



# Swamitva Yojana will empower villages and poor: Modi

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized that the Swamitva Yojana will empower villages and the poor, making the journey towards a developed India more pleasant. Over the past five years, approximately 1.5 crore rural residents in India have been issued property ownership certificates (property cards). Today, more than 65 lakh beneficiaries receive property cards, bringing legal ownership documents to around 2.25 crore rural residents across the country. This marks a historic day for India's rural economy. On Saturday, the Prime Minister launched the e-distribution program of property ownership certificates under the Swamitva Yojana from Delhi. During the program,

property cards were distributed to over 65 lakh beneficiaries from more than 50,000 villages nationwide, including 15.63 lakh beneficiaries from Madhya Pradesh. The prime minister also interacted with the scheme's beneficiaries, while Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav participated in the program from Seoni district. Highlighting the global relevance, PM Modi said that according to a United Nations survey, property rights are among the major challenges of the 21st century, along with climate change, water scarcity, health issues, and pandemics. In many countries, the poor lack property rights, leading economists to term their assets as "dead capital," which cannot be leveraged for transactions or economic activities. Such a situation also leaves them vul-



nerable to disputes and encroachments. The Swamitva Yojana addresses this significant challenge. The Prime Minister remarked that previous governments did not provide a concrete solution. After his government came into power in 2014, they initiated this scheme. Land mapping was conducted using drones, and property documents were prepared for the poor. Out of approximately six lakh villages in India,

drone surveys have been completed for more than half, and property cards have been issued to 2.25 crore rural residents. This initiative will boost the economy and unlock economic activities worth over 100 lakh crore rupees. PM Modi stated that the Swamitva Yojana is a significant step towards realizing the vision of Gram Swaraj (village self-governance) as envisioned by Mahatma Gandhi. Providing ownership rights to the poor will strengthen village panchayats economically and bring Gram Swaraj to reality. It will also facilitate better disaster management and make it easier for rural residents to claim timely benefits. The Prime Minister stressed that India's heart lies in its villages, and the development of villages is integral to the nation's progress.

The Swamitva Yojana and land reforms will serve as the foundation pillars for rural development. India has already issued 23 crore land identification numbers, and land records are being digitized. PM Modi also highlighted the significant role of women in building a developed India. Initiatives like Bank Sakhis, Insurance Sakhis, Lakhpati Didis, and Drone Didis are crucial steps towards women's empowerment. Over 1.25 crore Lakhpati Didis have been created across the country. In several states, property ownership certificates under the Swamitva Yojana include the names of wives. Similarly, women's names are being included in the registry of houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav distributes acceptance letters of Atal Pension Benefit Scheme to Ladli Behna during a programme at Government Polytechnic College, in Seoni Madhya Pradesh on Saturday. Pioneer photo

# CP Bhopal opens Sagar reunion games 2025

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The two days of the fifteenth edition of Sagar Reunion Games 2025 Khel Ka Mahakumbh began today at SISTec Ratibad Campus to promote fitness and health amongst Sagarties. The games are organised yearly to promote sports and good health amongst group employees. Commissioner of Police, IPS Harinarayanachari Mishra and Dronacharya Awardee Dr Sanjay Bharadwaj Coach Cricket NIS BCCI Level 3 inaugurated the 15th edition of Sagar Reunion Games 2025 in an exciting opening ceremony by releasing balloons into the sky at SISTec Ratibad Campus in presence of Managing Director Sagar Group Siddharth Agrawal, Director Sagar Agrawal and CEO SMPL Integrated Textile Industry Kapil Kumar Agarwal and Principal

SISTec Ratibad Dr Manish Billore. Kapil Agrawal pledged everyone with Reunion Games Oath in its true spirit of sportsmanship with IPS Harinarayanachari Mishra declaring the 15th Sagar Reunion Meet 2025 open. Speaking on the occasion IPS Mishra said, "I am elated to be part of the Sagar Reunion Games 2025. India is a youth country and sports bind the youth. Sports strengthen our mind, body and soul. Our efforts and hard work towards our health act as resistance to diseases. Youth should focus their health Games 2025 in an exciting opening ceremony by releasing balloons into the sky at SISTec Ratibad Campus in presence of Managing Director Sagar Group Siddharth Agrawal, Director Sagar Agrawal and CEO SMPL Integrated Textile Industry Kapil Kumar Agarwal and Principal

teams of Sagar Reunion Games 2025 are Corporate Trailblazers, SMH Health Hawks, SPS Katara Legends, SPS Saket Saviours, SNPL Rice Steamers, SMPL Super Spinners, SPS GN Titans, SPS RN Spartans, SPS Dynamic Dashers, SISTec Super Kings GN, SPS and SVN Ratibad Titans and SISTec Ratibad Royals. The two-day reunion will join the participants with a pledge for fitness followed by heats of matches and tournaments in exciting games of Cricket, Badminton, Table Tennis, Tug of War and Rope Skipping along with sessions of Yoga & Meditation. All teams will be competing in a sporting vibrant atmosphere for a wider community connect to inspire and collaborate between a leading corporation and a prestigious sporting institution. The winners will be awarded trophies in a felicitation ceremony at the close of games on Sunday.

# AIIMS treats rare adrenal bladder tumors

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

**Bhopal:** The Department of Urology in AIIMS Bhopal successfully treated 13 hormonally active adrenal tumors in the past year using advanced laparoscopic techniques, demonstrating the institution's innovation in medical care and surgical expertise. Among these, 7 patients with functional hormonally active adrenal tumors, such as pheochromocytoma and aldosteronoma, were treated through minimal invasive laparoscopic adrenalectomy. This is a surgical procedure in which laparoscopic techniques are used to remove the adrenal gland (located above the kidneys). Small incisions are made, and a laparoscope (a long, thin tube with a camera and light) is used to access the adrenal gland. The procedure involves less pain and quicker recovery.

# Shivpuri records lowest day temperature at 19 degree amid severe cold spell

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh faced extreme cold-day conditions on Saturday, with many districts reporting unusually low temperatures accompanied by widespread fog. Shivpuri recorded the lowest day temperature in the state at 19°C. Other districts, including Damoh at 20°C, Khajuraho at 22.2°C, Nagaon at 22.5°C, Narsinghpur at 22.6°C, and Rewa-Pachmarhi at 23°C, also experienced significant drops in daytime temperatures. Among the major cities, Gwalior recorded the coldest day temperature at 21°C. In comparison, Bhopal registered a relatively higher temperature of 25.6°C, followed by Indore at 27.9°C. Ujjain and Jabalpur recorded day temperatures of 29°C and 25°C,

respectively. Dense fog affected several regions, significantly reducing visibility and causing disruptions. Areas such as Gwalior, Bhind, Morena, Datia, Shivpuri, Niwari, Chhatarpur, Neemuch, Agar-Malwa, Mandasaur, Ratlam, Guna, Ashoknagar, Tikamgarh, Panna, Satna, Mandla, Khajuraho, and Nagaon were particularly affected, with visibility in some locations dropping to as low as 50 to 100 meters. The weather conditions disrupted transportation, with flight delays reported from Gwalior. The Bengaluru-Indore flight arrived two hours late, while a Delhi-Indore flight was delayed by one and a half hours. These disruptions added to the challenges faced by residents dealing with the cold and foggy conditions.

The Meteorological Department has warned that severe cold conditions are likely to persist for the next three days as icy winds are expected to intensify. This will likely cause temperatures to drop further, prolonging the extreme cold and dense fog across many areas of the state. On Friday, similar cold-day-like conditions were observed in 18 cities, including Bhopal, Indore, Ujjain, Gwalior, and Jabalpur, where day temperatures fell below 23°C. The situation was exacerbated by dense fog in places like Gwalior, Shivpuri, and Niwari, with near-zero visibility reported at Gwalior Airport and other airports in the region. Minimum temperatures have also plummeted across several districts. For instance, Kalyanpur in Shahdol recorded

a chilling 4.6°C, Piparsama in Shivpuri saw 5.6°C, and Nagaon in Chhatarpur registered 6.1°C. Other areas like Pachmarhi, Rajgarh, Umariya, and Deora recorded minimum temperatures close to 6°C. Weather warnings have been issued for dense fog in regions including Guna, Ashoknagar, Shivpuri, Gwalior, Datia, Bhind, and Morena. Shallow to moderate fog is expected in cities such as Bhopal, Indore, Ujjain, and Dhar. Additionally, cold-day conditions will persist in areas like Shajapur, Neemuch, and Singrauli. Residents are advised to take precautions as the ongoing weather pattern is expected to bring extreme cold and dense fog for the next few days, disrupting daily life and transportation across Madhya Pradesh.



Dr Ankit Goenka, Dr Preeti Mishra and others during a Health and Hygiene show at 'Pari Bazaar' a heritage festival season-5, organised by The Begums of Bhopal Ladies Club, at historical Gauhar Mahal in Bhopal on Saturday. Pioneer photo

# DNLU Jabalpur inks academic collaboration pact with NLU Jodhpur

PNS ■ JABALPUR

**D**harmashastra National Law University (DNLU), Jabalpur, has entered into a significant partnership with National Law University (NLU), Jodhpur, to strengthen academic collaboration. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), signed on January 18, 2025, aims to promote the exchange of students and faculty, collaborative academic activities, joint research programs, and co-publications. The MoU was formalized during the Vice Chancellors' Conclave in the presence of esteemed leaders from various National Law Universities across India. The agreement was signed by DNLU Vice-Chancellor Prof. (Dr.) Manoj Kumar Sinha and NLUJ Vice-Chancellor Prof. (Dr.) Harpreet Kaur, with NLUJ



Registrar Sunita Pankaj also attending the event. DNLU, established in 2018 under the Madhya Pradesh Dharmashastra National Law University Act, is committed to advancing legal education and upholding the principles of the Indian Constitution. Guided by its Visitor, Hon'ble Justice J.K. Maheshwari, Judge of the Supreme Court of India, and Chancellor, Hon'ble

Chief Justice Suresh Kumar Kait of the Madhya Pradesh High Court, DNLU offers undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral programs in law. NLUJ, Jodhpur, consistently ranked among India's top law schools, is renowned for its academic excellence and professional training. Under the leadership of Prof. (Dr.) Harpreet Kaur, an accomplished academic specializ-

# 42-year-old man sexually assaults 5-year-old girl in Jabalpur, nabbed

PNS ■ JABALPUR

Jabalpur police arrested on Friday a 42-year-old man for abducting and sexually assaulting a five-year-old minor girl. The crime took place on January 15 in Hanumantal police station area. According to the police, the victim used to call the accused "Nanu" (maternal grandfather). The accused allegedly lured the girl with a mere five rupees and sexually assaulted her. On the day of the incident, at around 7 PM, the girl was playing just a few metres away from her house with her friend, who happened to be the granddaughter of the accused, a familiar face in the neighbourhood. He approached her with the promise of buying her chips and handed over Rs 5 to the little girl. He then carried her into his home under the guise of playing. Once inside, he gagged the girl with a piece of cloth to ensure she did not shout and sexually assaulted her. After the assault, he left the crying girl outside her house and escaped the scene at around 8:30 PM.

the distressed kid returned home, she started removing her clothes. Her mother noticed that her pyjama was wet and asked her what happened. She managed to explain what the accused did to her, specifically mentioning that "Nanu took off my clothes". The shocked mother immediately went to accused's residence to confront him, but the house was locked. On the day of the incident, the victim's father was not at home. The next day, when he returned, the victim's mother informed him about the incident after which he reached the police station and filed a complaint. Acting on the complaint, a team was formed, led by Station Officer Dheeraj Raj and Sub-Inspector Sangita Choudhary to nab the rapist. On 17th January, the police got a tip-off from an informant that the accused was seen near his house in the morning attempting to leave the city. Police swiftly swung into action and cordoned off the area where he was last seen. The accused operates a garbage truck for his livelihood.

# Cruelty to dog in Piplani area

PNS ■ INDORE

**Bhopal:** A shocking case of animal cruelty has come to light in the Piplani area, where a dog was tied up and brutally beaten, leaving it seriously injured. The incident, which reportedly occurred on January 14, was brought to the attention of the police after a disturbing video of the abuse surfaced. Champaram Rajput, a resident of Gadiapura Anand Nagar, Piplani, informed the police that he received a video on his mobile phone late at night, showing a severely injured dog lying helplessly. The animal's legs and mouth had been tied, and it was evident from the video that the dog had been beaten mercilessly. After viewing the video, Champaram went to his locality in Siddharth Lake City, Anand Nagar, and found the dog lying in the same condition, still tied and in visible pain. Concerned, he checked the CCTV footage from a nearby house, which revealed two unidentified individuals brutally assaulting the dog and attempting to carry it away. Based on the complaint and the video evidence, Piplani police have registered a case against the unknown accused under relevant sections of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.

# Medi-Caps University organises training on 'Rooftop farming'

PNS ■ INDORE

**T**he faculty of Agriculture at Medi-Caps University Indore organized a one-day practical training on "Rooftop Farming" and "Kitchen Garden" at the university campus. The event was informally inaugurated by the Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, Prof. (Dr.) D.K. Patnaik, who encouraged participants to utilize open spaces such as rooftops, courtyards, and balconies for growing useful plants. Highlighting the benefits of such initiatives, he remarked that cultivating plants not only provides fresh, pesticide-free vegetables but also contributes to saving money and improving physical and mental health. The Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture, Pro (Dr.) S.D. Upadhyaya, presented the program's objectives and its practical significance. The session also featured a special presentation on nano irrigation techniques by a representative from M/s Samadhan Agro, Rau. The program was conducted by Professor MuralidharIyer, ensuring a seamless and engaging experience for all attendees. Participants were introduced to modern agricultural practices

through hands-on activities. They visited the polyhouse and net house facilities, where they learned about hydroponics techniques under the guidance of Dr. Rahul Singh Raghuvanshi. Additionally, detailed demonstrations on planting in pots were conducted by Professor Gaurav Kumar Ahirwar and Professor MuralidharIyer. Participants actively engaged in pot preparation activities, gaining practical insights into urban gardening. To reinforce the learning experience, the session concluded with a detailed video presentation summarizing the techniques and methods covered during the training. The event successfully inspired attendees to adopt sustainable and productive gardening practices, contributing to a healthier and greener lifestyle.



Members of the OBC Mahasabha stage a sit-in demonstration demanding 13% on-hold OBC reservation including several other demands, at Ambedkar ground in Bhopal on Saturday. Pioneer photo



# PM Modi distributes more than 65 lakh property cards under SVAMITVA scheme

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday distributed more than 65 lakh property cards under the SVAMITVA scheme, and said it will bolster economic activities and help in poverty alleviation. The prime minister virtually addressed the event and also interacted with some beneficiaries. He also said rural land digitisation is "furthering rural empowerment by leveraging the power of technology and good governance".

The property cards are being distributed to beneficiaries across more than 50,000 villages in 10 states -- Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and two Union territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh. Modi said the scheme will help people get loans and

benefits of other government schemes. "Around 2.24 crore beneficiaries in villages will now have SVAMITVA property cards after 65 lakh cards are distributed today," the prime minister said. "Property rights are a major challenge across the world. Years ago, the United Nations had held a study, which revealed people did not have legal documents for property rights in several countries. The UN has said property rights are important for poverty alleviation," he said. Modi said an eminent economist had opined that property in villages is a "dead capital" because people cannot do anything with it, and it can't help increase their income. "India was also impacted by this challenge. People in villages have property worth lakhs of crores (of rupees), but they did not have papers for it. There were disputes, properties were snatched, and even banks did not provide loans over it," he said. The prime minister



emphasized that no sensitive government could leave its villagers in such distress. "Previous governments should have taken steps to do something about it but nothing much was done," he said. Modi said Dalits, backward classes and tribals were the worst affected by this. Elaborating on the SVAMITVA Yojana, he said it involved mapping houses and

lands in villages using drones and providing legal documents for residential properties to villagers. He added that the benefits of this scheme are now visible. "India has over six lakh villages, with drone surveys completed in nearly half of them," Modi said. He highlighted that after receiving legal documents, lakhs of people had taken loans from banks based on

their properties and started small businesses in their villages. "After getting legal property rights, lakhs of people have taken loan. They have used this money to start their businesses. Many of these are farmers, for whom this property cards is a guarantee to financial security," he said. Modi said that once property cards are issued in all villages, the scheme will unlock

economic activities worth over Rs 100 lakh crore. He emphasized the substantial capital that will be added to the country's economy. Noting that earlier, land disputes were common for farmers and obtaining land documents is challenging, often requiring multiple visits to offices and leading to corruption, the prime minister said that land records are being digitized to

deal with these issues. Highlighting that SVAMITVA and Bhuaadhaar are foundational systems for village development, he said that Bhuaadhaar provides a unique identity to land, with around 23 crore Bhuaadhaar numbers issued, making it easy to identify land plots. "Over the past seven-eight years, approximately 98 per cent of land records have been digitized, and most land maps are now digitally available," Modi added. Later, in a social media post, the prime minister said rural land digitisation is "furthering rural empowerment by leveraging the power of technology and good governance". Union Minister of Panchayati Raj Rajiv Ranjan Singh 'Lalan', Union Minister of State for Panchayati Raj S P Singh Baghel and Ministry of Panchayati Raj Secretary Vivek Bharadwaj were also present at the event. It was attended virtually by several chief ministers, Union

ministers and state ministers. Events are also being organised in over 230 districts for physical distribution of property cards. It is expected that around 13 Union ministers will physically join from designated locations from across the country to oversee regional distribution ceremonies of property cards. The SVAMITVA (Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas) scheme was launched in 2020 to enhance the economic progress of rural India by providing 'Record of Rights' to households owning houses in inhabited areas in villages through the latest drone technology for surveying. The scheme also helps facilitate monetization of properties and enabling institutional credit through bank loans; reducing property-related disputes; facilitating better assessment of properties and property tax in rural areas and enabling comprehensive village-level planning.

## Congress's new HQ narrates tale of party's 139-year history

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Several leaders who left the Congress and even mounted stinging attacks on it find a place in the pictorial representation of the party's history spread across the five storeys of its new 9A Kotla Road office. Ahead of a media tour of the office, Congress treasurer Ajay Maken Saturday told reporters at the first press conference at the Indira Gandhi Bhawan that the building was built at an estimated cost of Rs 200-225 crore with some dues still left to be paid to Larsen and Toubro (L&T) construction company. The Congress headquarters was inaugurated on Wednesday, as the grand old party turned a page in its history after operating from its iconic 24, Akbar Road premises for the last 47 years. Congress parliamentary party chief Sonia Gandhi inaugurated the plush building in the presence of party president Mallikarjun Kharge, former party chief Rahul Gandhi, and general secretaries Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Jairam Ramesh and K C Venugopal, among other senior leaders. "Today we will introduce you to a temple of democracy - Indira Bhawan, the headquarters of the largest opposition party of the country at present," Maken told the press conference along with AICC general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh and party's media and publicity department head Pawan Khera. "The government of India allotted this land to us on November 19, 2007. Its foundation stone was laid in 2009 and finally we received the 'completion cum occupancy certificate' on January 14, 2025, while it was inaugurated on January 15," he said. Indira Gandhi Bhawan, designed by Hafeez Contractor, narrates the tale of the party's 139-year-old history with its walls adorned with pictures from the freedom struggle to the party's governance achievements. From VP Singh to Ghulam Nabi Azad and from Suresh



Pachouri to Rita Bahuguna Joshi, many leaders who left the party, including some who joined the BJP, and made stinging attacks on the party, find a place in the slew of photographs and pictorial representation of the party's history adorning the walls of the new office. As one enters the building, the wall in front adorns the pictures of the party's first president W C Benerjee and current chief Kharge. A striking picture on the ground floor is that of Sonia Gandhi leading a march with the likes of Pachouri, Joshi and P Sudhakar Reddy, all now in the BJP, accompanying her. Also there in the photograph is Ashok Tanwar, who left the Congress for the BJP, but returned to the party fold last year. In another epic picture, Rajiv Gandhi, when he was prime minister, is seen flanked by Sonia Gandhi and Manmohan Singh, PV Narasimha Rao and VP Singh (who all became prime ministers) and K R Narayanan (who became president later). On the fourth floor, which showcases the party's history from 2014-2023, a picture from 2019 adorns the wall in which Azad is seen standing with Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Manmohan Singh, taken at Rajghat during a protest against CAA and NRC. Another interesting photo that adorns the walls on the fourth floor is of Sonia Gandhi and then president Sitaram Kesari during a campaign rally in Rohtak in January 1998. A few months later Kesari was forced out and Gandhi took over as party chief. Asked about party leaders

Bhawan not only symbolises the ambitions and aspirations of the country with the largest youth population in the world, but also that the party is also ready to play the role of a vigilant opposition and protect democracy," Maken said. In the times to come, such processes are being developed in Indira Bhawan so that Congress workers from all over the country are welcomed in this building and senior party office bearers can easily interact with them, he said. The objective of Indira Bhawan was to create a place that would not only be the headquarters of the party but also symbolise its heritage and values, Maken said. The design reflects the glorious history and democratic principles of the party while at the same time having the amenities of a modern workplace, he said. "We have sought to create a welcoming environment that encourages collaboration and participation, and that our headquarters is both inspiring and practical. In addition, special emphasis has been placed on incorporating elements of transparency and openness in the design to reflect the values of inclusion and democratic dialogue," Maken said. The building, spread over a total area of 2,100 sq m, has its own auditorium with 276 seats, numerous meeting rooms, and adequate seating arrangements for the officials of every front organisation and cell of the Congress, he said. There are 134 trees, 8675 plants and 264 art works and paintings, he said, adding that the cafeteria has paintings of Nand Lal Bose which were made on the request of Mahatma Gandhi for the Haripura Congress session of 1938. Maken said each floor represents an era in the history of the Congress. "The new Congress Bhawan is not a building, but a glorious legacy of freedom. At the base of this Indira Bhawan is an ideological movement and at its peak is the resolution to protect the Constitution," he said.

## US-India sign cybercrime pact

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Days before it hands over power to President-elect Donald Trump, the Biden administration signed a pact with New Delhi that provides for boosting cooperation in combating cybercrime and related challenges such as terror financing and violent extremism. The agreement on cybercrime investigations, signed in Washington on Friday, allows the agencies concerned of the two countries to step up the level of cooperation with respect to cyber threat intelligence and digital forensics, according to an Indian readout. It is the second such move in the last few days by the outgoing Biden administration that reflected the overall upward trajectory of relations between the two nations. The US on Wednesday removed restrictions on three Indian nuclear entities -- Bhabha Atomic Research



Centre (BARC), Indira Gandhi Atomic Research Centre (IGCAR) and the Indian Rare Earths (IRE). The lifting of the restrictions is aimed at implementation of the historic India-US civil nuclear deal sealed around 16 years ago. The Memorandum of Understanding or MoU on cybercrime investigations was signed by Indian Ambassador Vinay Kwatra and Acting US Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security Kristie Canegallo. "Cybercrime has intricate

linkages with the common security challenges faced by India and the US such as terrorism and violent extremism, terror financing, drug trafficking, organised crime, human trafficking, illegal migration, money laundering and transportation security," Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in the readout. "The MoU on cybercrime investigations will enable further strengthening of India-US security cooperation, as part of our

comprehensive and global strategic partnership," it said. From New Delhi, the Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C) of the Union Home Ministry will be responsible for execution of the MoU, the MEA said. From the US side, it will be the Department of Homeland Security, and its constituent agencies -- the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Homeland Security Investigations Cyber Crimes Center (C3) which are tasked to execute the pact.

## Indian Navy participating in mega wargame 'La Perouse' with naval forces from eight other nations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Navy is participating in a mega wargame along with naval forces from eight nations including the US and France against the backdrop of increasingly fractious geopolitical environment and China's military muscle-flexing in the Indo-Pacific. The naval exercise 'La Perouse' is underway in the straits between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean as well as Malacca, Sunda and Lombok. These straits are largely considered as very crucial for global maritime trade. The nine-day exercise that

began on January 16 aims to enhance cooperation among the participating nations in areas of maritime surveillance, interdiction operations, air operations and information sharing. French Carrier Strike Group (CSG), led by nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Charles De Gaulle, is the mainstay of the mega exercise. India's indigenously designed and built guided missile destroyer INS Mumbai is part of the exercise, according to the Indian Navy. Besides, India, the US and France, naval forces from Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Canada and the UK are participating



in the exercise. "The exercise provides an opportunity for like-minded navies to develop closer links in planning, coordination and information sharing for enhanced tactical interoperability," the Indian Navy said on Saturday. "The exercise will witness complex and advanced multi-domain exercises including surface warfare, anti-air warfare, air-defence, cross deck landings and tactical manoeuvres, as also the constabulary missions such as VBSS (Visit, Board, Search and Seizure) operations," it said in a statement. The Indian Navy's participation in the exercise

showcases the high levels of synergy, coordination and interoperability between the like-minded navies and their commitment to a rules-based international order in the maritime domain, it added. The Australian Navy has deployed its frontline destroyer HMAS Hobart, while Canada has sent its warship HMCS Ottawa. The United States deployed combat ship USS Savannah, Malaysia sent destroyer FFG Lekir and its embarked helicopter and the vessel Gagah Samudera, The United Kingdom is participating in the exercise with offshore patrol vessel HMS Spey and Singapore

with the patrol vessel RSN Independence. "Strengthening maritime security will be at the core of this exercise, with the development of interoperability and the ability to act collectively in the event of a maritime crisis, which will contribute to it," a French readout said. It said the planned interactions will enable work on a broad spectrum of maritime security operations. "The various forces distributed in the area will train to search for and then intervene on ships suspected of illicit activities; with suspect vessels being played by vessels of the force," it added.

## Christian man unable to bury father: SC raps Chhattisgarh Government

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has slammed the Chhattisgarh Government and sought its response on a plea filed by a Christian man who said he is unable to bury his pastor father in Chhindawada village as people have aggressively objected to it and police have threatened him with legal action. A bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and Satish Chandra Sharma expressed surprise that the body was lying in a mortuary in the district hospital and medical college, Jagdalpur since January 7, when the man died and the police have not taken any action since then. Bench rapped the Chhattisgarh Government while seeking its response on the plea filed by the son. "Leave the village panchayat, even the High Court has passed a strange order. What is the State Government doing," the bench said while issuing notice to the Chhattisgarh Government.



The matter will be heard on January 20. The top court was hearing the appeal filed by Ramesh Baghel, belonging to the Mahra caste, challenging an order of the Chhattisgarh High Court which disposed of his plea seeking burial of his father who was a pastor in the area specified for Christian persons in the village graveyard. Relying on a certificate issued by the gram panchayat's sarpanch that there are no separate burial grounds for Christians, the High Court denied him permission saying it may cause unrest and disharmony in the public at large. The pastor died due to prolonged old age illness.

## Import of refurbished medical devices not allowed, says CDSCO

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a move aimed at curtailing the influx of unregulated second-hand medical devices in the country, the apex drug regulator Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) has informed the Customs Department that import of refurbished devices is not allowed. In a letter to the Principal Commissioner of Customs, the CDSCO said that all medical devices are regulated under the Medical Devices Rules, 2017. "However, there is no specific provision for regulation of refurbished medical devices under the said rules. Hence, no licence is issued for import of such devices and it cannot be imported under Medical Devices Rules for sale and distribution," the CDSCO said. Manufacturers of medical devices have welcomed the move, stating this decisive clarification reinforces the regulatory framework designed to ensure the highest standards of patient safety.

Dr Sudhir Srivastava, former Chair of the Medical Device Committee at PHDCCI, said that the decision by CDSCO marks a pivotal step towards reinforcing India's self-reliance in medical technology. "Allowing refurbished medical devices into the country would have jeopardized the quality of healthcare, disincentivized local innovation, and undermined the spirit of the 'Make in India' initiative," Srivastava said. Indian manufacturers are making significant strides in research and development, delivering "cutting-edge solutions tailored to our healthcare needs," he said. "By curbing refurbished imports, we not only protect the integrity of our medical ecosystem but also send a strong message to global investors that India is committed to building a robust, indigenous medical device industry. This move safeguards both the future of healthcare innovation in India and the well-being of our patients," he added.

## Sangam witnesses sea of devotees, 7.5 Crore take the holy dip in five days

**BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■**  
MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

The air thrummed with spiritual fervor as millions descended upon the Sangam, the sacred confluence of the Ganges, Yamuna, and mythical Saraswati rivers, for the Mahakumbh Mela. In just five days since its commencement, an astonishing 7.5 crore devotees have taken the holy dip, a testament to the enduring power of faith and tradition. On Saturday, the banks of the Sangam witnessed a breathtaking spectacle as over 19.84 lakh pilgrims, including over 10 lakh Kalpvasis dedicated to a month-long spiritual immersion, participated in the sacred bath. "It is truly humbling to witness this sea of humanity united in devotion," remarked Shri Ram Narayan Das, a revered sage attending the Mahakumbh for decades. "The energy here is palpable,

a powerful blend of faith, humility, and joy." The Mahakumbh, one of the largest religious gatherings on Earth, has transformed Prayagraj into a vibrant tapestry of colors, sounds, and spiritual experiences. From the chanting of mantras to the rhythmic beats of devotional music, the atmosphere is charged with an undeniable sense of collective upliftment. "I have traveled from the southernmost tip of India to experience the sanctity of the Sangam," shared an elderly woman, her eyes glistening with tears of joy. "This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to cleanse my soul and connect with the divine." Beyond the religious significance, the Mahakumbh also serves as a powerful testament to the unifying force of faith. People from all walks of life, irrespective of caste, creed, or social standing, come



Newly-initiated Naga sadhus perform rituals at the Sangam area during the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 PTI

together to partake in this grand celebration of spirituality. "The Mahakumbh is not just a religious event; it is a celebration of humanity," stated Shri Ajay Kumar, District Magistrate of Prayagraj. "The administration has been working tirelessly to ensure the safety and well-being of all pilgrims, while also striving to maintain the sanctity of this sacred event." As the Mahakumbh progresses, millions more are expected to join the festivities, making this year's edition an unforgettable testament to the enduring power of faith and the timeless allure of the Sangam. The Rajnath Singh takes a dip. Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh arrived in Prayagraj on Saturday to attend Mahakumbh. He was received at Bamrauli Airport by MLA Minister Nand Gopal Gupta, with MP Sudhanshu Trivedi also accompanying him. Upon reaching Prayagraj, the Defence Minister took the sacred dip at Triveni Sangam, chanting slogans such as "Sanatan Ki Jai" and "Ganga Maiyya Ki Jai." Following the ritual, he visited Akshayvat, Patalpuri, and Bade Hanuman Ji temples and reviewed the preparations for the Mahakumbh. Later in the evening, the Defence Minister is scheduled to meet with Army officials to discuss security arrangements for the Mahakumbh. Speaking on the occasion, Singh remarked, "I consider it my great fortune to have taken a holy dip in the Sangam at Prayagraj today. The Mahakumbh is a grand spiritual and cultural festival that embodies the essence of Indianness. It transcends associations with any particular sect, community, or religion."



Devotees gather to take a holy dip at the Sangam PTI

## A night of service: Prayagraj police feed and comfort 24,000 stranded pilgrims at Maha Kumbh

**BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■**  
MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

In a heartwarming display of humanity and dedication, the police in Prayagraj turned saviors for over 24,000 pilgrims stranded outside Prayagraj Junction station late Tuesday night. After taking the holy dip on Makar Sankranti, the devotees faced bone-chilling cold and long delays caused by thick fog disrupting train schedules. The night saw policemen not just managing the massive crowd but going beyond their duty to serve food, water, and tea to the weary pilgrims until 3 a.m. Wednesday. Blankets and quilts were also distributed to



shield them from the biting cold. Speaking about the efforts, ACP (Kotwali) Manoj Kumar Singh shared, "We saw elderly people and children shivering, some of them

hungry and tired. It was impossible to stand by and do nothing. With help from NGOs and generous locals, we made sure everyone was fed and kept warm." Many police officers personally pitched in to ensure the smooth distribution of food and supplies. Sub-Inspector Ravi Shukla, who helped prepare and serve meals, said, "When I handed over a plate of food to a young boy, his mother's teary 'thank you' made all the effort worth it. This is more than a duty; it is humanity." The chaos caused by delayed trains and miscommunication also left many pilgrims at the wrong stations.

## Mahakumbh to boost UP's economy by over one per cent, claim experts

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
PRAYAGRAJ

Mahakumbh 2025 in Prayagraj is poised to create a transformative cultural, social, and economic impact on Uttar Pradesh. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has emphasized the event's potential to generate Rs 2 lakh crore in business, with experts estimating an economic boost of over 1% to the state's GDP. This monumental gathering is also expected to significantly increase GST collections, with projections suggesting a potential threefold rise during the peak months of December, January, and February. The influx of millions of

domestic and international pilgrims over 45 days is anticipated to stimulate demand, increase production, create jobs, and enhance financial flows for businesses of all scales. The state government, which is investing Rs 16,000 crore in the event, plans to channel the revenue into infrastructure development, aligning with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's vision of making Uttar Pradesh a one trillion-dollar economy. Economist and chartered accountant Pankaj Gandhi Jaiswal predicts Mahakumbh 2025 could boost both nominal and real GDP by 1%. With an estimated 45 crore visitors expected to attend and average spending of Rs 10,000 per person, the total economic activity generated could surpass Rs 4.5 lakh crore. Even accounting for a 10% margin of error, the net contribution would remain above Rs 4 lakh crore. Such economic activity will not only bolster quarterly GDP but also contribute significantly to India's annual growth. "The state's investment will yield manifold returns," Jaiswal said. "An estimated Rs 4 lakh crore economic activity could result in GST collections of Rs 50,000 crore. Combined with income tax and other indirect taxes, the government's revenue

## Digital media centre boosts global coverage of Mahakumbh, emerges as information hub

**BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■**  
MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

To showcase the grandeur of Mahakumbh to the world, an advanced Media Center equipped with state-of-the-art technology is operational in the Mela area under Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's leadership. Boasting high-quality professional cameras worth crores of rupees, the Media Centre facilitates flawless recording and live-streaming of every moment of the Mahakumbh. This ensures that viewers experience the event in real time, offering an immersive digital experience to devotees worldwide. High-resolution cameras, featuring lenses costing up to Rs 50 lakh, are



broadcasting updates and news about the Mahakumbh on digital platforms. So far, 30 international journalists have conducted special coverage of the event, highlighting its cultural and spiritual significance. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed officials to ensure that the Media Center provides all necessary facilities for both domestic and international devotees to stay informed. The demand for Mahakumbh-related news is particularly high in countries such as the USA, Russia, Germany, Japan, and Israel. Adding to its global reach, Mahakumbh programs aired on Swedish Radio have garnered significant

## Railway Minister Ashwini inspects undersea bullet train tunnel work



**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
MUMBAI/THANE

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Saturday inspected the work of the undersea tunnel of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail Corridor, popularly called the bullet train project, and expressed satisfaction at the "good progress" on the mega multi-billion dollar project. The 21-kilometre tunnel, which includes a 7 kilometre stretch beneath the Thane Creek, will connect the Bandra Kurla Complex station to Shilphata. The undersea tunnel is the first of its kind in the country. The undersea tunnel has been designed and is being

and station infrastructure. The station at Bandra-Kurla Complex (BKC) is an engineering marvel, with a unique design featuring 10 underground floors and seven above-ground levels. The high-speed rail project is on schedule, with Japanese experts inspecting and approving the ongoing work," he said. The dream of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to provide an affordable, efficient transportation mode for the middle class is steadily becoming a reality, the Union minister remarked. The completion of the High Speed Rail route, the first in the country, will integrate the economies of the cities enroute, including Mumbai and Ahmedabad, and will greatly boosted urban development, Vaishnaw said. "The stations along the corridor will spur urban development and enhance daily commuters' productivity by significantly reducing travel time. Don't see the high-speed train as a transportation project, but as integration of the economy. It will elevate India's infrastructure and economic growth," Vaishnaw said. He lauded the efforts of Indian engineers, whose expertise has played a pivotal role in the project's success, adding it was a matter of pride for the entire country.

## Simultaneous poll is unconstitutional, being brought with political motive: DMK

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
CHENNAI

The Centre's initiative of 'one nation, one election' was 'unconstitutional' and was being brought with a political motive, DMK senior and Tamil Nadu Forests Minister K Ponmudy said on Saturday. Speaking at the DMK legal wing's third state conference that began here, he said "the move is unconstitutional and is being brought with a political motive." Terming the move to enforce simultaneous poll as an attempt to dispense with the five-year term of assemblies and downsizing the states to union territories, senior advocate Kapil Sibal said states will not be in the picture at all if one nation, one election law was enforced. "It will destroy the very federal structure of our country. The preamble of the Constitution



says that India is a union of states. You have diminished the states... You are destroying the basic structure of the state, and trying for one nation, one poll, one language, political party, one religion," Sibal said during a discussion on the topic. "The move amounts to destroying the essence of democratic functioning of our republic. Cronies support the idea without a national debate on it. I don't think the people of India and Tamil Nadu will tolerate it," Sibal said and claimed that it would also affect the education, health and other state specific issues.

## CBI court convicts Himachal IG, seven other cops in custodial death case

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
CHANDIGARH

A Special CBI court here on Saturday convicted the Himachal Pradesh Inspector General of Police and seven other policemen in the custodial death of an accused in the gang rape and murder of a minor girl in Himachal Pradesh's Kotkhai in 2017. The court of special judge Alka Malik will pronounce the quantum of punishment on January 27. The CBI court convicted IG Zahur Haider Zaidi, the then

deputy superintendent of police Manoj Joshi, then Sub-Inspector Rajinder Singh, then Assistant SI Deep Chand Sharma, then head constable Mohan Lal, Surat Singh, Rafee Mohammad and then constable Ranjit Sateta. The court acquitted the then Superintendent of Police DW Negi, his counsel Rabindra Pandit said. The accused have been convicted under various sections, including 302 (murder) read with 120-B, 330 (voluntarily causing hurt to extort confession), 348

## Six Crore senior citizens brought under Ayushman Bharat, 45 per cent of population covered: Nadda

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
AHMEDABAD

Ayushman Bharat has brought 6 crore citizens aged 70 and above under it, and the Centre's flagship health insurance programme now covers over 45 per cent of India's population, Union Health Minister JP Nadda said here Saturday. The Union Cabinet in October last year approved health coverage to all citizens aged 70 years and above irrespective of income under the 'Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana' (AB PM-JAY). "Under Modi 3.0, we have added 6 crore people above 70 under Ayushman Bharat. Now, more than 62 crore

people, or over 45 per cent of India's population, are covered, not in health insurance but under a 'health assurance' scheme with an annual coverage of Rs 5 lakh," he said. Speaking at the 'IIMA Healthcare Summit 2025' organised at the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad, he called the scheme a game changer and said it has benefited more than 4.2 crore citizens. "These are poor people - rickshaw pullers, street vendors, bus drivers, conductors, lift men, security guards, barbers, shoemakers - who perhaps would never have thought about caring for their health," Nadda said.



Rohit hints players have reservations about BCCI's 10-point diktat



PTI ■ MUMBAI

Rohit Sharma seems to have reservations about certain clauses in the 10-point disciplinary guidelines prepared by the BCCI at the behest of head coach Gautam Gambhir and India skipper on. "I suppose every team has some rules in place. We've spoken about various things you see over the last few months where you can improve as a team, where you can get a bit closer as a team. It's not a school. It's not a punishment," he said, trying to rationalise. "It's just (that) you have some rules in place and when you're playing for the national team you just follow those rules. Again, these are mature individuals. They are superstars in their own rights in international sport." Many former players have termed these rules as something that was always in place and Agarkar called them protocols that one has to follow while representing the national team. "But at the end of the day you're eventually representing your country. There are certain things that you just inherently follow as every team does. I think a lot of them (rules) have been in place. "Maybe we've spoken about it now and it's been put out, but a lot of them have been in place in any case. You keep on refining it as you go along eventually what suits the team, you want to try and do." There have been conjectures about Rohit's working relationship with the head coach and the skipper said that once he enters the playing arena, he is his own man. "Both (he and Gambhir) of us are very clear in what we want to do. I'm not going to sit here and discuss what goes behind every game tactically but it's very clear in my mind. "Gautam Gambhir is somebody once we enter the field he trusts what the captain is doing on the field. The basic talks that happen are only off the field, in the ground or maybe the changing room. "But once we take the field it's all about what I do on the field. That's the kind of trust we have in each other and that's how it should be. That's about it."

Winger Khvicha Kvaratskhelia signs with French champion PSG until 2029



PTI ■ PARIS

Khvicha Kvaratskhelia completed his expected move from Napoli to Paris Saint-Germain when he signed a deal until 2029 with the record 12-time French champion. The move comes a day after he posted a farewell video to Napoli fans, who affectionately nicknamed him "Kvaradona" in homage to Argentina great Diego Maradona, the club's greatest ever player. Kvaratskhelia starred in Napoli's Serie A title-winning team in 2023.

HINDUJA HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED. Appendix IV : Possession NOTICE (for Immovable property). Table with columns: Name of Borrower/Guarantor / Co-Borrower, Demand Notice Issued Date, Loan Account No., Amount Due as on Notice Date, Description of Secured asset (Immovable Property), Date & Type of Possession.

STATUTORY NOTICE TO BORROWERS/GUARANTORS. Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s) are hereby put to caution that the property may be sold at any time herein after by way of public auction... Authorised Officer, Hinduja Housing Finance Limited



# BEHIND THE SCENES WITH THE CAST



PHOTOS : PANKAJ KUMAR

### The cast of *Swipe Crime* breaks down their roles, with Faisal Malik giving fans hope for Prahlad Cha's return, says SAKSHI PRIYA

compelling character, adding another nuanced portrayal to his repertoire. Here, we dive into his thoughts on the series, his character and the lessons he's gathered along the way. In this gripping exploration of cybercrime, *Faisal* brings depth to a character that resonates with real-life personas. Here's a closer look at his journey with the show and the insights he shared about his craft.

**The Concept and the Draw:** For Faisal, the decision to join *Swipe Crime* was rooted in the script's quality and the universe it creates.

"What inspires every actor to do it? The character is good. The universe he has created is good. And it's very relatable as well as beautifully written. That's what inspires me," he shared.

**Portraying His Character:** Faisal's character in *Swipe Crime* stands out for its layered personality. He described it as someone who is multifaceted depending on perspective. "A nice person, for myself only, not for the people around me. So for me, I

am a very nice, good person. But for my students, I am a badass. So they don't like me. And it's good for me," he explained. To bring authenticity to the role, Faisal drew inspiration from a real-life individual.

"There is a teacher on my campus, Mr. Sharma. He was like this. So I have just taken him and done it here."

**Films vs OTT:** Having worked in diverse mediums, Faisal finds the OTT format particularly appealing for its depth in storytelling. "Not platform, but the medium of series is good. Because one can easily explore the character and the person. It's not hero-centric at all," he stated, reflecting on the opportunities OTT platforms offer.

**When Prahlad Cha Returns:** Fans of Faisal's character from *Panchayat* are eagerly awaiting the return of Prahlad Cha. Faisal shared some insight on this during the interview, saying, "Ready ho raha hai. 8 or 9 months lagega abhi." This indicates that while the wait may be long, there are plans for Prahlad Cha's return in the future.



### Lessons from the Industry:

The entertainment industry has taught Faisal valuable lessons, both professionally and personally. "For me, it's like to be good to people. Yeah, that's nice," he said, emphasising the importance of kindness and understanding. However, his journey also came with its challenges. "Someone told me a long time back to stop thinking about too much of anything. I used to produce shows and all. So in that entire journey, I was very bad to people. Because I was keeping my 24/7. So if some other person is not doing their work, then I become very bad. They all said don't do this. You are making enemies."

### Advice to His Younger Self:

When asked what he would tell his younger self, Faisal offered an honest and surprising answer. "That's the worst thing I have done in my life, to think about work. Otherwise, I would be a lazy person. I would be sitting alone. I don't want to do anything. This is what I want to do: doing nothing," he said with a smile.

### A Show That Resonates with Today's Audience

*Swipe Crime* is a thriller that mirrors society's growing dependence on technology and the vulnerabilities it exposes. The performances, led by Faisal Malik's gravitas, Rishab Chadha's depth, Diksha J Singh's charisma and Ronit Ashra's fresh energy, make it a must-watch for audiences of all ages. As Faisal Malik aptly put it, "Awareness is key. While technology evolves, it's up to us to use it wisely and protect ourselves." With a compelling storyline, powerful performances and a relevant message, *Swipe Crime* is set to leave a lasting impact on viewers, making them think twice about the digital footprints they leave behind.

### The Cast Reveals All! Insights from the Cast and Crew:

OTT platforms have brought forth a wave of fresh, engaging content and *Swipe Crime* is the latest show garnering attention. With its intriguing storyline and complex characters, the show has created a buzz among audiences. Here's an exclusive look into the world of *Swipe Crime* with the cast members, Rishab Chadha, Diksha Singh, Ronit Ashra and the celebrated Faisal Malik.

Faisal Malik, known for his phenomenal work in *Panchayat*, shares his insights on the show, while the rest of the cast speaks about their challenges, character nuances and their experiences working together.

**Faisal Malik on His Role and Reflections from the Industry:** Faisal Malik, best known for his remarkable performances, takes on a Professor role in the series *Swipe Crime*. He has cemented his place in the industry as an actor who brings depth and authenticity to every role. In *Swipe Crime*, a gripping series exploring the dark corners of cybercrime, Faisal takes on a



**RISHAB CHADHA**  
Versatility and Dedication

Rishab Chadha, known for Drishyam and Khoobsurat, shines in *Swipe Crime*. Reflecting on his 18-year acting journey, he said, "I've spent so much time on my craft that nothing feels too challenging anymore. But this role was unique, requiring restraint and a transformation that I hadn't experienced before." On challenges, he shared, "A scene with alcohol and fire was intense. I unknowingly consumed alcohol, fainted post-shoot, but it's my best intro scene yet." Playing Vidhan Shastri, a shy yet ambitious UP engineering student, Rishab drew from personal experiences and the director's vision, saying, "Understanding the director is key."



**DIKSHA J SINGH**  
From Model to Actress

Diksha J Singh is a multifaceted personality, an actor, model, and politician, best known for her role as Juhi in *Swipe Crime*. Talking about her character, she shared, "After a long time, I came across a script that offered so much for a woman to play, especially in a negative role from a college perspective. It's rare and refreshing." For Diksha, Juhi is mentally strong and incredibly clever, characteristics she found fascinating to portray. Though she did not share screen space with Faisal Malik, she expressed admiration for their performances and eagerly sought their guidance during promotions.



**RONIT ASHRA**

From Social Media to Acting Debut

Ronit Ashra, celebrated for his mimicry and content creation, makes his acting debut in *Swipe Crime*. Transitioning from a social media sensation to an actor, he remarked, "Acting has always been my passion. It feels great to finally bring it to life in a show like this." Ronit plays Nikhil Saxena, the studious son of an ITian who wants to carve his own path. Describing his character, he said, "Nikhil is a mix of intelligence and ambition, with a lighthearted dynamic with his parents." Ronit shared amusing anecdotes from the set, especially his improvisations with Faisal Malik. "We'd often create moments on the spot, making the process incredibly fun," he said.



## Layers of Love and Craft

By SAKSHI PRIYA

Chandni Chowk has always been the heartbeat of wedding shopping in Delhi, and now, with the addition of *House of Surya* at *Omaxe Chowk*, bridal shopping has reached new heights of elegance. The store transforms this experience into an art form, showcasing timeless craftsmanship that speaks to the soul of traditional Indian fashion.

The *House of Surya* collection stands out with intricate details, from delicate hand embroidery to the rich textures of Banarasi silks and velvets. The colour palette spans from classic bridal reds to soft pastels and muted metallics, offering something for every bride and wedding celebration. Whether it's a grand lehenga for the main ceremony or a lighter outfit for pre-wedding events, the designs strike the perfect balance of luxury and wearability, catering to the vibrant celebrations that define Indian weddings.



The launch saw *Malaika Arora* bringing her signature grace and glamour, embodying the collection's ethos of confidence and elegance. Her presence highlighted how the designs resonate with today's brides, who seek a harmonious balance between tradition and individuality. Stepping into the store feels like entering a world of creativity and craftsmanship. The thoughtfully designed space invites customers into a world of creativity and detail. From ornate embellishments to the careful interplay of heritage and contemporary aesthetics, every garment has a personality of its own. The artistry and skill of Indian craftsmen shine through, with pieces that feel like heirlooms meant to be cherished. As wedding season peaks, this addition has quickly become a go-to for bridal wear that adapts to the varying needs of modern celebrations. From mehendi to reception, the collection caters to every event while maintaining the grandeur that Indian weddings are known for. The focus on craftsmanship is what makes this collection truly special. In a fast-paced world, it's refreshing to see a space that honours traditional techniques while keeping them relevant for the present day. For those stepping into the whirlwind of wedding preparations, this new destination is about connecting with a legacy of design and artistry. It offers not just garments but an experience, one that makes every bride feel unique and every occasion unforgettable.

# GRITTY PICTURE OF TIHAR

### Neflix's *Black Warrant* takes viewers into the life in Tihar Jail investigating power, corruption and survival in 1980s, writes ABHI SINGHAL



**B**lack Warrant is a crime drama series, premiered on Netflix. It has been adapted from the 2019 memoir 'Black Warrant: Confessions of a Tihar Jailer' by Sunil Gupta and Sunetra Choudhury, the series offers a portrayal of life inside India's Tihar Jail during the 1980s.

**Conspicuous**  
The story revolves around *Sunil Kumar Gupta*, portrayed by *Zahan Kapoor*, a novice jailer who begins his tenure at Tihar Jail. As he becomes acquainted with the prison's operations under the guidance of *Rajesh Tomar* (played by *Rahul Bhat*), *Sunil Kumar Gupta* confronts the pervasive corruption and complex power dynamics among inmates and staff of Tihar Jail. The series excavates into *Gupta's* moral dilemmas and his interactions with notorious criminals, including serial killer *Charles Sobhray*.

**A Stellar Ensemble**  
The cast of *Black Warrant* delivers outstanding performances, bringing depth to the series' deep story. *Zahan Kapoor* shines as *Sunil Gupta*, portraying a young, idealistic jailer coming to truth with the harsh realities of Tihar Jail. His portrayal of inner conflict and moral dilemmas adds a relatable human touch to the story. *Rahul Bhat* excels as *DSP Rajesh Tomar*, a hardened

mentor who embodies the complexity of law enforcement in a morally ambiguous environment.

*Sidhant Gupta's* performance as the cunning and calm *Charles Sobhray* is a standout, effortlessly having a scary vibe of his own. *Rajshri Deshpande* adds gravitas as *Pratibha Sen*, a journalist investigating the murky waters of prison politics. Supporting actors like *Tota Roy Choudhury* and *Joy Sengupta* skillfully portray senior prison officials, highlighting the institutional dynamics and their often questionable choices. Each actor contributes to the authentic portrayal of a prison system marked by power struggles, corruption, and humanity's darker shades. The ensemble's seamless chemistry elevates the series, making it a gripping watch.

**Direction and Production**  
The series is a collaborative creation by *Vikramaditya Motwane*, *Satyanshu Singh*, and *Daniel Sharma*. *Motwane*, co-directs alongside *Singh*, *Sharma*, *Rohin Ravendran Nair*, and *Ambieeka Pandit*.

**Episode Structure**  
"Black Warrant" comprises seven episodes, each ranging from 38 to 50 minutes. Each episode takes you through deeper into the challenges



faced by *Gupta* as he sails the double crossing environment of Tihar Jail.

### Critical Reception

The series goes good on the part of authentic depiction of prison life and compelling storytelling of the Tihar Jail. The storyline is gripping and showcases the major part of how things roll in Tihar Jail. The dark side of corruption, the setting of inmates with the police, the violence inside the jail and the under trails is perfectly showcased in the film.

With each episode centred on a different case, the show is meticulously scripted. Even if the majority of the plot seems authentic, it falls apart when *Sunil* is revealed as the system's sole saviour. It could have done better with the ending like the other episodes.

### Closure

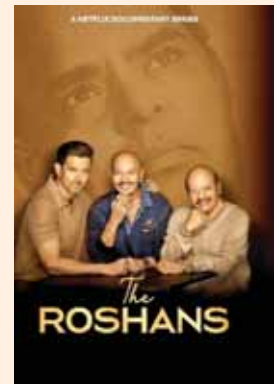
"Black Warrant" is notable for its honest and realistic depiction of the intricacies found in one of India's most infamous prisons. With excellent acting, especially from *Zahan Kapoor* and *Rahul Bhat*, the series explores themes of survival and division of power. *Black Warrant* is a notable addition to Netflix's library for fans who enjoy crime dramas based on actual events.

Rating - 4/5

### SUGGESTED BINGES



**PAATAL LOK SEASON 2**  
IMDB Rating: 8.9/10 (as of 18th Jan)  
OTT: Amazon Prime Video  
Director: Avinash Arun  
Cast: Jaideep Ahlawat, Ishwak Singh, Anurag Arora



**THE ROSHANS**  
IMDB Rating: 8.2/10 (as of 18th Jan)  
OTT: Netflix  
Director: Shashi Ranjan  
Cast: Rakesh Roshan, Hrithik Roshan, Rajesh Roshan



**BACK IN ACTION**  
IMDB Rating: 6.5/10  
OTT: Netflix  
Director: J.J. Perry, Kristina M. Peterson  
Cast: Cameron Diaz, Jamie Foxx, McKenna Roberts, Rylan Jackson

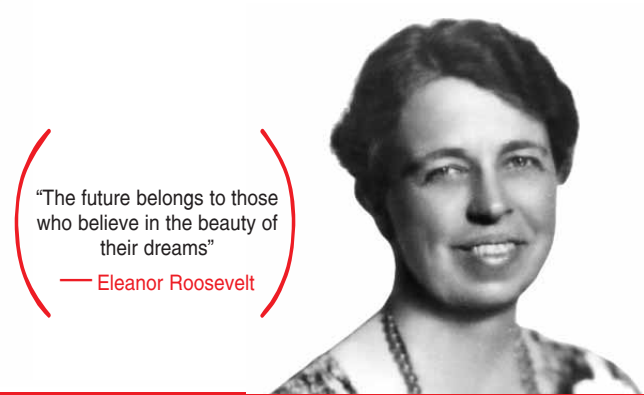


**XO, KITTY SEASON 2**  
OTT: Netflix  
Director: Katina Medina Mora, Steven Tsuchida, Anna Mastro  
Cast: Anna Cathcart, Minyeong Choi, Gia Kim



**WITH LOVE, MEGHAN**  
OTT: Netflix  
Director: Michael Steed  
Cast: Meghan Markle, Mindy Kaling, Prince Harry





# real-A-life action hero

From Bollywood star to philanthropic icon, Sonu Sood's journey in Bollywood is a classic example of perseverance and resilience, writes **GYANESHWAR DAYAL**

*@SonuSood who plays Villain in South and Bollywood, but he did such a thing in this tragedy that he is the biggest hero in my eyes. On a social platform like Twitter, by taking the details of the workers, they are arranging buses and transporting them to the own village.: Md Shahnawaz Alam @alamktr00*

**M**d Shahnawaz Alam was not the only person praising Sonu Sood for helping migrants reach their homes during Covid when lockdown was suddenly announced and people were stuck across the country. It was crazy time. No one knew what was in store and how pandemic would unfold. It was particularly hard on migrant workers with meagre resources walked endless journey to their hometowns. In this situation *Sonu Sood*, a known name in Bollywood for playing mean villain came forward to help people and making arrangements for traveling to these workers. The twitter was abuzz with people asking 'Sonu bhैया' help and getting it. His twitter handle became a virtual helpline. Tweets like these flooded his social media handle. And he ready came for help. Genuinely. It was a gesture people reciprocated with warmth and *Sonu Sood* became a household name. It was indeed a turning point in the life and career of the star. And since then he did not look back. *Sonu Sood's* journey in Bollywood is a testament to resilience, hard work, and the power of perseverance. From humble beginnings to becoming a household name, *Sonu's* story is not just about acting but also about his extraordinary contributions to society through his philanthropic efforts. His rise to fame and his journey of selfless giving have made him one of the most admired figures in India, both on and off the screen. Born on July 30, 1973, in Moga, Punjab, *Sonu Sood* was not always destined for the glitz and glamour of Bollywood. Growing up in a middle-class family, *Sonu's* early life was filled with academic aspirations. He completed his engineering degree from the Yeshwantrao Chavan College of Engineering in Nagpur. However, despite his technical background, his heart was always inclined towards acting. *Sonu* moved to Mumbai with dreams of making it in Bollywood. Like many aspiring actors, his journey was not without struggle. He started his career with small roles and often faced rejection. His initial years in the industry were difficult, and he struggled to find a breakthrough. He appeared in a variety of roles, including in films like *Kahan Hai Tu* (1999) and *Shaheed-E-Azam* (2002). These films, although not major hits, helped *Sonu* gain experience and sharpen his acting skills. *Sonu Sood's* breakthrough came with the film *Yuva* (2004), directed by Mani Ratnam. Playing the character of a strong-willed, determined man, *Sonu's* performance was well-received. This marked the beginning of his rise in the industry. His portrayal of negative roles in films like *Aashiq Banaya Aapne* (2005) and *Dabangg* (2010) further solidified his presence in

Bollywood. In *Dabangg*, his character, Chhedi Singh, was menacing, and his performance opposite Salman Khan earned him widespread acclaim. The turning point in his career came when *Sonu Sood* was offered roles that showcased his versatility. Whether as the villain or a complex character with shades of Gray, *Sonu's* consistent hard work and dedication to his craft saw him rise through the ranks of Bollywood's A-list stars. His powerful performances in films like *Jodha Akbar* (2008), *Simmba* (2018), and *Raju Chacha* (2000) earned him several awards and nominations. What sets *Sonu* apart is his ability to evolve with the changing dynamics of the film industry. He has played a range of characters, from a villain to a hero, from action-packed roles to romantic parts. His commitment to delivering quality performances, regardless of the scale of the film, has made him a dependable actor in Bollywood. While *Sonu Sood's* acting career has been remarkable, his philanthropic work during the COVID-19 pandemic made him a true hero in the eyes of millions. When the pandemic caused widespread suffering across the globe, *Sonu* didn't just stay confined to his home; he became the guiding light for thousands of people in need. *Sonu's* philanthropic efforts began when he started helping migrant workers stuck in different parts of India due to the lockdown. With his own funds and resources, *Sonu* arranged transportation for thousands of migrant workers to return to their homes, despite facing logistical hurdles and government restrictions. His initiative gained massive media attention, with people praising him for his quick and effective response to the crisis. In addition to helping migrant workers, *Sonu Sood* extended his support to the medical sector by arranging hospital beds, oxygen supplies, and treatment for those suffering from COVID-19. He provided financial aid to families who had lost their loved ones during the pandemic and launched multiple campaigns to help students, farmers, and the underprivileged access education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. Through his organisation, the Sood Charity Foundation, *Sonu* has continued his philanthropic efforts, focusing on education, healthcare, and helping the underprivileged. He believes in the power of education and aims to provide quality education to children who do not have access to it. His efforts have not gone unnoticed, and he has received numerous accolades, including the prestigious International Humanitarian Award in recognition of his selfless work. *Sonu Sood's* success in Bollywood is a result of his unwavering dedication and hard work. He didn't come from a film family and had no Godfather when he reached Mumbai from his hometown Moga with just Rs 5000 in his pocket. He worked his way up to build his career from the ground up. His perseverance is a reflection of his commitment to his craft and his belief that success comes with consistent effort. What sets *Sonu* apart from many others in the industry is his work ethic and focus. He has worked in several regional film industries, including Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Hindi cinema, which allowed him to understand the nuances of different audiences and cultures. This versatility has been key to his success, as he is equally comfortable playing a hero or villain in different languages and genres. In an industry where many actors rely on luck or industry connections to secure their place, *Sonu* has demonstrated that talent, dedication, and hard work are the true pillars of success. His journey is an inspiration to aspiring actors and those who believe in the power of perseverance. *Sonu Sood* has not only made a place for himself in Bollywood but has also become a hero for countless people across the country. His legacy, both as an actor and philanthropist, will continue to inspire generations to come.



*Sonu Sood's* journey in Bollywood is an incredible narrative of success, struggle and humanity. From a young man with dreams of becoming an actor to a respected figure in the Indian film industry, *Sonu's* dedication to his craft and his selfless philanthropic work makes him an iconic figure in India today. He was in Delhi at the premier of his latest offering 'Fateh' an action-packed film dealing with cybercrime. *Sonu Sood* talked to Gyaneshwar Dayal, about his acting, social responsibilities and future plans.

**Could you tell us what scripts draw your attention?**  
I like to do the films which are close to common man, about his life and problems. Recently I did *Fateh* which deals with the cybercrimes which has become a menace in the country and people should know about it. So I thought why not make a film which would indeed not only entertain but also inform people about the dangers lurking in the digital domain. So I prefer films which are entertaining but also create awareness and talk about people's issues

**You are known for action. Do you like action roles?**  
Yes of course. In my films people get to see a lot of action sequences which are world class and are at par with Hollywood films. We can say that we make action sequences which are world class and perfectly choreographed. *Fateh* is case in point.

**How do you prepare for a role in a film?**  
Well acting comes naturally to me. I have always loved acting and so when I hear a character in the film I get the idea how to go about it. I can switch on and off between the roles and that is really important because Bollywood works like that. Yes, understanding of the role must be there so that you can do justice to it.

**You do a lot of philanthropic work. So what you prefer action for the people in their dire times or action on the screen?**  
See, life is more than just lights camera action. When there are no lights or camera action continues in the real life. It is a great feeling when you can help someone in need when there is no light no camera. It is important to be sympathetic and have empathy, because cinema is one aspect of life not the other way round.

**You have portrayed a range of roles, both positive and negative. Which type do you prefer, and why?**  
That's correct I accept all types of roles I think I can do justice to. But now on I want to do positive roles. I love playing positive roles and that is the kind roles I would be doing now on.



In *Sandburgs* you will find yourself immersed in an ambiance that feels straight out of America when they serve. The menu is crafted to teleport you to the street style of USA with their presentation, writes **TEAM AGENDA**



# SLICE OF AMERICA ON YOUR PLATE

When you step into *Sandburgs*, you're instantly transported to the bustling streets of America usually you might have seen in the web series. From the rustic interiors to the vibrant menu, every corner exudes classic American charm. And the food? It's a culinary celebration of comfort and indulgence. Here's a deep dive into the unforgettable experience that *Sandburgs* offers.



lovers. This unique offering combines marinated cottage cheese with fresh veggies like onion, tomato, and capsicum. The *SB special mint mayo* and *tandoori sauce* elevate the flavours, creating a blend of smoky, tangy, and herby notes in every bite. The warm, crisp bread completes the sandwich, making it a satisfying meal on its own. Other options you could explore in the Sandwiches category are *Peri Peri Cottage press Sandwich*, *Classic Pollo press Sandwich*, *North Pollo Press Sandwich* which are like awesome for the fast food lovers.

**BURGERS THAT SPEAK TO YOUR SOUL:** The *Garden Dreams Burger* is a masterpiece that deserves a standing ovation. The handmade veggie patty is perfectly crisp on the outside and tender within, paired with fresh lettuce, juicy tomato, and a generous dollop of homemade harissa mayo that gives the burger a delightful kick. The caramelised onions and melted cheddar cheese add layers of sweet and savoury goodness, all nestled in a soft, freshly toasted bun.

**SANDWICHES THAT STEAL THE SHOW:** The *Tandoori Cottage Press Sandwich* is a revelation for sandwich

**CHEESINESS YOU CAN'T SAY NO TO:** Cheese lovers, unite! The *Grilled Cheese* is a triple-threat of mozzarella, parmesan, and cheddar cheeses melted



to perfection. The caramelised onions tucked inside add a hint of sweetness that balances the richness of the cheeses. Toasted in freshly baked milk bread, it's a nostalgic nod to classic American comfort food, oozing with gooey goodness. You could also satisfy your taste buds by ordering *Shroom & Cheese* with assorted mushroom ragu with caramelised onion, mozzarella and parmesan cheese toasted in a freshly baked milk bread, *Ham & cheese* with premium pork ham with sharp cheddar cheese and golden fried egg toasted in a freshly baked milk bread.

**SIDES THAT COMPLIMENT THE FEAST:** What's an American-style meal without crispy potato fries? *Sandburgs'* fries are golden perfection, crispy on the outside and fluffy on the inside. The variety of dips, including the *Cheese Garlic Dip* and the *tangy BBQ Dip*, allow you to customise your experience. The *Spicy Dip* is a personal favourite, adding just the right amount of heat to the crispy fries.

**COOL DRINKS AND COFFEE:** The

beverages menu is equally impressive. The *Hazelnut Iced Latte* offers a smooth blend of nutty and creamy flavours, served over ice, making it a refreshing pick-me-up. The *Lemon Iced Tea* is a zesty and revitalising drink, perfect for pairing with the heavy-duty burgers and sandwiches. You could also try *Sundaes - Hot Chocolate Sundae* and *Salted Caramel Sundae* if you are an ice cream fan.

**DESSERTS AND BEYOND:** Although I didn't try the sundaes this time, their presence on the menu promises a classic American diner experience. The range of beverages, from *Coffee on the Rocks* to *Nice and Warm drinks*, ensures there's something for every palate.

*Sandburgs* deliver taste but on the promise of a true American-style dining experience. The presentation, flavours, and overall vibe make it a must-visit for anyone craving hearty comfort food. From the meticulous plating to the authentic taste, *Sandburgs* takes you on a culinary journey straight to the heart of America, one delicious bite at a time.



## FACTSHEET

**Restaurant Name:** Sandburgs  
**Place:** Unit 4/E-14, Upper Ground Floor, Rajouri Garden, New Delhi (outlets in Gurgaon as well)  
**Price for 1:** ₹700 approx

## Revolutionising Dining Experiences

*Japonico: Discover the joy of great food and creative flavours*



**Pawan Soni**  
Food critic and founder of the Big F Awards



In a culinary world where new menus often blur into monotony, *Japonico* on Golf Course Road stands out as a beacon of creativity and authenticity. This is a place where innovation meets artistry, delivering a dining experience that surprises and delights even the most seasoned food enthusiasts.

With a view of the bustling metro line on the golf course road, *Japonico's* interiors are a visual treat. The layout is thoughtfully divided: one side features a live wood Robata grill and family-style seating, while the other, overlooking the bar, offers a more high-energy vibe. Striking design elements, live projections on flowing water and giant pots, create a serene yet vibrant ambience. Subtle lighting is balanced by strategically placed spotlights, ensuring that every dish's presentation shines as brightly as its flavours.

**A COCKTAIL JOURNEY LIKE NO OTHER:** The experience begins with the drinks. *The Legacy*, a gin- and vodka-based martini, exemplifies the bar's mastery. Served with tobiko caviar, pickled radish, and an olive, each element adds depth: the tobiko bursts with wasabi and truffle notes, the radish enhances passion fruit flavours, and the olive ties it back to the martini's classic essence. *Japonico's* mixology programme promises a standard that few can match.

**CULINARY HIGHLIGHTS:** The meal starts strong with the *Mushroom Salad*, a delightful medley of textures and flavours. Crisp and dehydrated shiitake mushrooms pair beautifully with iceberg lettuce, red cabbage, mizuna, cucumber and avocado, all elevated by a goma dressing. The *Rocky Shrimp Tempura*, spiced with togarashi and creamy mayo, may not break new ground, but its flawless execution ensures it's devoured in no time. The dim sum, crafted with precision, leaves no room for leftovers. The star of the meal, however, is the *Atlantic Crab and Aji Chili Taco*. The sweetness of crab meat meets the heat of chilli and the crunch of a

perfectly crisp taco shell, all brightened by a hint of lemon. It's so irresistibly good, you might not want to share. If you're a crab lover, this dish alone is worth the visit.

From the Robata grill comes another standout: the Australian Lamb Cutlet, marinated in gochujang sauce for 24 hours. The result is tender, flavourful meat that melts in your mouth, delivering smoky richness with every bite.

**THE TEAM BEHIND THE MAGIC:** Great food and drinks require a great team, and *Japonico* is no exception. Restaurateur *Sahil Sambhi*, who I awarded the Best Restaurateur title in the 11th season of The Big F Awards, has honed his craft over the years, evolving from a nightlife innovator to a culinary trailblazer. Known for award-winning ventures like *Bawri* and *VietNom*, Sambhi's passion for innovation and excellence shines through in *Japonico*. At his side are talented mixologists *Chirag Pal* and *Jeet Rana*, and *Chef Roberto Blondi*, who brings Michelin-starred expertise to the table. Together, they've crafted a restaurant that's as much about the experience as it is about the cuisine.

**SETTING A NEW STANDARD:** As the first major restaurant launch of 2025, *Japonico* has raised the bar for the industry. It's not just a place to eat; it's a statement of what dining should aspire to be. Judging by the weekday crowd, diners agree, this is a benchmark that will be hard to beat.

## FACTSHEET

**RATINGS** (Out of 5)  
**Food:** 4.75 | **Drinks:** 4.75 | **Ambience:** 5.0 | **Service:** 4.5 | **Overall:** 4.75  
**Address:** Japonico, 2nd Floor, Tower D, Vipul Tech Square, Golf Course Rd, near Sector 42-43, Sector 43, Gurugram  
**Phone:** 9948000039

# From Mangalore to Delhi's Table

By **TEAM AGENDA**

Food has an uncanny way of transporting us. A single bite can take us to a vibrant street, a quiet kitchen or even the shores of a distant coast. At *Chor Bizarre Chef Shriya Shetty's Mangalorean* pop-up did exactly that, bringing the soothing flavours of Mangalore to the heart of Delhi.

The vegetarian journey began with *THINDI*, the *Jowar Tartlet* filled with *red amaranth* cooked in *coconut milk* and topped with *bajeel* (tempered beaten rice). This delicate appetiser was a celebration of earthy, creamy flavours and contrasting textures.

*KUNDAPUR* featured the *7-Hour Mushroom Ghee Roast*, served in *Bombay pao* with *ridge gourd tztziki*, *pomegranate* and *cilantro*. The slow-cooked mushrooms were rich and spiced, beautifully balanced by the refreshing tztziki.

The *BAFAT* offering, *Mangalorean Sweet Potato Bafath*, came with *sannas* and *tamarind reduction*. This dish delivered a balance of sweetness and tanginess, made complete by the softness of the sannas.

The vegetarian MAINS, served *thali-style*, included *Kori Roti*, *Peas* and *Potato Gassi*, *Red Amaranth Raita*, *Ridge Gourd*



paired with luscious *Banana Mousse*, *cacao nibs* and a *tangy pickle drizzle*. *Chef Shriya Shetty's* pop-up offered a delightful way to explore *Mangalorean* culture through its comforting curries, distinct spices and unique pairings. Whether you choose the vegetarian spread or the meatier options, each dish brought the flavours of *Mangalore* alive in every bite.

*Chutney*, *Raw Banana* and *Carrot Sukkha*, *Ghee Rice* and accompaniments like *yoghurt* and *pickle*. The comforting *gassi* and *crispy kori roti* were the highlights, offering a fulfilling and balanced experience.

For non-vegetarian diners, the *7-Hour Chicken Ghee Roast* from *KUNDAPUR* packed a flavourful punch, while the *Mangalorean Pork Bafath* from *BAFAT* delivered tangy notes with the *sannas* and tamarind reduction. The MAINS featured the *classic Chicken Gassi*, *Chicken Sukkha* and *Ghee Rice*, completing the hearty thali.

The meal ended on a sweet note with the *DESSERT*, a warm, buttery *Ghee Cake*



**Chef Shriya Shetty**

## FACTSHEET

**Date & Time:** January 19th, 2025  
**Lunch:** 12pm & 2pm  
**Dinner:** 7pm & 9:30pm  
**Price:** Veg ₹1,300 (All Inclusive), Non veg ₹1,600 (All Inclusive)  
**Address:** Broadway, 4/15 A, Asaf Ali Road, New Delhi, 110012

# ESSENCE OF ASSAM



The Brahmaputra Carnival celebrates the Assamese heritage, and culinary delights, writes **ABHI SINGHAL**



**N**ortheast India, a treasure of cultural diversity and natural beauty, is a region where traditions and modernity coexist in harmony. Among its enchanting states, Assam stands out with its lush tea gardens, lively festivals, and the mighty Brahmaputra River. Assam is all alive with the *Brahmaputra Carnival*, a grand celebration that promises to showcase the region's rich heritage, arts, and cuisine. Set against the stunning backdrop of the majestic river, the carnival features cultural performances, adventure sports, food festivals, and more. It's a unique opportunity to experience the soul of Assam like never before.

A fun carnival that looks like a colourful masterpiece made from Assamese soul, river breezes, and sunshine. On the banks of the majestic Brahmaputra River, Assam culture is celebrated at the *Brahmaputra Carnival*. The river itself is serving as the stage for this festival, which is organised by the Assam Government and is a symphony of culture, adventure, and unadulterated delight.

To make your experience even more fun and adventurous is The *Lachit Ghat* is the site of the *Brahmaputra Carnival*, and *Sandbar Island* serves as the *Tent City* during the event. It takes 15 to 20 minutes by speed boat from the *Lachit Ghat* to *Sandbar Island*, and the journey is visually stunning. If you're considering a trip to the northeast, the sunny and windy weather is ideal for a getaway.



the carnival pulsates with energy, yet maintains a serene undercurrent. The *Brahmaputra*, ever unpredictable, adds a touch of wildness to the festivities, reminding us of the raw power of nature. It's a retreat for the soul, where the peace of the river's embrace melds perfectly with the excitement of adventure.

**GLAMPING IN STYLE:** The festival provides a luxurious glamping experience with three categories of tents

namely the *Royal Tents*, *Premium Tents*, and *Deluxe Tents*. All of the three options offer you a comfortable and stylish retreat, complete with modern amenities and breathtaking river views that would blow away your mind. Also, one would enjoy the foggy views as soon as you get up and look outside of your tents. The foggy layers engulfing the *Brahmaputra River* will want you to have a cup of tea or coffee with those views and chills. You would also experience the open-air cinema magic



at *Brahmaputra Carnival Tent City*. Movies, fresh air, and unforgettable moments await you. The main part of the stay is the hospitality provided at your new home. The hospitality by *Gias* and his team of boys at the *Tent City* would truly make you comfortable and at home providing everything handy and in need.

**ADVENTURES ON THE BRAHMAPUTRA:** For the adrenaline junkies, the *Brahmaputra* is



an irresistible playground. At the *Sandbar Island* you would experience the speedboat rides cut through the water like a knife, while kayaking and jet skiing offer a more intimate encounter with the river's currents with your own rapid and water fun. For those seeking a true test of courage, bungee jumping provides an exhilarating leap of faith. And let's not forget the thrill of *ATV rides* and the exhilarating descent on the river rapids during a white-water rafting expedition.

This is not the end. You could also experience the *hot air balloon* rides up into the sky for beautiful views, *beach volleyball*, *beach cricket*, *archery*, *river rafting* and *water roller*. These adventures offer a unique perspective on the Brahmaputra, allowing you to experience its power and beauty firsthand.

At the *Lachit Ghat*, you would experience *Archery*, *River Rafting*, *Water Roller*, *Speed boat*, *Kayaking*, *ATV*, *Bungee Ejection*, *Mechanical Bull Ride*, *Bungee Trampoline*, *Air Gun Shooting*, *Zip Line*, *Rope Course* and *Zorbing*. All this will keep you hooked to the carnival and not wanting to leave it. Take note that the water activities do not take place after the dark due to safety reasons.

**A CULTURAL VIBE:** Beyond the thrills, the *Brahmaputra Carnival* is a celebration of Assamese culture. You would see vibrant performances of traditional dances like *Bihu*, *Satriya Nritya*, *Bagurumba*, *Bhortal*, and *Ojapali* showcasing the region's rich heritage. Apart from the dance culture you could get stalls at the *Lachit Ghat* to buy the Assam specialities like the printed *Gamucha*, *Mekhela Chador* for women and the *Dhoti-gamosa* for men.



The *Brahmaputra Carnival* also takes you through the musical ears of Assam as bands perform in the concerts in the evening at the *Lachit Ghat*. On the 31st January the *Carnival* will be graced by the melodic singing of the famous singer *Papon*, on 19th February it will be *Rupam Buyan* and 19 January will be rocked by *Kanawz & Company*.

**THE TRADITIONAL TASTE:** At the *Brahmaputra Carnival* you can indulge in local delicacies that savour the flavours of authentic Assamese cuisine. The carnival has food stalls with authentic Assamese touch. You would see *chicken momos*, *chicken vodka momos*, *prawns*, *silkworms* and so much more that would satisfy your mouth watery taste buds.

**A JOURNEY TO REMEMBER:** The *Brahmaputra Carnival* is more than just a festival; it's an invitation to experience the soul of Assam. It's a chance to connect with nature, have some adventure, and discover the magic of a land where the river dictates the rhythm of life. So, pack your bags guys, and prepare to be swept away by the essence of the *Brahmaputra Carnival*.





**YOUR WEEK AHEAD**

MADHU KOTIYA



**ARIES** March 21-April 19

This week opens on a high note, bringing you much-deserved acclaim and a sense of triumph over challenges. At work, your innovative contributions, from fresh ideas to novel technologies, will be warmly embraced and celebrated, enhancing your professional stature. Your ability to explore and implement multifaceted solutions stands out, earning you respect and admiration from colleagues. As the week progresses, you may reconnect with a past acquaintance or visit a place steeped in nostalgic memories, enriching your emotional landscape. This period is marked by joyous family interactions, adding to the week's positive ambiance. Towards the week's close, you might feel a bit drained and concerned, yet your resolve remains unshaken, ready to tackle life's hurdles with confidence.

**Lucky number 22 | Lucky colour** Midnight Blue  
**Lucky day** Thursday



**LEO** July 23-Aug 22

This week is filled with potential and vibrancy, as you may encounter a blossoming relationship, heightened intuition, or a joyful addition to your family. Your innate sense of understanding allows you to identify issues before they are spoken, equipping you with the natural ability to offer timely and effective solutions. Midweek brings a surge of emotion accompanied by fresh hopes and decisive actions. This is a time when your deepest aspirations could begin to take shape, driven by a strong internal guidance. You might find opportunities for material prosperity, whether through professional endeavors or unexpected sources like a gift or legacy. As the week closes, you may find yourself reflecting on past events. It's essential to release these reflections and embrace the present opportunities and joys life presents.

**Lucky number 17 | Lucky colour** Green  
**Lucky day** Sunday



**SAGITTARIUS** Nov 22-Dec 21

The week begins under challenging circumstances but concludes with uplifting developments that will inspire you. You may encounter difficulties, errors, and disputes that could sap your spirit. Yet, this period also marks the start of a new phase marked by perseverance and effort. Focus on sharpening your mental acuity by engaging in educational activities or improving your communication skills. Midweek, your attention might shift to matters concerning children, such as securing their admission to reputable educational institutions or addressing their career aspirations. It is vital to offer support and encouragement, particularly to those engaged in rigorous academic pursuits. As the week draws to a close, familial joy and a sense of closeness prevail, bringing satisfaction and good health. The joy brought by family members, especially children, will enhance your well-being.

**Lucky number 14 | Lucky colour** Saffron  
**Lucky day** Monday



**TAURUS** April 20-May 20

This week holds promising prospects for those feeling grounded and practical. Expect significant career advancements, potentially through a promising job opportunity or a notable increase in earnings. For the recently married, joyful news regarding family expansion may arrive. Prepare for travel, as an upcoming journey could yield substantial financial rewards. However, exercise caution during your travels, as there are indications of potential loss or misleading situations. Protect yourself from negative influences, as it seems some undesirable attention could be directed your way. As the week concludes, a sense of security and happiness will envelop you, supported by the warmth and cooperation of your family. Memories of simpler times may surface, bringing with them a wave of nostalgia. Generosity will be both received and rewarded, enhancing both personal and professional financial situations.

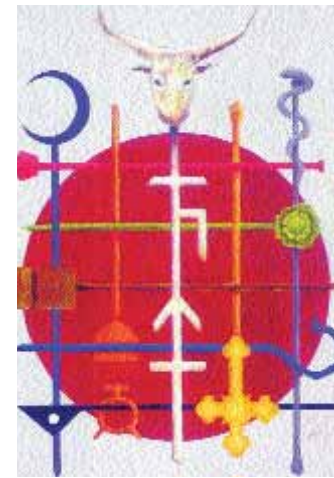
**Lucky number 13 | Lucky colour** Coral  
**Lucky day** Tuesday



**VIRGO** Aug 23-Sep 22

This week, you may find yourself frequently on the move, balancing work commitments with enjoyable activities. You're likely to encounter opportunities for new projects or responsibilities. It will be crucial to allocate sufficient time and energy to ensure their successful completion. Midweek brings a shift towards social engagements, with possible events like parties or community celebrations, offering a delightful break from daily stressors. These gatherings are a chance to unwind and cherish moments with friends and family. As the week concludes, be prepared for increased competition or conflicts in your professional sphere. Tensions could arise, potentially from individuals who may not favor your success. It's important to respond thoughtfully to any challenges, as impulsive reactions could undermine your hard work. Exercise caution and strategic thinking to navigate through any disputes effectively.

**Lucky number 25 | Lucky colour** Tangerine  
**Lucky day** Friday



**CAPRICORN** Dec 22-Jan 19

This week, individuals typically characterized by diligence and a calm demeanor may find themselves quietly progressing toward their objectives, preferring a gentle approach. They may feel a strong sense of destiny guiding their actions more than their own efforts. Midweek could bring a sense of joy due to a significant financial achievement, marking a period of growth and prosperity in business endeavors. Income may increase from various sources, and many ambitious plans could be set in motion. Engagement in spiritual activities or rituals might also capture their interest, underscoring a period rich with favorable developments. Achievements will span several areas of life, including maintaining good health, family achievements, and an abundance of financial gains, all contributing to harmonious relationships with family and friends.

**Lucky number 11 | Lucky colour** Teal  
**Lucky day** Wednesday



**GEMINI** May 21-June 20

This week brings unexpected financial rewards and introduces a compelling and profitable work project that could lead to significant recognition for your innovative ideas. You'll find yourself enjoying life's comforts and luxuries more than usual. Your hard work and perseverance are poised to elevate your professional status, supported by a sense of divine favor. This period also ignites a spiritual awakening, encouraging you to engage in reflective practices such as meditation, devotional activities, or charitable efforts. As the week concludes, a long-anticipated opportunity will present itself, offering the chance to pursue a cherished goal. Dedicate yourself fully to this endeavor to harness the full extent of your potential. Remember, perseverance and intelligence are key to capitalizing on this promising time.

**Lucky number 8 | Lucky colour** Turquoise  
**Lucky day** Saturday



**LIBRA** Sep 23-Oct 22

This week heralds a phase of abundance, accompanied by intellectual growth and a sense of fulfillment. Expect a strong foundation in your finances, ensuring stability and comfort. This could be the result of previous efforts or potentially from an unexpected source. Your discipline and achievements will not go unnoticed, earning you well-deserved recognition and pride. It's an opportune moment to initiate new ventures or relationships. Collaborations will flow smoothly due to your adept understanding of interpersonal dynamics. However, the latter part of the week might see a shift from clarity to uncertainty. It's important to avoid dwelling on past fears when facing the future. Rash decisions and confrontational behavior could complicate matters. Embrace calmness and clarity to navigate through any challenges, allowing you to find effective solutions effortlessly.

**Lucky number 9 | Lucky colour** Violet  
**Lucky day** Saturday



**AQUARIUS** Jan 20-Feb 18

This week begins amid unresolved challenges that are causing you stress. A sense of isolation and a heavy air of doubt might be overwhelming. You find yourself perplexed, seeking a way out of these difficulties without a clear solution in sight. It's important to reflect on your past actions and future direction. Gaining this perspective will help smooth your path forward and shift from a negative to a more positive mindset. Embrace and honor your emotions; they hold significant power to positively transform your circumstances. When there's harmony between your physical and mental states, remarkable achievements become possible. As the week closes, anticipate significant life changes that will bring some relief to your mental tension. Joyful events, such as significant personal milestones or professional successes, are on the horizon, offering you moments of happiness.

**Lucky number 7 | Lucky colour** Rose  
**Lucky day** Sunday



**CANCER** June 21-July 22

This week, those with sensitive dispositions might find themselves grappling with fluctuating emotions and a lack of mental balance. Several pressing matters require their attention, demanding immediate and decisive actions to move forward effectively. Amidst this mental unrest, there's a tendency to multitask excessively, which complicates setting priorities and achieving clarity. It's essential to cultivate focus to avoid becoming mired in indecision. Embracing practices like spiritual reflection, meditation, or yoga could greatly benefit mental stability. An unexpected reunion with a familiar face from the past promises delightful moments of nostalgia, enhancing emotional well-being. Support and wise counsel from a respected mentor will provide much-needed guidance, making it easier to navigate challenges. By week's end, a sense of stability and well-being, both financially and emotionally, is likely to prevail.

**Lucky number 2 | Lucky colour** Pink  
**Lucky day** Tuesday



**SCORPIO** Oct 23-Nov 21

This week, you may find yourself swiftly adapting to dynamic shifts in your life, which could include a sudden opportunity to join a new organization or company. This sudden influx of choices might leave you feeling uncertain and indecisive, but remember, a decision must be made. Expect a week brimming with activity and innovation. You are at the cusp of concluding one phase and embarking on a new, more profound phase of your journey. It's time to leave the past behind and set your sights on what lies ahead. A firm decision now will set the stage for a harmonious alignment of your thoughts and emotions towards the end of the week, enhancing your career prospects significantly. You'll emerge from this period feeling wiser and more emotionally mature.

**Lucky number 10 | Lucky colour** Lavender  
**Lucky day** Wednesday



**PISCES** Feb 19-March 20

You may find yourself embarking on an extended trip soon, which includes participating in various meetings or workshops. Challenges could arise in your professional environment, potentially involving competition or difficult obstacles, so tread cautiously. Emotional connections may also be strained during this period, possibly leading to feelings of rejection or disconnection. Remember to prioritize your wellbeing during these times, but rest assured that these challenges are only temporary. By the end of this period, you'll notice a restoration of order and balance in your life, signaling a shift towards more positive circumstances. The comforting presence of maternal affection will bring a sense of security and warmth. If you're hoping to nurture new relationships, career opportunities, or ventures, give them the attention and patience they require to flourish.

**Lucky number 3 | Lucky colour** Copper  
**Lucky day** Tuesday

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# The Power of Gratitude Journaling

THE LIFE GUIDANCE



Seerat Kaur Marwaha

The positive effects of gratitude extend beyond mental health. Gratitude journaling helps with better sleep, reduced blood pressure and improved immune function

Gratitude is often described as the quality of being thankful and the readiness to show appreciation for and return kindness. It is a fundamental human emotion, yet its potential to transform lives is frequently underestimated. *Gratitude journaling*, a simple practice of recording things you are thankful for, has emerged as a powerful tool for fostering emotional well-being, enhancing mental health, and even improving physical health. By consciously focusing on the positive aspects of life, gratitude journaling reshapes perspectives, rewires the brain, and cultivates happiness. The concept of gratitude has long been studied in psychology, particularly within the field of positive psychology. Researchers Dr. Robert Emmons and Dr. Michael McCullough are pioneers in studying gratitude. Emmons defines gratitude as a two-step process: recognising that one has obtained a positive outcome and acknowledging that there is an external source for this positive outcome. This perspective connects gratitude not only to personal satisfaction but also to relational and societal harmony. Neuroscience supports the transformative effects of gratitude. Studies using functional MRI scans show that practicing gratitude activates the brain's reward system, specifically the medial prefrontal cortex. This area is associated with decision-making and the regulation of emo-

tions. Furthermore, gratitude enhances the production of neurotransmitters like dopamine and serotonin, often referred to as the "feel-good" chemicals. These changes not only foster happiness but also mitigate symptoms of anxiety and depression. *Gratitude journaling* involves regularly writing down things you are grateful for. This practice may appear simplistic, but its effects are profound. Research indicates that *gratitude journaling* can reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety. A 2015 study published in the journal *Psychotherapy Research* found that individuals who engaged in gratitude writing reported significantly better mental health outcomes compared to those who focused on negative emotions or did not engage in any writing practice. Gratitude helps reframe thoughts, reducing rumination and encouraging a focus on the positive. Putting gratitude on paper promotes emotional resilience by encouraging individuals to concentrate on their blessings rather than their shortcomings. This positive focus redirects attention away from stress and difficulties, fostering a mental buffer that strengthens the ability to navigate adversity. Research by Dr. Emmons highlights that gratitude significantly boosts optimism, a critical factor in building resilience. Reflecting on the kindness and support received from others through *gratitude*



*journaling* can significantly improve interpersonal relationships. By deepening appreciation for those around us, it strengthens social bonds. According to a study published in the journal *Emotion*, gratitude not only enhances feelings of connection but also inspires prosocial behaviour. The positive effects of gratitude extend beyond mental health. *Gratitude journaling* has been associated with better sleep, reduced blood pressure, and improved immune function. A study in the journal *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being* found that participants who practiced *gratitude journaling* for two weeks experienced better sleep quality and longer duration, likely due to reduced stress levels.

Incorporating *gratitude journaling* into daily life is simple and requires minimal resources. Dedicate a specific time each day for journaling. Many people find that writing before bedtime helps them reflect on the day and end it on a positive note. Begin by listing three things you are grateful for each day. These can be as simple as a good meal, a kind word, or a moment of laughter. Rather than writing "I am grateful for my family," elaborate on a specific moment, such as "I am grateful for the conversation I had with my sister today, which made me feel understood." Dive deep into one or two experiences rather than creating a long list. This approach helps reinforce the emotional impact of the practice. Incorporate gratitude for challenges and lessons learned. This reframes obstacles as opportunities for growth. If you struggle to get started, use prompts such as, "What made me smile today?" or "What is something I take for granted but am truly thankful for?" The power of this practice is evident in countless personal stories. For instance, individuals recovering from trauma often find solace in gratitude practices. One such example comes from veterans participating in a gratitude program developed by the University of California, Berkeley. Many reported reduced symptoms of PTSD and improved overall well-being after weeks of *gratitude journaling*. Similarly, organisations like schools and

workplaces have embraced gratitude initiatives to foster a positive culture. Employees and students who engage in gratitude practices report higher satisfaction, productivity, and collaboration. In today's fast-paced, often overwhelming world, journaling serves as a grounding practice. Social media, while connecting people, can amplify feelings of inadequacy through constant comparison. *Gratitude journaling* counters this effect by focusing on intrinsic values and personal blessings rather than external validation. Moreover, technological advancements have made this journaling more accessible. Apps like "Gratitude," "Five Minute Journal," and "Day One" offer digital platforms for consistent journaling, making the practice convenient and engaging. *Gratitude journaling* is more than a habit; it is a transformative practice that rewires the brain, reshapes perspectives, and fosters holistic well-being. By consistently focusing on the positive aspects of life, individuals can enhance their mental and physical health, build resilience, and nurture meaningful relationships. Scientific research supports the profound impact of gratitude, making it a cornerstone of emotional intelligence and personal growth. In a world that often emphasises what is missing, *gratitude journaling* reminds us to cherish what we already have, transforming lives one thought at a time.

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