







# Special preparations being made to prevent cheating in UP Board exams

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Special preparations are being made to prevent cheating in the classes 10 and 12 examinations of Uttar Pradesh Madhyamik Shiksha Parishad (UPMSP). UP Board Secretary Bhagwati Singh has announced that the answer-sheet of candidate caught cheating during the examination will not be checked. The secretary said misleading

information is being made viral by unwanted elements on some social media platforms that the candidates using unfair means in the examination will be punished with financial penalty and imprisonment. This is completely wrong, he clarified. The UP Board classes 10 and 12 examination are starting from February 24 and will run till March 12. A total of 54.38 lakh candidates

will appear in the exam. The Uttar Pradesh Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act- 2024 will be applicable in the examination this year. It provides for punishment of life imprisonment and fine up to ₹1 crore to solvers and solver gangs for affecting the sanctity of the examination, leaking question papers, trying to solve question papers etc. The UP Board examina-

tions will be conducted under CCTV surveillance. Question papers will be monitored through CCTV in the strong rooms of the examination centres. Work is also underway on the plan to conduct it through Artificial Intelligence (AI). The board examination will be held at 8,140 centres in the state. A total of 54,38,597 students are registered for the examination.

# Emphasis on tuberculosis screening

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

An awareness meeting on tuberculosis (TB) and vaccination was organised under the aegis of the Health department on Saturday as part of the National Tuberculosis Eradication Programme (NTEP) at Al Mahmood Hospital, Sudamapur (Bajardiha). Starting the programme, District Tuberculosis Officer (DTO) Dr Piyush Rai discussed TB and its prevention in detail. He laid special emphasis on getting tuberculosis screening done. He said that community participation is very important and explained the facilities provided by the government to the patients and hospitals. He elaborated on the need for notification of patients by private hospitals and the TB preventive therapy given to the patient's family. Dr Rai said earlier the medicine used to be given for six months but now a course of only three months with one tablet a week has started in Varanasi district. The patient is now given ₹1,000 per month instead of ₹500 per month earlier, he added. The Al Mahmood Hospital was also asked to make the



TB awareness programme being held at Al Mahmood Hospital, Bajardiha in Varanasi on Saturday.

public aware through various sign boards. Dr Shahid, a UNICEF representative, elaborated on vaccination of children, timely registration of pregnant women in the hospital, four prenatal checkups, importance of iron and folic acid, Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC) etc. President of Al Mohammad

Committee Haji Zuber Ahmed thanked everyone and assured active participation in the search campaign for TB patients and said he will work actively in this direction and make the programme successful. The seminar was attended by influential people from the

Muslim-dominated area and emphasis was laid on spreading awareness among the people about tuberculosis. Vice-president Haji Rasheed Ahmed, secretary Haji Naveed Ashraf, joint secretary Haji Abdul Latif and Haji Ishrat Belal, Dr Akhtar Masood and other staff of the hospital were also present in the meeting.



Devotees gather to take a holy dip at the Sangam during the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 in Prayagraj on Saturday.

PTI

# S-I killed as car rams into stationary truck

PTI ■ BASTI

A 57-year-old police sub-inspector (S-I) died, and a head constable was injured when the car they were travelling in rams into a stationary truck on the Harraiya-Babhanan road in the Pakolia area here. Police said that the sub-inspector, Hari Narayan Mishra (57), who was posted at the Pakolia police station, was travelling to the station from Gorakhpur in a car driven by head constable Ram Kumar Dubey. On the way, their car collided with a dumper on the Harraiya-Babhanan road in the Harraiya area. Mishra died on the spot in the accident. The head constable was injured and was admitted to the hos-

pital. Officials said the body has been sent for an autopsy.

**MENTALLY-CHALLENGED WOMAN 'DRINKS' ACID, DIES Bareilly:** A mentally challenged woman died after she allegedly drank acid kept in the toilet of her house, police said on Saturday. The incident took place in Kiratpur village in the Bhamora police station area on the night of January 16 and the woman died at the district hospital on January 17. Prempal, the woman's uncle, told police that his 19-year-old niece drank acid kept in the toilet of her house on Thursday night. As her condition deteriorated, her family members took her to the district hospital. She died during treatment.

# Boatmen will now be allowed to operate from Qila Ghat to Sangam

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The boatmen will now be able to run boats from Qila Ghat to Sangam on the remaining four main bathing days, including Mauni Amavasya. Earlier, on Paus Purnima and Makar Sankranti the boat operation from Qila Ghat to Sangam had been banned which had caused resentment among the boatmen and they had opposed it. Seeing the protest by the boatmen, the mela administration has come on the back foot. Now boats will be operated from Qila Ghat to Sangam. CO Jal Police Rajneesh Yadav said instructions have been

received from the Mela officer that boats will be operated from Qila Ghat on the main bathing festivals. On the other hand, the police and security agencies remained on alert for several hours on information of bomb in Sector-18 of Maha Kumbh late on Friday night. However, nothing was found. This call was made through a proxy server. Police remained engaged in tracing the caller till late night. The incident happened around 11 pm on Friday. When contacted DIG Vaibhav Krishna said the person who threatened on the basis of the number and will be arrested soon.



Police personnel patrol at Sangam on a cold and foggy morning during Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj on Saturday.

PTI

# Trainee officers understand working of various railway departments

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A group of 19 officers undergoing training at the Indian Railways Institute of Transport Management (IRITM) visited Varanasi as part of a three-day training programme. During it they participated in a training meeting with the Divisional Railway Manager (DRM), Varanasi Division of North Eastern Railway (NER), Vineet Kumar Srivastava, here on Friday. As part of it the team of trainee officers of Operation Technology visited the DRM's office and understood the working system of various departments of the railways. In the Bhartendu auditorium room of Varanasi division (NER) they had a comprehensive discussion with the DRM and divisional officers and shared their experiences related to railway management and rail operations. On the occasion Srivastava informed the trainee officers about the functioning of Varanasi division and told them that serving the Railways is considered very close to military service. "Working in the Railways is complicated but all of you have this golden opportunity to serve the country through railway service", he said. Addressing the trainee officers, he told them that they have to travel the entire country and understand the diversity and unity found in different states, only then they can understand the soul of the country and move forward to provide uninterrupted rail service. The DRM suggested



Divisional Railway Manager VK Srivastava addressing the trainees in Varanasi

the trainees to ask questions continuously to learn the things better and assured them of full cooperation in the field inspection of Varanasi division. Srivastava also suggested to visit Varanasi and observe important tourist and religious places. On the occasion Senior Divisional Commercial Manager (SDCM) Sheikh Rehman, Senior Divisional Finance Manager (SDFM) Rajesh Kumar, Senior Divisional Security Commissioner (SDSC) S Ramakrishnan, Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer (SDEE) RN Singh, Senior

Divisional Materials Manager (SDMM) Nitesh Agarwal, Divisional Commercial Manager (DCM) Ramesh Pandey, Divisional Operations Manager Ratandeep Gupta, Assistant Commercial Manager (ACM) DK Singh, IRMS faculty member Manish Pandey and supervisor BK Singh along with trainee officers of Operations Technology were present. Earlier, while welcoming everyone, SDCM Sheikh Rehman gave detailed information about Varanasi division through presentation and also gave details of the arrangements made by

Varanasi division during Maha Kumbh Mela-2025. The officer trainees of this group understood the working process by conducting a field inspection at Varanasi division and interacted with the field officers and got various information related to the management of railway operations. This tour has been organised for the trainee officers of UPSC-2022 (EOL) and 2023 batch under the joint foundation course of IRITM and IRMS. Varanasi division had facilitated the interaction with field officers and field visits as well as for trainee officers.

# Registrar stresses importance of maintaining clean environment for overall well-being



Cleanliness drive being launched at BHU in Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A cleanliness drive was undertaken in collaboration with SSS, NCC and NSS, covering the route from Saraswati Chauraha (crossing) to Vishwanath Temple in Banaras Hindu University (BHU) on Friday on the third day of the five-day student-centric programme being organised under the auspices of Wellbeing Services Cell (WBSC) of BHU.

The theme of the event, 'Promoting Social Responsibility and Community Service', reflected Swami Vivekananda's vision of a self-reliant and disciplined society. More than 150 participants, including 70 NCC cadets, 30 SSS staff members, 15 SRK fellows, three primary counselors, five NSS students and students from various faculties, enthusiastically participated in the drive which covered five routes. Several bags of waste

were collected during the initiative. Registrar Prof Arun Kumar Singh graced the event as the chief guest along with Prof AK Nema (Dean of Students) and Prof Nishat Afroz (Associate Dean of Students - Student Development). In his address to the students, the registrar emphasised the importance of maintaining a clean environment for overall well-being. **SYMPOSIUM:** Speakers focussed on understanding of immune system, cancer progression, mechanism of tumorigenesis and available therapeutic options on the second day of the international symposium on 'Recent Advances in Disease Biology and Emerging Therapeutics', being organised by the Department of Zoology, Institute of Science, Banaras Hindu University (BHU) here on Saturday. There were five sessions comprising lecture from international speakers conducted during the day. Competitive oral and poster presentations from research scholars provided a platform for the young researchers to interact with the scientists that helped them to enhance their understanding of the disease biology and novel therapeutic

approaches. The theme of this symposium reflects a deep understanding of the intricate interplay between fundamental disease biology and the innovative therapeutic strategies shaping the future of healthcare. By bringing together eminent scientists, scholars and researchers from across the globe, this symposium aims to provide an unparalleled platform for the dissemination of knowledge, exchange of ideas and fostering of interdisciplinary collaborations. Such initiatives are a testament to the department's unwavering commitment to academic and research excellence. The symposium is undoubtedly providing a unique platform for young researchers to learn, network and contribute to this dynamic field. Earlier, inaugural session was held at the seminar complex on the first day. The keynote lecture was delivered by the chief guest Prof Absar Ahmad. Organising secretary Dr Ajay Kumar welcomed the delegates and participants. Joint organising secretary Dr Akhileendra Maurya informed about the eminent achievements of the chief guest. Treasurer Dr Shruti R Hansda proposed the vote of thanks.

# SP workers object to comments on Akhilesh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The workers of Samajwadi Party (SP) expressed anger over alleged 'indecent and casteist' comments on party chief and MP Akhilesh Yadav. They handed over a memorandum to Joint Commissioner of Police (JCP) Dr K Ejilearassane here on Friday and demanded registration of a case in this connection. A delegation of party leaders and advocates led by state Samajwadi Party secre-

tary Raju Yadav and former city president Vishnu Sharma met the JCP and submitted a memorandum. Raju Yadav told Dr Ejilearassane that the party workers are angry after a person posted alleged 'casteist and indecent' comments on Samajwadi Party supreme Akhilesh Yadav on social media from his Facebook ID. Vishnu Sharma said such comments can cause religious tension anytime. Following the complaint by SP leaders,

police officers were ordered to register a case and take strict action. Prominent among those present were Sandeep Yadav, Vikas Yadav 'Bachcha', Neeraj Yadav, Shiv Kumar Gautam, Lavkush Yadav, Satyanarayan Yadav, Alok Kumar and Zeeshan Alam. **MAGISTERIAL INQUIRY:** In the case of the death of inmate Renu, daughter of an unknown person, who had died during treatment on January 10 in the Government Lal Bahadur

Hospital, Ramnagar the Additional District Magistrate (Civil Supply) has been nominated by District Magistrate S Rajalingam to conduct a magisterial inquiry. ADM (CS) Amit Kumar Bhartiya informed that in case anyone wanted to present any evidence/record or point of view it can be done so by contacting his office located at Collectorate on any working day from 10 am to 5 pm till January 25 so that it can also be included in the investigation process.

# 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 villages 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 Bhu-Aadhaar are foundational systems for village development, he said that Bhu-Aadhaar provides a unique identity to land, with around 23 crore Bhu-Aadhaar 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 Khara.

"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 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 Haripur 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 safety 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.







# BEHIND THE SCENES WITH THE CAST



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.



## 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.



### 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, Rishabh Chadha, Diksha Singh, Ronit Ashra and the celebrated Faisal Malik.

**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

Rishabh 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, Rishabh 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.

# GRITTY PICTURE OF TIHAR

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



*Black 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.

**Conspectus**  
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 Sobhraj.

**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 Sobhraj 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 Raveendran Nair, and Ambiecka 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 divison of power. *Black Warrant* is a notable addition to Netflix's library for fans who enjoy crime dramas based on actual events.

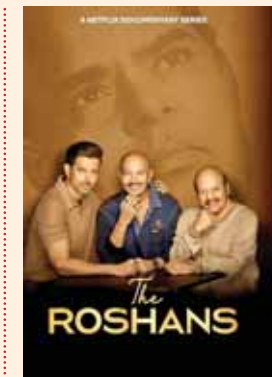
Rating - 4/5

Get in touch at [vivacity@dailypioneer.com](mailto:vivacity@dailypioneer.com)

### 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



"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams"

— Eleanor Roosevelt



# A real-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 Shah Nawaz Alam @alamktr00*

**M**d Shah Nawaz 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 bhaiya' 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.



**ACTING COMES NATURALLY TO ME: SONU SOOD**

*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

**W**hen 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 COMPLEMENT 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.



## FACT SHEET

**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



**I**n 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 shitake mushrooms pair beautifully with iceberg lettuce, red cabbage, mizuna, cucumber and avocado, all elevated by a gomae 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.

## FACT SHEET

**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**

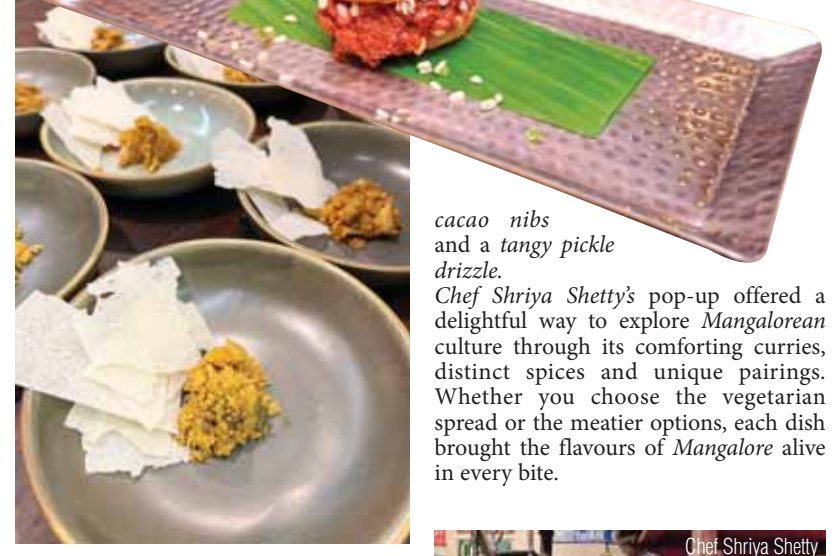
**F**ood has an uncanny way of transporting us. A single bite can take us to a vibrant street, a quiet kitchen or even the shores of a distant coast. At *Chor Bizarre Chef Shriya Shetty's* Mangalorean pop-up did exactly that, bringing the soothing flavours of Mangalore to the heart of Delhi.

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 tzatziki*, *pomegranate* and *cilantro*. The slow-cooked mushrooms were rich and spiced, beautifully balanced by the refreshing tzatziki.

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 Chutney*, *Raw Banana* and *Carrot*



*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.

*Sukha*, *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 Sukha* and *Ghee Rice*, completing the hearty thali. The meal ended on a sweet note with the *DESSERT*, a warm, buttery *Ghee Cake* paired with luscious *Banana Mousse*.



## FACT SHEET

**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



Pawan Soni  
Food critic and founder of the Big F Awards

# 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.

**A RETREAT ON THE RIVER:** Currently being held on the Lachit Ghat,



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 specialties 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



**VRIGO** 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 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

# The Power of Gratitude Journaling

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: recognizing 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.