



Ayodhya saw unrest due to appeasement politics: CM Yogi attacks Opposition

(Gns).

Ayodhya and the Ram Mandir have long remained at the centre of political discourse, with visits by political leaders often accompanied by sharp political messaging, particularly in the run-up to major religious and cultural milestones.

Today, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, after his visit to the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Temple, took a veiled swipe at the Opposition. He alleged that "some people" had turned Ayodhya into a land of unrest and conflict through appeasement politics.

The Chief Minister was speaking at a public gathering in Ayodhya after offering prayers at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi complex on

the second anniversary of Ram Lalla's Pran Pratishtha. He visited the Ram Lalla temple and the Ram Darbar before addressing the gathering.

Without naming any party, CM Yogi alleged that opposition forces disrupted the sanctity of Ayodhya in the past due to appeasement politics. "In Independent India, Ayodhya has witnessed several stages of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. Ayodhya's name tells that no war has been fought here, which means no enemy could stand its ground in front of its courage. But some people, driven by greed, religious fanaticism and appeasement, made Ayodhya a place of unrest and conflict,"

he said. Hails PM Modi for building Ram Mandir

During his address, he credited Prime Minister

moments under the Prime Minister's leadership – the foundation stone laying of the Ram Janmabhoomi Temple on 05 August 2020,

edged the role of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, who was present at the event, in the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. He said Singh was visibly emotional on witnessing

the completed temple after nearly 500 years.

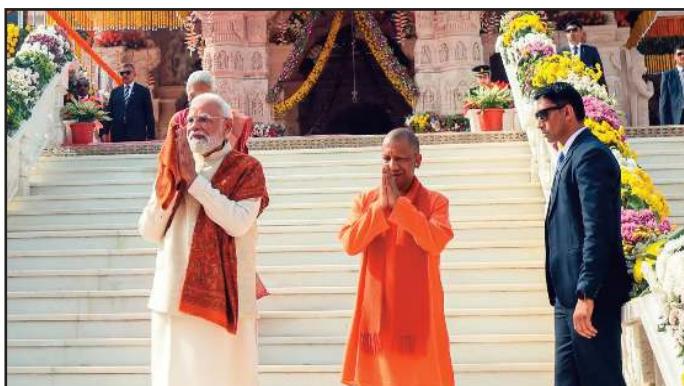
"The Defence Minister has played a prominent role in the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, and today, after 500 years,

he is overwhelmed by looking at the temple and is experiencing a feeling of joy and pride. I saw him getting emotional as he was hoisting the flag at Mata Annapurna temple on

the occasion of Pratistha Dwadashi," the CM said.

Earlier in the day, CM Yogi and Defence Minister also visited Hanuman Garhi, where they offered prayers to Lord Hanuman

prayers to Lord Hanuman



Narendra Modi for fulfilling what he described as a centuries-old aspiration. Recalling key milestones, Yogi Adityanath said Ayodhya would always remember three historic

CM Yogi also acknowl-

the pran pratishtha ceremony of Ram Lalla's idol on 22 January 2024, and the hoisting of the saffron flag atop the temple on 25 November.

On this auspicious occasion, he first offered prayers at Hanuman Garhi and then had darshan of Lord Ramlala at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Temple. Afterwards, amidst chanting of mantras, he installed the religious flag on the spire of the Maa Annapurna Temple located within the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi complex.

In his address, the Defence Minister mentioned Operation Sindo

and cited the example of

as Lord Rama taught us all

the importance of not abandoning righteousness even in war, our Army conducted a limited, controlled, and purposeful operation. "The objective of Operation Sindo

was to teach the terrorists a lesson, and we taught them that lesson by

this opportunity today."

Defense Minister Rajnath Singh, describing it as the most fortunate day in his life, said, "Two years ago today, when Lord Rama was re-established here, it was a historic moment of pride for all Indians. Today, Lord Rama is gracing not only India but the entire world with his glory.

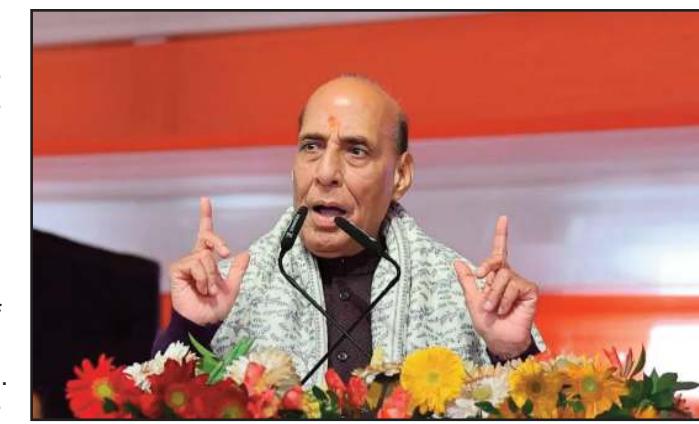
He said that every street and intersection of Ayodhya has become imbued with the spirit of Rama. Kanak Bhavan, Dashrath Mahal, Hanuman Garhi, the entire Ayodhya is shining brightly in the lap of Mother Sarayu. This radiance is not limited to the Ayodhya region alone, but the entire Awadh and India are immersed in the spirit of Rama today.

During Operation Sindo, we followed Lord Ram's teaching of not abandoning righteousness even in war: Rajnath Singh

(Gns). Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday participated in the second anniversary celebrations of the consecration ceremony of Lord Ramlala at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Temple.

Lord Rama's adherence to righteousness. He said just

entering their stronghold," he added.



The Defence Minister,

expressing his feelings on

the occasion, said, "Lord,

what more could I ask for

today? It feels as if I have

received everything I ever

wanted in life. Lord

Raghuvendra himself

chose me for this day,

which is why I am getting

the opportunity today."

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'Claim mocks our national security': Congress demands clarification on China role in India-Pakistan conflict

(Gns).

Hours after Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi claimed that his country mediated in the India-Pakistan conflict in May early this year, the Opposition Congress on Wednesday demanded a clarification from the Narendra Modi government on the role Beijing played in stopping the Operation Sindo.

President Trump has long

claimed that he personally intervened to stop Operation Sindo on May 10, 2025. He has made this

claim at least 65 times

across various platforms

in at least seven different countries.

The Prime Minister has

not broken his

silence on these claims

made by his so-called good

friend to this day," he said

on X.

Sharing a video of Deputy Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General Rahul Singh, Ramesh said during Operation Sindo, India

was actually facing and

fighting China, which

apparently supported

Pakistan during the conflict.

He said the Chinese

claim of mediation in the

India-Pakistan conflict

appears to mock our

national security.

"Since China was decisively

standing with Pakistan,

China's claims of mediating

between India and

China on June 19, 2020,

has significantly weakened

India's negotiating position.

Our trade deficit is at a

record high, and a large

portion of our exports

depends on imports from

China.

An important decision by Chief Minister Shri Bhupendra Patel for the holistic development of rural areas in the state's districts

(Gns).

Annual Rs. 1 Crore Discretionary Grant to Be Allocated to Presidents of District Panchayats in All 34 Districts for Key Local Development Works

Gandhinagar, 31 December 2025 : Chief Minister Shri Bhupendra Patel has taken a significant public interest decision aimed at ensuring the holistic and inclusive development of rural areas across the state's districts. For this purpose, he has issued directions to allocate a discretionary grant of Rs. 1 crore to the presidents of all 34 District

importance in their respective districts.

to MLAs for development works under the Decentralised District Planning Programme.

In the state, there is an

All India N R Congress (AINRC) with Chief Minister N Rangasamy supported by the BJP.

Assam, of course, is with the BJP with Himanta Biswa Sarma as the Chief Minister. At the same time, Puducherry has a coalition government headed by the

With two decisive victories in Delhi and Bihar, 2025 was a good year for the BJP and the NDA, but for its rivals it was not so

good. While the Arvind Kejriwal-led AAP was defeated in Delhi, the Mahagathbandhan of Lalu Prasad's RJD, Congress, and the Left were no match for the BJP-led NDA in Bihar.

But, 2026 can be a good year for opposition parties, as except for Assam, it is the opposition parties that are ruling the other three states—West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala.

In West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee will be fiercely defending her government against a resurgent BJP, while the Congress and Left will try to recover some ground.

In the state, there is an

Comparing police action between March 20, 2017, and December 29, 2025, the DGP said that the data showed that 266 accused persons had been killed in police encounters since 2018, reflecting the state police's emphasis on what he described as a "zero-tolerance policy" against crime following the Chief

tained on criminal gangs.

Providing figures for 2025, the DGP said 48 criminals were killed in police encounters in the state, the highest number recorded in recent years. He asserted that all actions

were taken within the framework of law and that there was no leniency towards hardened and organised criminals. Continuous pressure, he added, has been main-

Minister's instructions.

In 2025 alone, police conducted 2,739 operations, during which 3,153 accused were injured, while 48 were killed in encounters. One policeman

ried out 16,284 operations in total, in which 10,990 accused were injured and 266 killed. During these actions.

1,783 police personnel were injured and 18 lost their lives, according to the data. Yogi Adityanath took charge as the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh in March 2017.

Meanwhile, according to the police data shared at the press conference, a total of 1,25,985 criminals have been convicted since July 2023.

Among these, 79 offenders have received death penalty, reflecting what the DGP described as

stronger case preparation and effective courtroom advocacy by the police.

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Editorial

Policy must offer smokers an off-ramp

India wants to reduce smoking, but its approach defies basic public-health logic. By raising cigarette taxes while outlawing safer alternatives, it corners smokers into a false choice: keep paying more to smoke, or break the law to quit. No serious tobacco-control strategy can work this way. If the government's aim is to move people away from smoking, incentives matter. Adults need legal, regulated, lower-risk options that make switching possible, not punishable. India is trying to reduce smoking while banning the very tools that make quitting possible, a contradiction no tax policy can fix.

India has already seen the limits of this approach. Over the past decade, cigarette taxes have risen sharply, but steady raises in income have cancelled out their bite, leaving cigarettes just as affordable. The WHO may recommend taxation at 75 per cent of retail price, but India is stuck near 53 per cent not because taxes are low, but because taxes alone cannot outpace economic growth. And when cigarettes become more expensive, smokers do not quit, they shift to cheaper and far more harmful alternatives like bidis, chewing tobacco, or black-market products, all of which become even more attractive as taxes climb. The Bill's debate in Parliament made this tension clear, with MPs questioning worker livelihood, illicit trade, and the lack of a proper roadmap to curb smoking. Even countries with far higher tobacco taxes have learned that taxation works only when paired with harm-reduction tools. That is why New Zealand raises taxes annually and allows safer alternatives for adults trying to quit. Sweden, now on track to become the world's first "smoke-free" country, did not get there by taxing cigarettes alone. It succeeded because it encouraged a low-risk alternative: snus. The UK cut smoking rates dramatically not with punitive taxes, but by actively promoting vaping as a far safer alternative for smokers. India wants to achieve the same public health goals as the countries that have slashed smoking rates dramatically, but it has banned the essential tools needed to achieve that goal. By outlawing e-cigarettes and safer nicotine products under PECA, India has closed off the most credible exit route for adult smokers. The result is entirely predictable: prices keep rising, choices keep shrinking, and smokers are left with nowhere to go except back to more harmful products. When taxes go up, and alternatives stay illegal, people do not quit; they switch to cheaper, more harmful tobacco or to unregulated black-market products. This inconsistency also harms the workers whom MPs raised concerns about, including bidi rollers, leaf pluckers, and small growers. A tax-only approach squeezes demand unpredictably but doesn't build a transition plan for the communities dependent on tobacco cultivation. A modern tobacco framework would pair tax reform with a structured shift toward less harmful products, more stable markets, and genuine cessation pathways. India does not need to reinvent the wheel; it needs to stop ignoring the evidence that already works. A coherent science driven policy would keep taxes smart, not punitive; regulate and legalize safer alternatives for adults and farmers and workers in diversifying to other crops and industries. This is not a lenient approach but only a strategy proven to reduce harm. Raising cigarette taxes may preserve government revenue and satisfy the WHO on paper. But if the goal is fewer smokers, not just fuller coffers, India must offer people an off-ramp. Without harm reduction, tax hikes are little more than a costly detour.

Rashmika Mandanna, Vijay Devarakonda's Marriage Date & Venue Fixed

(Gns). Rashmika Mandanna and Vijay Devarakonda seem all set to turn a new page in their story, and fans couldn't be more excited. For months now, whispers about their relationship have been floating around, but the buzz has recently shifted gears into full-blown wedding talk.

According to reports, the two actors quietly got engaged back in October 2025, in what can only be described as a super low-key ceremony. No flashy Instagram posts, no paparazzi leaks—just a handful of family members and close friends witnessing the moment. Since then, admirers of the duo have been waiting for something concrete, and it looks like the wait is finally paying off.

According to reports, actors Rashmika Mandanna and Vijay Devarakonda are purportedly set to marry on February 26, 2026, in a private ceremony at a palace in Udaipur, following a secret engagement in October 2025. The couple, known for their roles in films like Geetha Govindam and Dear Comrade, have kept their relationship private, with the wedding expected to be intimate and away from public attention.

Word is that the wedding is locked in for February 2026, with February 26 marked as the big day. And here's the dreamy detail: the venue is said to be a palace in Udaipur. Yes, one of those

grand heritage properties that ooze royalty and charm. But don't expect a Bollywood-style extravaganza with hundreds of guests and endless photo ops.

Much like their engagement, the wedding is reportedly going to be intimate and private, attended

shared pictures or even hinted at it publicly. This isn't surprising though—the couple has always preferred silence over spectacle when it comes to their personal lives. It's almost as if they've made a pact to keep their relationship sacred and away from the constant glare of cameras.

been part of her journey from the beginning. Her words: "I can just hope that everyone has a Vijay Devarakonda in their lives because that's a blessing"—pretty much melted hearts everywhere.

The two first shared screen space in Geetha Govindam and later in Dear

When asked about the wedding rumours, Rashmika handled it with her usual grace. During a chat with The Hollywood Reporter, she said she wouldn't confirm or deny anything, adding that when the time comes, they'll speak about it. That calm, measured response only added fuel to the curiosity.

A little earlier, at the success meet of her film The Girlfriend in Hyderabad, Rashmika got candid about Vijay. She called him "Viju" and spoke warmly about his support, saying he had

India has quietly crossed a scientific threshold in its northernmost region.

(Gns).

India has quietly crossed a scientific threshold in its northernmost region. At a state agricultural university in Kashmir, researchers have successfully developed the country's first gene-edited sheep—an animal that has now completed a year of monitored growth with normal health indicators and improved muscle development. The achievement has not triggered headlines or public debate. Yet its implications extend well beyond the laboratory in which it was born.

Developed at Sher-e-Kashmir Agricultural University in Srinagar, the project reflects years of publicly funded research that has advanced quietly, without the regulatory attention such breakthroughs usually demand. The sheep was developed using precision gene-editing techniques

that alter an organism's existing DNA rather than inserting foreign genetic material. By disabling a gene known to limit muscle growth, scientists have demonstrated measurable gains in body mass without observable physiological stress. This is not experimental tinkering for novelty's sake. The research emerged from a region that consumes far more mutton than it produces, under conditions of shrinking pasture, water stress, and rising demand. What makes this development consequential is not the animal itself, but the policy vacuum surrounding it.

India has, in recent years, signalled openness to gene-edited crops, approving varieties devel-

oped through similar techniques. Livestock, however, remains in regulatory limbo.

There is no clear guidance on whether gene-edited animals will be treated as natural vari-

eties or scientific success. Globally, countries have begun to resolve this dilemma by focusing on outcomes rather than methods—assessing food safety, ani-

under defined safeguards. Others remain cautious but are actively revising their rules. India's hesitation, by contrast, appears less philosophical than procedural.

Ethical concerns surrounding animal biotechnology are legitimate and should not be minimised. But ethical governance requires clarity, not silence. A regulatory architecture that includes transparent approvals, traceability, animal-welfare standards, and post-deployment monitoring is not an endorsement of unchecked innovation. It is an assertion of state responsibility. There is also a strategic dimension India cannot ignore. Protein availability, especially affordable animal



ants, subjected to transgenic regulations, or evaluated under an entirely new framework. This uncertainty effectively caps progress, regardless

of scientific success. Globally, countries have begun to resolve this dilemma by focusing on outcomes rather than methods—assessing food safety, ani-

Without choice

(Gns).

Nearly five years after Myanmar's military seized power, the generals have returned to a familiar ritual: the ballot box. But this election, held in phases amid an active civil war, is not an exercise in democratic renewal. It is an attempt to convert control into consent at a moment when the state itself is fractured. The conditions under which the vote is being conducted tell the real story. Large parts of the country are excluded on grounds of "instability"; opposition parties have been dissolved, and prominent leaders remain imprisoned or exiled.

The National League for Democracy, which won decisive mandates in earlier elections, is absent, its leadership jailed under charges widely seen as political. In such circumstances, the vote cannot serve as a mechanism of representation; it can only function as a managed outcome. The junta's argument is procedural: that phased voting, security

arrangements, and participation by registered parties, amount to progress towards a multi-party system. Yet, procedure divorced from political freedom is a hollow substitute.

Laws criminalising criticism of the election, with penalties extending to long prison terms and even death, invert the meaning of civic participation.

Voting under threat is not a choice; it is compulsion. That some citizens still line up to vote is not evidence of legitimacy, but of complexity. Years of conflict, economic collapse, and inflation have left ordinary people desperate for stability. For many, casting a ballot may feel like a small assertion of normalcy or a hope—however faint—that prices will fall or daily life might improve. These motivations are human and understandable. But they cannot repair a process structurally designed to exclude dissent. The broader context makes the exercise even more tenuous. Myanmar remains a

battlefield, with the military facing armed resistance groups and ethnic militias

cise: a government claiming democratic intent while relying on coercion as its

primary instrument of rule.

Air strikes continue even as polling proceeds, underscoring the contradiction at the heart of the exer-

mate to persist, but not to resolve. Regional and international reactions reflect this scepticism. Western governments have rejected the polls outright, while ASEAN has urged dialogue before any election—an implicit admission that ballots cannot precede reconciliation. The junta's leadership, embodied by Min Aung Hlaing, insists the process is free and fair, but legitimacy cannot be asserted by declaration.

It must be earned through inclusion. For India and the wider region, Myanmar's election poses an uncomfortable truth.

Stability achieved through exclusion is rarely stable for long. An electoral timetable that sidelines a popular political force associated with Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and ignores half the country's population may deliver an administration, but not authority. In the end, this vote is less about choosing a future than about freezing the present. Without dialogue, ceasefires, and the restoration of political freedoms, Myanmar's ballot risks becoming another milestone in the normalisation of military rule.

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External support, particularly diplomatic and material backing from

Russia Shares Drone Wreckage Video Near Putin's Residence Amid Conflict Tensions

(Gns). Russia released night-time footage of a destroyed drone this week, saying Ukraine tried to strike President Vladimir Putin's residence in the Novgorod region. Kyiv rejected the charge and said Moscow had provided no credible proof, while allies also questioned Russia's version of events.

The Russian defence ministry published the video, filmed in a snowy forested area, and said it showed the damaged drone that allegedly headed towards Putin's residence in north-west Russia. State media said the clip was recorded at night and distributed by the ministry, according to AFP.

Russia claimed Ukraine attempted to strike President Putin's Novgorod region residence with 91 drones, releasing footage as evidence, but Kyiv denied involvement. Ukraine and allies questioned Russia's evidence, while Moscow labeled the incident a terrorist act, and Zelensky met with allies in France on January 6th, the incident remains uncertain.

On Monday, Moscow said Ukraine had targeted one of Putin's presidential residences in the Novgorod region. Officials claimed 91

long-range attack drones were involved. The Kremlin later said it could not pres-

ed, and suggested Russia had not provided verifiable data supporting the

about the drones and again questioned Moscow's evidence.

Speaking to journalists on Tuesday, Zelensky repeated that the attack narrative had been staged. "Our negotiating team connected with the American team, they went through the details, and we understand that it's fake," AFP quoted Zelensky as saying. Kyiv said this review supported its position that the allegation lacked factual support.

However, United States President Donald Trump directed criticism at Kyiv after Russia made the claim. "You know who told me about it? President Putin, early in the morning, he said he was attacked. It's no good," Trump said. Trump added that it was "one thing to be offensive because they're offensive", but "another thing" to attack Putin's house.

The video from Russia's defence ministry, the strong denial from Ukraine, and mixed reactions from international figures left the alleged drone incident surrounded by uncertainty. With Moscow insisting on its account and Kyiv rejecting it, the dispute added another layer of tension to the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

claimed attack.

The Kremlin said the supposed operation against the residence in the Novgorod region amounted to a "terrorist act" and a "personal attack against Putin." Russian officials used this language while stressing the security risks. They did not release further technical details about the drones, beyond their claimed numbers and range.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky dismissed Russia's statement as a "complete fabrication". AFP reported that Zelensky planned to meet allies in France on 6 January to continue discussions on peace efforts. Zelensky urged partners to check every Russian assertion

ent extra visual proof because the drones were "all shot down." Kyiv firmly rejected that explanation.

According to AFP, Russia's defence ministry described the alleged strike as "targeted, carefully planned and carried out in stages". Officials in Moscow called the episode a serious security incident. Russian authorities said the apparent target was a secluded presidential compound used by Putin in the north-west of the country.

Ukraine labelled Russia's accusation a "lie". Officials in Kyiv said there was no "plausible" evidence linking Ukraine to any drone strike on Putin's residence. Several Western partners also voiced doubts, AFP report-

ed.

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her home. Trusting their assurance, she got inside the vehicle.

Instead of taking her

Police said the prolonged nature of the crime points to deliberate intent, and further investigation is

learnt about the assault, family members rushed to the spot and shifted her to a hospital.

Victim Hospitalised, Accused Arrested

Doctors treating the woman said she required 10 to 12 stitches on her face. While her condition is now stable, she remains in deep shock. Her statement has not yet been recorded due to her medical and psychological condition.

In her complaint, the victim's sister told police that the woman had called her around 8.30 pm the previous evening, saying she had argued with her mother and was going to a friend's house, adding that she would return within three hours.

Police confirmed that the woman is married, has three children, and has been living separately from her husband due to an ongoing domestic dispute. Both accused have been taken into custody, and the van involved in the crime has been seized as part of the investigation.

home, the van allegedly diverted towards Gurgaon Road, where the accused began assaulting her inside the moving vehicle.

Assault Continued For Over Two Hours

Investigators said the woman remained trapped inside the van for nearly two-and-a-half hours. During this time, the accused allegedly raped her repeatedly. Despite her resistance and repeated pleas, the men continued to make repeated phone calls to her sister. When the sister returned the call and

underway to reconstruct the exact route taken by the accused.

Thrown Out Of Moving Van With Severe Injuries

Around 3 am, the accused allegedly pushed the woman out of the moving van near Raja Chowk in the SGM Nagar area. She sustained serious facial injuries and was bleeding heavily after hitting the road.

Despite her condition, the woman managed to make repeated phone calls to her sister. When the sister returned the call and

the van allegedly diverted towards Gurgaon Road, where the accused began assaulting her inside the moving vehicle.

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