



## Use of AI should aim to bridge social, economic, technological divides: Prez Murmu

(Gns). President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday launched the #SkilltheNation challenge under the SOAR (Skill for AI Readiness) initiative of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) at a function held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre.

She also virtually inaugurated the IGNOU Regional Centre and Skill Centre at Rairangpur, Odisha, on the occasion.

Addressing the gathering, the President said Artificial Intelligence is reshaping economies and societies worldwide.

"It is transforming how we learn, how we work, how we access modern

services, and how we address humanity's greatest challenges. For a young nation like India, AI is not just a technology but a tremendous opportunity for positive change," she said.

The President said India's approach has always been that technology should empower people, promote inclusion, and expand opportunities for all.

"The use of AI should aim to bridge social, economic, and technological divides. It is essential to ensure that its benefits reach people of all backgrounds and ages, especially those from marginalised communities," she said.

The President was happy to note that students

are preparing themselves for a future full of possibilities and opportunities.

She urged them to remember that technology, their knowledge and skills

pleted AI learning modules. She said that by learning about emerging technologies themselves, they have set an example of leadership through learning.



should be used to serve society, find solutions to challenges, and empower others.

The President appreciated the Members of Parliament who have com-

The President said Artificial Intelligence is emerging as a growth driver for the Indian economy.

"In the coming decade, AI will play a significant role in the country's GDP,

employment, and overall productivity. Skills such as data science, AI engineering, and data analytics will play a crucial role in developing the country's AI talent pool," she said.

The President said the government, in collabora-

tion with various institutions, industry partners, and academia, is ensuring that India not only adopts technology but also shapes a responsible future through it.

She urged all to work together with commitment

to build a developed India.

"We should contribute to making India a knowledge superpower in line with the National Education Policy and to building a tech-driven, inclusive, and prosperous India," the President said.

This event, being organised by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, is part of the continued commitment of the government towards preparing India's workforce for an AI-driven future.

## Cigarettes, tobacco to be costlier from Feb 1 as Centre imposes additional excise duty

(Gns). The Central government on Wednesday notified a significant revision in excise duty on cigarettes and other tobacco products. According to the notification issued by the Ministry of Finance, an additional excise duty will be imposed on cigarettes in the range of Rs 2,050 to Rs 8,500 per 1,000 sticks, effective February 1, 2026.

The additional duty will be levied over and above the existing 40 per cent Goods and Services Tax (GST) on tobacco and similar products.

The move follows Parliament's recent passage of the Central Excise (Amendment) Bill, 2025, which provides for an increase in excise duties on tobacco and allied products following the expiry of the

GST compensation cess. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said in Parliament that the revenue collected will become a part of the divisible pool, and will be redistributed again to the States at the 41 per cent devolution formula.

"Many members here made the comment that this is a cess. Excise is not a cess. Excise duty existed before GST. Compensation cess is reverting back to the Centre to be collected as excise duty, which will

be redistributed to the States at the 41 per cent allocated," she had said.



Several countries revise tobacco taxes annually, while many link it with inflation, she noted. The minis-

ter added that even in India, tobacco taxes were increased regularly prior to the introduction of GST, primarily due to health considerations. "Higher prices or taxes were intended to act as a deterrent so that people would not get into the habit," Sitharaman said.

The government is bringing back the excise duty which existed priority to the GST system.

The minister said because of various initiatives taken by the government, acreage under tobacco cultivation of over 1.12 lakh acres (45,323 hectare) moved to other crops between 2018 to 2021-22. It has shifted to sugarcane, groundnut, oil palm, cotton, chilli, maize, onion, pulses, and turmeric, she had said.

## Mann Government's Digital Drive by 2025 Lets 1.85 Lakh People Access 437 Services From Home

(Gns). Under the leadership of Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, the Punjab government has achieved a historic milestone by making the state's administrative structure completely digital and citizen-friendly by 2025. Punjab has today emerged as a state in the country where "government is run not from offices, but from people's homes." This wave of administrative reforms has not only ensured transparency and accountability in government functioning but has also uprooted the decades-old culture of "recommendations and delays."

Under Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, the Punjab government aims to digitize its administration by 2025, facilitating citizen-

friendly services. The Bhagwant Mann Sarkar Tuhade Dwar scheme provides over 1.85 lakh citizens with 437 services, and the Revenue Department has processed over 12.46 lakh online applications, with pendency now at 0.33%.

Discussing this transformative change, Cabinet Minister Aman Arora said that due to the state government's visionary policies, the common citizen of Punjab is now able to avail government services from the comfort of their homes. The "Bhagwant Mann Sarkar Tuhade Dwar" scheme has proven to be a



strong pillar of this digital revolution, providing over 1.85 lakh citizens with 437 different services at their doorsteps. This scheme not only saves time but has also emerged as a major support for the elderly and rural residents.

The greatest example of administrative efficiency has been seen in the Revenue Department, where over 12.46 lakh applications have been processed online by Patwaris. This incorporation of technology has simplified land and property-related tasks, which were once a hotbed of corruption and delays. The entire process is now

paperless, and QR-coded digital certificates have added a new dimension to security and authenticity. This eliminates the need for citizens to visit offices or resort to middlemen.

The key to this government's success is real-time monitoring through the "Digital Dashboard." Thanks to this state-of-the-art system, pendency (pending cases) across all departmental services has now dropped to a mere 0.33%, the lowest level in the state's administrative history. Minister Aman Arora clarified that Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann has clearly directed that public work must be completed within timeframes without any hindrance. Today,

## Take resolution on New Year to remove BJP govt in 2027 : Akhilesh Yadav

(Gns). Samajwadi Party President Akhilesh Yadav extended New Year greetings and best wishes to everyone during a big gathering here on Thursday, with an appeal to party workers and leaders to take a resolution for 2026 to remove the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh in the 2027 assembly polls.

He announced that if the Samajwadi Party forms the government in UP, women will receive Rs 40,000 annually. "The Samajwadi Party fulfils its promises, and the public trusts that the SP keeps its promises. Only under a Samajwadi Party government will farm-

ers, labourers, and the poor benefit," he said.

"You all must dedicate yourselves to the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) so that no eligible



voters' names are deleted from the voters' list. BJP had already admitted that most of the deleted voters are supporters of BJP; hence, now no one can

stop SP from coming to power in 2027 in UP," he announced.

Addressing the gathering, the SP president also asked the workers to follow

leading the country and society on the path of prosperity.

"In the new year, everyone must work together with new energy and determination. The negative BJP government must be removed in 2027, and it must be ousted from power. In this government, injustice, oppression, inflation, unemployment, and corruption are at their peak. The public is suffering. The removal of the BJP government in 2027 is certain," he added.

Akhilesh Yadav claimed that "the BJP has become weak, and when the BJP becomes weak, it becomes even more communal".

## In her New Year message, Mayawati calls for inclusive development, constitutional governance

(Gns). Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) national president and former four-time chief minister of Uttar Pradesh Mayawati on Thursday extended heartfelt New Year greetings to all citizens and the Indians living across the world, wishing them happiness, peace, prosperity, security and a life of dignity.

In her New Year message, Mayawati said she hopes 2026 will make the daily lives of the poor and hardworking sections of society — collectively referred to as the Bahujan Samaj — simpler and freer from the growing burden of complex rules and laws. She stressed that the new year should bring real relief

and positive change to the lives of ordinary people, which would require continued social and political struggle for justice and dignity.

Highlighting the situation in India, particularly in Uttar Pradesh, the country's most populous state, she said widespread poverty, unemployment, and corruption continue to trouble the Bahujan population. She emphasized that the benefits of development, in line with the welfare-oriented Constitution, should not remain limited to a handful of people, but must reach all the most needy sections. She stressed the need for



policies and programmes to improve per capita development.

Mayawati further stated that while no government can claim absolute rule of law, sincere efforts should be made at all levels to establish governance based on constitutional values. She called for strict and impartial action against criminal and anti-social elements, without bias or discrimination, to curb hatred, violence and social tension, so that people can genuinely feel positive change in the new year.

She appealed to the ruling party and governments at the Centre and in the states to uphold India's

constitutional identity based on "unity in diversity" and "sarva dharma sambhav" (equal respect for all religions), ensuring protection of life, property and faith for all citizens. According to her, only such an approach can lead to truly inclusive and equitable development, rather than widening the gap between the rich and the poor.

The BSP chief added that if India follows its constitutional principles sincerely, it can emerge as a global guide, benefiting Indians worldwide and improving relations with neighbouring countries, ultimately enhancing the quality of life for common people.

देश-दुनिया के नवीनतम समाचार  
प्राप्त करने के लिए आज ही  
गरवी गुजरात हिंदी चैनल देखिये



## Editorial

### Mumbai Decides

As Mumbai heads into another Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation election, the contest is being read not merely as a civic poll but as a referendum on the city's changing social contract. For decades, municipal politics here were anchored in a relatively stable demographic and economic reality: an industrial city with a strong Marathi-speaking working class that translated cultural assertion into political dominance. That Mumbai no longer exists. The city has undergone a slow but decisive demographic shift.

Linguistic pluralism is now the norm, not the exception. Marathi speakers remain a significant presence, but they no longer form an unquestioned majority. Hindi-speaking populations, Muslims, Gujaratis, and a wide range of smaller linguistic communities together shape the electorate. In such a landscape, appeals built primarily on a single, linguistic identity face natural limits, especially in a city where mobility ~ social, economic, and geographic ~ is constant. The upcoming BMC polls bring this reality into sharp focus. They test whether civic politics can still be driven by cultural consolidation or whether it must respond to a more fragmented, issue-driven electorate. The answer increasingly appears to be the latter.

Today's voters are less animated by questions of identity and more by the everyday pressures of urban life: transport bottlenecks, housing affordability, infrastructure fatigue, pollution, and the reliability of basic services. These concerns cut across language and region, reshaping how political legitimacy is earned. This shift has altered the grammar of Mumbai's politics. Infrastructure has become the dominant political idiom, not because it is universally loved, but because it speaks to a city stretched across suburbs, satellite towns, and long commutes. Large projects promise predictability in an otherwise chaotic urban experience.

In contrast, symbolic politics ~ once central to civic mobilisation ~ now struggles to generate sustained momentum beyond a core base. Equally telling is the persistent voter apathy that shadows Mumbai's elections. Turnout remains modest, particularly in affluent and commercial districts that wield outsized economic influence. This disengagement reflects a deeper change: the transformation of citizens into consumers of the city rather than participants in its governance. Municipal politics, despite the immense impact on daily life, no longer commands the urgency it once did.

The irony is that the BMC, one of India's richest civic bodies, presides over a city that often appears politically fatigued. Electoral contests are keenly watched by parties but unevenly engaged with by voters. The danger is not that Mumbai lacks political choice, but that it risks losing civic voice. The forthcoming BMC election will therefore be less about who controls the corporation and more about what kind of city Mumbai chooses to be. It is a test of whether politics can adapt to demographic reality without retreating into nostalgia ~ and whether governance can reconnect with a population that has grown diverse, mobile, and quietly disengaged.

## Ahmedabad International Flower Show-2026

After the inauguration, the Chief Minister and dignitaries visited various zones of the flower show and viewed its key attractions, including floral sculptures. The Chief Minister

Chief Minister Shri Bhupendra Patel inaugurates the 14th International Flower Show with the theme 'Bharat Ek Gatha'

Energy Minister Shri Rushikesh Patel and Minister of State for Urban Development Smt. Darshana Vaghela Graces the Event

•The world's largest floral artwork honouring the contribution of the Iron Man Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel towards national unity prepared for the Guinness Book of World Records

•The Chief Minister also unveiled a sculpture prepared on the theme of 'Women Empowerment'

•A special creation based on 'Diwali ~ World Intangible Cultural Heritage' declared by UNESCO was presented

•India's history, culture, achievements and emotions were presented on a single platform through the confluence of flowers, art and imagination

Flower Show Open for Visitors Till 22 January 2026

Gandhinagar, 1 January 2026: Chief Minister Shri Bhupendra Patel today inaugurated the 'Ahmedabad International Flower Show 2026' at the Sabarmati Riverfront. The 14th edition of the show, themed 'Bharat Ek Gatha', celebrates India's rich and diverse culture and will remain open until 22 January. On this occasion, Energy Minister Shri Rushikesh Patel and Minister of State for Urban Development Smt. Darshana Vaghela were also present.

child care units, and food stalls will remain major attractions for visitors. The flower show has been organised with public participation, with active partnership from several inde

The world-class Ahmedabad Flower Show-2026 beautifully blends Indian culture with the beauty of nature, drawing nature and culture enthusiasts from across the coun

theme.

A special zone dedicated to various Indian festivals has also been prepared in the exhibition. Here, through floral art, the message of light and hope

grace of dance forms such as Kuchipudi, Bhangra, Garba and Kathakali. At the centre of this zone, the idol of Lord Nataraja will symbolise India's artistic richness, continuity of tradition and the universal language of rhythm.

The 'Achievements of India' zone highlights modern India's progress through floral displays depicting high-speed rail, renewable energy, sports achievements, space technology and excellence in education. The zone reflects a balanced development between India's rich heritage with future-focused innovation.

A major focal point of the exhibition will be the symbolic zone of national unity, featuring a magnificent floral mandala of 30-metre diameter and the world's largest floral artwork of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. This display, honouring the contribution of Sardar Patel, known as the Iron Man of India, towards national unity, has been prepared to set a Guinness World Record.

Under Flower Show-2026, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation has installed a sprinkling irrigation network system over an area of 10,524 sq. metres at the event ground on the Sabarmati Riverfront for the maintenance of seasonal plants installed for display, instead of traditional watering methods such as tractors or pipes.

Four special entry gates for visitor convenience

- Gate No. 1 ~ Flower Park, near Ellisbridge, Riverfront West
- From the Multilevel Car Parking Foot Over Bridge- Gate No. 4 ~ Event Centre, Riverfront West
- East Entry, East end of Atal Bridge, Riverfront East.

Ticket rates and timings

For visitors, the entry fee from Monday to Friday will be Rs. 80/-, and on Saturday, Sunday and public holidays the entry fee will be Rs. 100/-. Further, free entry will be available on all days for divyangs, soldiers, children aged 12 years or below, and students of schools run by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation. For students of schools other than AMC schools, the entry fee will be Rs. 10/- from Monday to Friday between 9:00 am and 1:00 pm. Additionally, for visitors, a prime time slot entry fee of Rs. 500/- will apply from 8 to 9 am and from 10 to 11 pm.

## Abhaya fund row: Doctors' front president Aniket Mahato quits

(Gns).

A rift has surfaced within the Junior Doctors' Front (JDF), a platform formed to pursue legal justice for Abhaya, the young woman doctor, who was brutally raped and murdered at RG Kar Hospital, over financial irregularities linked to the 'Abhaya Fund'.

The controversy culminated on the first day of the New Year, when JDF president Aniket Mahato resigned from his post, citing deep differences and what he described as "undemocratic functioning" of the organisation. The Junior Doctors' Front was set up by a section of Abhaya's batchmates to

keep alive the demand for justice and to support the continuing legal battle. Junior doctors Aniket Mahato, Debashis Halder and Asfakulla Naiya were among those who initiated the 'Abhaya Fund' to collect money for legal expenses.

However, within months, allegations began to surface that funds were being misused, triggering unease within the forum and among supporters of the movement.

In his resignation letter, Aniket Mahato did not conceal his dissatisfaction. He stated that the manner in which



the front was functioning had deviated from democratic norms and was no longer aligned with the core objective of securing justice for Abhaya. Despite

circumstances would amount to compromising the very principles on which the movement was founded. The case that sparked the movement continues to evoke strong emotions.

In August 2024, a woman doctor was raped and murdered inside a seminar room at RG Kar Hospital. Junior doctors launched a sustained agitation demanding justice. The Central Bureau of Investigation later took over the probe and concluded the trial within a relatively short span. Civic volunteer Sanjay Roy was

convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment. However, the verdict failed to satisfy the victim's family, relatives and friends, who alleged that key aspects of the crime were concealed and that the judicial process shielded certain individuals. As a result, the legal fight has continued in the Supreme Court, with the family seeking a more comprehensive probe.

It was to support this legal battle that the 'Abhaya Fund' was created. But allegations of financial impropriety and claims that the Front's movement was losing direction intensified internal discord. Mahato, in his letter, also referred to

protests he had led earlier against the transfer of himself, Debashis Halder and Asfakulla Naiya, underscoring his continued commitment to the cause despite growing differences.

Reacting to the developments, Trinamul Congress leader Kunal Ghosh remarked that such trusts had turned into "honey pots", leading to inevitable infighting. With Mahato's resignation, the credibility and future course of the Junior Doctors' Front now stand under a cloud, even as the demand for justice for Abhaya continues to resonate beyond organisational turmoil.

## Neither victorious, nor vanquished

(Gns).

As the first quarter of the 21st century gently folds into history, humanity finds itself pausing not out of leisure, but out of necessity. Time, which once seemed abundant at the dawn of the new millennium, has moved with astonishing haste. The years since 2000 have not unfolded evenly; they have surged, collided, and reshaped the world with a force few could have anticipated.

Looking back at the past twenty-five years is like surveying a vast landscape marked by dazzling achievements, deep fractures, silent revolutions, and unresolved questions. It is a period that has tested human intelligence, ethics, resilience, and imagination like few others before it. The century opened with an air of confident optimism. The Cold War had ended, ideological binaries appeared exhausted, and globalization promised a borderless world driven by free markets, technological innovation, and shared



prosperity. Nations spoke the language of cooperation, and the internet emerged as the great democratizer of knowledge. What began as a modest network of information soon transformed into a digital universe that altered

how people learned, worked, loved, protested, and governed.

Emails replaced letters, video calls bridged continents, and digital platforms created new economies while dismantling older ones. Yet, with every door technology opened, it also revealed shadows ~ surveillance, data exploitation, addiction to screens, and the erosion of privacy. The illusion of a peaceful global order was abruptly shattered in September 2001. The terrorist attacks on the

United States did more than destroy buildings; they reshaped the world's political psyche. Fear became a dominant currency, security a consuming obsession. Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq followed, altering the geopolitics of West Asia and exposing the long-term consequences of interventionist policies. Terrorism evolved into a decentralized, ideological menace, while counterterrorism measures often strained civil liberties.

Over time, the nature of conflict itself transformed ~ moving away from declared wars to proxy battles, cyberattacks, economic coercion, and narrative manipulation. The global economy, meanwhile, experienced dramatic highs and devastating lows. The early years of the century celebrated unrestrained growth and financial innovation, only to be humbled by the global financial crisis of 2008. The collapse of financial institutions sent

shockwaves across continents, wiping out livelihoods and revealing how deeply interconnected ~ and vulnerable ~ the world had become. Recovery was slow and uneven, leaving scars that reshaped public trust in institutions.

Inequality widened both within nations and between them, turning economic disparity into a central moral and political issue of our time. India's story during these twenty-five years stands as a study in transformation layered with contradiction. Entering the century as a developing nation burdened by poverty yet rich in potential, India steadily redefined itself. Economic reforms matured, industries expanded, and a vast middle class emerged. The information technology and services sectors propelled India into global relevance, making Indian talent indispensable to the world economy. Simultaneously, digital governance initiatives revolutionized daily life ~ banking became mobile, welfare delivery more targeted.

## Power on Trial

(Gns).

The Supreme Court's decision to halt the suspension of the life sentence awarded to Kuldeep Singh Sengar is more than a procedural intervention. It is a reminder that justice in cases of sexual violence cannot be reduced to narrow textual interpretations divorced from power, context, and consequence. At the heart of the controversy lies a troubling legal question: whether an elected legislator occupies a position of trust or authority under child protection law.

The argument that political office does not automatically entail such authority may be technically defensible in isolation, but it collapses when placed against India's lived political reality. Legislators wield influence not merely through statute but through networks of control ~ over police, local administration, and social hierarchies ~ especially in rural and semi-urban India. To pretend otherwise is to ignore how power functions on the ground. In India, where caste, gender, and political



patronage often intersect, the abuse of authority rarely leaves formal fingerprints. The absence of a written order does not negate coercion; it merely reflects how power is exercised informally yet decisively.

This case starkly illustrates that imbalance. The survivor was a minor when she alleged prolonged sexual assault. Her attempts to seek redress were met with indifference, intimidation, and tragedy. Members of her family died in circumstances that raised serious questions. Her father died in custody. Even years later, the possibility of the convict's release triggered public fear and protest, not

because of sentiment alone but because of precedent. The Delhi High Court's decision to suspend the sentence, on the basis that the aggravated provisions of child protection law did not apply, reflected a judicial approach overly

focused on classification rather than culpability.

It risked sending a chilling message: that political power can exploit statutory silences to dilute accountability. The Supreme Court's stay acknowledges that such cases demand heightened scrutiny, not mechanical application. Crucially, this is not about pre-empting the final legal outcome. It is about recognising that bail jurisprudence must



## What Is Happening in Indore That Caused Seven Deaths as Kailash Vijayvargiya’s Comment Comes Under Spotlight?

(Gns). In Indore, Madhya Pradesh, at least seven people have died and 149 have been hospitalized after consuming contaminated drinking water, causing the state government to take disciplinary action and launch a high-level inquiry; the water contamination is believed to be caused by a leak in a water pipeline. The Chief Minister announced compensation for the families of the deceased, and the Madhya Pradesh High Court has ordered free treatment for affected people and a status report by January 2.

Switch To Shorts

The state government has swung into emergency mode following mounting criticism, with disciplinary action taken against civic officials and a high-level inquiry ordered into the incident.

What is happening in Indore?

Seven deaths linked to contaminated water have been reported in Indore since December, city mayor Pushyamitra Bhargava told news agency PTI.

Bhargava said that while the health department officially recorded three deaths, four more patients who were admitted to hospitals with similar symptoms later died.

District Magistrate Shivam Verma said doctors had confirmed four deaths due to the outbreak so far. According to official data, 149 people have been admitted across 27 hospitals in the city.

Chief medical and health officer Madhav Prasad Hasani said the deaths were caused by diarrhoea triggered by contaminated drinking water.

"The patients said they suffered from vomiting, diarrhoea, and dehydration after drinking contaminated water," he said.

Officials stated that contamination likely occurred due to a leak in the main water pipeline that ran beneath a toilet. A leakage was detected in the primary supply line in Bhagirthpura, where a toilet had been constructed above the pipeline, allowing sewage to mix with potable water.

The issue surfaced after local residents complained of an unusual smell in their water supply on December 25, local councillor Kamal Baghela said. While residents had been facing water-related problems for several days, the situation worsened sharply on that date.

Following reports of the outbreak, the health department surveyed 2,703 households and medically examined nearly 12,000 people in affected areas, according to officials.

Zonal officer Shaligram Shitole and in-charge assistant engineer Yogesh Joshi have been suspended, while deputy engineer Shubham Srivastava has been sacked in connection with the incident.



## Zohran Mamdani Sworn In As New York City Mayor at Historic Subway Station

(Gns). Zohran Mamdani became mayor of New York City just after midnight on Thursday, taking the oath of office at a historic, decommissioned subway station in Manhattan.

Mamdani, a Democrat, was sworn in as the first Muslim leader of America's biggest city, placing his hand on a Quran as he took his oath.

"This is truly the honour and the privilege of a lifetime," Mamdani said. The ceremony, administered by New York Attorney General Letitia James, a political ally, took place at the old City Hall station, one of the city's original subway stops that is known for its stunning arched ceilings. He will be sworn in again, in grander style, in a public ceremony at City Hall at 1 pm by US Sen.

Zohran Mamdani, a Democrat, was sworn in as New York City's first Muslim, South Asian descent, and African-born mayor, as well as the youngest in generations, taking the oath at a historic subway station and will face challenges including high costs and political opposition.


Bernie Sanders, one of the mayor's political heroes. That will be followed by what the new administration is billing as a public block party on a stretch of Broadway known as the "Canyon of Heroes," famous for its ticker-tape parades. Mamdani now begins one of the most unrelenting jobs in American politics as one of the country's most-watched politicians.

In addition to being the city's first Muslim mayor, Mamdani is also its first of South Asian descent and the first to be born in Africa. At 34, Mamdani is also the city's youngest mayor in generations. In a campaign that helped make "affordability" a buzzword across the political spectrum, the democratic socialist promised to bring transformative change with policies intended to lower the cost of living in one of the world's most expensive cities.

His platform included free child care, free buses, a rent freeze for about 1 million households, and a pilot of city-run grocery stores. But he will also have to face other responsibilities: handling trash and snow and rats, while getting blamed for subway delays and potholes.

Mamdani was born in Kampala, Uganda, the son of filmmaker Mira Nair and Mahmood Mamdani, an academic and author.

His family moved to New York City when he was 7, with Mamdani growing up in a post-9/11 city where Muslims didn't always feel welcome.



## Mann Government Unveils Rs 800 Crore Punjab Police Vision 2026 to Cut Emergency Response Time to 7 Minutes

(Gns). To make policing more efficient, responsive, and professional as per the commitment of Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann, Director General of Police (DGP) Punjab Gaurav Yadav on Wednesday outlined an ambitious and technology-driven "Vision 2026" for the Punjab Police, centered on a massive infrastructure and capability upgrade.

Punjab Police's Vision 2026, outlined by DGP Gaurav Yadav, includes upgrading the Dial 112 ERSS with a ₹52 crore control room in Mohali, and installing 2,367 CCTV cameras along the border for ₹49.58 crores, with over ₹800 crores spent on modernization in the last three years.

A key focus is the upgrade of the Dial 112 Emergency Response System (ERSS) with dedicated Dial 112 Central control room building to be established at Mohali with the cost of ₹52 crores, while a fleet of vehicles will be augmented with the cost of ₹50 crores.

"Our target is to drastically reduce the current average response time of 12-13 minutes to just 7-8 minutes," said the DGP, while adding that simultaneously, District Control Rooms across Punjab are also being upgraded with an investment of ₹25 crores to ensure seamless coordination and faster incident management.



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## PNG Jewellers Sharpens Its Next Phase of Growth with Lifestyle by PNG, Appoints Sara Tendulkar as Brand Ambassador

Pune: Lifestyle by PNG, the contemporary lightweight fine jewellery brand from PNG Jewellers, has announced Sara Tendulkar as its brand ambassador, marking a key step in strengthening the brand's connection with India's future jewellery consumers.

The association reinforces Lifestyle's role as a strategic bridge between PNG Jewellers' legacy customers and its future customers. While PNG has been a trusted name across generations for nearly two centuries, Lifestyle has been consciously created to remain relevant to the next generation through a modern retail format, contemporary design language, and an omni-channel experience.

Speaking on the larger vision behind Lifestyle, Dr. Saurabh Gadgil, Chairman and Managing Director, PNG Jewellers, said, "Lifestyle by PNG is a conscious and long-term effort to bridge our existing customers with future customers. While PNG has earned trust across generations, it is equally important for us to stay relevant to the way younger consumers think, shop and express themselves today. Lifestyle has been created as a modern retail format with a strong omnichannel presence, designed around everyday moments rather than only traditional occasions. This is not a short-term style initiative, but a serious business vertical under the PNG umbrella, with dedicated focus on merchandising, planning, marketing and digital platforms. The encouraging response to our pilot stores has given us confidence to scale the brand in a structured manner across key markets."

Sara Tendulkar's natural elegance, modern outlook, and strong digital connect make her a strong fit for the brand's philosophy. With over 8.9 million followers on Instagram, she is widely recognised for her understated style, authenticity and balanced presence. Her preference for clean silhouettes, minimal embellishment and comfort led fashion aligns seamlessly with Lifestyle's design ethos.

Commenting on the association, Sara Tendulkar said, "Lifestyle reflects a sense of ease and individuality that feels very natural to me. The jewellery is light, thoughtful and designed for everyday life, which makes this partnership genuinely exciting."

Adding to this, Hemant Chaavan, Head Marketing and E-commerce, Lifestyle by PNG, said, "Sara represents the mindset of the young woman Lifestyle is created for, confident, modern and expressive in her own way."



## Broken Eye Socket, Deep Cuts on Face, Assaulted for Hours: 5 Shocking Details of Faridabad Gang Rape

(Gns). A 25-year-old woman is being treated in a Faridabad hospital's ICU after being gang-raped, assaulted, and pushed from a moving vehicle on the Gurugram-Faridabad Road earlier this week; two men have been arrested in connection with the case.

Switch To Shorts

She is undergoing treatment in the Intensive Care Unit of a private hospital in Faridabad for multiple fractures and deep wounds. Doctors say she remains in a serious condition and is not yet fit to record her statement.

Police said the crime unfolded in the early hours of Tuesday on a poorly lit and largely deserted stretch of the Gurugram-Faridabad Road. Two men have been arrested in connection with the case and have been sent to judicial custody.

1. Late-night lift turned into a nightmare

According to investigators, the woman left a friend's house close to midnight and waited near Metro Chowk for transport. With buses and autos unavailable, she accepted a lift from two men travelling in a white Eeco van. Instead of dropping her home, the vehicle was diverted towards an isolated road.

Police said the accused assaulted her inside the van as it continued moving through deserted areas.

2. Assault continued for hours on isolated stretch

Officials said the accused exploited low traffic, dense fog and poor visibility to stop the vehicle at secluded points along the route. One of the men allegedly assaulted the woman inside the van while the other remained outside to keep watch.

The assault, police said, continued for nearly two to three hours as the vehicle moved between deserted locations.

3. Pushed out of speeding vehicle

After the prolonged assault, the accused allegedly drove back towards the city and pushed the woman out of the van near Raja Chowk in Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Nagar between 3 am and 4 am. Police said the vehicle was travelling at a speed exceeding 90 kmph at the time.

The survivor reportedly screamed for help, but there were few vehicles on the road due to cold and foggy weather conditions.

4. Broken eye socket, dislocated shoulder and deep facial wounds

Medical teams treating the woman said she sustained severe injuries, including a fractured right eye socket, a fractured and dislocated shoulder, and multiple deep cuts on her face that required more than 20 stitches.



## Air India Pilot Held at Vancouver Airport Over Drinking Suspicions Before Flight

(Gns). On December 23, an Air India pilot was detained at Vancouver airport due to concerns about his fitness for duty, causing a delay for a Delhi-bound flight (AI186); he was later replaced, and is now off flying duties pending an inquiry, while the DGCA issued a show-cause notice to another crew for compliance lapses.

Switch To Shorts

The incident occurred on December 23, days before Christmas, and resulted in the pilot being removed from duty while an alternate crew member was arranged to operate the flight.

What happened at Vancouver airport

According to reports, a staff member at the airport's duty-free store alerted authorities after either seeing the pilot consume alcohol or noticing the smell while he was making a purchase. Canadian officials then subjected the pilot to a breath analyser test, which he reportedly failed, following which he was detained for further inquiry.

The pilot was scheduled to operate a flight from Vancouver to Delhi, and the intervention came shortly before boarding, disrupting the departure schedule.

Air India's response and official statement

In its statement, Air India said the action was taken after local authorities questioned the pilot's fitness for duty.

"Flight AI186 from Vancouver to Delhi on 23 December 2025 experienced a last-minute delay after one of the cockpit crew members was offloaded prior to departure. Canadian authorities raised concerns regarding the pilot's fitness for duty, following which the crew member was taken for further inquiry. In accordance with safety protocols, an alternate pilot was rostered to operate the flight, resulting in the delay," the airline said. It added, "Air India regrets the inconvenience caused to its passengers and is fully cooperating with the local authorities. The pilot has been taken off flying duties during the process of the enquiry. Air India maintains a zero-tolerance policy towards any violation of applicable rules and regulations. Pending the outcome of the investigation, any confirmed violation will attract strict disciplinary action in line with company policy. Safety remains Air India's highest priority at all times."



## Hindu man attacked by mob, set on fire in Bangladesh amid continued violence against minorities

(Gns). Violence against minorities continued unabated in Bangladesh with another Hindu man being attacked by a mob on Wednesday, December 31.

Khokan Das, a medical shop owner in Shariatpur, was allegedly attacked by the mob while returning home on New Year's Eve.

The mob reportedly beat Das black and blue before pouring petrol on him and setting him on fire. He, however, survived the attack by jumping into a nearby pond, which helped douse the flames.

Das was taken to the hospital for treatment where his condition remains critical. His family has demanded justice, claiming that he is a simple man who never harmed anyone.

Earlier on December 18, a Hindu garment factory worker named Dipu Chandra Das was lynched to death by a mob in Mymensingh over allegations of blasphemy. The mob had beaten Das to death, hung his body on a tree and set it on fire.

Later, it was revealed that he was killed over a dispute with his co-worker, who was apparently jealous of his promotion to the rank of a supervisor in the garment factory.

A few days later, another Hindu man named Amrit Mondal was beaten to death by a mob over allegations of extortion.

Another Hindu killed in Bangladesh's Mymensingh where Dipu Chandra Das was lynched

Earlier this week, Bajendra Biswas, an Ansar member, was shot in the thigh by the accused Ansar member, Noman Mia. Biswas was rushed to a hospital where doctors declared him dead.

The Indian government has also expressed concerns over the rising attacks on Hindus and other minority groups in Bangladesh, a country-marred by violence since the fall of Sheikh Hasina government.



**WESTERN RAILWAY**  
**ELECTRICAL WORK**  
Deputy Chief Electrical Engineer (Construction), Western Railway, 1<sup>st</sup> floor Station Building, Room No. 165, Churchgate, Mumbai 400 020, invites e-Tender Notice No: EL-92-12-C-CCG-2025-26-02, Date: 29.12.2025. Name of Work: Design, Supply, Erection, testing and commissioning of 25 KV AC OHE for New Coaching Terminus (TRD Work) of platform return Trains at Vasai Road under Mumbai Division of Western Railway. NIT cost: ₹ 5,59,58,195/- EMD: ₹ 4,29,800/- e-Bid submission closing on: Till 20.01.2026, 15:00 Hrs. e-Bid opening date: On 20.01.2026 at 15:30 Hrs. For further details please visit our website [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in) 0958  
Like us on : [facebook.com/WesternRly](https://www.facebook.com/WesternRly)



## Ladakh administration to preserve ancient monasteries: LG Kavinder Gupta

(Gns). Lt Governor Kavinder Gupta on Thursday said that the Ladakh UT administration is firmly committed to the preservation, protection, and holistic development of ancient monasteries, ensuring conservation of their rich heritage, promotion of traditional art and architecture, and safeguarding these spiritual institutions for future generations.

To mark the beginning of New Year 2026, the Lieutenant Governor visited the iconic Hemis Monastery and the Maitri Geriatric Home at the Mahabodhi International Meditation Centre (MIMC), Devachan Campus, Choglamsar. The visit was marked by prayers, interaction with senior citizens, and a message of peace, compassion and inclusive development.

At Hemis Monastery, founded in 1630 by monastery headed by His Holiness Gyalwang Drukpa, an environmentalist leading Monastery.

At Hemis Monastery, the Lieutenant Governor offered prayers and sought blessings for peace, prosperity, and the overall development of Ladakh and its people. Interacting with the monks and devotees, he highlighted Ladakh's rich spiritual heritage and its role in promoting harmony, mindfulness, and universal human values.

The Lieutenant Governor stated that the UT Administration is making sincere efforts to bring the sacred Buddha Relics to Ladakh for public Darshan, enabling devotees and people from across the region to receive spiritual inspiration and strengthen Ladakh's identity as a global centre of Buddhism and peace.



## Chhattisgarh signs MoU with Sri Sathya Sai Trust to boost healthcare skills, youth employment

(Gns). Chhattisgarh took a significant step towards strengthening its healthcare workforce and expanding employment opportunities on Thursday with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Chhattisgarh State Skill Development Authority and the Sri Sathya Sai Health and Education Trust. The agreement was formalised at Mahanadi Bhawan in Nava Raipur in the presence of Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai.

The MoU aims to enhance skill development in the healthcare sector by introducing structured vocational training programmes tailored to the growing demands of modern medical services. Under the partnership, healthcare training centres will be established to equip young people with industry-relevant skills while creating a pool of trained professionals to support hospitals and emergency services across the state.

As per the agreement, training will be provided free of cost through both residential and non-residential programmes. Courses will cover key disciplines, including Medical Laboratory Technology, Cardiology Technician, ECG Technician, Cardiac Care Technician, and Emergency Medical Technician. Officials said the initiative is designed to open sustainable career pathways for youth, particularly in a sector witnessing rapid expansion.

Addressing the gathering, Chief Minister Sai said skill development remains central to the state's development strategy. He noted that focused training in healthcare would not only improve service delivery but also generate meaningful employment for young people. "A skilled workforce is essential for strengthening healthcare infrastructure, especially in remote and underserved areas," he said, expressing confidence that the initiative would have a long-term impact.

The Chief Minister added that trained professionals emerging from the programme would be able to contribute effectively to hospitals, diagnostic centres and emergency response systems, thereby improving access to quality healthcare across Chhattisgarh.

Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma, Cabinet Minister Gajendra Yadav, Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister Subodh Singh, and Sri Sathya Sai Health and Education Trust Chairman C Srinivas were among those present at the signing ceremony, along with senior officials of the Skill Development Department.

Officials said the collaboration reflects the state government's emphasis on linking skill development with public health priorities, positioning Chhattisgarh to meet future healthcare challenges with a trained and employment-ready workforce.



## 44 volunteers left for Lucknow for Aapda Mitra training, DM gave green signal

District Magistrate Chandra Prakash Singh sending off the green flag Mathura. From 02 January 2026 to 13 January 2026, 44 volunteers of the district were sent for training for the Aapda Mitra training program organized by the State Disaster Response Force, Lucknow. District Magistrate Chandra Prakash Singh flagged off the bus for Lucknow. The District Magistrate informed that in the 12-day training program, a total of 44 volunteers from 24 NCC, 7 Civil Defense, 4 NSS and 9 Nehru Youth Centers of the district are being sent to Lucknow for training as Aapda Mitra. Everyone will be provided training by the State Disaster Response Force, Lucknow.

All the arrangements related to organizing/conducting the training like accommodation, food, training, related materials, expenses for transportation etc. will be made by the State Disaster Response Force, Lucknow. During the training, each volunteer will be provided with an emergency responder kit as per the orders issued by the government and an insurance policy will also be issued. The District Magistrate congratulated all the volunteers and sent them off to Lucknow

## Refinery celebrated New Year with school children

Mathuras Indian Oil has always given importance to the work of upliftment of the society by following its corporate value of "Care"/"Conservation". Social welfare activities under Corporate Social Responsibility give a distinct and special identity to Indian Oil. In this sequence, Mathura Refinery has also been taking many commendable initiatives for social welfare since its inception. Following the corporate philosophy of "Conservation", Mathura Refinery started the New Year 2026 on a special note. On the first day of New Year, Mathura Refinery celebrated the New Year with school children under the Community Outreach Programme.

Mathura Refinery met the children of Government Primary School, Ranchi Bangar and Sur Kutir praised the contribution of Indian Oil and Mathura Refinery to the country. This was the happiest moment of life for the officials of Mathura Refinery. Mathura Refinery has always been committed to good governance, safety of its officers and employees as well as welfare of the local residents and providing education, health and basic amenities. With this special beginning of the new year, Mathura Refinery is again focused on its goal and will always continue to fulfill its compassion and duty towards the society.

Visually Impaired School, Keetham and wished them a bright and healthy future. Everyone appreciated this unique step of Mathura Refinery and

Outreach Program and spread happiness by distributing blankets, stationery kits and sweets. Mukul Aggarwal, Executive Director,



## Annual Function and Certificate Distribution Ceremony Held at New Global Skill Computer Academy, Premnagar

The annual function along with a certificate distribution ceremony was successfully organized at New Global Skill Computer Academy, located on Mandwa Road, Premnagar. The institute has been imparting computer training since January 1, 2022.

Academy Director \*Ashutosh Kumar (Sonu Modanwal)\* extended New Year greetings to the students and highlighted the importance of cyber security in today's digital era. He also shared insights on the growing relevance of computers and the future scope of \*Artificial Intelligence (AI)\*.

On the occasion, \*Managing Director Ajay Pratap Singh, \*\*Centre Manager Prabhat Kumar, and associate \*\*Avadhesh Sahu\* jointly cut the cake. Around 60 students attended the program, and certificates were awarded to nearly 40 successful trainees. Courses like \*CCC, O Level, ADCA, and Tally Accounting\* are available at the centre.

## Hospitals to offer "home away from home" for patients' families

(Gns). In a move that blends healthcare with compassion, the Chhattisgarh government has announced the creation of dedicated rest homes for relatives of patients at government medical college hospitals, addressing a long neglected hardship faced by families travelling from remote and rural areas for treatment.

The initiative was formalised with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Department of Medical Education and the Sevedan Arogya Foundation at the state secretariat in Nava Raipur, in the presence of Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai. The project aims to ensure that attendants of hospitalised patients are no longer forced to spend nights in corridors, staircases or open spaces while caring for their loved ones.

Under the agreement, the Sevedan Arogya Foundation will take full responsibility for the construction, furnishing, and day-to-day management of the rest homes. The facilities will operate on a "no profit, no loss" basis, offering safe, clean and affordable accommodation. Each rest home will provide round the clock security, CCTV surveillance, hygienic food and a dignified living environment within or near hospital campuses.

In the first phase, the rest homes will be developed at government medical colleges in Raipur, Ambikapur, Raigarh and Jagdalpur, key healthcare hubs that receive a steady influx of patients from distant districts. Officials said the selection reflects the pressing need for organised accommodation in cities where families often stay for weeks during prolonged treatment.

Health Minister Shyam Bihari Jaiswal said the initiative recognises that recovery is not limited to medicines alone. "Treatment also depends on emotional support and peace of mind. These rest homes will allow families to remain close to patients in a secure and humane setting," he said.

Chief Minister Sai emphasised that healthcare must extend beyond clinical care. "Our objective is not only to provide quality treatment but also to safeguard the dignity and comfort of patients' families. For those coming from far flung areas, these rest homes will offer safe, clean and affordable shelter along with food and basic facilities, under one roof," he said, describing the move as a hallmark of sensitive and responsible governance.

Technical Education Minister Khushwant Saheb, Health Secretary Amit Kataria, Medical Education Commissioner Ritesh Agrawal, and representatives of the Sevedan



## Bangladesh ex-foreign minister warns of Pak-China axis & terror modules

(Gns). Bangladesh risks being pulled into a dangerous geopolitical and ideological vortex as it aligns itself too closely with Pakistan and China and allows religious extremism to flourish at home, a former foreign minister of the country has warned, painting a bleak picture of economic stagnation, diplomatic isolation and social rupture in the post-Sheikh Hasina era.

In an exclusive interview to the United News of India, Prof AK Abdul Momen, who served as Bangladesh's foreign minister from 2019-2024, said that the Bangladesh-Pakistan-China axis building up could prove deeply destabilising, not just for Dhaka, but for the wider South and South East Asia.

"Depending on the nature of this axis, many scenarios may unfold," Prof Momen said, outlining a cascade of risks which range from provoking pressure or sanctions from the United States; losing credibility in international forums; alienating India and other liberal neighbours, and, most ominously, sliding toward jihadist radicalism and authoritarian rule.

Bangladesh's foreign affairs adviser Md Touhid Hossain had earlier this month said it is "strategically possible" for Dhaka to join a regional grouping with Pakistan that excludes India. It is also known that the BNP during the Late Prime Minister Begum Zia's reign had close ties with both China and Pakistan and had allowed ISI to run terror camps aimed at destabilising India's northeast.

At stake, Momen suggested, is the very identity of Bangladesh — a country born out of a bloody war of liberation in 1971, founded on secular nationalism and linguistic pride, now confronting the possibility of being recast as what he described as a "jihadi country," where women would be relegated to second-class status and democratic institutions hollowed out.

"Depending on the nature of the Bangladesh-



## 'Save the country from darkness': Sheikh Hasina urges unity in New Year message, warns of crisis facing Bangladesh

(Gns). Bangladesh Awami League Chairperson and former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today extended greetings for 2026 and called on citizens to unite to "save the country from this journey into darkness."

The message was posted on the official X handle of the Bangladesh Awami League, carrying New Year message from Sheikh Hasina to the people of the country.

In a strongly worded message, the Awami League chairperson referred to the conspiracies working to destroy the country. She claimed that those attempting to destroy Bangladesh had been exposed. She accused unnamed forces of pushing Bangladesh into crisis.

Sheikh Hasina said, "You have seen how illegal usurpers, holding you hostage, have pushed the country toward darkness through limitless corruption, falsehood, and the intoxication of serving personal interests."

In her New Year's address, Sheikh Hasina appealed to Bangladesh citizens to come together to save the country from the journey into darkness. She urged people to make a collective commitment at the start of the year. She said, "Let us, as we welcome the New Year, pledge ourselves to that commitment of protecting the nation."

Highlighting Bangladesh's history and identity, she warned that the distinct identity of Bangladesh and its historic struggle for liberation were being questioned.

She also recalled past moments of national unity during crises. She added, "In the past, whenever such critical times have arisen, this nation has united, forgetting differences of class, religion, colour, language, and ethnicity, and has leapt forward to realize a collective dream."

Expressing confidence in the people, Sheikh Hasina said she believed Bangladeshis would not allow the current hardships to continue for long and that a decisive outcome would be seen in the New Year itself.

Sheikh Hasina also raised concerns about Bangladesh's global standing, saying the country's name had become associated with fear internationally, resulting in a loss of respect for its people. Referring to economic challenges, she said insecurity among foreign investors and donor groups, coupled with chaotic conditions, had led to an economic collapse.

"Happy New Year, my beloved Bangladesh. May the New Year bring boundless harmony, happiness, and prosperity for all the people of Bangladesh," the Awami League chairperson said.

The message reflected her hope for renewal and reconciliation in the year ahead. She stated, "May it wipe away the sorrows and afflictions of the past, correct mistakes and shortcomings, and become a memorable year for everyone."



## CIA assessment undercuts Russia's claim of Ukrainian plot to kill Vladimir Putin

(Gns). US intelligence agencies have found no evidence to support Russia's claim that Ukraine tried to assassinate President Vladimir Putin in a recent drone operation, according to The Wall Street Journal report.

The conclusion follows an assessment by the Central Intelligence Agency, which determined that there was no attempt to target Putin or any of his residences. A US official familiar with the intelligence review said the findings contradict Moscow's allegation. The CIA has declined to comment publicly.

According to the assessment, US intelligence believes Ukraine was planning a strike on a military target located in the same wider region as Putin's country residence, but not near the site itself.

lines for peace deal with Russia

US intelligence agencies track developments

Russia has claimed that Ukrainian drones were aimed at Putin's Novgorod-area residence, known as Dolgiye Borody, or Long Beards, and has described the incident as an attempted assassination.

Also Read: 'Peace? Yes. At any cost? No': Volodymyr Zelenskyy's New Year message sets red

inside Russia using a combination of satellite imagery, radar monitoring and intercepted communications, The Wall Street Journal reported.

President Donald Trump appeared to cast doubt on the Russian claim after being briefed on the intelligence review by CIA Director John Ratcliffe.

Trump shared a New York Post editorial on Truth Social that questioned whether the alleged attack had taken place, reposting a headline suggesting Russia was obstructing peace efforts.

Earlier, Trump told reporters he was "very angry" after Putin said during a phone call that Ukrainian drones had targeted his residence. When asked whether US intelligence had confirmed the incident, Trump said it was possible the attack may not have occurred, adding that Putin had told him it did.

Ukraine has acknowledged carrying out certain sabotage and targeted operations inside Russian territory but has firmly denied any attempt to target Putin or his residence.

