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Close to hundred members suspended from Parliament on security breach row

UNPRECEDENTED MOVE

INDIA parties are demanding a statement from the Home Minister in both Houses on the shocking incidents. It is a simple, straightforward and legitimate demand. But Home Minister refuses to make a statement which is his duty and responsibility," Congress leader Ramesh said in the post.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In an unprecedented development, 78 MPs, including both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha members, were suspended yesterday for staging protests in demand of a statement by Union Home Minister Amit Shah on the security breach in Parliament last week. Fourteen MPs had been suspended last week, also for demanding a statement on the security breach. So, this takes the total number of MPs suspended in this session to 92.

In Lok Sabha, 30 MPs have been suspended for the remainder of the session and three have been suspended till the privileges committee submits a report on their conduct. As for Rajya Sabha, 35 members have been suspended for the rest of session and 11 till a report by privileges panel. Earlier, Rajya Sabha MP Derek O'Brien had been suspended after he demanded a discussion on the breach.

The suspended MPs from Lok Sabha



include Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, Congress's leader in Lok Sabha, and Gaurav Gogoi, deputy leader of the party in the House. Trinamool MPs Kalyan Banerjee, Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar, Saugata Ray and Satabdi Roy, and DMK members A Raja and Dayanidhi Maran are also on the list. In Rajya Sabha, Congress's Jairam

Ramesh and Randeep Singh Surjewala, DMK's Kanimozhi and RJD's Manoj Kumar Jha are among those suspended. Speaking to the media, Chowdhury said the government was behaving in a dictatorial manner and treating Parliament as BJP headquarters. He said the Opposition had been cooperating with the government ever since the session began.

Gogoi said the BJP government is bulldozing the Opposition and claimed that the Home Minister is scared of taking responsibility for the massive security breach. He said they will continue their protest outside Lok Sabha.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi told Dainik Jagran newspaper in an interview that the incident was "very serious". He said there is "no need to debate" this and that a "detailed investigation" should be carried out.

On the Opposition's demand for the Home Minister's statement, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has maintained that security inside the House is under the

secretariat's purview and that it will not let the Centre intervene.

CONGRESS, ALLIES "INSULTED" LS SPEAKER, RS CHAIRMAN: BJP

New Delhi: The BJP on Monday accused the Congress and its allies of "insulting" the Lok Sabha speaker and Rajya Sabha chairperson and "embarrassing" the country with their conduct, with 92 opposition members suspended from both Houses in the past five days.

Leader of the House in Rajya Sabha Piyush Goyal told reporters that opposition members brought placards and willfully disrupted parliamentary proceedings despite the decision taken earlier that placards would not be allowed in the Houses.

ALL DEMOCRATIC NORMS BEING THROWN INTO DUSTBIN: KHARGE

New Delhi: In a post on X, Kharge said, "First, intruders attacked Parliament. Then Modi government attacking parliament and democracy. All Democratic norms are being thrown into the dustbin by an autocratic Modi government by suspending 47 MPs. We have two simple and genuine demands - the Union Home Minister should make a statement in both Houses of Parliament on the inexcusable breach in Parliament security and a detailed discussion should be held on the same."

Rising Covid cases: Health Ministry asks states to maintain 'constant vigil'

JN.1 IS A SUB-LINEAGE OF THE BA.2.86 OMICRON VARIANT AND WAS FIRST DETECTED IN LUXEMBOURG IN AUGUST, BEFORE SPREADING TO OTHER COUNTRIES. BA.2.86, ALSO KNOWN AS THE "PIROLA" VARIANT, WAS FIRST DETECTED IN DENMARK IN JULY. ACCORDING TO THE US CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION (CDC) JN.1, IS PART OF THE SAME LINEAGE OF BA.2.86 AND CONTAINS AN EXTRA SPIKE MUTATION - L455S MUTATION, WHICH HAS IMMUNE-EVASION PROPERTIES.



ing a state of constant vigil over the Covid situation in the country. Underlining that "due to consistent and collaborative actions between Centre and State Governments, we have been able to sustain the trajectory at sustainable low rates", he said: "However, as the Covid-19 virus continues to circulate and its epidemiology behaviour gets settled with Indian weather conditions and circulation of other usual pathogens, it is important to keep the momentum going to effectively deal with the challenges in public health."

The letter comes as India on Monday recorded 1,828 Covid cases. With 1,634 cases, Kerala accounted for the highest number. Looking at the upcoming festive season, the Union Health Secretary advised the states to put in place requisite public health measures and other arrangements to minimise risk of increase in transmission of the disease by adherence to maintenance of respiratory hygiene.

All states have been advised to ensure adequate testing in all the districts as per Covid testing guidelines and maintain the recommended share of RT-PCR and Antigen tests. They have also been asked to monitor and report district-wise Influenza-like Illness (ILI) & Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI) cases in all health facilities on a regular basis including in the Integrated Health Information Platform (IHIP) portal, for detecting the early rising trend of cases. The ministry also encouraged to increase number of RT-PCR tests and send positive samples for genome sequencing to Indian SARS COV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) laboratories so as to enable timely detection of new variants.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Union Health Ministry on Monday issued an advisory to states over the fresh surge in Covid-19 cases in some states/UTs in India and the detection of the first case of the new JN.1, a sub-variant of Omicron, in Kerala.

In the letter, Union Health Secretary Sudhanshu Pant highlighted the need for maintain-

INDIA BLOC LEADER TO BE DECIDED AFTER POLLS: MAMATA

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Ahead of the fourth meeting of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) here on Tuesday, West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee said on Monday that the leader of the bloc will be decided after the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

She added that the meeting was an opportunity to discuss seat sharing among the constituents of the INDIA bloc in detail. Mamata Banerjee also said that she does not have a problem with anyone but with the BJP's ideology. Speaking to the media, Banerjee said, "After the election everyone will decide (prime ministerial candidate). Banerjee's remarks came on a



question on her opinion on the role of Rahul Gandhi as he is going on a 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' again and if he would be the prime ministerial candidate of the bloc. When asked if the Congress had consulted her over Rahul Gandhi's role, she said, "I cannot say about any other party."

Thane 'mowing down' case: Accused trio, including top babu's son, granted bail

Team Absolute | Thane

A Thane court on Monday granted bail to three accused, including the son of a senior Maharashtra bureaucrat, arrested for their involvement in the "mowing down" case of a beautician on December 11, lawyers said.

The trio -- Ashwaji Gaikwad, Romil Patil and Sagar Shelke -- were arrested on Sunday night by a SIT of the Thane police within hours after it launched the probe.

They were produced before Magistrate P. S. Dhumal who rejected the police demand for five days custody, sent them to judicial custody and then granted them bail of Rs 15,000 each. Senior advocate Rajan Salunkhe, representing Gaikwad, the son of Vice-Chairman and MD of Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation Anilkumar Gaikwad, told media persons that all the offences were of a bailable nature and hence the court has freed them on bail.

"Given the sensitive nature of the case, the complaint lodged by a woman and the ongoing investigations, we request you all not to conduct a 'media trial' and exercise restraint," he said.

He claimed that Gaikwad was not present at the time of the incident, which was actually a



case of accident, and they would present their version before the investigators.

Gaikwad, Patil and Shelke, were nabbed after a complaint was lodged by beautician, Priya Umendra Singh, 26, alleging that her boyfriend Gaikwad and his friends had tried to "mow" her down with his SUV, in the early hours of December 11, and left her bleeding on the road to die.

Congress's 2024 funds drive "Redirects" to BJP within hours of launch

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Congress party's 'Donate for Desh' crowdfunding campaign has already hit a roadblock - a technical one - within hours of its launch today. It seems the party did not register the domain name before announcing the initiative and now, ironically, clicking DonateforDesh.org takes the visitor to the donation page of the BJP. Moreover, another related domain in the name of the Donate for Desh campaign has been acquired by news website OpIndia.

The Congress, meanwhile, has accused the BJP of "copying" it and "creating fake domains to confuse people". The domain name of the party's campaign is donateinc.net.

Supriya Shrinete, a Congress leader and the party's social media and digital platforms chairperson, said the BJP "is in panic mode" after the grand old



party started its donation campaign. "Why is BJP so afraid despite having autocratic power, all institutions, all resources and maximum money?"

When Congress started the donation campaign, not only did they (BJP) panic but their system also started creating fake domains and confusing

them. By the way, thanks for copying us - it's good to see your fear," she posted on X in Hindi.

Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge launched the crowdfunding campaign earlier today and donated a sum of Rs one lakh, 38 thousand. "Ek mahine ki tankhawa gayi (one month's salary is gone)," said Kharge in a lighter vein.

The campaign, the Congress said, aims at "empowering the party to create an India rich in equal resource distribution and opportunities".

In a post on X, the Congress said, "Beyond a campaign, it's a commitment to champion the rights of marginalised communities, bridge disparities, and stand as a formidable opposition against a government favouring the affluent."

Congress treasurer Ajay Maken said the 'Donate for Desh' campaign will work as an umbrella for a series of fundraisers.

2,500 fraudulent loan apps weeded out from Google Play Store: Sitharman

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Google has suspended or removed over 2,500 fraudulent loan apps from its Play Store between April 2021 and July 2022 as the government and RBI are keeping a close watch to maintain cyber security, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharman informed Parliament on Monday.

"As part of steps taken to control fraudulent loan apps, the RBI has shared a 'whitelist' of legal apps with the government, and this list was shared by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) with

Google, whose app store is the primary source of distribution of digital lending apps," the Finance Minister said in a written reply in the Lok Sabha.

She said that the Google has updated its policy regarding enforcement of loan lending apps on the Play Store and has also deployed additional policy requirements with strict enforcement actions for lending apps in India.

She said that in accordance with the revised policy, only those apps are allowed on the Play Store which are published by Regulated Entities (REs) or those working in partnership with Res.

Climate change will affect fire weather danger in forests: IIT Delhi

Team Absolute | New Delhi

IIT Delhi on Monday said that the human activity is causing the earth's climate to change in unprecedented ways.

The IIT Delhi said that their recent study disclosed that the atmospheric temperatures are rising rapidly and will continue to rise in the future.

"These warming temperatures will increase the fire weather danger in many Indian forests," the institution said. The IIT Delhi officials said that the researchers developed a very high-resolution data set of future climate projections and used that data to calculate the



Fire Weather Index (FWI) for forest regions of India.

"The results showed that forests in Central and South India and the Himalayan region will see significant increases in FWI by the end of the century," the officials said. They said that the fire season in these regions will also increase by 12-61 days. "These findings align well with the

conventional wisdom that higher temperatures increase forest fire hazard. Interestingly, the study showed that not to be the case in all forests," the officials said. They said that humid tropical forests in the Western Ghats and parts of the North-East, where rainfall and humidity are projected to rise, will experience lower FWI despite the warming. Somnath Baidya Roy, Professor and Head of the Centre for Atmospheric Sciences, and a co-author of the study said that we must study forest fires in India at a high degree of granularity to properly represent the diversity in climate and forest types across the country.

Govt putting up 26 coal mines for commercial auction

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The government is putting up another 26 coal mines for commercial auction in the next round on December 20, the Ministry of Coal announced on Monday.

While 12 of the mines are in Madhya Pradesh, eight are in Chhattisgarh, five in Jharkhand, and one in Telangana. The Ministry also said that seven mines are fully explored, while 19 are partially explored. Three of these mines will be offered under the Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act 2015 (CMSP), while the other 23 mines will come under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Act 1957,



according to an official statement. Unlike previous commercial coal mine auctions, there are no restrictions on the sale or utilisation of coal this time around. For ease of doing business, the Ministry of Coal said it has conceptualised a single window clearance system portal to create a platform to obtain various clearances for the early operationalisation of coal mines, ultimately resulting in the augmentation of coal production in the country through a single gateway.



"BETA PADHAO' TO SAVE GIRL CHILD": HIGH COURT ON WOMAN PARADED NAKED CASE

Bengaluru | Agencies

While continuing to hear the suo-moto petition on the stripping and assault case in Belagavi district, the High Court of Karnataka on Monday called for fixing collective responsibility on the society. "It is not 'beti bachhao, beti padhao'. It is 'beta padhao', to save the girl child. Unless you tell the boy child, you will not be achieving it. The girl will naturally be respectful to the other lady. It is for the boy to be told to respect and protect the lady," the High Court division bench headed by Chief Justice Prasanna B Varale said.



The High Court on December 12 took suo motu cognisance of news reports of the incident of 42-year-old woman in Hukkeri Taluk allegedly tied to an electric pole, stripped and assaulted after her son eloped with a girl from the same village and ST community. The High Court in its hearing called for the need for fixing collective responsibility in such cases. "Some collective responsibility measures have to be taken, which Lord William Bentinck took in history. It is not the action of offenders, but the inaction of those standing at the spot that is more dangerous. These people standing mute spectators will make the assailant a hero," the High Court said. The High Court orally observed that Lord William Bentinck imposed collective fines on villages that harbored criminals. The High Court noted that only one person in the village came to the rescue of the woman. The village has a population of 8,000 and during the incident there were "around 50 to 60 in addition to 13 assailants. And to the misfortune of the victim, only one person namely Mr Jehangir showed the courage to assist the victim and made an attempt to save the victim from assailants. In that process, he was subjected to physical assault. In this situation, out of 50 to 60 people only one person could gather the courage and rush to the rescue of the victim whereas others were just mute or silent spectators of the incident," the High Court noted. Referring to a book on the Roman Empire, the High Court said, "Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire", read it.

Unless you build a good society you cannot build a nation. Unless we instill these values in the next generation nothing will happen. There will be other judges and advocates and other spectators but things will go on," the High Court said. During the arguments, the High Court asked why the villagers remained mute spectators and whether they were "afraid of the police?" The High Court said that it may be because the police did not treat witnesses properly. "Sometimes witnesses are picked up and not treated friendly. It makes them apprehensive. Police stations, subject to exceptions, don't differentiate between witness and accused," the High Court said. Suggesting new laws for collective responsibility, the High Court said, "So many bystanders. But nobody did any-

thing. It is collective cowardice. That is to be addressed. Police are not of British Raj. Something needs to be done. Some factors should be collected and provided to the Law Commission and they may come out with the law. This is how law marches. The law should have pace with people's lives. How will you ensure that such incidents are not repeated? This also needs to be addressed." In its order on Monday, the High Court noted that the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) had awarded an interim compensation of Rs.50,000 for the rehabilitation of the victim of which 50 per cent was allowed to be withdrawn and another 50 per cent kept in fixed deposit. After consulting with the medical officer, the High Court noted that the women needed treatment for six to eight months and modified the DLSA order and ordered the release of the entire compensation amount unconditionally. The HC also noted that Rs.5 lakh has been deposited in the woman's account by the Chief Minister relief fund and the Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Schedule Tribes Development Corporation had allotted 2 acres 3 guntas (40 guntas are one acre) of land to the victim at Chulki village, Belagavi. "We appreciate these steps taken by the State of Karnataka as a solace to the victim," the HC said. The High Court also recorded that the Police Inspector Vijay Kumar Sinnur was suspended for lapses.

Modi's 'guarantee vehicle' is super hit: PM Narendra Modi

Varanasi | Agencies

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said that Modi's 'guarantee vehicle' has become a super-hit.



Addressing an event here, Modi said the vehicle has evoked tremendous response from the people and it has been assured that the country will become developed by 2047. Modi said Varanasi has witnessed historic work in the last nine years to increase connectivity and mentioned works done to increase road and rail connectivity from the city. The Prime Minister also mentioned the renovation of the Ganga ghats, the introduction of a cruise on the river, modern hospitals and natural farming along the Ganga River. "Our government is leaving no stone unturned for the development of the place. Training institutes have been opened here for the skill development of the youth. I am mentioning modern develop-

ment here because the biggest problem in our spiritual journey is lack of infrastructure," Modi said. He further said that for centuries, India has been an example of economic prosperity and physical development. "The government, society and

saints are working together for the rejuvenation of Kashi," he added. Throwing light on the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra, he urged every religious leader to spread awareness about this journey. "This should become our personal resolution," Modi said.

Man dragged on vehicle bonnet from Delhi's Lajpat Nagar to DND flyover; no injuries

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A man was dragged on the bonnet of a vehicle from Delhi's Lajpat Nagar to DND flyover, the police said on Monday. The police said the incident took place on Sunday night, adding that no injuries were reported. A PCR call was received on Sunday night wherein the caller informed that while going towards the DND Flyover enroute Noida, the driver of a vehicle hit him in the Lajpat Nagar area and carried him on the bonnet up to the DND Flyover. "This call was assigned to the Kotla police station, which contacted the caller on the given mobile number," said a senior police officer. Based on the statement of the complainant, a case under Section 279 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) was registered and the driver of the offending tempo traveller, identified as Manoj Kumar, has been bound down in the case. "On inquiry, Kumar said that he works as a driver and on that day while he was going from South-Ex, suddenly his vehicle touched the complainant's vehicle while plying on the



South-Ex flyover (complainant was driving a canter truck)," said the officer. The tempo traveller driver tried to flee but the complainant held the bonnet and climbed on it in order to stop him. "Kumar didn't stop due to fear as he was alone in the vehicle, while the complainant was with his driver. The vehicle of the victim has also been confiscated," the officer said.

7 illegal Bangladeshi immigrants, one local agent held from Howrah station

Kolkata | Agencies

Seven illegal Bangladeshi immigrants and one local agent were arrested by the cops of the Railway Protection Force (RPF) on Monday from the premises of the Howrah Station near Kolkata. Sources said that the RPF got a tip-off that some illegal immigrants from Bangladesh were arriving by train. On Monday morning, the RPF cordoned off the Howrah Station premises and started hunting for the immigrants. After an extensive search they were able to track the seven illegal immigrants, which included four men and three women. They have been identified as Md Kausar, Usman Sheikh, Kabir Hussain, Hakim Sheikh, Chalna Begum, Minara Begum and Tanha Tania. In addition to that, a local agent Sheikh Jakir, who was responsible for arranging the illegal entry of these seven Bangladeshis into India, was also nabbed by the RPF men. None of them had valid visas for India and they



entered the country illegally through the Indo-Bangladesh borders near Basirhat in North 24 Parganas district of West Bengal.

They were supposed to go to Bengaluru from Kolkata, where Sheikh Jakir had promised them jobs as construction workers. Police have started probing whether they really came to India with the hope of getting jobs or if they are part of any insurgency racket. Meanwhile, in a related incident, Hooghly district police arrested two Bangladeshi youths from Mogra area on Monday. The two arrested Bangladeshi citizens, Biplab Das and Ratan Das, crossed the border illegally some time ago, settled down in Mogra and started earning their livelihood as vegetable vendors at a local market. However, their dialect raised doubts in the minds of the local people about their origins and finally on Monday they informed the local police. The cops detained and started interrogating them and the two men admitted that they were residents of the port city of Chittagang in Bangladesh. They also admitted to entering India without valid visas and other related documents.

Eat Jhatka meat to make Sanatan Dharma more strong: Giriraj Singh

Patna | Agencies

Union minister Giriraj Singh on Monday asked the people to eat Jhatka meat to make Sanatan Dharma more strong. "In Sanatan Dharma, we have a tradition of sacrifice (Bali Pratha) in worshipping Hindu gods and goddesses. The sacrifice is always done through Jhatka and we must eat Jhatka meat to make Sanatan Dharma more strong," Singh told his supporters in his Begusarai constituency on the second day of his visit. He asked people to take oath that they will only eat Jhatka meat and not Halal meat. "In other religions (Islam), they follow the method of Halal. We should not follow the method of Islam," Singh said. He also asked the people to raise the slogan "Ek Baar Me Jhatka". Singh said that Sanatan Dharma is the best tradition in the world. "Under Sanatan Dharma, people offer sugar to ants and



water to Peepal trees," he said.

SEXTORTION RACKET: 2 HELD IN GURUGRAM FOR DUPING PEOPLE OF RS 2.88 CR

Gurugram | Agencies

Two residents of Nuh have been arrested for allegedly duping several people of Rs 2.88 crore by making obscene videos to them which they filmed, the police said on Monday. The accused have identified as Juber Khan and Wasim alias Bhaddal alias Mosen, both residents of Nuh in Haryana. The police also recovered a mobile phone used in the crime from their possession. The case came to light after a man lodged a complaint stating that two bike-borne men snatched his mobile phone and fled the spot. Based on the complaint, a case was registered at the Kherki Daula police station. Acting on the complaint, a crime branch team nabbed the two accused -- Juber and Wasim -- from Nuh on Sunday. During questioning, it was revealed that Juber was involved in duping several people of Rs 2.88 crore after making an obscene video calls to them which he filmed.



Excise policy case: ED issues second summon to Kejriwal for Dec 21

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Spelling more troubles for Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal ahead of his planned 10-day Vipassana session (December 19 to 30), the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday asked him to appear before the agency on December 21 in connection with the alleged excise policy scam. An ED source said the agency has asked the Delhi Chief Minister to appear before it on December 21. The fresh summon came when Kejriwal is all set to leave for his 10-day annual Vipassana session starting December 19. According to some sources, Kejriwal is likely to go ahead with the Vipassana session as scheduled. Kejriwal had earlier skipped the ED summon on November 2 in connection with the case. Kejriwal had also dubbed his summon as illegal and politically motivated. He had also said that the notice was sent at the behest of the BJP. "The notice has been sent



to ensure that I am unable to go for election campaigning in four states. The ED should withdraw the notice immediately," the AAP leader had said.

Allahabad HC reserves order on Eidgah survey in Mathura



Prayagraj | Agencies

The Allahabad High Court has reserved its order on holding a survey at the Shahi Eidgah mosque adjacent to the Krishna Janmabhoomi temple complex in Mathura. On December 15, the Supreme Court refused to stay the High Court's December 14 order which allowed the primary survey of mosque by a court-monitored three-member team of advocate commissioners.

During the hearing, a decision could not be taken by a three-member team of advocate commissioners regarding the form of survey to be conducted. The Muslim petitioners argued that their plea in the Krishna Janmabhoomi case was pending in the Supreme Court. Following this, the High Court decided to reserve its order. Over a dozen petitions are pending before the High Court regarding the Eidgah complex, with the Hindu side claiming that the mosque was constructed by Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb by demolishing a temple on 13.37 acres of Lord Krishna's birthplace.

Pharma firms valuations do not factor in threats from acceleration in generics adoption in India

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The current implied domestic valuations of pharma companies do not adequately factor in threats from any acceleration in the pace of adoption of unbranded and trade generics in India, as per a report by Kotak Institutional Equities. In another instance exemplifying the Indian government's intent to push generics, it has set an imposing timeline to achieve its objective of reaching 25,000 Jan Aushadhi stores. The government targets to increase the store count by 2.5X to 25,000 in less than 2.5 years (end-FY2026), the report said. Apart from store additions, there is also an effort to improve the geospatial coverage of stores (skewed toward South India currently). On the other hand, the ongoing clamp down on non-compliant man-



ufacturers augurs well for our coverage, it said. "Factoring in the impact of lower prices in the trade generics and Jan Aushadhi (unbranded generics) channels, we estimate a 70-110 bps annual dent on branded growth at least until FY2028E. With Jan Aushadhi's rapid expansion, there is a risk of this hit on IPM swelling further," the report said. Currently, most domestic businesses are trading at an implied valuation of 30-35X FY2025E EPS for acute-heavy companies and 35-40X FY2025E EPS for chronic-heavy companies. "We note that current valuations imply the ongoing steady decline in the share of branded generics will continue and do

not factor in any further growth deceleration over the next few years," it said. The government has been focusing on improving access to affordable drugs through an aggressive roll-out of Jan Aushadhi stores. The number of stores has grown by more than 100X in the past 9 years from only 80 in CY2014. As of November 30, 2023, 10,006 stores have been opened across 753 out of the total of 785 districts in the country. In August 2023, without providing a timeline, the government had announced its intent to open 25,000 Jan Aushadhi stores across India, the report said. Recently, the government announced an imposing timeline of achieving this target of 25,000 Jan Aushadhi stores by March 2026. The Jan Aushadhi program (PMBJP) reported sales of Rs 12.4 bn in FY2023 and Rs 7 bn in 1HFY24.

Sugar output rises in UP but falls in Maharashtra, Karnataka



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Sugar production in the country declined by 10.7 per cent to 7.4 million metric tonnes during the current season so far (till Dec 15) as several mills in Maharashtra and Karnataka started operations a fortnight after the scheduled date of the start of the crushing season from Oct1, according to Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA). The sugar output in Maharashtra's dropped to 2.44 million tons from 3.3 million tons compared to the same period last year, while Karnataka's production fell 11.7 per cent to 1.7 million tons. However, sugar production in Uttar Pradesh increased by 9 per cent to 2.2 million tons during the current season as mills started their operations early. The government has eased the ban on diverting sugarcane juice for the production of ethyl alcohol to allow mills to divert up to 1.7 million tons of sugar for the purpose so that their profitability is not hit and sugarcane farmers are paid in time.



CABINET WILL BE FORMED SOON: CHIEF MINISTER MOHAN YADAV

► MOHAN YADAV, WHO TOOK OATH AS THE NEW CHIEF MINISTER OF MADHYA PRADESH A WEEK AGO, CLEARED THE AIR SURROUNDING THE FORMATION OF THE CABINET IN THE STATE.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

There has been no consensus yet on which faces will be in Dr. Mohan Yadav's cabinet in Madhya Pradesh. Along with regional and caste equations, there is a problem regarding senior MLAs. In such a situation, there is no possibility of ministers taking oath on Tuesday.

There will be a meeting again on Tuesday in Delhi regarding the names to be included in the cabinet. Former CM Shivraj Singh is also going to Delhi on Tuesday. Where he will have discussions with party president JP Nadda. Sources reveal that CM Mohan Yadav has objected to senior leaders being made central. He said that if very senior leaders become ministers then



they will face difficulty in working. Regarding the expansion of the cabinet, Deputy CM Jagdish Deora said that it will be decided by the top leadership. It is not in our hands. Whereas Deputy CM Rajendra Shukla said that it is not possible to tell the date right now, because the central leadership has to take a decision. Earlier, BJP's Kailash Vijaywargiya said, "A decision on cabinet formation be taken in this matter in a party meeting on December 17." Earlier on Sunday late evening, a brainstorming session

regarding cabinet expansion went on for about an hour at the house of BJP National President JP Nadda. CM Dr. Mohan Yadav, both Deputy CMs Jagdish Deora and Rajendra Shukla, BJP MLAs Narendra Singh Tomar, Kailash Vijaywargiya and Prahlad Patel were present in this meeting held in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah. State BJP President VD Sharma, National Co-Organization General Secretary Shiv Prakash and State Organization General Secretary Hitanand Sharma also participated.

After the meeting, BJP sources had said that the cabinet expansion has got the green signal and the ministers can be sworn in soon. However, now once again the names will be brainstormed. It is believed that the list of names can be finalized in the meeting to be held on Tuesday. According to BJP sources, along with MP-turned-MLA Rakesh Singh, Prahlad Patel, Reeti Pathak and Rao Uday Pratap Singh, Kailash Vijaywargiya can be made minister. Probably 18 to 20 ministers can take oath for the first time.

Shivraj Chouhan to meet BJP chief today amid buzz over central role

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Former Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh Shivraj Singh Chouhan is scheduled to meet BJP national president JP Nadda in Delhi today.

Chouhan confirmed about his visit to Delhi and meeting with the BJP chief in the state capital Bhopal on Monday. According to the information, the former Chief Minister will reach Delhi on Tuesday morning.

"BJP Chief Nadda has called for a meeting and I will go to meet him," Chouhan said. When asked whether discussions will be held about getting a position in the Union cabinet ministry, the BJP leader said he has no information about it.

Notably, it will be Chouhan's first visit to Delhi after stepping down from the post of Chief Minister.

Chouhan also said that whatever the party would decide, he would work for it and there were a few subjects, which were his favourite issues for which he would continue to work from



his heart." I have always said that the BJP is a mission and when you work in a mission then you won't decide, the mission decides for you. Whatever the party will decide, I will work for it. There are a few subjects like environment, women empowerment, and child welfare, these are my favourite issues and I will continue to work for it from my heart," Chouhan said. Meanwhile, talking about the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, which is scheduled to be held next

year, the BJP leader has said that now the target is about the Lok Sabha elections to win all the 29 seats from the state under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. All the party workers would work hard for it. The era of Chouhan came to an end last week on Wednesday after the BJP MLA Mohan Yadav took oath as Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh. Governor Mangubhai C. Patel administered the oath of office to him at Motilal Nehru Stadium, Lal Parade Ground in Bhopal.

BUDGET BREAK ON GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

Team Absolute | Bhopal

With the increasing debt in Madhya Pradesh and the formation of a new government, the threat of cuts has been imposed on many schemes. The Finance Department has issued instructions to many departments to seek permission before going ahead with the schemes.

According to information received from sources, the state government has a debt of about three and a half lakh crores and it needs more loans for the schemes to be implemented in the coming times. In such a situation, it does not seem easy to run many schemes at pace.

With the command of Madhya Pradesh in the hands of Mohan Yadav, the Finance Department has put budget brakes on the plans of Shivraj government. The Finance Department said that any decision should be

taken only after asking. Don't do anything without asking. The Finance Department has imposed restrictions on more than 35 departments in the government of CM Mohan Yadav.

Like PM Road Scheme, Chief Minister Teerth Darshan Scheme, schemes related to tribals, repairing of bungalows of ministers and officers, Mahakal Complex Expansion Scheme, schemes related to sports, more than 6 award schemes, airstrip expansion, Chief Minister Loan Solution Scheme run for farmers. Many other schemes are included. If CM Mohan Yadav's government wants to work on any of these schemes, then it will first have to take permission from the Finance Department.

The Finance Department has also put a stop to the work of the schemes being run for the devotees. Due to this, the work of Mahakal

campus expansion and Teerth Darshan scheme will be stopped. Apart from this, restrictions have also been imposed on giving awards and honours. The Finance Department has made it clear that it has been made mandatory for the department heads to take permission from the Finance Department for the Bhamashah Award given by the Commercial Tax Department.

Sources say that the biggest burden on the government is to provide scooters to the previously employed girl students, giving money to dear sisters, giving gas cylinders for Rs 450, increasing the salary of Panchayat employees, increasing the honorarium of contract employees as well as college guests. Fixing of honorarium for scholars has adversely affected the financial condition of the government.

Atal Medicity, and Divisional level Institutes of Medical Science using investment of Rs 20,000 crore

MP SANKALP PATRA 2023 GUARANTEES HEALTH SECURITY OF EVERY CITIZEN. CM DR. MOHAN YADAV INSTRUCTS AUTHORITIES TO PREPARE THE ROADMAP IN SEVEN DAYS

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Atal Medicity will be established in Madhya Pradesh under Madhya Pradesh Niramay Infrastructure Mission using an investment of Rs 20,000 crore. Divisional level Madhya Pradesh Institutes of Medical Sciences will be set up on the lines of AIIMS. Health security has been guaranteed to every citizen in Madhya Pradesh Sankalp Patra 2023. It is noteworthy that Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav has given instructions to prepare a roadmap within seven days to fulfill the guarantees given in Madhya Pradesh Sankalp Patra 2023.

According to the Madhya Pradesh Sankalp Patra 2023, palliative care centers for cancer patients will be established in major cities. Under the One Lok Sabha-One Medical College scheme, medical colleges will be established in every Lok Sabha constituency. Under the One District-One Nursing College scheme, there will be a nursing college in every district. Blood bank will be set up at every block headquarters under the One Block-One Blood Bank scheme. The number of advanced life support ambulances will be doubled. The number of beds in hospitals and ICU will also be doubled. Currently 132 types of diagnosis tests are avail-



able free of cost. Around 10,000 patients are benefiting every day. In 2003, there were 5 medical colleges, which have now increased to 24. The MBBS seats have increased to more than 4,000. More than 800 health centers have been constructed and developed in 3 and a half years. The number of

hospital beds has increased from 2,000 to 42,000 and the number of ICU beds has increased more than 10 times to 2,085. More than 11,000 health and wellness centers have been started to ensure health services. More than 2,000 ambulances are available. The number of doctors and paramedical staff has been increased more than 7 times to more than 51,000.

If expenditure is more than Rs 5 lakh for the beneficiaries of Ayushman Bharat, the additional expenditure will be borne by the CM Relief Fund. A regulatory authority will be set up to control excessive medical charges in private hospitals. As many as 500 new Jan Aushadhi Centers will be started across the state. Medicines will be available in these at low prices. Medical seats have been increased by up to 4,000. 2,000 medical seats will be increased in the next five years. Appointments will be made on the vacant posts of doctors, nurses and other paramedical staff on a mission mode.

Apart from the financial assistance of Rs 20 lakh given by the Central Government, financial assistance will also be given to rare disease patients. Madhya Pradesh will be made TB-free State by 2025. TB patients will be given monthly financial assistance of Rs 1000.

CHILL WILL INCREASE IN THE ENTIRE STATE FROM TODAY

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Due to cold winds, the chill will start increasing in the entire state from Monday. The night temperature may drop by three degrees Celsius in the next two days. Due to the activeness of three weather systems formed at different places, clouds had started forming. Due to their weakening the weather has started becoming dry. The direction of the winds has also become northern and north-westerly.

According to the information received from the Meteorological Center, at present a western disturbance is forming in the upper part of the air in the form of a cyclone around Jammu. Due to its influence, an induced cyclone is active over Haryana. Apart from this, a trough is also present around Punjab. Ajay Shukla, former senior meteorologist of the Meteorological Center, said that due to the influence of these



three weather systems, clouds had started appearing. Due to this the

night temperature started increasing slightly. Now with the weakening of

these weather systems the weather has become dry.

Since Sunday afternoon, the direction of the winds has also become northern and north-westerly. The wind speed also remains around 10 to 15 kilometers per hour. Due to the effect of cold winds, a drop in maximum temperature has also been recorded in the entire state on Sunday. The minimum temperature is also likely to start falling from Monday.

The minimum temperature may drop by up to three degrees Celsius in two days. The weather patterns may change again when a new western disturbance arrives in North India on December 22. On the other hand, the lowest temperature of 8.5 degrees Celsius was recorded in Nagaon in the state on Sunday. The minimum temperature in 28 cities was less than 15 degrees Celsius. The night temperature in hill station Pachmarhi was 7.2 degrees Celsius.

Swearing in of new MLAs in the Assembly

Narendra Singh Tomar will be elected Speaker of the Assembly unopposed, opposition in support

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The special session of the 16th Assembly in Madhya Pradesh has started from Monday. MLAs are being sworn in in this four-day long session. Meanwhile, Narendra Singh Tomar filed nomination for the post of Assembly Speaker. He will be elected unopposed. He has got the support of the opposition. The Speaker of the Assembly will be selected on December 20. The Protem Speaker will administer the oath to him.

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav was the first to take oath, followed by Leader of Opposition Umang Singhar. Shivraj Singh took oath at number five. BJP MLA from Sabalgarh in Morena district Sarla Rawat got stuck several times in taking the oath. She was not able to read. The security personnel helped her. Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav said, today is the first day of the session of the 16th Assembly. I am happy that today the ruling party and the opposition have jointly filed the nomination for the new Assembly



Speaker. As the leader of the legislative party, I welcome the positive thinking of the opposition. The opposition should give its constructive support in this manner. We will take the state to new heights of development.

Former CM Shivraj Singh Chauhan discussed with the media in the assembly premises.

Regarding the crying of women, Shivraj Singh said - Be it the relationship between brother and sister, maternal uncle or nephew, I have said earlier also that brother's relationship is of trust and maternal uncle's relationship is of love.

Patwari will enter the election season with new enthusiasm

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Newly appointed President of Madhya Pradesh Congress Jitu Patwari will now enter the election campaign with new enthusiasm in the Lok Sabha elections. For this, Patwari will finalize the team after discussing with senior party leaders. Congress party workers are in despair due to the crushing defeat in the recent assembly elections. If the leadership is not changed despite the heavy defeat of the Congress, then a positive message would not be sent to the workers.

The positive side of Patwari is that while he was the state president of Youth Congress, he created a network in the entire state and now this team will come into the mainstream. If new people get a chance to work in the state unit, their seniors will also be taken along. Lok Sabha elections will be declared in March. If seen from this perspective, the first challenge before the Patwari will be to prepare the workers for the Lok Sabha elections. They will have to be freed from the feeling of



despair and inspired to fight the BJP.

Along with candidate selection, work will have to be done from now on selected Lok Sabha seats. Sources say that four working presidents may also be appointed by the All India Congress Committee to create regional and political balance. This experiment was also done when Kamal Nath became the state president. At that time Jitu Patwari was the working president.

A BILINGUAL BOOK ON PHYSIOLOGY UNVEILED AT AIIMS BHOPAL

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Prof. (Dr.) Ajai Singh, Executive Director, AIIMS Bhopal, released a pioneering bilingua (Hindi and English) Physiology book at the institute. Written by Dr Varun Malhotra, Dr Ashish Kumar Dixit, Dr Danish Javed of AIIMS Bhopal and Professor M Shobitha of Sharda University, the book aims to meet the needs of Hindi-speaking students.

Professor (Dr.) Ajai Singh expressed his pleasure to unveil this important book, which has been written especially for students who are more comfortable with Hindi. He highlighted the recognition of language as a potential barrier and emphasized the book's role in promoting inclusive education by breaking down linguistic barriers. This bilingual book aims to strengthen students' understanding of physiology, promote critical thinking, and refine clinical reasoning skills.



Professor (Dr.) Ajai Singh congratulated the dedicated team behind the book and invited the students to adopt this book overcoming the language barriers.

The vision of the Executive Director is to achieve excellence in medical education at AIIMS Bhopal, and this bilingual Physiology book represents an important step towards

that goal. The release of the book marks a milestone in the commitment to provide a level playing field and nurture talent in the medical education landscape.



EDITOR'S SPECS

JD-U: Walking on double-edged sword

With only few months left for the Lok Sabha polls, JD-U is all geared-up, strategising for the electoral battlefield and planning to organise several rallies in coming days. One of the strategies of the party is that the JD-U President and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar will conduct rallies outside the state to explore ground support. All these programmes are being organised separately by the JD-U while other members of the INDIA bloc have been excluded. Nitish Kumar has played a significant role in uniting opposition parties against BJP and in the formation of the INDIA bloc. The question arises why is JD-U pursuing 'Akela Chalo' strategy when the INDIA bloc has already been formed. The JD-U organised a 'Bhim Sansad' at the Patna Veterinary College ground on November 24, aiming to consolidate the Dalit votes. The rally witnessed enthusiastic participation, indicating JD-U's growing momentum. The alleged objective of this rally was to make JD-U's allied parties aware of its strength. Nitish Kumar was also scheduled to address a rally in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh on December 24. However, the rally has been postponed. The JD-U has also announced to organise rallies in Uttar Pradesh; in Jharkhand on January 21; and another rally in Patna on January 24. All these announced rallies will be held without the INDIA bloc. JD-U Spokesperson Neeraj Kumar said that while the party is part of the alliance, every political party has the right to enhance its support base. He said that if JD-U becomes stronger, it will benefit the allied partners as well and therefore there is no hidden agenda behind the party's approach. "JD-U ranks third in Bihar in terms of number of MLAs. The party will surely make efforts to change its equation in the next election," political analyst Ajay Kumar said.

By naming OBC, Adivasi, Brahmin CMs, BJP defines narrative for 2024

Santosh Kumar Pathak

In Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Rajasthan, the leaders chosen as chief ministers after extensive deliberations has sent a clear message to the voters and opposition parties that the BJP has already begun preparations for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

In the three states, the BJP has not only addressed local politics by selecting chief ministers and two deputy chief ministers but has also made strategic moves to navigate caste equations and prepare for victory in the 2024 elections.

The three states -- Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan -- together have a total of 65 Lok Sabha seats.

By appointing an OBC CM in Madhya Pradesh, a tribal CM in Chhattisgarh, and a Brahmin CM in Rajasthan, the BJP has attempted to cut through the strategies of opposition parties.

The move is seen as an effort to counter the narrative around caste-based reservations and OBC reservations, raised by opposition leaders such as Rahul Gandhi, Akhilesh Yadav and Tejashwi Yadav, which was thought to potentially become a major electoral issue in the Lok Sabha elections.

Although Shivraj Singh Chouhan himself comes from the OBC community, but the BJP has strategically chosen Mohan Yadav, an OBC leader with the surname 'Yadav', as the CM of Madhya Pradesh to send a political message to Yadav voters in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

By appointing an OBC leader as Madhya Pradesh CM, the BJP has delivered a significant blow to Akhilesh and Tejashwi, who were formulating strategies based on caste dynamics in their



respective states to win the Lok Sabha elections.

Uttar Pradesh has 80 and Bihar has 40 Lok Sabha seats, making a total of 120 seats from these two states.

In Chhattisgarh, by appointing a tribal leader, Vishnudev Sai as the CM, the BJP not only navigated the electoral dynamics in the state but also made efforts to connect with the over 10 crore tribal population spread across various states in the country.

The significance of tribal voters can be gauged by the fact that out of the 543 Lok Sabha seats, 47 seats are reserved for Scheduled Tribes. Several states in the Northeast have a population where tribal communities constitute more than 75 per cent, making the tribal vote crucial not just in reserved seats but also in approximately 20 other seats.

Brahmins were traditionally considered a vote bank for the Congress until a few decades ago. However, as the Congress shifted its focus towards the Muslim community, especially during the Mandal politics era, Brahmins distanced themselves and aligned with the BJP.

In the current political scenario, the BJP, by choosing Brahmin leader Bhajanlal Sharma as the CM in Rajasthan, has attempted to send a strong political message to Brahmin voters across the country.

Apart from Rajasthan, Brahmin voters play a significant role in states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi. Brahmin voters not only cast their own votes but also have the ability to influence votes of other communities due to their political influence.

In the 2014 and 2019 elections, along with the other upper castes, including Kshatriyas and Vaishyas, Brahmins played a significant role in Narendra Modi's victory, and the BJP aims to consolidate their support again to form the government at the Centre for the third consecutive time in 2024.

Many analysts view the selection of new chief ministers in these three states as the end of the Atal-Advani era in the BJP. However, the party dismisses this interpretation, stating that such an analysis is not appropriate. The foundation laid by the two leaders continues to propel the party forward. Similar sentiments were expressed when leaders like Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Raman Singh and Vasundhara Raje Scindia became chief ministers for the first time in these states. Once again, the party has chosen grassroots workers to become chief ministers.

Raje, Shivraj, 9 ministers/MPs who quit Parliament to be assigned key roles

With the selection of new chief ministers and deputy chief ministers in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan, the BJP is likely to assign new roles to former chief ministers Vasundhara Raje, Shivraj Singh Chouhan and nine MPs who had resigned from Parliament after winning the assembly elections.

As part of the election strategy, the BJP had fielded 21 MPs in the assembly elections in four states, out of which 12 MPs won the polls.

On the instructions of the party high command, all these 12 MPs resigned from Parliament. At that time, it was said that many of them were contenders for the post of chief minister but this did not happen.

The MPs who resigned from Parliament included former Union ministers -- Narendra Singh Tomar, Prahlad Singh Patel, Renuka Singh -- Uday Pratap Singh, Rakesh Singh, Riti Pathak, Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore, Diya Kumari, Kirodi Lal Meena, Mahant Balaknath, Arun Sao and Gomati Sai.

Out of these 12 leaders, Arun Sao has been made the deputy chief minister of Chhattisgarh and Diya Kumari the deputy chief minister of Rajasthan, while it has been decided to make former



Union minister Narendra Singh Tomar the Speaker of the Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly.

According to sources, the party is soon going to give key responsibilities to the remaining nine leaders who won the Assembly polls from their respective states.

It is being said that 5-6 of these MLAs can be made ministers in

their states. Two MLAs have indicated that they will not become ministers and said that they will work for the organisation only. Some of these leaders may contest the Lok Sabha elections again in 2024.

Former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Raman Singh, who is currently the national vice president of the BJP, will stay away from active politics for the next 5 years, as the Speaker of the Chhattisgarh Assembly.

Former Rajasthan CM Raje is currently the national vice president of the BJP and if everything goes well then former Madhya Pradesh CM Chouhan can also be made a national vice president of the party.

It is also being said that the party can give an important role to both Chouhan and Raje in the Lok Sabha elections to be held next year and if both these leaders agree, then they can also be brought into national politics by making them contest the Lok Sabha elections.

international

Car plows into Biden's motorcade outside Delaware campaign headquarters

Washington | Agencies
A car plowed into a parked SUV that was part of US President Joe Biden's motorcade while the latter was leaving his campaign headquarters in the state of Delaware, according to a White House report.



Delaware plates hit what seemed to be a motorcade SUV shielding the motorcade at the intersection across from the entrance of the campaign headquarters," the report said.

"There was a loud bang and POTUS was standing outside the vehicle with a surprised expression on his face," it said.

Agents quickly sprung into action, cornering the car and pulling weapons on the driver, who held his hands up, it added. The Bidens' trip to the campaign headquarters marked the first time since staffers began working out of the Wilmington office over the summer.

The President was not harmed, Xinhua news agency quoted the report as saying.

The President and First Lady Jill Biden emerged from the 2024 re-election campaign headquarters in Delaware's downtown Wilmington at around 8 p.m. on Sunday night, it said.

The First Lady entered the

vehicle first, saying "Happy Holidays" to the staffers. The President then emerged

and his exit was interrupted by a car that hit a motorcade SUV. "A silver copper sedan with

Israeli strike in northern Gaza kills 110 people

Tel Aviv | Agencies
At least 110 people, including women and children, were killed and 100 others injured in Israeli airstrikes in northern Gaza's Jabaliya region, the Palestinian Health Ministry said on Monday. According to the Ministry, the strikes on Sunday hit the Jabaliya refugee camp, the largest in Gaza, as well as a residential block.



Meanwhile, The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) on Monday announced the death of four more soldiers in Gaza, taking the overall toll of fallen troopers in the ongoing ground offensive to 126.

According to the military, Sgt. First Class Urija Bayer (20), a commando in the Maglan unit from the northern town of Maalot-Tarshihadied, succumbed to his injuries he had sustained during combat in

southern Gaza on December 14.

Meanwhile, Sgt. First Class Liav Aloush (21) and Master Sgt. (res.) Etan Naeh (26) from the Duvdevan unit; and Master Sgt. (res.) Tal Filiba (23) of the Yahalom unit of the Combat Engineering Corps, were all killed on Sunday during fighting in southern Gaza. The IDF also said that a few soldiers were injured in the fierce fighting, including one from the Duvdevan unit who is undergoing treatment at a military hospital after being grievously wounded.

Israel has launched its ground offensive in the Hamas-controlled enclave on October 27 -- 20 days after the militant group launched its massive attack against the Jewish nation.

Fierce storm in Argentina kills 14 people

Buenos Aires | Agencies
At least 14 people were killed after a fierce storm that brought with it heavy rain and winds of 150 km/h, lashed eastern Argentina, authorities said.



The storm first made landfall on December 16 in the port city of Bahia Blanca, around 570 km (355 miles) south of Buenos Aires, damaging buildings and causing power outages before moving towards the capital city on Sunday, the BBC reported.

According to the authorities, after hitting Bahia Blanca, the storm caused part of the roof of a sports centre to collapse during a roller skating competition, killing 13 people. An additional 14 people were injured, with some who were trapped beneath the rubble.

An orange weather alert, indicating a threat to life and property, was in force in parts of Buenos Aires province.

On Sunday, a woman was killed in the town of Moreno, a suburb of Bahia Blanca, when she was hit by a falling tree branch.

Also on Sunday, newly-appointed President Javier Milei travelled to Bahia Blanca with several ministers to survey the damage, the BBC reported.

His office said the government was "working together with the provincial and municipal authorities to assist the victims and control the damage".

The storm also led to two deaths in neighbouring Uruguay.

Blood supplies running low in China due to a spike in respiratory illnesses



Beijing | Agencies
China is facing a shortage of blood -- a problem blamed on the current spike in respiratory illness, the cold snap and a fall in the number of donors, the media reported.

Local authorities and blood centres in several of the biggest provinces, including Henan, Shandong, Fujian, Hubei and Shanxi, have warned of a sharp drop in the number of donations and appealed for people to contribute, South China Morning Post reported.

According to state-controlled news outlet ThePaper.cn, blood stocks in Xinxiang, a city in Henan province, were running so low that they threatened the supply for operations and other hospital needs, SCMP reported.

The city's publicity department and local Red Cross Society issued an urgent appeal on Friday, saying demand was surging but fewer people were donating because it was winter. Yuncheng, a city in the central province of Shanxi, issued a similar appeal for donors, saying donations had fallen dramatically after temperatures "dropped off a cliff" while respiratory illnesses surged.

12 shot dead in Mexico Christmas party



Mexico City | Agencies
At least 12 people were shot dead during a Christmas party in the municipality of Salvatierra of Guanajuato state, Mexico, authorities have said.

The bloodshed occurred on Sunday during a Christmas posada, a traditional Mexican celebration, in the community of San Jose del Carmen, the Guanajuato Attorney General's Office said, adding that an investigation is under way.

A group of armed attackers arrived unexpectedly and opened fire at posada participants, the majority of them young people, leaving 12 dead and 10 injured, Xinhua news agency reported, citing initial reports from the municipal government.

The wounded were taken to hospitals in the municipality, authorities said, without providing details about their conditions.

In recent years, violence has increased in the region due to the dispute between criminal groups seeking control.

N.Korea fires 'unspecified ballistic missile' toward East Sea for 2nd day

Seoul | Agencies
North Korea fired an unspecified ballistic missile toward the East Sea on Monday, the South Korean military said, just hours after it launched a short-range missile, amid speculation the latest one could be an intercontinental ballistic missile.



The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said it detected the launch but did not give further details, Yonhap news agency reported.

North Korea fired a short-range missile from in or around Pyongyang at 10:38 p.m. Sunday, and it flew about 570 km before splashing into the East Sea, according to the JCS.

The back-to-back missile launches came after South Korea's First Deputy National Security Adviser Kim Tae-hyo said a few days earlier that the North could fire an ICBM within this month.

The firings also came days after Seoul and Washington held the second session of the Nuclear Consultative Group (NCG) and agreed to complete the establishment of guidelines on the planning and operation of a shared nuclear strategy by the middle of next year.

Just after Sunday's launch, the North's defence ministry lambasted the NCG meeting as "an open declaration on nuclear confrontation" and criticized the U.S.' deployment of major military assets to the Korean Peninsula this year.

The North's latest sabre-rattling also came amid heightened tensions after Pyongyang scrapped a 2018 inter-Korean military agreement designed to reduce tensions and prevent accidental clashes along the border last month.

Seoul had partially suspended the deal in protest of the North's successful launch of its first military spy satellite on Nov. 21. The North last fired a ballistic missile on Nov. 22, but the launch apparently failed, according to the JCS.



Opposition alleges safety lapses after 9 killed in blast at Nagpur explosives factory

Team Absolute | Nagpur

Police have registered a case against unidentified persons in connection with the blast at an explosives manufacturing factory in Maharashtra's Nagpur district which claimed nine lives, officials said on Monday.

Search teams have recovered a number of body parts from the site at the Solar Industries India factory in Chakdoh area where the blast took place on Sunday, they said.

The body parts have been sent to a government hospital for post-mortem and DNA analysis to identify the victims, according to sources.

Opposition legislators in the state alleged lapses by the company in ensuring the safety of workers and demanded action against Industrial Safety Department officials.

The bodies of the victims were blown to pieces due to the severe intensity of the explosion and the building collapsed, an official from Kondhali police station said.

He said search teams have so far recovered more than 50 body parts from the site of the incident.

A case has been registered against unidentified persons under Indian Penal Code sections 304 (a) (causing death by negligence) and 286 (negligent conduct with respect to explosive substance) on a complaint of Kondhali police station's assistant police inspector Pankaj Waghode. "The accused persons would be identified during the investigation," the official said.

The body parts recovered have been sent to the Government Medical College & Hospital (GMCH) here for



post-mortem and DNA analysis to identify the victims, sources said.

After the panchnama, the body parts, kept in different packets, will be matched with the samples of relatives for identification.

The remains of the victims will be sent for forensic analysis before being handed over to the relatives, they said.

Work was on to remove debris from the blast site, a senior police official said.

Raising the issue in the state legislative council on Monday, opposition leader Ambadas Danve (Shiv Sena-UBT) demanded a report from the Nagpur district collector to fix accountability and demanded action against officials concerned from the Industrial Safety Department.

Danve, who visited the blast site, said the bodies were dismembered.

"Mandatory safety drills had not been conducted at the company and even officials from the industrial safe-

ty department were denied access to the premises," he said.

Danve said workers at the factory were forced into early morning shifts after working late the previous night.

Congress MLC Shashikant Shinde said, "This isn't the first time that an explosion occurred in the company. There were two such incidents in the past." Referring to the Rs 20 lakh compensation announced by the company to the victims and Rs 5 lakh by the state government, Shinde wondered whether the government is placing a monetary value on the lives of innocent people.

"Around 4,000 workers are employed on a daily wage basis in the company on a meagre Rs 10,000 per month," he said and demanded permanent employment for them.

Congress MLC Bhai Jagtap said while the minimum wage is Rs 12,000 in Maharashtra, the company was paying only Rs 10,500 per month to the workers.

He demanded that the services of workers be regularised.

Solar Industries India senior general manager Ashish Srivastava on Sunday said the incident occurred in the building where boosters used in coal mines are produced. "It took place when sealing work of the product was going on".

The explosion occurred when the workers were engaged in production and packaging of Trinitrotoluene (TNT) chemical, a potent yellow explosive material widely used in military applications, a police official said.

The bodies of nine workers, who were in the 6 am to 2 pm shift, were blown to pieces following the blast. The single-floor facility also collapsed and the body parts were trapped under the debris, he said.

The high-intensity explosion was even heard by locals some kilometres away from the site.

After the incident, angry locals and relatives of workers had blocked the Amravati-Nagpur highway running along the site of the explosives manufacturing unit, demanding access to the premises so that they could see the bodies of their loved ones.

The police later tried to pacify them and the crowd was dispersed.

To locate the bodies, the police used drones above the accident site and deployed a bomb detection and disposal squad along with a forensic team for evidence collection, an official said.

The factory falls under the jurisdiction of the Petroleum & Explosive Safety Organisation (PESO) and its officials were conducting an inquiry into the incident, the police said.

Decisions like Dharavi redevelopment bad for Mumbai and Maharashtra: Uddhav



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Former Maharashtra Chief Minister and Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Uddhav Thackeray said on Monday that the way Dharavi is being redeveloped is bad for Mumbai and Maharashtra and slammed the Bharatiya Janata Party for calling Saturday's protest march by his party against the project as a "settlement morcha" (agitation to extort money).

The Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT) and other opposition parties like the Congress and the NCP have alleged the Maharashtra government is bestowing favours on the Adani Group, which was chosen through a tender to undertake the ambitious project.

"Decisions like Dharavi redevelopment are bad for Mumbai and Maharashtra. Our protest march was not a settlement morcha because the BJP was not part of it. Only the BJP indulges in settlement," Thackeray

said. On Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis' claim that Saturday's morcha comprised people from other areas and not Dharavi, Thackeray hit back saying the participants were brought from the moon on board Chandrayaan that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had sent.

He also hit out at Maharashtra Navnirman Sena chief Raj Thackeray's criticism of Saturday's morcha by stating "we are not getting to know who are the chamchas of Adani".

On the Maratha quota issue, Thackeray said the community must get reservation without it affecting benefits of other groups. Without naming Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, the Shiv Sena (UBT) chief those who had taken oath to give reservation by touching the feet of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj must now go ahead and fulfil the demand.

Will commit suicide publicly, says Shiv Sena (UBT) leader accused of mafia links, graft

Team Absolute | Nashik

Rubbishing allegations of graft and mafia links against him, Shiv Sena (UBT) Nashik leader Sudhakar Badgujar on Monday said if charges against him are proved, he will commit suicide in public.

Badgujar, facing a SIT probe for allegations of mafia links after photos and videos showed him dancing with a terror convict Salim Shaikh alias 'Kutta', is now booked by Nashik Police on Sunday in a forgery and cheating case.

The ACB case pertains to a 2016 panel report of the Nashik Municipal Corporation claiming that Badgujar, then a Municipal Corporator and a NMC Standing Committee Member, was allegedly cornering civic contracts for his own company.

Stoutly denying the charges, Badgujar told mediapersons today that false cases are being filed pertaining to old matters against Opposition parties, but he will fully cooperate with the investigations.

"If the charges against me are proved true, then I will hang myself publicly in front of the ACB office



in the presence of my Shiv Sainiks," he declared. The Maharashtra government SIT is investigating his alleged mafia links for which the Nashik

Police have questioned him for the past three days, and now Badgujar and some of his associates are likely to be probed by the ACB.

The ACB followed up the case by raiding two premises of Badgujar on Sunday night and the operations continued till early Monday morning.

Criticising the ACB action, Badgujar said that he was served a notice at 7 p.m. on Sunday and his two residences were raided at 7.30 p.m., after a cheating case was filed against him.

He said that he had never indulged in cheating anyone and he had quit the said company which had bagged the civic contracts, in 2006.

Badgujar said that the original complaint was filed against by the ACB in 2013, then how it took them 10 years to take action now, adding that "the police department is working under pressure to do injustice".

He slammed the police and the Bharatiya Janata Party for harassment, filing false cases by misusing power, and said that "power comes and goes, it does not last forever", and has demanded that the ACB should give him at least a week to reply to its notice.

12 killed in two road accidents in Pune region

Team Absolute | Pune

At least 12 persons were killed and many more were hurt in two separate accidents involving trucks, a car and an autorickshaw in different parts of the Pune region, late Sunday night, officials said here on Monday.

In the first instance, eight persons were killed when a delivery truck speeding from Ahmednagar to Kalyan in Thane rammed into an autorickshaw coming from the opposition direction near the Pimpalgaon Joga holiday resort, at 11.30 p.m.

Among the deceased were seven passengers travelling in the autorickshaw and the delivery vehicle driver.

In the second tragedy, four members of a family were crushed to death while overtaking a truck which crashed on their car on the Pune-Nashik Highway, at 11 p.m.

The victims include Sunil Dharankar, 48,



his wife Asha, 42, a 2-year-old toddler girl, Ojasvi, and a relative Abhay S. Visal, while a woman, Asmit A. Visal was rescued by the local villagers and rushed to nearby hospital in a critical condition.

The truck driver fled from the spot after the mishap, and the police have launched a manhunt to track him down. The cause of both the accidents is being probed.

The local police reached the two affected accident spots soon afterwards, shifted the damaged vehicles and cleared the massive traffic jams that built up on both the highways by early this morning.

"I Am Not Old": Sharad Pawar jabs critics over age dig

Team Absolute | Pune

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) President Sharad Pawar took a swipe at his age critics on Sunday, saying that he had not grown old and still had the power to "straighten some people out." Pawar was speaking at a bullock cart race programme organised on the occasion of his birthday in Haveli taluka of Pune's rural part.

Addressing the crowd, Sharad Pawar said, "I have a complaint with you people. You people often comment on my age that I am 84 years old, I am 83 years old, what have you people seen in me till now? I have not become old. I still have so much strength in me. I can straighten some people out."

Pawar also spoke about the bullock cart racing event, saying that it could be included in the Olympics if planned decisions are taken.

"This event is a competition of speed, strength and determination. If planned decisions are taken, then I am confident that this event can be brought to par with many



other sporting events in the world, and you (bullock cart racing organisers) are doing other work as

well," he added. His statement is seen as a clear rebuttal to his opponents, who

have often targeted him for his age and called for his retirement from politics.

Notably, his nephew, Ajit Pawar, has made similar comments in the past. Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar took a jibe at Sharad Pawar on July 5 and said that IAS officers retire at 60, BJP leaders retire at 75, and you are 83, Are you not going to stop?

"You portrayed me as a villain in front of everyone. I still have deep respect for him (Sharad Pawar)...But you tell me, IAS officers retire at 60...even in politics - BJP leaders retire at 75. You can see the example of LK Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi...That allows the new generation to rise..." said Ajit Pawar. "You (Sharad Pawar) give us your blessings...The other day, he went to YB Chavan memorial...I have also been there...but you are 83, aren't you going to stop?...Give us your blessings and we will pray that you live a long life," said the Deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar while addressing party legislators and other workers in Bandra on July 5.

Three dead, as many injured as car with drunk driver rams into other vehicles

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Three persons died and three others were injured in a road accident in Ulhasnagar in Maharashtra's Thane district on Monday, a police official said. At 5:30am, a car with an allegedly inebriated driver dashed into autorickshaws and two-wheelers under Central police station limits, newswire PIT reported quoting the official.

"The deceased and injured were occupants of the vehicles the car rammed into. They have been identified as couple Subuddin Jana and Anjali Jana, and Shambhuraj Chavan. Three injured persons have been hospitalised," he said. Nagesh Ramani, driver of the offending car, fled from the scene of the crime but was held some time later, the official said.

He has been charged for various offences under Indian Penal Code and Motor Vehicles Act.

Mumbai residents miffed as BMC yet to construct on Andheri-Ghatkopar Link road



Team Absolute | Mumbai

A congested 500-metre stretch at Ghatkopar West on the Andheri-Ghatkopar Link Road is giving pedestrians a headache as the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) is yet to construct a proper footpath there. A resident, K B Raghavan, told mid-day that the stretch between Lal Bahadur Shastri Marg junction and Sarvodaya hospital junction, which sees heavy traffic, is a dangerous route for senior citizens and children.

Civic activist Sachin Manjrekar said the stretch was developed around 15 years ago, but the civic body has not constructed a full-length footpath on either side of the road. "The BMC

self-parked a solid waste compactor on the road, which is an obstruction for pedestrians. I don't know why the civic body hasn't been able to construct a full-length footpath in the past 15 years," he said.

Manjrekar added, "During peak hours, pedestrians don't have space to walk, so they step onto the road. At one place, a small drain runs parallel to the road, which is not even properly maintained." A senior citizen who didn't want to wish to be identified, said, "There is a need for proper footpaths. This road connects to Ghatkopar railway station via LBS Marg. Also, a huge number of schoolchildren use this stretch."

T S Shetty, another senior citizen, said, "I don't use this

road regularly, but it seems that walking on it is a task, even on a Sunday afternoon. There is a footpath from LBS Marg, but it comes to an end after a few metres, forcing us to walk on the road. A proper footpath is needed." The BMC announced a 'pedestrian-first' policy in 2019. The then-municipal commissioner had decided to implement this policy after having a bad experience related to footpaths.

Manjrekar said despite the policies that exist on paper, across Mumbai, pedestrians are compelled to walk on the road due to the absence of footpaths. Gajanan Bellale, the assistant municipal commissioner of N ward, did not respond to mid-day's messages by press time.



Bad Bunny, Kendall Jenner split after less than a year of dating

Los Angeles | Agencies

Rapper Bad Bunny and Kendall Jenner have called it quits. The pair were last spotted together at the 'Saturday Night Live' after party in October, when Bad Bunny took on double duty as host and musical guest on the show.

The recording artiste, whose real name is Benito Martinez Ocasio, and Kendall first sparked romance rumours in February, when they were spotted joining Hailey Bieber and Justin Bieber on a double date, reports. At the time, a source shared that they were introduced by friends after the rapper relocated to Los Angeles.

"Kendall recently started hanging out with him," the source said. "She likes him and is having fun".

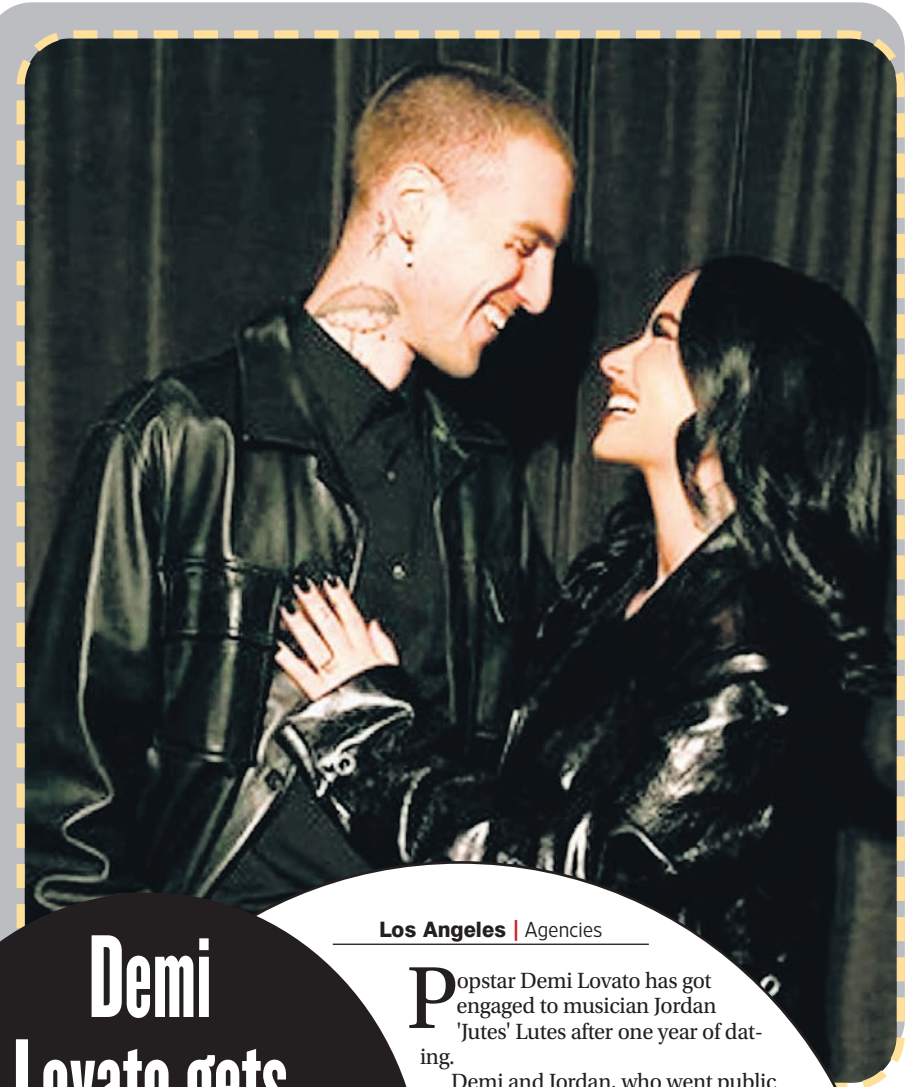
As per People, their romance heated up throughout the spring, as the pair was spotted horseback riding together and cozying up to one another at Coachella. After enjoying a vacation together in Idaho over the summer, a source said, "They definitely seem in love, and super serious".

In September, the former couple made their front row debut at Milan Fashion Week. The two looked stylish and relaxed as they sat next to one another to watch Gucci's spring/summer 2024 fashion show.

The 818 Tequila founder seemingly fit the event with the "Titi Me Pregunto" artiste into her busy Fashion Week schedule, as just hours after the Gucci show, she herself walked the runway for Versace.

Though the hitmaker expressed that he didn't want to "clarify anything" regarding his private life in the October issue of 'Vanity Fair', he did reveal that there is someone in his life who he has tried to improve his English for.

Bad Bunny said, "With some people, I speak English -- with some specific people. With one of them, I couldn't talk to her before."



Los Angeles | Agencies

Demi Lovato gets engaged to musician Jordan 'Jutes' Lutes

Popstar Demi Lovato has got engaged to musician Jordan 'Jutes' Lutes after one year of dating.

Demi and Jordan, who went public with their romance in August 2022, got engaged on Saturday in Los Angeles, a representative for the singer confirmed, reports.

Jordan, a 32-year-old songwriter, who first met Demi in January 2022 when they co-wrote her song 'Substance', popped the question with a bespoke pear-shape diamond solitaire engagement ring.

After a "personal and intimate proposal," Jordan and Demi (who uses she/they pronouns) headed to Craig's, one of their favorite L.A. restaurants, to celebrate with their families.

On Demi's 31st birthday in August, Jordan shared a carousel of sweet selfies and silly videos paying tribute to his now-fiancée. "Happy birthday to my best friend.

you're obvs the most beautiful and talented person to ever do it," he captioned the post. "but more importantly you're weird af and u make me cry laughing." Aside from co-writing 'Substance' with Demi, Jordan also shares writing credits on her tracks 'Happy Ending' and 'City of Angels,' all off Demi's eighth album Holy Fvck.

Los Angeles | Agencies

Late actor Robin Williams made sure he could eat with his family once a

week.

The "Mrs. Doubtfire" star, who took his own life in 2014 at the age of 63, had Zelda, 34, and 32-year-old Cody with ex-wife Marsha Garces Williams and now his eldest has explained that whilst his career didn't leave much time for formal traditions, he did try to make sure everyone got together for a meal every Tuesday.

Zelda told People, "Dad's job made it pretty hard to keep anything like a yearly tradition really, aside from Thanksgiving or days when sets would shut down."

"So we didn't really have much in the way of that, but cooking together was a big part of our family. We would eat together every Tuesday, however many family

members were in town."

The "Lisa Frankenstein" actress went on to add that her dad, who also had Zak, 40, with ex-wife Valerie Velardi, wasn't the "best cook" but making sure he was spending time with his loved ones was imperative to him, reports aceshowbiz.com.

She said, "My brothers and my dad were not good cooks! But my mom and I would take part, and it was a big part of our family. Being together was the important thing, because otherwise, especially with people scattered to the wind with work, it became even more special to do that."

Zelda went on to reveal that Christmas is not a "big deal" for herself or her family and that these days they tend to just use it as a way to see one another and then spend time travelling.

"Christmas is not a really big deal in my family. We usually use it to see each other and then just travel," she added.



ROBIN WILLIAMS' DAUGHTER REVEALS FAMILY TRADITION ACTOR WOULDN'T MISS DESPITE WORK

RITA ORA REVEALS PRIORITISING HER MENTAL HEALTH IS PROUDEST ACHIEVEMENT OF 2023

Los Angeles | Agencies

Pop star Rita Ora is proud of herself for "prioritising" her mental health throughout 2023 and is "excited" to start work on her next album in the new year.

Rita reflected that this year she has been looking after herself more than ever and has tried to stay on a "clean path" for the sake of her well being.

Asked what is her proudest achievement of 2023, she told Spotify: "Making it through emotionally, mentally and physically. I've been prioritising my mental health, working out and not being as crazy and focused on other things and trying to stay down a clean path."

Meanwhile, the 'Anywhere' hitmaker is due to start work on her fourth studio album in January and is feeling "excited" to get going with the project as she teased that she also has a "couple of films" in the pipeline, reports.

She said: "I am really excited. I just want to keep going now. I just don't want to stop. I am doing a couple of films next year too."

Rita recently explained that she has learned to live in the present because no one actually has any idea what will happen in the future.

Asked what advice she'd give to



someone who is uncertain about their future, Rita told Blag Magazine: "What's the point? Because you would never know anyway what your future holds. So what's the point of being uncertain?"

"I know this thing that my therapist tells me all the time. It's like, why put your body through something twice? You know when you have stress about the future or the past. It's like your body doesn't really know the difference.

"So if you can avoid putting your body through something twice, you should really try and do that. So that's what I've been working on. So it'd be probably like, what's the point? Just try and do what you can in that moment you're in, rather than worrying about what's going to happen in the future. Therapist's words, not mine!"

BEN AFFLECK TAKES SON SAMUEL TO GAME IN LOS ANGELES

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Ben Affleck was seen showing off his own basketball skills while leaving his 11-year-old son Samuel's game in Los Angeles.

Samuel, who wore a Junior Lakers team jersey and red trainers, looked impressed as his dad busted out the cool trick, reports.

The 51-year-old Oscar-winning actor was wearing a casual grey tee paired with a blue shirt, jeans and Nike shoes as he expertly spun a ball on his finger while he walked with his son, who he co-parents with his ex-wife Jennifer Garner.

As per 'Mirror.co.uk', the father-son duo share a massive love for basketball, and even announced the lineup at the NBA All-Star Game in Salt Lake City back in February.

Ben is often spotted sitting courtside at his only son's games and the 'Good Will Hunting' star also directed and starred in the Michael Jordan sports drama 'Air' earlier this year.

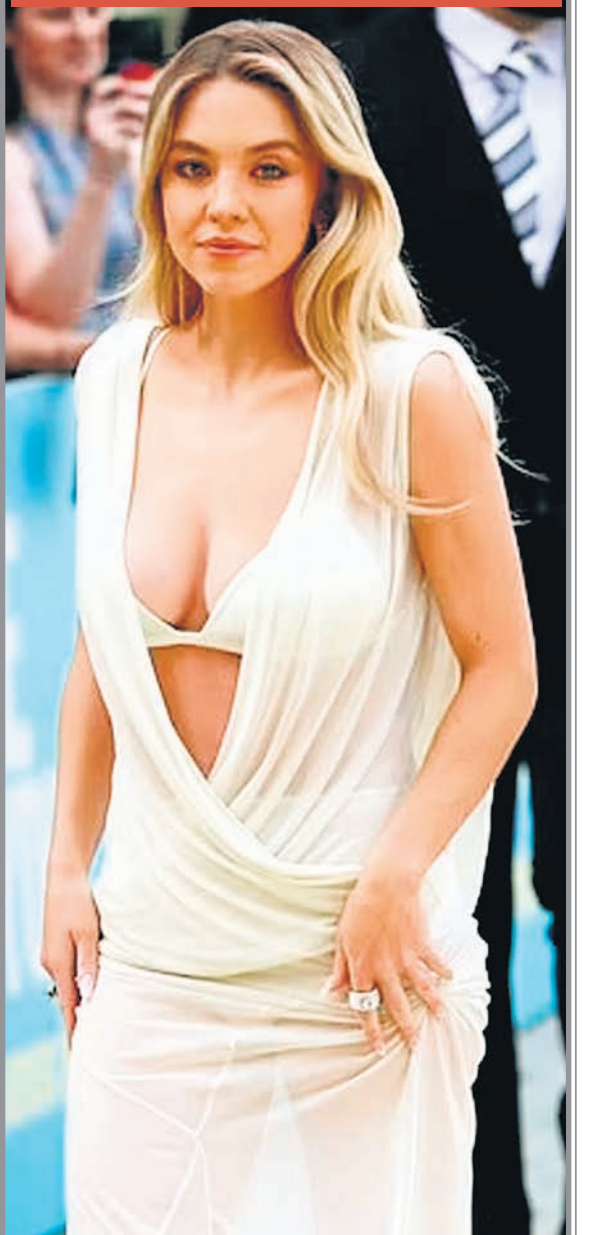
Ben and Jennifer Garner were photographed laughing together at one of their son's basketball games last month. The co-parenting exes were married from 2005 to 2018.

Since their divorce, the 51-year-old Alias actress has been in an on-again, off-again relationship with businessman John Miller, while Ben got hitched with Jennifer Lopez last year.

Ben first dated the 'On the Floor' singer in 2002 and got engaged that same year, before postponing the wedding and officially splitting in 2004. They rekindled their romance in 2021 and tied the knot in Las Vegas in July 2022.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Sydney Sweeney



RANVEER SINGH UNVEILS HIS WAX FIGURES AT MADAME TUSSAUDS MUSEUM

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood star Ranveer Singh, who is known for 'Bajirao Mastani', 'Padmaavat' and 'Gully Boy', unveiled his two wax figures as he visited Madame Tussauds London. He was accompanied by his mother, who, as a child, first introduced the actor to the world of Madame Tussauds London by showing him album pictures of her own visits to the attraction.

The London figure pays homage to Ranveer's culture and heritage with the neon sherwani designed by Manish Arora as part of his wedding celebrations.

The outfit includes hundreds of individually sewn embellishments and flamboyant leopard head shoulder detail, tied together with a triple-layered diamond and pearl necklace, and eight large gemstone set rings.

The Singapore figure dons a custom tuxedo featuring a velvet blazer with floral embellishments. The outfit has been designed by Gaurav Gupta.

Ranveer specifically chose the distinct looks and styling for his figures as he was involved throughout the creative process.

The figure was originally announced in 2019 when the actor received the Madame Tussauds of the Future Award at the IIFAs - the International Indian Film Academy - where it was revealed that he would be joining the star-studded attraction.

"As a child, my Mother first told me about Madame Tussauds. Ever since a young age, I've had a fascination for this mythical, magical place called Madame Tussauds and it's been incredible to see how the journey of life works... What an incredible moment it is for me to be here with my Mum, launching my own figure at Madame Tussauds London," Ranveer said. "It's a hugely proud moment for me and for my family. It is a significant achievement to have your figure at Madame Tussauds because the attraction recognises excellence in each respective field, so to be in such an esteemed company feels really wonderful. I feel very happy, very humble, very

grateful and very very proud."

Andre Timmins, Co-Founder of the IIFA, said: "It is so exciting for IIFA to be a part of this unveiling for Ranveer's Madame Tussauds' figure launch as it was at the 2011 IIFA Awards, Toronto where he won his first Best Debutant Award and on stage said that this is just the beginning.

"Like IIFA, it truly was just the start of a soaring career, and we are proud as a brand to have been able to take an icon of Indian Cinema and the fraternity to such new heights, with global recognition, and such as being honoured at Madame Tussauds London."



Neha Dhupia to make her International film debut in 'Blue 52'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Neha Dhupia is set to make her international film debut with 'Blue 52', directed by renowned Egyptian filmmaker Ali El Arabi.

Ali El Arabi, celebrated for his award-winning documentary feature 'Captains of Za'atari'.

'Blue 52' unfolds against the stunning backdrops of Kochi, India, and Qatar.

Speaking of her international debut, Neha said: "Embarking on the journey of 'Blue 52' has been nothing short of magical. The fusion of diverse cultures in this international venture allowed me to delve deep into a character that is both challenging and emotionally resonant."

The actress said: "It's a transformative experience that I believe will leave a lasting impact and I'm glad that Ali chose me to essay the lead in what is my international first."

Director Ali El Arabi said: "Creating 'Blue 52' was a labor of love, blending the cinematic languages of Egypt, America, and India. Neha brought an unparalleled dedication to her role, infusing the character with a nuanced emotional depth."

"The picturesque locales of Kochi and the vibrant energy of Qatar served as the perfect canvas for our storytelling. This film is a testament to the collaborative spirit of international cinema, and I am excited for audiences to experience the richness we've crafted together."

The film is the story of Ashish, who at the age of nine is isolated by his father when he loses his oldest son and using this fear he isolates Ashish on an island by the backwaters of Kochi, India. Growing up, Ashish becomes a boy trapped in a man's body by the age of 22, with little knowledge of the world beyond his idol Messi and the life lessons imparted by his mother over the years, aimed at preparing him for life beyond their small island home.

Strengthened by newfound resolve, Ashish decides to leave home with his mother's support and an opportunity that seems almost like a fantasy, offering him the chance to meet his idol, Messi, at the World Cup in Qatar 2022. Left to navigate the world on his own for the first time, he discovers his true self and finds his own passion.

Ajay Devgn says KJo was his 'sworn enemy' once upon a time

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood star Ajay Devgn recalled the time when filmmaker Karan Johar was his "sworn enemy". Ajay will be seen on the "Koffee With Karan" along with Rohit Shetty. A promo of the show gives a glimpse of the rapid fire.

In the clip, Karan first asks in the Devgn household what could be the reason if Kajol is not talking to you.

To which he replied: "Waiting for that day."

Karan then asks "do you have a sworn enemy?"

Ajay replies: "Once upon a time, you". Karan holds his throat in response and says: "I got such a shock".

For the unversed, Ajay and Karan were at loggerheads when the 'Shivaay' clashed with 'Ae Dil Hai Mushkil' in October, 2016.

Dot: 'The Archies' allowed me to express myself both through music, acting

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Dot, whose real name is Aditi Saigal, debuted in the Hindi film industry with Zoya Akhtar's 'The Archies', which she says allowed her to express herself both through music and acting.

Dot played Ethel in the musical.

The actress has written and sang all four Dear Diary themes picturised on Khushi Kapoor, as well as lent her voice to the character of Betty (Khushi), singing and composing the song 'Asymmetrical'.

She has also sung the other two chartbusters 'Dhishoom Dhishoom' and 'Sunoh'.

Dot said: "I'm thrilled with the overwhelming love 'The Archies' music is receiving from listeners. Music is a big part of my identity, since I was a songwriter long before I ventured into the film industry.

'The Archies' allowed me to express myself both through music and acting, so naturally it will always be my most cherished project."

The actress added: "This album was particularly special for me because I got to work with industry pioneers like Zoya, Javed Akhtar, SEL and Ankur Tewari, as well as indie musicians Tejas and The Islanders."

Dot is elated that 'Sunoh' ranks among the most-listened songs of 2023.

"'Sunoh' held a special place for all of us as it was the first song we drafted and shot. Seeing it come to life on screen and resonate with so many people has been truly heartening!" Dot admits that writing songs for films is a hugely different creative process which she has enjoyed thoroughly.

The actress said: "Writing for the screen is a vastly different experience from composing in my bedroom or college practice rooms! It's a highly



collaborative process where the primary focus is on the narrative." "Such opportunities don't come by every day, you know? There was a creative energy that flowed between us, though we all come from different musical backgrounds."



'Bigg Boss 17': Aishwarya calls Ankita 'badtameez aurat', end up in ugly fight

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Aishwarya Sharma Bhatt and Ankita Lokhande ended up in a really ugly fight and used derogatory words to describe each other after getting into an ugly fight.

The fight started right after Sohail and Arbaaz Khan asked Ankita who she felt wasn't playing their individual game in the show. Ankita replied by taking Aishwarya's name.

She said that Aishwarya should play the game in front foot. However, this did not go down well with Aishwarya which led to the fight.

Responding to Ankita, Aishwarya said: "Khudke pati ke dimag pe game khelne wali

aurat, mujhe Ankita ka game koi dikhaao please, she doesn't have an individual game of her own. Don't ask me to play an individual game and first learn the spelling of individual."

The fight then turns ugly as their husbands Vicky Jain and Neil Bhatt get involved.

Aishwarya comes charging towards Ankita and starts calling her names. Ankita then says that she and her husband have been after her since they've entered the show.

Aishwarya replies saying that her husband is not interested in a woman like her.

This triggers Ankita, who asks what does "teri jaisi aurat mean."

Aishwarya replies by saying: "Badtameez aurat".



Kriti Senon