corporation organised Yoga sessions for its employees in more than 40 venues across the city, most of them public parks, including Deshapriya Park and Elliot Park.

"About 1,000 employees from KMC headquarters took



KMC employees perform yoga at Elliot Park on Sunday

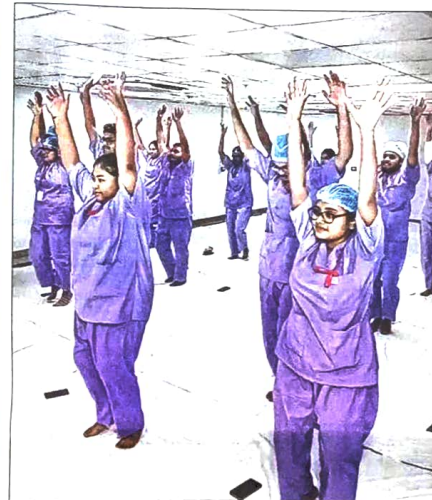


Employees of Lady Brabourne College at a yoga session

part in the session at Elliot Park. Employees from other offices of KMC in the boroughs and wards took part in the sessions held at other parks across the city," said a KMC employee.

A state government em-

ployee started from his Garia home at 2.30am on Sunday in his own car. "I reached the office at 3pm. There was a bus waiting for us at our office in Salt Lake. We left the office at 3.15pm and reached Red Road around 4pm. We were asked to



Desun Hospital employees perform yoga

arrive early," said the official.

Schools and colleges

Students and teachers from several private English-medium schools travelled to Red Road to take part in the International Yoga Day celebra-

tions. Among the institutions represented were Birla High School, South Point school, Sushila Birla Girls' School, Sri Sri Academy and GD Goenka Public School, Dakshineswar.

WHY THEY ROLLED OUT THE MAT

They came from different professions, age groups and parts of the city, but shared a common belief: that a few minutes of daily practice can make a meaningful difference. Participants at International Yoga Day events spoke about fitness, stress relief, discipline and the pursuit of a healthier life.



AMISHA SHAW, 21, a first-year BBA student, travelled from Girish Park to Red Road via Esplanade and reached by 5.15am.

"Classes, assignments and exams make it difficult to practise regularly, but I try whenever I can because yoga helps me stay calm and focused. Being part of such a large gathering was motivating and reinforced the importance of physical and mental well-being," she said.



ABHUIT NASKAR, 43, an accountant from Sakrail in Howrah, travelled with his family to Red Road after boarding a local train at 2.30am.

"Yoga is part of my routine because it helps me stay fit, reduces stress and keeps me energised despite a busy work schedule. Even on days when I return home late, I try to find some time to practise. A short session can make a big difference to both body and mind."

plan to continue practising every day," he said.



AMARTYA SAHA, 37, head of the journalism and mass communication department at New Alipore College, participated in the celebrations at the college.

"The nationwide observance reflects the significance of yoga. It needs to become a part of our daily lives because it can improve both our quality of life and productivity. Yoga enhances physical and mental fitness—a healthy body fosters a healthy mind and emotional well-being," he said.



KAKALI MAJUMDER, 52, a homemaker and mother of two, attended a yoga session at her residential complex in Avidipta phase II on Sunday.

"I started doing yoga two years ago. I have always thought curing the natural way through exercise and yoga was the best option one

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Dawn calls, city responds

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In many schools, students were asked to report as early as 3.45am to travel to the venue. The children showed considerable enthusiasm for the event, and several had practised the *asanas* in advance, said Vijaylaxmi Kumar, principal of GD Goenka Public School, Dakshineswar.

"The children and teachers gave good feedback. We have yoga as an activity in our school curriculum," said Jaidev Ghosh, principal, South Point.

Many students, who arrived well before the event began, started practising on their own. "The main intent was to do yoga with the Prime Minister, but our students were disappointed as there were no screens nearby, and they missed that experience. Overall, they enjoyed the ambience," said Gargi Banerjee, principal of Sri Sri Academy.

The first few blocks closer to the dais were reserved primarily for senior government officials, said a state government official.

St Xavier's College (Autonomous), Kolkata, in association with the St Xavier's College (Calcutta) Alumni Association, the Students' Council, and the departments of NSS and NCC, observed International Yoga Day at the College grounds.

Private hospitals

Several private hospitals organised yoga sessions on Sunday. Manipal Hospitals, EM Bypass, held a session on its premises, attended by more



International Yoga Day being observed on Red Road and (below) at Eden Gardens on Sunday morning.

Pictures by Bishwarup Dutta and Sanat Kr Sinha



than 70 employees from both clinical and non-clinical departments under the guidance of trained instructors.

"We do the yoga sessions every year on International Yoga Day because it uplifts one mentally and physically," said an official.

Desun Hospital also or-

ganised a yoga session on its premises on Sunday morning. A hospital official said such programmes are held every year, but this year's event was larger in scale. "Doctors, nurses, administrative staff and support staff all participated in the session," he said.