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Risk-taking is now mainstream; youth no more willing to live life in comfort zone: PM Modi on National Startup Day

(Gns).
Lauding the Startup culture that has been embraced by the youth in India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said risk-taking has become mainstream in the country.

Speaking at an event to mark the National Startup Day and 10 Years of Startup India, at Bharat Mandapam here, the PM said the Startup India Mission has become a revolution in just 10 years and the country today has the world's third-largest startup ecosystem.

"The youth of my country are not willing to live their lives in a comfort zone anymore. They are not content with following the same old beaten path. They want to forge their own paths because they aspire to

reach new destinations, new heights.

"Previously, risk-taking was discouraged in the country. But today, risk-taking has become mainstream. Those who think beyond a monthly salary are now not only accepted but also respected," the PM stated.

Reflecting further on the risk-taking ability, the PM said it is an old habit of his too.

"The tasks that no one else is willing to do, the issues that previous governments avoided for decades because they feared losing elections and their positions, the tasks that people warn me are political risks — I consider it my duty to undertake them. Like you, I believe that whatever is necessary for the country must be

done by someone. If there are losses, they will be mine, but if there are benefits, they will accrue to



crores of families of my country," Modi said, talking about some of the difficult decisions he has taken as the head of the government over the last 12 years since becoming the prime minister in 2014.

The PM further said India's youth are today

focused on solving real problems, and Startup India is not just a scheme but a rainbow vision.

Startup India connects diverse sectors with new opportunities and now is the time for our startups to focus more on manufacturing, stated PM Modi.

The courage, confidence and innovation of startups are shaping India's future, he said further with

a hope for the years and decades ahead.

The PM also highlighted the empowerment factor of the Startup India policy, stating that people from underprivileged sections as well as women have bene-

fitted immensely from the scheme.

"Startup India has given birth to a new culture in the country. Previously, only children from wealthy families would start new businesses or ventures,

because they were the only ones who could easily access funding. Most children from middle-class and poor families could only dream of getting a job. But the Startup India programme has changed this

mindset.

"Women have also played a major role in this transformation. Today, more than 45 per cent of recognised startups have at least one female director or partner," Modi said.

Under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Shri Bhupendra Patel, Collector Conference concludes in Gandhinagar

Chief Minister Urges Development of Robust District-Level System for Listening to Public Representations and Ensuring Swift, Honest Resolution
Chief Minister

*** Emphasis on Monitoring Effective Implementation of Government Schemes Through Priority to Field Visits**

*** Directive to lead the overall functioning of the entire district based on honesty, integrity, competence and effectiveness.**

*** Government Stands with Collectors; Call to Lead District Teams Fearlessly with Wisdom and Integrity**

Gandhinagar, (Gns).
Chief Minister Shri Bhupendra Patel has urged the district collectors of the state to develop a more robust system at the district level for speedy and honest resolution after listening to



people's representations.

In this context, he stated that public trust and confidence can be earned only by understanding the difficulties of the person coming with a representation in the district and responding with a sense of empathy and support. He especially emphasised that for issues that can be resolved at the district level, people should not have to approach the government or departments, and that collectors should ensure such issues are resolved locally in a speedy, transparent and effective

manner.

Addressing the Collector Conference held in Gandhinagar, he instructed district collectors to prioritise field visits and monitor the effective implementation of government schemes. He also urged collectors to lead the overall functioning of the district on the core principles of honesty, integrity, competence and effectiveness.

Chief Minister emphasised that the responsibility entrusted to the District Collectors as heads of the districts is a significant

opportunity to serve the public by addressing and resolving the problems of the common man. He added that due to strong financial management in the state, there is no longer any shortage of funds for development works. In such circumstances, collectors should lead district teams and ensure proper supervision so that ongoing development works under various schemes are completed swiftly and with quality. He urged all district collectors of the state to work together through teamwork and mutual consultation, and said that collectors should function responsibly so that circulars and rules are not interpreted differently across districts and people experience ease in getting their work done.

Rahul Gandhi to visit Indore, meet families of contaminated water victims

(Gns).
Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi is set to visit Indore on Saturday and meet the families of victims who succumbed allegedly due to the consumption of contaminated water of the Narmada river supplied by the Indore Municipal Corporation (IMC) through taps in households of the Bhagirathpura locality of the city.

According to Congress leaders, Rahul Gandhi would also visit the Bombay Hospital to meet patients who are still undergoing treatment there after

the outbreak of vomiting, diarrhoea, and dehydration, linked to contaminated drinking water.

Madhya Pradesh Congress president Jitu Patwari claimed to media persons on Friday that at least 24 people had died so far due to contaminated drinking water in the Bhagirathpura area, while the condition of about 10 patients remained critical.

Patwari said Rahul Gandhi would meet patients in the hospital and

also visit Bhagirathpura to express condolences to the families of the deceased.

The Congress had also planned a meeting at Indore's Abhay Khel Prashal, where Rahul Gandhi was scheduled to address and interact with Congress leaders, urban local body representatives, environmentalists, and intellectuals from across the state.

However, that meeting has been called off, as the Indore district administration and police denied per-

mission for it. The Congress had sought permission for a gathering of around 1000 people.

"Therefore, we will organize this conference at a later date," Patwari said.

As per Congress leaders, Rahul Gandhi is expected to arrive at Indore by special plane at around 11 AM. He is scheduled to meet patients at Bombay Hospital from 11:45 to 12:15 pm and then proceed to Bhagirathpura to meet bereaved families from 12:45 pm to 1:45 pm.

At 2:30 pm, Rahul Gandhi would depart from Indore for New Delhi.



Commonwealth Speakers resolve to make democratic institutions more people-centric

(Gns).
The three-day 28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC) concluded on Friday evening with a renewed commitment to make democratic institutions more people-centric.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla handed over the chairmanship of 29th CSPOC to Sir Lindsay Hoyle, Speaker of the UK House of Commons, and wished him best for the success of the next CSPOC in London.

In his valedictory address, Birla noted that democratic institutions can remain strong and relevant when they are transparent, inclusive, responsive and accountable to people.

He observed that transparency fosters public trust

by ensuring openness in decision-making, while inclusivity guarantees that every voice—especially those on the margins — is heard and respected in the democratic process.

Together, these principles sustain the legitimacy of democratic institutions and strengthen the enduring bond between the citizen and the State, he opined.

Recalling the vision behind the establishment of CSPOC, 56 years ago, the Speaker said that the Conference was conceived to ensure continuous dia-

logue among democratic legislatures of the Commonwealth and to explore new ways of enhancing parliamentary efficiency and responsiveness.

He stated that the 28th CSPOC had carried this legacy forward with renewed vigour and substance. The unprecedented participation of the largest number of countries in CSPOC's history was highlighted by the Speaker as a defining feature of this Conference.

This wide and inclusive representation, he said, would ensure that the New

Delhi Conference is remembered as a significant milestone in the history of Commonwealth parliamentary cooperation.

Reflecting on the substantive sessions of the Conference, he noted that discussions on responsible use of Artificial Intelligence in Parliaments, the impact of social media, citizen engagement beyond elections, and the health and well-being of Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff were particularly thought-provoking. These deliberations, he said, helped Presiding Officers gain greater clarity about their evolving roles and responsibilities at a critical juncture where democratic traditions intersect with rapid technological change.

kuaishankar underlines importance of economic security in uncertain global environment

(Gns).
External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday said India places a very high priority to its relationship with Japan, which has evolved over the past two decades into a broad, comprehensive and strategic partnership.

Co-chairing the 18th India-Japan Strategic Dialogue with visiting Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi here, he underlined the importance of economic security, calling it 'paramount' and emphasising the need to de-risk both national and global economies amid an uncertain international economic environment.

The India-Japan relationship, he recalled, was primarily an economic partnership earlier. But it has evolved over the past two decades, the Indian minister said, referring to coop-

eration between the two nations in various international forums, including Quad, the United Nations, G4, and G20.

Talking about the

"Much much time has passed, but the relationship today sees that our initiative, what we call MAHASAGAR and visions for the Indo-Pacific align

obligation, a duty, to shape the global order. And in the current uncertain global situation, it's even more important that we work closely towards shared strategic goals."

He said, "Economic security today is particularly paramount. Both our countries attach enormous importance to it. And how to de-risk our own economies and how to de-risk the international economy are both very important. We will be discussing resilient supply chains, critical minerals, and how to address energy, health, and maritime security in our talks today," he added.

Jaishankar also noted that India and Japan will mark 75 years of diplomatic relations next year, expressing confidence that the special, strategic, and global partnership will continue to strengthen.



shared Indo-Pacific vision, Jaishankar pointed out that former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe had, in an address to the Indian Parliament, laid the foundation for the Indo-Pacific as a political, economic, and strategic construct.

closely with your free and open Indo-Pacific," he told his Japanese counterpart. Jaishankar said, "We are leading democracies. We are the major economies of the world. And we have today not just an opportunity but also an

Nitish Kumar begins 'Samridhhi Yatra', RJD questions claims of prosperity

(Gns).
Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Friday launched the 'Samridhhi Yatra' (Prosperity Tour) from Bettiah in West Champaran district, marking his 16th statewide tour as Chief Minister since assuming office in 2005,

and his first such tour after taking oath for a record tenth term.

On the occasion, the Chief Minister laid the foundation stone for 125 development projects worth Rs153 crore to



Addressing a gathering in Bettiah, Nitish Kumar tar-

accelerate the district's overall development, and also inaugurated 36 completed projects costing Rs29 crore.

geted the Opposition, saying that his government has been working with complete honesty and dedication to make Bihar a developed state, with the cooperation of the Central government, while "some people merely indulge in baseless talk."

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Editorial

Voice of the Hills

For the hills of Darjeeling and the wider Gorkha belt, Prashant Tamang was never just a reality-show winner or a screen actor. He was a moment in history. In a country where visibility often decides belonging, his rise from a police constable to a national stage did something quietly radical: it made the Gorkha identity visible, relatable, and proudly Indian in the public imagination. His victory years ago was not merely about musical talent.

It was about recognition. In towns where people pooled money to buy phones just to vote, in homes where prayers were offered for his success, one could sense that something deeper was unfolding. A community that had long felt peripheral suddenly found itself at the centre of a national conversation. For many in the hills, he was the first face on mainstream television that looked like them, spoke like them and carried their cultural confidence without apology. That emotional investment explains the scale of grief now visible in Darjeeling. The crowds, the tears and the tributes are not performative. They are deeply personal. Tamang was not admired from a distance; he was claimed. He represented the possibility that talent from the margins could break through without being diluted or stereotyped. In doing so, he challenged a long-standing hierarchy of who gets to be seen and celebrated in India. It is also telling that his success once triggered ugly reactions and backlash.

That tension exposed an uncomfortable truth: that representation is not always welcomed, and that the ascent of marginalised identities can unsettle entrenched ideas of who "belongs". Yet it is precisely this disruption that made his journey important. He did not just sing; he shifted perceptions. In later years, his transition into acting, including darker, more complex roles, showed an artist unwilling to be boxed into a single narrative. He was not content being remembered as a one-season wonder or a sentimental figure from the past. He wanted range, depth, and credibility. In doing so, he proved that his early success was not an accident of public sympathy but the foundation of a serious creative life. For the Darjeeling hills, his story carried a second meaning. It was proof that one did not have to leave one's identity behind to move ahead. That one could step into the national spotlight without shedding local roots. That one could be from "the hills" and still be central to India's cultural bloodstream. His sudden passing feels cruel because it interrupts that arc. It leaves behind unanswered questions about what more he might have become, and what more he might have represented. But even in its brevity, his journey has already done something lasting. It has expanded the space for the Gorkha community in India's cultural map. Long after the music fades and the screens go dark, that may be his most enduring legacy.

Chief Minister Shri Bhupendra Patel distributes assistive devices worth ₹1.16 crore to 1,017 Divyangjan in Bhavnagar



stream: Agriculture Minister Shri Jitu Vaghani

Gandhinagar, (Gns). Chief Minister Shri Bhupendra Patel stated on the occasion of the Divyang assistive devices distribution programme in Bhavnagar that, under the guidance of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the State Government has taken several decisions in the interest of Divyangjan to make their lives easier and more dignified.

In Bhavnagar, a free Divyang assistive devices distribution camp was organised by ALIMCO and the Bhavnagar district administration under the ADIP (Assistance to Persons with Disabilities for Purchase/Fitting of Aids /Appliances) Scheme of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, and the CSR initiatives of GETCO and PGVCL.

Chief Minister described the free assistive devices distribution programme— under which assistive devices worth ₹1.16 crore were provided to 1,017 Divyangjan in a single day by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India—as a reflection of the Government's commitment towards Divyang welfare.

CM congratulated Union Minister Smt. Nimuben Bambhaniya and her team for promoting Atmanibharta by organising camps over 15 days in Bhavnagar and Botad districts and distributing more than 4,800 assistive devices worth ₹3.51 crore free of cost to over 2,600 Divyangjan. He also lauded GETCO and Paschim Gujarat Vij Company Limited (PGVCL) for their contributions in the context of the CSR initiative.

On this occasion, the Chief Minister said that in the last five years, more than 4 lakh Divyangjan in Gujarat have been provided assistance of over ₹820 crore through various welfare schemes. He further added that Divyangjan have also been relieved from the hardship of repeatedly undergoing medical check-ups for certification, as the decision to make disability certificates valid for a lifetime has provided significant relief.

He further stated that visually impaired persons with 60 per cent or more disability are now eligible for benefits under the Sant Surdas Yojana, enabling them to live with dignity and self-respect.

Highlighting the Prime Minister's role in transforming the lives of persons with disabilities, the Chief Minister said that the Accessible India initiative has led to the creation of special facilities in government offices, railway stations, airports, and public spaces across the country, significantly improving ease of living.

Elaborating on the Prime Minister's initiative to establish "Divyasha" Kendras, the Chief Minister said that through these centres, free assistive devices are being provided to Divyangjan and senior citizens. He added that out of the target of establishing 300 Divyasha Centres across the country, around 100 have already become operational.

Chief Minister Shri Bhupendra Patel also outlined the Prime Minister's systematic approach to nurturing the talent of Divyang athletes at national and international levels. He said the Para Athletes High Performance Sports Centre, being built in Gandhinagar at a cost of ₹316 crore, will offer advanced training to help athletes achieve greater success in global competitions.

CM stated that the Prime Minister's vision of Viksit Bharat@2047 includes making Divyang people equal partners in education, employment, technology, and industry.

Union Minister of State for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Smt. Nimuben Bambhaniya said that under Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's leadership, India has witnessed numerous revolutionary changes. Several welfare schemes for Divyangjan are being effectively implemented.

In Botad and Bhavnagar districts, around 2,700 Divyangjan were assessed, and camps held in Shihor, Palitana, and three locations in Botad resulted in the distribution of 1,577 devices worth ₹121.20 lakh to 825 Divyangjan.

She further stated that the government is continuously working to make Divyangjan Atmanirbhar. Under the ADIP Scheme, lakhs of beneficiaries have received free modern assistive devices. Over the past 11 years, more than 18,000 camps have been organised nationwide, reaching over 31 lakh Divyangjan.

Agriculture Minister Shri Jitubhai Vaghani stated that the emotional expression of the term "Divyang" and the beginning of special arrangements for Divyangjan were initiated by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. The sensitive measures taken during his tenure as Chief Minister to mainstream Divyang people are now delivering results across the country, bringing positive change through assistive device programmes.

He further said that Chief Minister Shri Bhupendra Patel, through his simplicity, transparency, and empathetic leadership, has established strong governance in Gujarat. Under his guidance, such programmes have become a source of inspiration for society, and he praised the government's initiatives for the welfare of Divyangjan.

The Minister also noted that under the Prime Minister's guidance, both government and private sector entities are ensuring meaningful utilisation of CSR funds for social welfare. Assistive device support enables Divyangjan to become Atmanirbhar and integrate into the societal mainstream.

On this occasion, the goodwill message of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi was read out.

Bhavnagar Collector Dr Manish Kumar Bansal delivered the welcome address, while District Development Officer Shri Hanul Choudhary presented the vote of thanks. The programme outline and contextual address were presented by Shri Vivek Dwivedi, General Manager of ALIMCO.

The event was attended by Bhavnagar's In-charge Minister Shri Kaushik Vekariya, Mayor Shri Bharat Barad, Standing Committee Chairman Shri Raju Rabadiya, and Deputy Mayor Smt. Monaben Parekh, MLAs Smt. Sejal Pandya, Shri Bhikha Baraiya, Shri Shambhunathji Tundiya, Shri Gautam Chauhan, Shri Shiva Gohil, Joint Secretary to the Government of India for Food and Public Distribution, Shri Ravi Shankar, Leader Shri Kumar Shah, Shri Digvijaysinh Gohil, along with senior officials and office-bearers.

Bridging the gap between expression and access

(Gns). Public institutions generally factor progress through statistics, files, and milestones. Yet, there are moments when the country reveals itself far more eloquently through colour, form, creativity, and imagination. The 64th National Exhibition of Art (NEA) offered precisely such a moment. As I walked through the curated galleries, what unfolded was more than an exhibition of artworks; it was a living conversation between traditional and contemporary, between masters and budding artists, and between creative expressions and public engagement.

The National Exhibition of Art is the most prestigious annual event of the Lalit Kala Akademi. Begun in 1955, it has served as a platform for the convergence and confluence of the visual arts in India. Over the decades, the Akademi and NEA have consistently upheld excellence through continuity, credibility, experimentation, and inclusivity. In April 2025, I joined the Ministry of Culture, where the curation of the exhibition was in a preliminary stage. On reviewing the preparations, I realised that the NEA had the potential to be transformed into a facilitative ecosystem, one that could redefine institutional support for the arts and the creative economy.

Central institutions must respond to the contemporary realities of artists and act as enablers, fostering an environment that supports market access and economic sustainability. With this conviction, I was determined that NEA must move beyond being a mere showcase and evolve into a purposeful engine of the creative economy. In letter and spirit this led to the decision to open the awarded artworks for sale. The vision was clear – to remodel the outlook of the NEA, from being perceived solely as an exhibition to becoming a viable platform within the art marketplace. Creativity belongs to the artist to conceptualise; as administrators our role is to support them through policies and mechanisms that provide funding platforms, digital infrastructure, and exposure.

Guided by this conviction, the Lalit Kala Akademi was steered to formulate a focused action plan to reimagine the NEA on a grand scale. Working in mission mode, the aim was to create a credible and contemporary marketplace for artists, something not attempted earlier in this form. To match this renewed purpose and intent, the outreach and publicity strategy of NEA was scaled up. Gallery owners, curators, collectors, connoisseurs, and artists from India and abroad were proactively engaged through targeted outreach, expanding the Exhibition's footprint within the global art ecosystem. Dedicated preview sessions were organised for potential buyers and the target group to generate an outcome aligned with the objectives.

These curated engagements enabled direct interaction between artists and potential buyers, ensuring that the final curation of the NEA aligned seamlessly with its long-term goal – empowering artists through market access and meaningful economic opportunity. The comprehensive makeover, backed by wide publicity, sustained engagement, and the presence of eminent figures from the art fraternity, infused renewed momentum into the exhibition. The 64th National Exhibition of Art was inaugurated in a renewed avatar on 5 August 2025. NEA 2025 featured a curated selection of 283 artworks, chosen from over 5,900 submissions received from across India through a rigorous two-tier jury process. The mediums on display spanned painting, sculpture, graphics, installation, photography, and more, showcasing the diversity and depth of Indian artistic expression.

Broad-brushed across mediums, themes and approaches, the exhibition was organised into six curatorial zones by the curator, Gargi Seth – Ritual and Spiritual, Myths and Memories, Rural-Urban Highlights, Loss and Displacement, Surrealism and Material and Tactile. This new approach yielded concrete results. An amount of Rs 1.07 crore (approx) was raised by the sale of 64 artworks with prices ranging from Rs. 20,000 to 4 lakhs. The pricing was decided on the basis of amounts fixed by the artists and assessed by a committee.

The proceeds of the sale amount were passed on to the artists on a 90:10 ratio; ninety percent go to the respective artists, and ten percent go to an Artist Aid Fund managed by LKA. In addition, twenty exceptional artworks were awarded by the Hon'ble President of India in recognition of their innovation and excellence in the visual arts with a memento, certificate and a cash prize of Rs 2 lakh each. The 64th edition is a significant breakthrough and reflects a shift in how the Ministry of Culture is reimagining institutional support for culture.

This renewed approach consciously extends beyond metropolitan regions, recognising that creativity blossoms across geographies and communities; and directly aligns with the National Mission on Cultural Mapping. As Secretary to the Culture Ministry, I see this initiative as part of a larger trajectory. By expanding visibility, strengthening market access, and nurturing creative industries, we are working towards creating sustainable livelihoods while reinforcing culture as an integral driver of inclusive development. By opening our art galleries to contemporary voices and seeking global exposure, we are not only creating new pathways of sustainable livelihood but also broadening the scope of public engagement and cultural reform.



feel real, the relationships feel lived-in, and no one is completely right or wrong. This moral ambiguity gives the story weight."

Director and producer Arvind Babbar said, "As a director, my focus in Prayagraj Ki Love Story was to present a love story that doesn't shy away from reality. I wanted the audience to feel the tension, fear, and emotions of two people whose romantic journey suddenly turns into a fight for survival. Every scene has been designed to keep the audience emotionally connected to the couple and their decisions. The natural truth that Ambika Vani and Gaurav Sharma bring to their performances keeps the story grounded and makes the experience even more immersive for the audience."

Sharing his thoughts on the series, Neeraj Roy, Managing Director, Hungama Digital, said, "The love story of Prayagraj is rooted in the city I come from and understand intimately. It depicts relationships as they are often lived, shaped by culture, circumstances, and decisions that aren't always easy. The series follows a love story that unfolds amidst real pressures and their consequences. This is why it feels honest and relatable rather than idealistic. We hope audiences connect with its authenticity and see their own familiar emotions and realities reflected on screen."

Prayagraj Ki Love Story is now streaming on Hungama OTT and its partner platforms including Tata Play Binge, Watcho, BSNL, PlayboxTV, RailWire Broadband, Airtel Xstream Play and Door TV.

What happens when a romantic trip goes horribly wrong ? Watch Hungama OTT's Prayagraj Ki Love Story to find out

Lucknow, 16 January 2026: Hungama OTT, one of India's leading digital entertainment platforms, launched its new original series Prayagraj Ki Love Story on January 8, 2026. Set against the backdrop of Prayagraj's soulful lanes, historic ghats, and timeless ambiance, the series subverts the concept of a romantic getaway and transforms it into a high-stakes survival story. Starring a stellar cast including Gaurav Sharma, Ambika Vani, Pavitra Punia, and Manish Wadhwa, the series is a blend of romance and suspense as a young couple finds themselves stranded in a city that suddenly feels completely unfamiliar.



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city to every scene. You

Troubling truth

India today stands at a curious crossroads. On paper, it is one of the fastest-growing major economies in the world. Its markets attract global capital, its technology firms shape digital ecosystems, and its political stability stands out in a turbulent region. Yet, beneath this impressive surface lies a quieter, more troubling truth: India has grown, but it has not fully transformed.

The gap is not one of ambition or talent. It is structural. Most successful development stories follow a clear path. Workers move from farms to factories, from low-productivity work to mass manufacturing, and only then into higher-value services. This process does more than raise GDP ~ it creates jobs at scale, absorbs surplus labour, and builds a broad middle class. India attempted a leap. It built a strong services sector without first building a large manufacturing base. The result is an economy with pockets of excellence and a vast informal underbelly. This helps explain why high growth has not translated into mass employment. Millions enter the workforce each year, but the economy generates too few stable, productive jobs ~ especially for women. Services-led growth rewards skills at the top, but it cannot absorb workers at the scale that factories once did. An economy that skips labour-intensive manufacturing risks becoming both unequal and fragile: dynamic at the summit, stagnant at the base.

Equally worrying is the condition of India's cities. Urban centres should be engines of growth ~ places where infrastructure, skills, capital and ideas come together. In India, cities are often treated as administrative units rather than economic drivers. They lack financial autonomy, political authority, and managerial capacity. Mayors are weak, municipal finances are strained.

WR to introduce 12 more ac local train services over mumbai suburban section w.E.F 26th january, 2026

Mumbai, **Total number of AC services increased from 109 to 121**

Looking at the popularity and growing demand by the commuters, Western Railway has decided to increase the number of AC local services over Mumbai Suburban section with effect from Monday, 26th January, 2026. With the introduction of 12 new AC services, the total number of AC services will now increase from 109 to 121.

According to a press release issued by Shri

Vineet Abhishek – Chief Public Relations Officer of Western Railway, there has been a substantial rise in the number of commuters traveling by AC local trains.

will run as AC services on all days of the week. There will be no change in the total number of services, i.e. the count of local services is 1406 including the

the UP direction, there are 2 services each between Virar – Churchgate & Goregaon – Churchgate and one service each between Borivali –

Churchgate & Bhayandar Churchgate. Similarly, in the DOWN direction, there are 2 services each between Churchgate – Virar & Churchgate –

Goregaon and one service each between Churchgate – Bhayandar & Churchgate – Borivali. The details of the additional 12 AC EMU services are enclosed as Annexure-I.

Details of the 12 additional air-conditioned EMU services being introduced:

UP TRAINS:					
Sr. No.	Originating Station	Departure	Destination Station	Arrival	MODE
1	Goregaon	05:14	Churchgate	06:11	SLOW
2	Borivali	07:25	Churchgate	08:20	FAST
3	Virar	10:08	Churchgate	11:27	FAST
4	Bhayandar	12:44	Churchgate	13:48	FAST
5	Virar	15:45	Churchgate	17:09	SLOW
6	Goregaon	19:06	Churchgate	20:01	SLOW

DOWN TRAINS:					
Sr. No.	Originating Station	Departure	Destination Station	Arrival	MODE
1	Churchgate	06:14	Borivali	07:19	SLOW
2	Churchgate	08:27	Virar	09:51	FAST
3	Churchgate	11:30	Bhayandar	12:31	FAST
4	Churchgate	13:52	Virar	15:36	SLOW
5	Churchgate	17:57	Goregaon	18:51	SLOW
6	Churchgate	20:07	Goregaon	21:02	SLOW

People-centric parliaments vital for democratic trust: Om Birla at CSPOC valedictory

(Gns).

Asserting that the strength and relevance of democratic institutions hinge on their ability to remain open and people-centric, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Friday said parliaments can endure and command public trust only when they are transparent, inclusive, responsive and fully accountable to citizens. He was delivering the valedictory address at the conclusion of the 28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC) in New Delhi.

“Transparency in decision-making fosters public trust, while inclusivity ensures that every voice — especially those on the margins of society — is heard and respected,” Birla said, adding that together these principles “sustain the legitimacy of democratic institutions and strengthen the enduring bond between the citizen and the state.”

The conference, inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday, concluded with a renewed collective commitment by Commonwealth legislatures to make democratic institutions more people-centric, accountable and effective.

During the valedictory session, Birla formally handed over the chairmanship of the 29th CSPOC to Sir Lindsay Hoyle, Speaker of the UK House of Commons, and wished him success for the next conference to be held in London.

Reflecting on CSPOC’s 56-year journey, the Lok Sabha Speaker recalled

that the forum was conceived to ensure continuous dialogue among Commonwealth legislatures and to explore innovative ways to enhance parliamentary efficiency and responsiveness. He said the 28th edition had carried this legacy forward “with renewed vigour and substance,” noting that it witnessed the largest-ever participation of countries in CSPOC’s history. This unprecedented representation, he said, would ensure that the New Delhi conference is remembered as “a significant milestone in the history of Commonwealth parliamentary cooperation.”

Birla said deliberations during the conference on the responsible use of artificial intelligence in

Parliaments, the impact of social media, citizen engagement beyond elections, and the health and well-being of Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff were particularly thought-provoking. These discussions, he noted, provided greater clarity to Presiding Officers about their evolving roles at a time when democratic traditions are intersecting with rapid technological change. “Technology, inclusion and global partnerships will shape the new world order,” Birla remarked, underlining that initiatives such as e-Parliament, paperless functioning and digital databases have significantly enhanced transparency, efficiency and responsiveness of legislatures. Responsible use of technology, including for linguistic inclusion, he said, is a key enabler of more citizen-centric Parliaments.



SC’s remarks on West Bengal incident raise serious questions: Ravi Shankar Prasad

(Gns).

Former Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad “condemned the way constitutional norms were torn apart in West Bengal” when Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee attempted to stop Enforcement Directorate (ED) officials during an investigation, saying the Supreme Court’s remarks during the hearing of the matter raise serious questions.

Addressing the media in Patna on Friday, the BJP leader also questioned the Opposition’s silence over the issue, saying “for the first time in the history of independent India, a Chief Minister snatched a file from an agency investigating corruption.”

The Patna Sahib MP said, “It must be acknowledged that even during the Fodder Scam investigation, the CBI office in Patna was never attacked. This is the

ment has informed the court that suspicious evidence was found, indicating that Rs 20 crore related

Supreme Court has made sharp remarks in this matter and has also issued a notice to the Chief Minister. The ED has demanded the suspension of the DGP. The next hearing will be held on 3 February. He expressed confidence that justice will be delivered.

Taking a jibe at the Opposition leaders, he said that those who speak about the Constitution and its protection every day are silent. Their double standards are now exposed before everyone.

“They are silent even on such grossly unconstitutional conduct. The people of the country have recognised their true face. The people of West Bengal will expose them through their votes,” he added.

Prasad said that the



first time that a Chief Minister, along with her officials, stopped an ED investigation into corruption and the coal scam, forcibly took away files, and brought the investigation to a halt.”

He said that the govern-

to money laundering in the coal scam had been deposited with the I-PAC, making the investigation necessary. The total scam is estimated to be worth around Rs 3,000 crore.

Prasad said that the

Pro-Iran protests staged in Kashmir; parties seek safe evacuation of stranded students

(Gns).

With tensions escalating in Iran following US President Donald Trump’s threats of military action, some protests have also erupted in India against the United States. The Kashmiri Shia Muslims held a demonstration in Srinagar today in support of Iran, condemning the US’ interference in Iran’s internal affairs. Similar agitations were held in Budgam, where demonstrators marched from Imambara to Main Chowk to oppose US actions.

PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti also commented on the evolving situation in Iran and blamed the United States for interfering in the internal matters of Muslim countries, in the name of restoring democracy. “The

greatest destruction in Muslim countries has been caused by America. The example of Gaza is right in front of us. The people of Iran should not fall for this deception and should stand with their own government,” she said.

Mufti also took a dig at the BJP government for the changing relations between India and Iran. She said, “Iran and India have had very close relations with Kashmir, but ever since the BJP government came to power in India, the entire system in the country has changed...”

The unrest in Iran began



have resulted in an estimated death toll ranging from under 3,000 to more than 12,000, according to media reports.

Kashmiri students stranded in Iran

Amid the nationwide unrest in Iran, there are reports of several Indians, including many students

from Kashmir, being stranded in Iran. Expressing concern for their children, the families of these students have urged the Indian Government to ensure their early evacuation. According to sources, the MEA is preparing to facilitate the return of Indian nationals from Iran amid the evolving situation there.

Several political leaders, including PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti and Baramulla MP Abdul Rashid Sheikh alias Engineer Rashid, have written to External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, seeking immediate measures from the government for the rescue of Kashmiri students trapped in Iran amid the tense situation there.

CM Vishnu Deo Sai pays tribute to Hiraben Modi at Shiv Mahapuran Katha

Addressing the gathering at the village of Khamhar, the Chief Minister said spiritual and cultural traditions play a vital role in nurturing values such as social harmony, moral responsibility and collective consciousness.

(Gns).

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Friday attended a Shiv Mahapuran Katha organised in a remote tribal pocket of Raigarh district, paying tribute to the late Hiraben Modi, mother of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The religious discourse is being held in Kharsia block’s Bargad Khola area as a mark of remembrance for Hiraben Modi, drawing large participation from local residents.

Addressing the gathering at the village of Khamhar, the Chief Minister said spiritual and cultural traditions play a vital role in nurturing values such as social harmony, moral responsibility and collective consciousness. He noted that the organisation of a large scale religious event in a forested and remote

region reflected the deep rooted cultural faith of the people and offered a shared moment of reflection for the entire area.

Sai also interacted with young spiritual orator Krishna Dubey Maharaj, describing his rendition of the Shiv Mahapuran as a rare example of devotion

isers, Sai praised the initiative of local resident Manu Rathia and the organising committee for hosting the event in difficult terrain. He said such efforts go beyond individual faith and create opportunities for collective participation, particularly in regions that often remain distant from large cultural

also mentioned that rice from Chhattisgarh was offered during the consecration ceremony at the Ram temple in Ayodhya, calling it a moment of pride for the state.

Finance Minister O P Choudhary, Lok Sabha MP Radheshyam Rathia, Rajya Sabha MP Devendra Pratap Singh, Janjgir MP Kamlesh Jangde, and other public representatives were present on the occasion. All dignitaries offered prayers and wished for peace, prosperity and public welfare in the state.

The Shiv Mahapuran Katha is being narrated in a musical format by Krishna Dubey Maharaj from Akola, Maharashtra, and is witnessing steady attendance from surrounding villages. District authorities had made security and logistical arrangements in view of the Chief Minister’s visit. The programme is scheduled to continue over the coming days.



and discipline at a young age. The Chief Minister remarked that despite official engagements, he felt compelled to attend the programme, even briefly, given its spiritual and social significance.

Commending the organ-

gathering. Referring to Chhattisgarh’s civilisational heritage, the Chief Minister recalled the state’s association with the Ramayana period, noting that Lord Ram is believed to have spent a significant part of his exile in the region. He

vening the meeting, the state government must complete the task of the takeover of Phase I from L&T after the latter exited the project last year. The takeover should include the settlement of all financial transactions related to Phase I. Moreover, the state government should submit detailed proposals for Phase -II construction to the central government.

Reddy stated, “The Government of India has already agreed in principle to Phase II with the understanding that the takeover of Phase I from L&T is completed first and coordina-

Kishan Reddy urges CM Revanth to expedite Hyderabad Metro Phase II

Union Minister for Coal and MP from Secunderabad, G Kishan Reddy, met his Cabinet colleague and Union Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs, Manohar Lal, over the expansion of the Metro Railway Phase II.

(Gns).

The Centre has agreed in principle to the long-pending Phase II expansion of the Metro network in Hyderabad, said Union Minister G Kishan Reddy, who has shot off a letter to Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy complaining about the delay on the part of the state government in moving forward with the project. Phase II of the Metro expansion can be taken up only after the state government completes the takeover of Phase I from L & T.

Union Minister for Coal and MP from Secunderabad, G Kishan Reddy, met his Cabinet colleague and Union Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs, Manohar Lal, over the expansion of the Metro Railway Phase II. He was told that the Chief Minister had agreed to the formation of the joint committee with the Centre for the implementation of the project. The Centre will convene a meeting of the Joint Committee once the state government nominates its two representa-

tives. However, before con-



tion begins through the Joint Committee agreed earlier.” He also urged the Chief Minister to nominate the two representatives at the earliest so that “coordination can commence without delay.”

L&T had built Phase I of the Hyderabad Metro Railway (HMR) as a public-private-partnership (PPP) project, but chose to exit the project last year following a deal under which the state government will pay Rs 2000 crore towards its equity investment and take over the project’s debt as well. After the Congress government came to power, the Chief Minister has been visiting Delhi several times to convince the Centre to take up the expansion project.

Ayodhya’s Boatmen to become Cultural Ambassadors of ‘Saryu’

Recognising boatmen as an integral part of Ayodhya’s traditional livelihood and visitor experience, the department has launched a three-day specialised training programme from January 15 for nearly 60 boatmen engaged in river navigation.

(Gns).

As Ayodhya continues to witness a steady rise in pilgrims and tourists from across the country, the Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department has taken a focused step to strengthen community-led tourism by empowering local boatmen along the Saryu River.

Recognising boatmen as an integral part of Ayodhya’s traditional livelihood and visitor experience, the department has launched a three-day specialised training programme from January 15 for nearly 60 boatmen engaged in river navigation.

The training programme, being held at Hotel Saket in Ayodhya, is designed to equip boatmen with modern skills while preserving their traditional role.

Tourism and Culture Minister Jaiveer Singh said here on Friday that the initiative aims to ensure that tourism growth translates into direct livelihood opportunities for local communities.

He added that the programme focuses on digital

payment systems, storytelling, disaster management and emergency first

ing.

During the sessions, trainers from MKITM are



aid, enabling boatmen to offer safe, informed and culturally rich experiences to visitors.

With Ayodhya now holding national and international attention following the consecration of the Ram Mandir, the Saryu has emerged as a key experiential touchpoint for visitors. The Minister said the objective is to move beyond sightseeing and connect tourism with culture, safety and community participation.

The training is being conducted jointly by the Manyavar Kanshiram Institute of Tourism Management (MKITM) and the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), reflecting a coordinated approach to capacity build-

guiding boatmen on how local stories, Ram Katha and historical narratives linked to ghats and landmarks can enrich a visitor’s

journey. Emphasis is being laid on courteous interaction, clear communication, and responsible conduct with tourists. The SDRF team is providing hands-on training in emergency response, CPR, and basic first aid, ensuring preparedness during river operations.

On completion of the programme, participating boatmen will be issued identity cards, formally recognising them as trained service providers. This, officials said, will enhance trust among visitors and strengthen the professional standing of boatmen.

Minister Jaiveer Singh said that Uttar Pradesh is steadily expanding water tourism in a safe and structured manner.

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By virtue of this notice, the general public and customers of IIFL Home Finance Limited are hereby informed that the IIFL Home Loan branch at 1st Floor, Shop No-17, Market Yard Complex, Seva Sadan Road, Near Shak Market Gate, Viramgam, Gujarat - 382150 will be closed w.e.f. **April 20, 2026.**

All the customers and general public are requested to take note of the above and visit iiflhomeloans.com/locate-us to find other IIFL Home Loan branches near you.

Saint Premanand reaches Sudama Kuti Ashram in Vrindavan, participates in centenary celebrations

(Gns). Saint Premanand Maharaj arrived in Vrindavan on Friday to participate in the centenary celebrations marking 100 years since the arrival of Saint Sudama Das Maharaj, the founder of Sudama Kuti, in Vrindavan.

Premanand Maharaj had darshan of Lord Kaushal Kishore and performed a circumambulation of the Shri Ram Mahayagya site. He stayed there for about half an hour.

Saint Premanand Maharaj arrived at Sudama Kuti Ashram to participate in the ongoing centenary celebrations. There, he met with Shri Mahant Sutikshan Das Maharaj and Mahant Amar Das Maharaj. Afterwards, he went to the celebrations at the Kumbh Mela grounds, where he performed a circumambulation of the Shri Ram Mahayagya site.

Upon arriving at Sudama Kuti Ashram, Saint Premanand Maharaj had darshan of Lord Kaushal Kishore and performed aarti (a ritual of worship).

Seeing Lord Kaushal Kishore, Saint Premanand Maharaj and his accompaniment of about 100 devotees arrived at the Kumbh Mela grounds. The ashram staff and Saint Premanand Maharaj's attendants escorted him through the crowd and back to Kali Kunj Ashram. Saint Premanand Maharaj remained at the celebrations for about half an hour.

Various religious and spiritual programmes are being organised as part of the centenary celebrations at Sudama Kuti Ashram. Saints and Mahants are attending the event. A ten-day Shri Ram Mahayagya is also being held as part of the celebrations, with devotees participating and offering oblations in the 108-kundiya (fire pit) Mahayagya.



3500 voters will decide the fate of 35 candidates for 6 posts in the bar elections

Mathura, Vrindavan. Bar Council Mathura elections were concluded on Friday. In which advocates exercised their franchise to protect advocate interests. 35 candidates tried their luck for 6 posts in the elections. Whereas 3500 advocates used their franchise. There were 5 candidates in the fray for the post of President, 3 candidates for the post of Vice President, 12 candidates for the post of Secretary and 9 candidates for the joint post. Advocate Kunjbihari Verma also voted. He is currently serving as the Vice President of Village Organization and Ekal Abhiyan. Kunjbihari Verma, who is constantly active in the works of social harmony, constantly keeps his awareness towards Sanatan Dharma sharp. He has also been the Vice President of Vishwa Hindu Parishad Vrindavan.



Braj Press Club President Dr. Kamal Kant Upmanyu Advocate and Special DGC POCSO Court Mrs. Alka Upmanyu Advocate and Kunj Bihari Verma Advocate exercising their vote in the annual election of the Bar Association.

PNB signs MoU with Indian Army

16 January 2026: Punjab National Bank (PNB), Nation's leading public sector bank, has renewed its MoU with Indian Army on 13th January 2026. Under the MoU, PNB will be offering a bouquet of services with enhanced insurance coverage and other benefits to all the serving personnel and pensioners of the Indian Army under the bank's flagship scheme "PNB Rakshak Plus".

The MoU was exchanged in the presence of Shri. Bibhu Prasad Mahapatra, Executive Director, PNB and Lt Gen Rajeev Puri, AVSM, VSM, Director, Army Headquarters. MoU was signed by Shri. Sudhir Dalal, Chief General Manager PNB & Major General VK Purohit, AVSM, YSM, SM, Additional Director General Personal Services.



of Shri. Bibhu Prasad Mahapatra, Executive Director, PNB and Lt Gen Rajeev Puri, AVSM, VSM, Director, Army Headquarters.

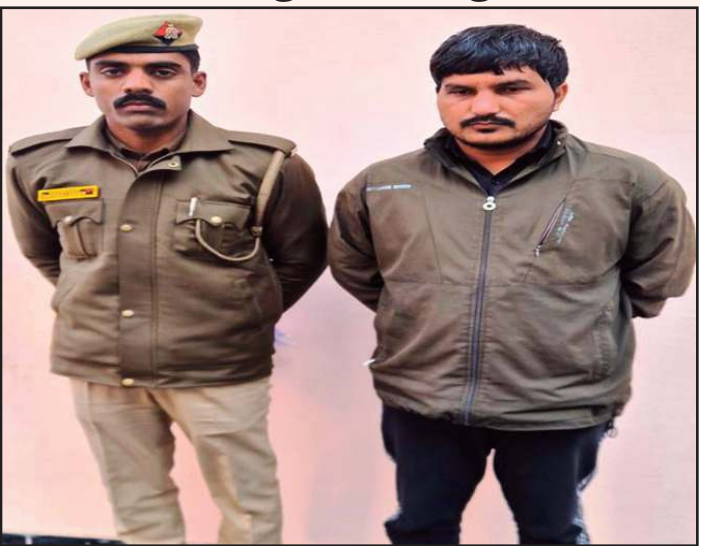
Accused of robbery from silver merchant arrested along with goods

In the joint action of city Kotwali police and SOG, 456 grams of white metal and 5 thousand rupees were found.

Mathura. Kotwali Police SOG team, taking joint action, arrested the wanted accused in the robbery incident with a silver merchant. Police have recovered the robbery proceeds of 456 grams of white metal and Rs 5,000 in cash from the possession of the accused. According to the police, the informer

On the information of wanted accused Deepak Ni.Village Chandaury police station, Chhata district, Mathura was arrested on Friday afternoon from the colony near Dholipayau Road railway crossing.

Necessary legal action has been taken in the case based on the arrest and recovery. The team that took the action included Inspector Vinod Babu Mishra, Police Station Kotwali District, Senior Sub Inspector Sunil Kumar Joshi Police Station Kotwali, SI Rakesh Kumar, SOG Mathura, etc



SC rejects Justice Yashwant Varma's plea against "unilateral" constitution of inquiry committee

(Gns). The Supreme Court on Friday rejected a plea by Allahabad High Court judge Justice Yashwant Varma, seeking the quashing of Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla's decision to constitute a three-member committee under the Judges (Inquiry) Act to inquire into the alleged recovery of unaccounted cash from his then official residence in New Delhi, in pursuance of impeachment proceedings against him.

Dismissing Justice Varma's plea and holding that no interference was called for with the Speaker's decision, a Bench of Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice Satish Chandra Sharma said, "The extraordinary remedy under Article 32 is confined to enforcement of Fundamental Rights and does not extend to issuing advisory or corrective directions in relation to internal statutory mechanisms of the Parliament, where no present or inevitable infringement of any Fundamental Right is evinced. Petitioner is, thus, not entitled to any relief."

For adjudicating Justice Yashwant Varma's challenge to the Speaker's decision, the Supreme Court framed a set of five interlinked issues and application of Section 3(2) of the Judges (Inquiry) Act.

At the core was the question of whether the first provision to Section 3(2) mandates the constitution of a Joint Committee when impeachment notices are submitted in both Houses on the same day but are subsequently admitted by the Speaker, Lok Sabha, and refused by the Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha.

The Court also examined the competence of the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha to decline admission of the motion in the absence of the Chairman, and the legal consequences of such refusal on the validity of the Speaker's action in constituting an inquiry committee.

Further, the Bench considered whether the draft decision prepared by the Secretary-General of the Rajya Sabha declaring the notice "not in order" was legally sustainable. Finally, the Court addressed whether, in light of these issues,



₹112 Crore Water and Drainage Network Project in Navsari Municipal Corporation's Outer Areas; set to Benefit Over 25,000 People

New Drainage and Water Supply Network Will Ease Drinking Water Issues and Health-Related Problems

Gujarat Government's Urban Vision to Address Problems in Small Towns Through Effective Water Management

Gandhinagar, (Gns). The Gujarat government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Shri Bhupendra Patel, remains committed to improving the 'Ease of Living' for citizens while advancing urban development across Gujarat. With cities developing, the government is ensuring the availability of essential civic amenities such as water supply, drainage pipelines, roads, and sanitation in newly connected areas. Aligning with this approach, Navsari Municipal Corporation has undertaken a water supply and drainage project with an investment of ₹112 crore.

Navsari Municipal Corporation was formed on 1 January 2025, following the inclusion of the former Navsari Vijalpore Municipality area along with four adjoining villages, Eru, Dharagiri, Dantej, and Hansapore. These outer areas had long been facing challenges related to clean drinking water and the lack of proper drainage infrastructure. To address these concerns once and for all, Navsari Municipal Corporation has initiated the construction of a new water supply and drainage network in these areas at an estimated cost of ₹112 crore.

New ₹112 Crore Drainage Network to Benefit Over 25,000 People

Under this project, the Municipal Corporation will develop modern infrastructure in a phased manner, including new water supply and drainage pipelines, overhead tanks, underground sumps, drainage pumping stations, sewage treatment plants, and new water treatment plants. These initiatives will provide substantial relief to over 25,000 residents by addressing long-standing challenges related to drinking water availability and sewage disposal. As a result, health-related concerns, especially among children, will be reduced significantly.

The new water supply and drainage network in Navsari will not only strengthen civic infrastructure but will also be an important step towards making the city cleaner, safer, and more modern. The four villages integrated into the Navsari Municipal Corporation area will also have better roads, street lighting, new drainage networks, gardens, ponds, a vihar dham, a civic centre, and dustbin distribution to strengthen cleanliness efforts.

Discussing this project, Navsari Municipal Corporation Commissioner Shri Dev Chaudhary said that "In the new year, Navsari Municipal Corporation is focusing on improving basic civic facilities, including drainage, roads, storm water systems, and water supply. For this, a plan has been prepared to lay complete drainage, water, and stormwater networks in the four villages recently merged into the city. In the first phase, drainage and water supply works will be carried out. The project is being implemented on schedule and will provide relief to residents while improving their overall well-being."

'Urban Development Year' Marks a Milestone in Gujarat's Development Journey

In 2005, Shri Narendra Modi, then Chief Minister of Gujarat, celebrated the first 'Urban Development Year' and introduced various initiatives to boost urban development across Gujarat. Building on this vision and committed to accelerating progress, Chief Minister Shri Bhupendra Patel has announced that 2025 will be observed as 'Urban Development Year' once



Jharkhand High Court stays police action on FIR amid ED-Police standoff

(Gns). The Jharkhand High Court on Friday stayed all police action on an FIR lodged against officials of the Enforcement Directorate, providing interim relief to the central agency amid an escalating standoff with the Jharkhand Police.

Hearing a criminal writ petition filed by the ED, a Bench of Justice Sanjay Kumar Dwivedi ordered that no coercive steps shall be taken against ED officials in connection with the FIR lodged by Santosh Kumar, an accused in the alleged drinking water supply scam. The court directed that the police investigation arising out of the FIR be kept in abeyance for the time being.

The Bench issued notices to the state government, directing it to file its response within seven days, while private respondent Santosh Kumar was It was directed that the Senior Superintendent of Police would oversee the security arrangements, with central forces such as CISF or CRPF to be deployed for the purpose.

The ED has sought quashing of the FIR and demanded a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation into the entire episode. The court indicated that the prayer for a CBI inquiry would be considered at a later stage.

The case stems from an ongoing ED investigation into alleged irregularities in the state's drinking water department. According to the agency, Santosh Kumar appeared at the ED's Ranchi office without a summons and sought to record his statement. He later alleged assault during questioning and lodged an FIR against ED officials at the Airport police station.

Following the registration of the FIR, Ranchi Police initiated a probe and visited the ED office on Thursday, prompting the agency to approach the High Court. The ED contended that the police action was intended to derail and influence its statutory investigation, a submission that led the court to grant interim protection.



Set to become BJP's youngest chief, Nabin faces crucial political challenges during his tenure

(Gns). BJP national working president Nitin Nabin is expected to be elected as the party's national president unopposed, with his name likely to be formally announced on January 20. With no other candidate expected in fray, the election is set to be a formality, party sources said after the saffron party on Friday released its schedule for electing the new chief.

According to the poll schedule, nominations for the post will be filed on January 19. Polling will be held if required on January 20, and the official announcement of the new BJP president will be made the same day, the party said.

The Statesman on December 19 had written that Nabin will be elevated following a formal electoral process after the 'Khar Maas' — the period considered inauspicious for major ceremonial events in Hindu traditions — that ended on January 14.

Set to succeed party president J P Nadda, Nabin will be the youngest BJP chief so far. Notably, Nadda too was first appointed as the BJP's national working president in June 2019 before being elected unopposed as national president in January 2020, succeeding Union minister Amit Shah. Nabin enjoys the backing of the entire top leadership, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah and is regarded within the party as a dynamic, ideologically rooted leader with deep organisational commitment. Coming from an RSS background, his elevation is seen as part of a generational transition in the BJP's leadership.

Still, it will be a tough run for the young leader who faces a mixed bag of challenges and opportunities with a capacity to significantly shape the party and national politics during his three-year tenure. The first and foremost will be preparing for the 2029 Lok Sabha elections for which Modi government has the agenda set — such as implementation of the women's reservation in the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies, navigating the politically-sensitive delimitation exercise following the Census and caste count, and pushing forward the One Nation One Election (ONOE) initiative — tasks that require deft leadership, consensus-building skills and careful management of internal party dynamics.

Delimitation has raised concerns, particularly in southern states, which fear a reduction in their relative representation due to faster population growth in northern states since the 1971 Census. If ONOE is implemented, it could further transform India's political and electoral landscape.

This year, Nabin will be tested on the BJP's ability to expand into its unconquered terrains— West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala—and holding on to Assam and Puducherry. Next year, it will be the urn of Uttar Pradesh, Manipur, Punjab, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Gujarat. Amid all this, there may also be internal challenges, including the task of carrying everyone along, and especially those who may not be entirely happy with his elevation. Managing factional interests, balancing senior leaders' expectations, and

