

SHOWBIZ
HAMPERING MY REPUTATION: ARMAAN MALIK ON HIS NAMESAKE BB CONTESTANT P5



Bombay Times

WEDNESDAY, JULY 10, 2024
ADVERTORIAL, ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY
PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

VARIETY
SALMAN'S FIRING CASE: MUMBAI COPS FILE CHARGESHEET AGAINST NINE P2



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TODAY, ACTORS NEED TO WIN OVER PEOPLE ADDICTED TO 15-SEC REELS: TAMANNAAH

Devika V Menon

Tamannaah Bhatia has worked on movies in several languages across the country. When asked about how her journey has been — from her first film till now — she says it's all about making a choice and then sticking to it, no matter what. "I knew I wanted to be an actor, and I took one day at a time, working towards my dream. I did not over-emphasise any particular decision, but I made a conscious choice of what I wanted to do and I stuck by that, regardless of the circumstances," she tells us in an exclusive interview.

CONTINUED ON P 6

Everything in life, at some point, will get exhausting and tiring. It will get demanding. But, what is the one thing you can do when it gets to that point? For me, it's acting

Tamannaah Bhatia

Hindustani 2 is like our version of a Bond film: Ravi Varman



After *Anniyan* (2005), Ravi Varman has collaborated with Shankar on this film

Roopa Radhakrishnan

After cinematographer Ravi Varman, who has films like *Barfi!*, *Ram-Leela*, *Jagga Jasoos* and *Ponniyin Selvan* to his credit, has shot Lyca Productions' *Hindustani 2*, which hits screens on July 12. Talking about working with Shankar again after their 2005 blockbuster *Anniyan*, the cinematographer says, "With Shankar sir, he always defines the boundary. He's very clear and writes what is needed. Within that boundary, I can play, and he will provide all the technology that I may want to recreate his vision, which is so original."

After the director had narrated the story, the cinematographer says it felt like "our own version of a James Bond film". "Like the recent Bond films, every scene was an event, with each one having a unique setting, like a place without gravity, a yacht, a gold palace and so on. We even have a unicycle chase," he reveals.

The film also is his third one with Kamal Haasan. Explaining the challenge involved in shooting an actor wearing prosthetic makeup, he shares, "Real skin has some moisture and is reflective, but with prosthetics, you get an unnatural shine. It requires sensitive handling of lighting and lensing."

IT WAS MY DREAM TO WORK WITH SHANKAR SIR: BOBBY SIMHA

Immediately said yes when Shankar sir narrated the film to me, because it was my dream to work with him," shares National Award-winning actor Bobby Simha, who plays a key role in *Hindustani 2*. The actor, who has been part of *Jigarhanda*, *Salaar*, *777 Charlie* and *Petta*, among others, calls working with Kamal Haasan a learning experience.

"When we slightly get stuck, he gives an idea to add a minute smile and that smile would go on to make a difference. I learnt from Kamal sir to work on such details," he says.

Bobby Simha plays an investigative officer in the film

It's complicated to light up a shot when actors are using prosthetic makeup



TOIFA GIVES ME CONFIDENCE THAT WE CAN HAVE A CREDIBLE AWARD SHOW: SHOOJIT SIRCAR

The filmmaker, who is on the Advisory Council of the Times of India Film Awards (TOIFA) OTT Edition, speaks about his association with the award show and what makes the voting process credible

P5



'There's a huge demand for fake fans at film events'



Be it a film teaser launch or a fan engagement activity, a large crowd usually means popularity; but showbiz insiders share that not all of it is spontaneous — some of these 'fans' are fake and hired by marketing agencies

Niharika Lal

A strong turnout of 200-400 participants at many film trailer and teaser launches, as well as fan engagement activities in Mumbai, can be ensured for just ₹200-500 per person and a meal, say showbiz insiders. It ensures that the actors receive a lively welcome, they say. While this notion of a manufactured crowd and popularity may be surprising, those in showbiz say that over the years, it has become an established trend in Mumbai. This charade of popularity creates an illusion that there are hundreds of genuine fans cheering for the actors.

Insiders say that there are publicity teams and marketing agencies working to create fake crowds — both for cheering and protesting — to create hype.

CONTINUED ON P 2

Recently, a film on campus politics needed some publicity, and for that, we needed to manufacture a crowd in Delhi, Lucknow, and Mumbai that could protest against the film. But at the last minute, the organisers backed out due to budget constraints

— A source, who assembles fake fans on short notice

Saundhi khushboo from the first spell of rain is my favourite, says Shantanu Maheshwari



Shantanu Maheshwari

Divya Kaushik

Spending a day at home, enjoying some *bhajiya* and *kadachai* and watching movies with family" is Shantanu Maheshwari's idea of enjoying the mon-

soons. Thanks to his busy schedule, the actor has not had the chance to recreate this cosy experience this season. In a chat, he talks about his love for the season.

CONTINUED ON P 5

As kids, we would go out and play football when it would rain, and that used to be so much fun. I think I should get drenched when I get to take a break and just enjoy the rain

'There is nothing organic or genuine about many fan engagement activities today'

CONTINUED FROM P.1

'External agencies hire fake fans'

Event management agencies hire an external agency to gather pretend-fans to cheer for actors. These supposed fans are called junior artistes. A source says, "We were promoting a popular Punjabi actor's film, and he had an event for his upcoming movie. While he was going through the final details with the events agency, the organiser asked, 'Junior artiste ka kya karna hai?' The actor was shocked to find out that these junior artistes are hired to cheer for actors. Next day, at the press con, the actor said, 'Humne taali bajane ke liye fan nahi bulaye, aap log hi baja do.'" In Mumbai, this is not shocking but rather routine. Sources say that excluding A-listers' films, several big-budget films have hired fans in the last two to three years. There are several south films as well for which a paid crowd was orchestrated.



While the existence of fake fans and manufactured crowds for film events is a surprise to many, showbiz insiders say it is a routine strategy in Mumbai. Event management agencies hire an external agency to gather 'fans' to cheer for actors, and they are called junior artistes

School and college students are taken to such events to create perception of popularity and make them look like genuine fans. But there is nothing organic or genuine about these fan engagement activities - A source

Recently, at an event in Gwalior, Kabir Khan was quoted as saying, "When we do (such events) in Mumbai, there would be a (bigger) crowd, but half of them would have been paid to attend." When producers and actors don't have enough money to spend and still want a young crowd cheering for them, they approach schools and college fest organisers, who send their students to fill seats and cheer. While the industry in Mumbai is aware of this strategy, fans outside the city often mistake the manufactured crowds for actual hype around an event.



Uthup's husband, 78, passes away

Usha Uthup's husband Jani Chacko Uthup died in Kolkata on Monday, their family said. Jani, 78, complained of discomfort while watching TV at their residence. He was rushed to a nearby hospital but was declared dead, they said. A massive cardiac arrest was the trigger for the death, they added. Jani, the second husband of Usha, was associated with the tea plantation sector. They first met at the iconic Trinacas - a restaurant and bar in Park Street, Kolkata - in the early



'70s. Besides Usha, Jani is survived by a son and a daughter. The last rites were held on Tuesday, the family said. PTI

SALMAN KHAN FIRING CASE: MUMBAI COPS FILE CHARGESHEET AGAINST NINE

Mumbai Police on Monday filed a chargesheet in a special court against six arrested accused and three wanted persons, including jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi, in connection with the firing at Salman Khan's residence in Bandra in April, where two motorcycle-borne men fired five rounds outside Khan's Galaxy Apartment in the early hours of April 14. PTI



Salman Khan

POV There's no magic in our monsoons anymore

What road were Raj Kapoor and Nargis walking down, singing *Pyar Hua Iqar Hua...*, twirling that umbrella? How was infrastructure not falling around them? How was the water on the road not up to their waists? Why were cars not honking madly around them, stuck in traffic for hours? What world was that? What tricks has cinema played on us all these years with the mystique of the monsoon, the smell of moist earth, the romance of the soft drizzle, the uniquely cinematic setting of a downpour on chifton, the long drive on wind-swept, pristine, non-crowded roads surrounded by lush green trees? How did all that happen? Did AI exist before we knew of it? How do we even go out to search for this filmy version of the rain - the *rimjhim baarish*, the *paani ki phuhaar*, the *sawan* that brings its *aag*, the *bheegi bheegi* vibes? Has it all been washed away with the drain water flowing on the road outside our doors? Is there anything we can do that is really charming and monsoon-ish other than ordering *pakodas* and washing them down with a hot cup of tea, and maybe post a few pictures on the gram of that unique combination with appropriate hashtags to tell everyone how truly, utterly bewitching the beauty of the weather is, while we are frantically checking, behind that cinematic scene, if our vehicle parked in the basement has been submerged yet. Our politicians, our administrators, our contractors have stolen the romance of the monsoon and have transformed this season into a trashy medley of things collapsing, places flooding, commutes getting nightmarish in the urban spaces. But we don't hold them accountable for it. If you try to escape to more remote locations, reckless and relentless 'development' ensures that the romantic hill drive has the ever-present threat of the roads being just swept away. That sunroof you have opened to take in the picturesque drive may well be the opening a falling rock needs to make you truly connect to nature. If Raj Kapoor and Nargis were to walk outdoors in the monsoon in modern-day India, twirling that umbrella, there would be a very different context to '*Kehta hai dil, rasta mushkil, maloom nahi hai kahaan manzil*' - they would barely make it home if the rain continued for another half an hour, the *rasta* would be extremely *mushkil*. The eloquent, touching, haunting lyrics are no longer relatable to our realities. We have been reduced to elementary school lyrics - rain, rain, go away, WFH is just for today.



Agree? Disagree? Got a POV idea? Write to us at: pov@timesofindia.com

LEISURE

SUDOKU CHALLENGE

Level: Medium

4	2		7					
	5							
1			5	2	3			4
	1	4				9		
	7						1	
	3		9		8			
7			4	3	5			2
							4	
								3

HOW TO PLAY
Fill in the grid so that every horizontal row, every vertical column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9, without repeating the numbers in the same row, column or box. You can't change the digits already given in the grid. Every puzzle has one solution.

TIMES HITORI

3	5	2	9	6	4	6	3
3	8	2	9	7	2	6	4
6	6	1	8	6	5	3	3
8	9	8	1	3	6	8	2
3	3	8	2	4	9	1	5
5	7	2	4	6	3	6	1
4	4	9	3	1	7	5	6
9	2	9	5	9	1	9	7

HOW TO PLAY
1. A number may appear just once in each row or column. Eliminate repeat numbers by darkening cells. (see example)
2. Darkened cells must never be adjacent in a row or column.
3. Unmarked cells must create a single continuous area, undivided by darkened cells.
4. Every time you darken a cell, you can automatically circle its vertical and horizontal neighbours, which means they cannot be eliminated.
5. Any cell "sandwiched" between neighbours of the same value can be circled. (e.g. 6 4 6)
6. A "triple" is a special case of sandwich. Circle the centre cells, and darken the ends. (e.g. 6 6 6)

LOOP THE LOOP

RULES
• Connect adjacent dots with vertical or horizontal lines, creating a single loop (Fig A).
• Crossovers or branches are not allowed (As shown by dotted lines in Fig B).
• Numbers in the puzzle indicate the number of lines that should surround it, while empty cells may be surrounded by any number of lines.
• You can't draw lines around zeroes.
• Each puzzle has just one unique solution.

HOW TO BEGIN:
Example (Fig A) - Begin with the zero next to 3. Since no lines can be drawn around zero, mark crosses around it, as shown. Now there is a cross in one space around 3. So we know the three lines of 3 can only be drawn in the remaining three spaces. Next, these lines can only be extended in one direction each. Continue, using the same logic.

Hints: Keep eliminating possibilities by marking crosses in spaces between dots where a line isn't possible, i.e., if you have already completed required lines or where a line extension may create a branch or cause a deadend (Fig B).

THE DAILY CROSSWORD

By Andrew Walker 10/07/2024

ACROSS
1 Tea in masala chai, perhaps
6 Indeterminate but small amount
10 Partner
14 Stockpile
15 Mischief-making Norse god
16 "Statt!" letters
17 Shoes for emptying the kiddie pool?
19 Upscale
20 Avis rental
21 "... hallowed be ___ name"
22 Matter of will?
24 Urchin
25 Ring-tailed mammal
27 Shoes that prevent slipping in the shower?
33 Place to kick back
34 Cheri who played Judge Judy on "SNL"
35 ... de los Muertos
36 Catches with a lure
39 Main ingredient of 54-Across
41 Barely scrape (out)
42 Minor squabble
44 Plot devices?
45 Shoes for attending a gala?
49 Aquamarine, for one
50 Lucy of "Elementary"
51 "Deadwood" territory
54 South Asian stew
55 "The Greatest" memoirist
58 Not protected by defenders
59 Shoes that coordinate with a bright green ensemble?
63 Audition goal
64 "Family Guy" mom
65 Like farm country
66 Google Play downloads

DOWN
67 "Nasty!"
68 Lamp topper
1 Current letters
2 Actress Gilbert
3 Rumble remnant
4 Bigeye or yellowfin tuna
5 Plato, to Socrates
6 Partner
7 Egg ___ yung
8 Heart chart, briefly
9 Know-it-all
10 Seth Rogen's "Kung Fu Panda" voice role
11 Much of an atlas
12 Social sensitivity
13 Fencing tool
18 Leave on the grill too long, maybe
23 Spot on a shirt, say
24 The sun, for one
25 Foldout bed
26 Wildcat native to the Americas
27 Fictional chocolatier
28 Part of a makeover photo spread
29 By and large
30 Cool beans or warm fuzzies
31 TV's younger Dr. Crane
32 Lip
33 Leak slowly
37 Until now
38 Spirited gathering?
40 Drive-___ car wash
43 "¿Qué ___?": Spanish greeting
46 Steakhouse options
47 Bleemish
48 Edmonton NHL team
51 "The Lost City of Gold" explorer
52 Per item
53 Iodine-rich seaweed
54 Home office need
55 Taj Mahal site
56 Head up
57 Many a Caribbean country
60 "Payment forthcoming" note
61 ASMTist's need
62 "Like I didn't know!"

GARFIELD

EVER NOTICE HOW IT TAKES TWO WEEKS TO LOSE A POUND?

AND ONLY TWO SECONDS TO GAIN IT BACK

SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the letters in the four word jumbles, one letter to each square/circle, to make four ordinary words

LVAEE
LLORT
AEESNU
EORSDV

One way to get the most out of life is to look upon it as an ___ - William Feather (9)

HOW TO PLAY
Now arrange the letters in the circles to form the answer to the riddle or to fill in the missing word as indicated

ARCHIE

INTERESTING! DO YOU CONSIDER IT CUBIST, LIKE PISSAO?

OR FUTURIST, LIKE DUCHAMP?

NEITHER, REALLY...

... ARCHIE JUST WON'T SIT STILL!

FINOLEX FORTUNE

See what the stars have in store for you - according to your moon sign.

will get you down. You're tired of waiting for a lazy person's approval. Instead of resigning yourself to an interminable wait, stay busy. **LIBRA:** Discovering a hidden creative ability will be empowering. Give yourself permission to experiment with unfamiliar materials. You'll strike upon a method that gives you lots of happiness. Although you're highly analytical, you also enjoy working with your hands. Craft projects bring a welcome change. **SCORPIO:** Thanks to your superior communication skills, you're able to satisfy customer demand with minimum fuss. This skill is easily transferred to virtually any other industry. Work involving travel, publishing and education may be especially appealing. Follow your heart. **SAGITTARIUS:** Getting to the bottom of a mystery will be satisfying. You're tired of dealing with rumours and half-truths. By launching your own investigation, you'll gather reliable information about changes at work. Some changes are designed to move you forward. **CAPRICORN:** People are impressed by your professionalism. You'll rise to the challenge of protecting their interests. Before making any investments or purchases, you conduct lots of research. Instead of buying the cheapest materials, you look for serviceable items that will last for years. **AQUARIUS:** Someone who mistakes your generosity for naivety will ask for a loan. The last thing you want is to mix friendship with finance. Anyone who tries to make you feel guilty about protecting your monetary interests should be viewed with suspicion. **PISCES:** Working with a partner will be highly productive. It's liberating to deal with someone who doesn't feel compelled to play by the rules all the time. At first, your collaborator's methods will seem strange and chaotic. Instead of trying to correct this approach, observe it carefully.

SPELLATHON

Today's Ratings:
03-average | 04-good | 05-outstanding

How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, a letter can be used as many times as it appears in the puzzle. Each word must contain the central letter. There should be at least one seven letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed. British English Dictionary is used as reference.

O T
O L K
U

DENNIS THE MENACE

"ARE YOU TRYING TO BE ANNOYING?"

"NO. IT COMES NATURALLY."

ARIES: This is a good time to tidy up your living and work spaces. You can't think clearly when you're surrounded by chaos. Once you get rid of the clutter, you'll be left with a streamlined space that makes you excited to get to work. **TAURUS:** It's important to take a realistic view of your career. If you're in a dead-end industry, it's time to make a move. Although the prospect of starting over makes you worried, you shouldn't fall prey to anxiety. You're a fast learner. **GEMINI:** A business trip will be successful. That's because you're able to take a no-nonsense approach to work. Instead of resorting to charm and inflated promises, you make a truthful presentation. **CANCER:** Don't hesitate to apply for a hotly contested job. Although you face stiff competition, you'll easily win the prize. There are people around you who are looking for someone with superior communication skills. **LEO:** Bossing people around will turn friends into enemies. It's better to focus on your own work than worry about what everybody else is doing. The people who matter know you are the most talented person in the group. **VIRGO:** A setback or delay with a creative project

SOLUTIONS TO GAMES/PUZZLES

TIMES SUDOKU

9	6	9	1	9	7	6	8	2
8	7	6	9	2	5	1	6	3
2	9	1	6	7	6	8	7	4
5	2	8	1	6	7	9	3	5
9	1	4	2	9	6	9	7	6
7	6	9	4	9	1	2	5	8
8	9	6	9	2	6	1	3	7
6	7	2	2	1	9	6	9	8
5	3	1	7	6	9	2	7	4

LOOP THE LOOP

TIMES HITORI

2	5	7	6	4	6	3	
3	8	2	9	7	2	6	4
6	6	1	8	6	5	3	3
8	9	8	1	3	6	8	2
3	3	8	2	4	9	1	5
5	7	2	4	6	3	6	1
4	4	9	3	1	7	5	6
9	2	9	5	9	1	9	7

SCRAMBLE
Answer: One way to get the most out of life is to look upon it as an adventure. - William Feather

GREAT INDIAN WEDDING 2.0

GRANDER CANVAS, HIGHER EXPENSES MARK THE BIG DAY FOR COUPLES

Indians spare no expense for their extravagant weddings, turning them into dazzling showcases of intricate decorations, designer fashion and exotic locations



Anukriti Sharma

Indians aren't just getting married — they're orchestrating grand spectacles. Picture extravagant private jets whisking couples to remote destinations, towering décor, regal invites, global celebrities serenading guests, designer attire, and gourmet menus. For this opulence and grandeur, families are shelling out money like never before. The Indian wedding industry is valued at an astounding ₹10 lakh crore (\$130 billion), according to a recent report, just behind that of China (\$170 billion).

SKY'S THE LIMIT FOR SPENDS
From modest affairs costing around ₹12 lakh, to extravagant budgets rivalling those of Bollywood weddings, Indian weddings span a vast spectrum. "Saving for their kids' weddings is something every parent has been doing since ages. It's just that in the last few years, weddings have changed a lot. Now, sky's the limit when it comes to luxury weddings which cost upwards of ₹3 crore," explains Darshan Shroff, partner, Mamente Weddings. While Indians invest double in weddings compared to education, in the US, this number is the opposite, with weddings consuming half the budget allocated to education.

30-40%
Hike in enquiries for luxury weddings

75%
Enquiries about luxurious locations

₹ 30 lakh - ₹ 50 crore
Approx budget for luxury destination weddings
(As shared by multiple wedding planners)

₹ 10 lakh crore
Valuation of the Indian wedding industry

No 2
The standing of the Indian wedding industry in terms of expenditure. Food and grocery sales take the top spot

80 lakh - 1 crore
The number of weddings in India annually.
On average, Indians invest twice the amount in weddings than they do on education
(Source: A report by brokerage firm Jefferies)

52% Jewellery

20% Catering

10% Events

10% Clothing

8% Photography and videos
(Approx numbers)

Rajasthan is a popular wedding destination for many. One can expect to spend between ₹12 and 42 lakhs on renting a 5-star property alone. Exclusive venues in Udaipur and Jaipur may command higher prices

- Saumitra Singh, Managing Director, The Tigress Resort & SPA, Ranthambore

Offbeat lakeside destinations, and picturesque Kashmir have become popular wedding destinations in the country. At the same time, large groups prefer hosting weddings in their hometowns, like Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai, but with big budgets

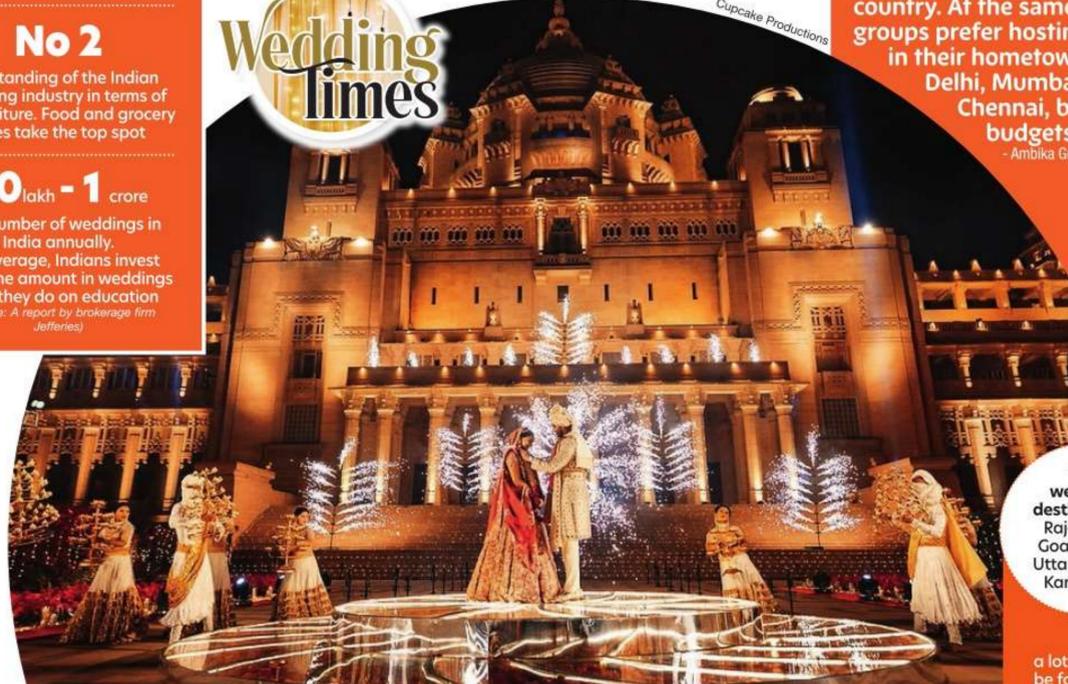
- Ambika Gupta, the A-Cube Project

Guests' preferences dictate the decor budget

Apart from expenses on jewellery, apparel, catering, and event management, decor is stated as an underrated aspect of weddings. Himish Agarwal, CEO of Konark Events, explains "For example, some communities favour a grand experience overall, while others prioritise top-tier entertainment. Some guests want to see renowned artists, skilled anchors, talented performers, photographers and make-up artists at the wedding. International guests at destination weddings in India expect superb management and professional services. All these factors dictate the decor and event expenses of wedding."

People are always pushing boundaries, drawing inspiration from the latest trends in showbiz and on social media. For instance, Bridgerton inspired a themed event we did this year. While not everyone can afford the full celeb wedding extravaganza, many aim for a scaled-down version of the same

- Darshan Shroff, partner, Mamente Weddings



According to experts, photography and videography budgets have also gone up depending on the venues. "High-end venues for special shoots may charge around 3 lakh per day, share Apoorv Mohan Shrivastav and Sanyogita Sao, from Plush Affairs, a wedding photography company



Top wedding destinations: Rajasthan, Goa, Kerala, Uttarakhand, Karnataka

Minimal weddings not out of the picture

While extravagant weddings hog the limelight, people from the wedding industry share that a lot of young couples also prefer smaller, more intimate affairs. "These naturally cost a lot less, ranging from ₹7-15 lakh at the most. Yet, they can be fantastic experiences, especially because they are far more personal," shares Smriti Ahuja, co-owner of Circle Goa, a wedding company.

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Saira Banu reveals Dilip Kumar suffered from severe insomnia

Saira Banu took to Instagram recently to post a few pictures of herself with Dilip Kumar and a letter she wrote to him. She also revealed that the late actor suffered from insomnia.

Saira wrote, "Sahib had everything at his disposal, yet he suffered from se-

vere insomnia. Before our marriage, even after taking pills, he would remain awake until dawn. However, once we got married, he started sleeping just in time. He even gave me a cute nickname, endearingly saying, 'Saira, you are my sleeping pill, you are my pillow'."



Dilip Kumar and Saira Banu

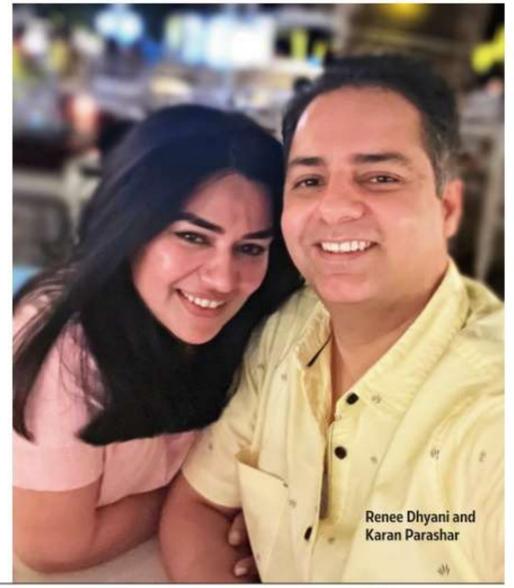
Renee to get married tomorrow

Aapki Nazron Ne Samjha actress Renee Dhyani is set to tie the knot with Karan Parashar, who works in the banking sector in Mumbai. Renee tells us, "It's an arranged marriage turned into love. Many believed I would either go for a love marriage or not marry at all. Last year, my parents suggested I consider marriage. They asked me to meet Karan in January this year and decide for myself. Karan was certain I was the one for him after our first meeting. However, it took me around 45 days to feel the same (laughs!)." She adds, "He is mature and calm, and brings tranquillity to my life. We come from different fields, so we have a lot of topics to talk about, and we respect each other's work."

Karan is mature and calm, and brings tranquillity to my life. We come from different fields & respect each other's work

The pre-wedding festivities have begun, and the wedding will take place tomorrow in Renee's hometown, Noida. The actress, who was last seen in the OTT series *Ratri Ke Yatri* and TV show *Dhartiputra Nandini*, shares, "Karan and I initially planned a destination wedding, but had to move it back to Noida because it was difficult for our parents to travel."

— Neha Maheshwri



Renee Dhyani and Karan Parashar

ENTERTAINMENT

PRODUCED BY FELICITY THEATRE

MAHABHARAT
THE EPIC TALE

A PLAY WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY PUNEET ISSAR DURYODHAN & KARAN'S PERSPECTIVE

LIVE ON STAGE

VENUE: **BAL GANDHARVA RANG MANDIR BANDRA-MUMBAI**

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A HINDI PLAY

Siachen

written by Aditya Rawal

translated by Raghav Dutt
directed by Makarand Deshpande

TODAY & TOMR. 9pm PRITHVI

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Cast: Zahan Kapoor, Niketan Sharma, Chitransh, Ashish Bhatt, Rohit Mehra, Jatin Sarin & Shruti Jolly

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An intimate birthday bash for Rakesh Paul



Rakesh Paul with wife Sunaina & daughter Ruhani



Gurpreet Kaur and Hunar Gandhi



Vivek Mushran

Rajev Paul

Rakesh Paul celebrated his birthday recently with an intimate house party for his family and friends from the industry. The actor, who celebrated his birthday after a long time, said, "I haven't celebrated my birthday for many years, but my family insisted on it this time. So, we invited some of my closest friends and we had a nice time."

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Drive away the rainy-day blues

Cooler temperatures, varied topography, and refreshed surroundings make the monsoons particularly appealing. Make good use of these conditions to venture by road to these scenic spots

stations of Lonavala and Khandala are perennial favourites. The drive along the Mumbai-Pune Expressway offers breathtaking views, especially when the clouds gather around the mountaintops.

Ketan Shah, a marketing professional, recounts, "Driving on the wide roads, we were surrounded by vibrant greenery, especially when the clouds gather around the mountaintops. We visited Tiger Point, where we indulged in hot masala noodles and a cup of ginger tea, amidst the foggy views."

During the rainy season, Malshej Ghat transforms into a retreat for nature lovers and adventurers. Renuka Mahajan, a travel agent, shares, "The scenic drive from Mumbai to this spot is a highlight in itself, passing through roads that showcase beautiful valleys and mist-covered peaks. Travellers can enjoy the natural beauty of the

WEATHER THE STORM

Driving during the monsoon can be challenging, but follow these precautions for a safe and smooth journey:

1. Ensure your car is serviced and rain-ready, focusing on brakes and wipers.
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3. Reduce your speed and maintain safe distance from the vehicle in front of you.
4. Stock your car with a first aid kit, flashlight, extra batteries, water, snacks, and a blanket.

OF VALLEYS AND PEAKS

visitors can unwind at one of the local resorts, and enjoy the cool and refreshing weather that defines this spot during the monsoons.

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As the rains transform the landscape into varying shades of green, it's the perfect time for a picturesque drive. If you want to escape the city's chaos and enjoy nature's glory, here are some spots near Mumbai to explore by road.

THROUGH MISTY LANES
Just a two-hour drive from Mumbai, the twin hill

from Mumbai, Igatpuri is a hill station with riveting views and ancient forts. The monsoon transforms this region into a green paradise, with numerous waterfalls cascading down the hillsides. Nisha Gupta, a graphic designer, tells us about her Igatpuri adventure: "We visited Bhatsa River and Camel Valley, both of which offer stunning views. The best part was the Tringalwadi Fort

trek as the rains made the trail challenging yet beautiful." Other spots for a monsoon drive include Mulshi Dam, where the journey takes you through winding roads flanked by dense forests and expansive fields. Mahabaleshwar, a hill station in the Sahyadri mountain range, and Bhandardara, a hill station in Ahmednagar district, are other places to consider during the

rainy season. Driving to these spots near Mumbai offers a refreshing break and a chance to

connect with nature. So, pack your bags, start your car, and set off on your monsoon adventure.

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TOIFA gives me confidence that we can have a credible award show: Shoojit Sircar

Tejas Kudtarkar



The filmmaker, who is on the Advisory Council of the Times of India Film Awards (TOIFA) OTT Edition, speaks about his association with the award show and what makes the voting process credible

Renuka Vyavahare

The Times of India (BCLL) recently announced the launch of its inaugural Times of India Film Awards (TOIFA) OTT Edition 2023. The black-tie event will take place on July 27 in Mumbai, honouring exemplary talent in acting, content creation and technical prowess in Hindi web films and series of 2023.

Beyond the legacy and prestige of the brand, what sets the awards apart is its rigorous three-tier voting process that ensures credibility. The nominees have been shortlisted by 30 members of the Screening Jury, comprising known actors, filmmakers, studio execs, writers, casting directors and film critics. The nominations are then vetted by the illustrious Advisory Council of nine members that include Siddharth Roy Kapur, Shoojit Sircar, Rajkumar Hirani, Sameer Nair, Nikhil Advani, Raveena Tandon, Guneet Monga Kapoor, Aanand L Rai and Madhureeta Mukherjee. After this, the TOIFA Academy comprising 175 members of the Producers Guild of India will vote for the winners.

Acclaimed filmmaker Shoojit Sircar, who is also on the Advisory Council of TOIFA, shared his insight on why he's optimistic about the credibility that TOIFA brings. In a candid chat with us, he said, "I have stopped going to award shows. I have not been to any award function for many years now. They are time-consuming and secondly, the credibility is questionable. I don't want to blame



The TOIFA - OTT edition has introduced People's Choice Voting Awards in four popular categories. To vote, log on to www.toifa.in or scan the QR code

anyone as that's how the world operates. But I firmly believe that award shows should honour the finest talent alone. When I was explained the three-tier voting process of TOIFA, technical details and the names involved in the Advisory Council, I felt the team's intent is right and they are capable of reinstating credibility."

The director elaborated, "There's a three-level check as far as nominations and voting are concerned. This award execution process gave me the confidence that for years to come, if the organisers stick to integrity and core values of rewarding talent and art, we could have a credible award show. Since this is the first year (OTT edition), going forward, things will expand and there will be more discussions, addition of members in the Advisory Council and Screening Jury. All of that will only add to the inclusivity and reach. But I can say that this is a good beginning."

I firmly believe that award shows should honour the finest talent. When I was explained the three-tier voting process of TOIFA, technical details and names involved in the Advisory Council, I felt the team's intent is right and they are capable of reinstating credibility

'Be it the Academy Awards or Golden Globes, every nominee turns up on the awards night'

Addressing a crucial issue, he added, "No one will know the winners of TOIFA beforehand (not even the Advisory Council). They will be announced straight on the awards night. That's going to be exciting. This will eliminate the culture of only winners attending the show, which is usually the case. Be it the Academy Awards or Golden Globes, every nominee turns up for the award show and that shows credibility. That is what TOIFA is trying to achieve too, and I feel that's incredible for artistic expression."

Hampering my reputation: Armaan Malik on his namesake BB contestant

Armaan Malik on Monday said he has no connection with a controversial YouTube creator who shares his name and is currently a contestant on the *Bigg Boss OTT 3*. In a post on X, the singer, 28, urged people to stop tagging him in social media posts that have no relation to him.

The contestant has been in the news for being married to two women - Payal and Kritika. Both of his wives joined him on the reality show, but Payal was eventually evicted from the show.

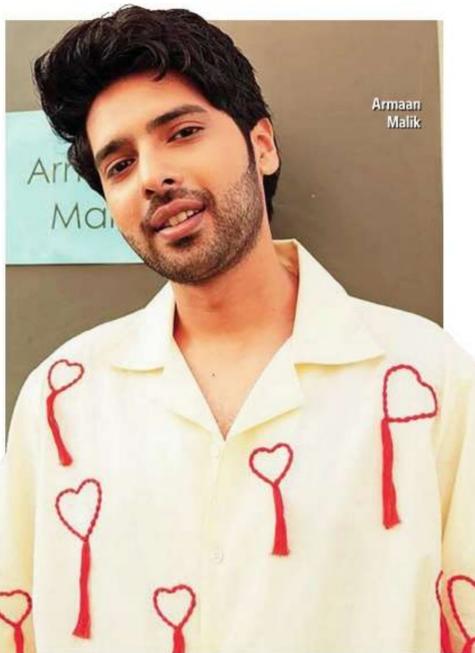
"I've been trying to overlook an issue for a while now, but it seems to be getting out of hand at this point and I have to address it," the singer wrote, adding, "A YouTube creator, earlier known as Sandeep, later changed his name to Armaan Malik and is currently on *Bigg Boss OTT Season 3*. This is causing a lot of confusion, with many people mistakenly tagging me and assuming we are the same person."

He further added, "This situation is hampering my reputation and is turning out to be misleading to so many people who have supported me over the



The BB contestant Armaan with his wives Payal and Kritika

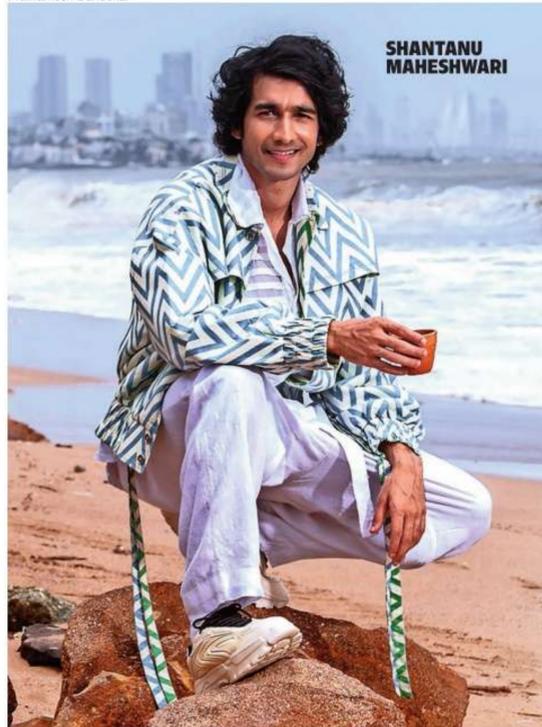
years. While I can't stop someone from changing their name and taking up the same as mine, I do request my own community to help me overcome this." PTI



Armaan Malik

'TRAVELLING IN MONSOON WILL SURELY BE A GREAT EXPERIENCE'

Prathamesh Bandekar



SHANTANU MAHESHWARI

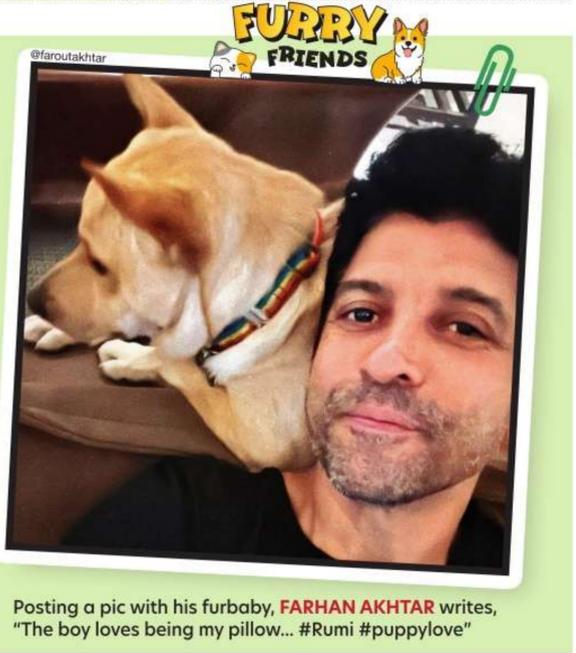
CONTINUED FROM K 1

'Mumbai has a different charm in the monsoons'

The actor and dancer, who grew up in Kolkata, but moved to Mumbai for his higher studies and work, says that he has his favourite spots to visit in Mumbai when it rains. "I think the city has a different charm to it when it rains. The fragrance, *saundhi khushboo*, from the first spell of rain is my favourite. Kanheri Caves in Borivali is one of my go-to monsoon spots in the city. The only bad thing about monsoons is that when you are working, it is a task to reach any place on time as traffic can get crazy." He adds, "As kids, we would go out and play football when it would rain and that used to be so much fun. I think I should get drenched when I get to take a break and just enjoy myself."

'Hill stations look exceptionally beautiful when it rains'

Shantanu says that travelling during monsoons has also been on his wishlist. "I have heard of some amazing monsoon destinations. I want to visit Meghalaya, I know that it rains a lot there and travel can be challenging, but that is something I want to experience. Also, I think hill stations look exceptionally beautiful when it rains. I have not explored Himachal. I would love to visit some offbeat locations near Manali. Monsoon travel will be a good experience I am sure, but this is something I can plan when I can take a break from work. I have a shoot lined up next, I think I should be able to take a break to travel after that," he says.



Posting a pic with his furbaby, FARHAN AKHTAR writes, "The boy loves being my pillow... #Rumi #puppylove"

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Borivali (W): Mega Hall, (Madhuram Hall) Shimpoli Road, Near Gokhale School

Dahisar (W): Mukti Kamal Hall, Next To Shree Shantinath Jain Temple Lokmanya Tilak Road, Near Dahisar Station

Bhayandar (W): Joel Smruti, Mandli Talao, Opp. Nagar Bhavan

Vasai (W): Samaj Unnati Mandal Sabha Gruha, Opp. Manikpura Petrol Pump, Post Vasal Road

Chembur: Swami Muktanand High School Hall, Subhash Nagar, N. G. Acharya Marg

Ghatkopar (W): Parameshwari Bagh, Near Munisurvat Derasar, Nauroji Lane

Mulund (W): Sarswat Wadi, Zaver Road

Thane (W): M.M.K HALL, Pride Park, Opp. Lockim Company, Ghodhunder Road

Ghodhunder: Manpada, Near R Mall (This venue is closed today only 10.07.2024 & restarts from tomorrow 11.07.2024)

Thane (W) Teen Haath Naka: The Thane Club, Mohan Kopekar Road, Teen Haath Naka, Opp. Raheja Gardens, Thane - 400601

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I have found myself through the characters I've played: Tamannaah



Tamannaah Bhatia

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

'I DID NOT KNOW WHERE MY DECISIONS WOULD TAKE ME'

Despite the uncertainty that comes with the profession, Tamannaah enjoys her job. "I did not plan the path beyond deciding that I wanted to be an actor. I had no idea where it would take me. Despite the uncertainty, I gave my dream a 100 per cent, and now I feel I pursued something enjoyable."

'WE ARE STRIVING TO GRAB PEOPLE'S ATTENTION'

Talking about the challenges that the Indian film industry is facing today, she says, "There was a time when it was only cinema. Then multiplexes came through. After that, OTT happened, with long-format in OTT trending now. Now literally, as creative people, our biggest competition is the 15-second videos online, because we are striving for people's attention who are used to watching 15-second videos."

'I AM NOT WORRIED ABOUT THE FORMAT OF THE WORK, AS LONG AS IT IS IMPACTFUL'

Currently busy with a number of projects across industries, Tamannaah shares, "I am working on an untitled Tamil film, and a Telugu movie called *Odelela*. At the same time, I am also doing an OTT show called *Partners*. So, the idea is to just focus on what that piece of content is that I am a part of. I'm not worried about the format. I'm just trying to see whether it has something new for me to do. Are people going to see a new and better version of me? Also, bonus points if it



'I do not consider fame to be a disability'

I don't think there is any downside to fame; it is actually very empowering. It's all about the way you look at it. I think I've only felt more and more empowered because of being somebody who has some kind of influence. I would feel bad for myself if I thought fame was a disability of any kind. This industry and this work do make you give up on a certain kind of life, but then, any other thing I would do would have its own pros and cons.

has some kind of emotional grounding, which tells a story."

'I GET AN INSIGHT INTO MYSELF EVERY TIME I PERFORM'

Tamannaah feels that the roles she has essayed have had an impact on her personal journey as well. "My own journey of finding myself has been through the characters," she says, adding, "I feel like every time I perform a certain character, it gives me a little bit of insight about myself, because as an actor, you're making choices about how you're going to perceive a character, and those choices are a very big re-

Every character I play gives me insight about myself, because as an actor, you're making choices about how you're going to perceive a character, and that is a reflection of who you are

lection of who you are. So, when people say you know how different the actor is from the character, I don't agree with it. You are choosing to make that character behave that way because that's your perception. So, I choose to play characters that are more diverse, and more authentic."

Keep tabs on you favourite stars with [bombaytimes](#)

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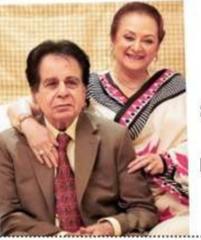
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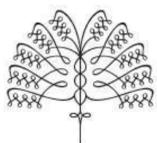
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