

TSK 25K

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Pierce follows in the footsteps of tennis legend Boris Becker, who flagged off the race in 2016.

Charity

TSK 25K is also a unique platform for charity as a diverse set of philanthropic organisations come together for fundraising. One NGO might work for slum children, another for the rights of disabled and a third for the environment. All of them join hands to help the needy in one way or another.

Since the last edition, in 2019, running groups have also been involved in raising funds, apart from corporate and individual donations.

Till now, around 20 NGOs have come on board for this year's run.

“In the post-pandemic situation, there is a collective realisation about the need for renewed compassion towards the community, which has encouraged people from different walks of life to get together, collaborate, and contribute in a meaningful way,” said Dinesh Agarwal, chairperson, United Way Kolkata, the philanthropy partner of TSK.

Countdown to TSK 25K starts

DEBRAJ MITRA

Calcutta: Eastern India's major running spectacle, which is an integral part of Calcutta's winter calendar, is less than a month away.

The Tata Steel Kolkata 25K, partnered by The Telegraph, slated on December 18, is back after a Covid-induced two-year gap.

In its seventh leg this year, the world's premier 25K race promises to be bigger and better. Registrations for all categories — 25K, open 10K, Ananda Run (4.2km), Senior Citizens' Run (2.3km) and Champions with Disability (2.3km) — are in full swing, organisers said.

TSK 25K is the first run in its category to be certified by the Association of International Marathons and Distance Races in India.

The presence of many elite athletes in the race ensures Calcutta a spot on the global running map. The race has also become a part of the schedule of many serious runners who are regular at marathons across India. But the festive fervour is lent by thousands of amateur runners.

Like the last edition in 2019, runners who have completed the 25K mark will get a medal made of steel this year.

"It takes hardiness and steely resolve to complete 25K, and to salute this resolute spirit, every finisher

GET, SET, GO

■ Registrations for all categories will remain open until December 9, 11.59pm, or till running places are filled, whichever is earlier, at tatasteelkolkata25k.procam.in

■ All confirmed participants will receive a goodie bag in addition to a running bib, while the 25K participants will also get a Race Day Tee

■ The 25K and 10K finishers will receive a medal and a timing certificate. Ananda Run participants will get a medal and certificate each. The Champions with Disability and Senior Citizens' Run participants will be given a certificate each

in this category will receive a medal of steel, which is a symbol of grit and strength, aspects that are tested in distance running," the organisers said.

Just over three weeks left for the run, Metro takes a look at what to expect:

People

Satovisha Samajdar, a forest officer posted in Raipur, Chhattisgarh, will be participating in the TSK 25K for the first time.

Samajdar, who is in charge of mapping and remote sensing of the forests of Chhattisgarh, is an avid runner and a veteran of full marathons in Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore.

"But running in your hometown is always special. The route of TSK 25K is also very scenic and leafy," said Samajdar, a former student of Gokhale Memorial Girls' School.

Rohit Pandey, 48, will also be competing in the 25K category.

Pandey took to running seriously less than a decade ago when he came back to his hometown from a job in Delhi.

"Running keeps people like me, who are into desk jobs, healthy. I don't want to gloat up. Running also gives me perspective and confidence," said Pandey.

Sangita Das, 61, will take part in the Ananda Run (4.2km). Her son has registered for the 10km category.

"He had run the last time (2019) as well. I saw the videos of the run and really liked the festive vibe. I wanted to take part but everything was stalled by Covid in the past two years. Now, the race is back and I don't want to miss the chance," said Das, a regular morning walker in Deshapriya Park.

As part of the preparations, she is in touch with a doctor.

Stars

Former tennis champion

Mary Pierce will flag off the race from the grand stand on Red Road.

"Running is the most simple and universal sport. The pandemic has highlighted the importance of good health and social life. Running has this transformational experience on individuals and also teaches one to be patient and persevere. I am excited to be a part of TSK 25K," the 47-year-old, with two Grand Slams in her kitty, had said after being named the international event ambassador for the seventh edition of the race.

Women's cricket legend Jhulan Goswami and actress Subhashree Ganguly have been named the "Ratnas" of TSK 25K.

"Running has been a part of my entire life. Being a fast bowler means running a few kilometres in every match. And it has helped me in many ways, beyond just fitness. All of us require to be health conscious, and running is the easiest way to stay fit. I urge one and all, especially the women-folk, to come out in large numbers and be a part of the TSK 25K. Women inspire families," Goswami said.

Argentina striker Hernan Crespo (2019) and US track-and-field star Mike Powell (2017) are among international sporting icons who have graced the TSK 25K over the years.