

{ ANANYA PANDAY }

I don't try to lie and hide. However, I have become more protective of things.

On dinner table discussions with her family

#Lifestyle

DIGITAL ARREST SCAMS: ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW TO STAY VIGILANT AND PROTECTED

p05

#MyCity

GEAR UP FOR AUTO EXPO!

The much-anticipated event is vrooming its way to Bharat Mandapam this month. Here's what to look forward to this time

p04



#Showbiz

WORLD HINDI DAY: FOREIGN ACTORS RECOUNT THEIR TIME LEARNING THE LANGUAGE

p01



Aquarius

Professional delays call for teamwork and a reassessment of timelines.

p02



#Showbiz

LA FIRES WREAK HAVOC

The catastrophic disaster in US has destroyed many celeb homes and forced others to evacuate

p01

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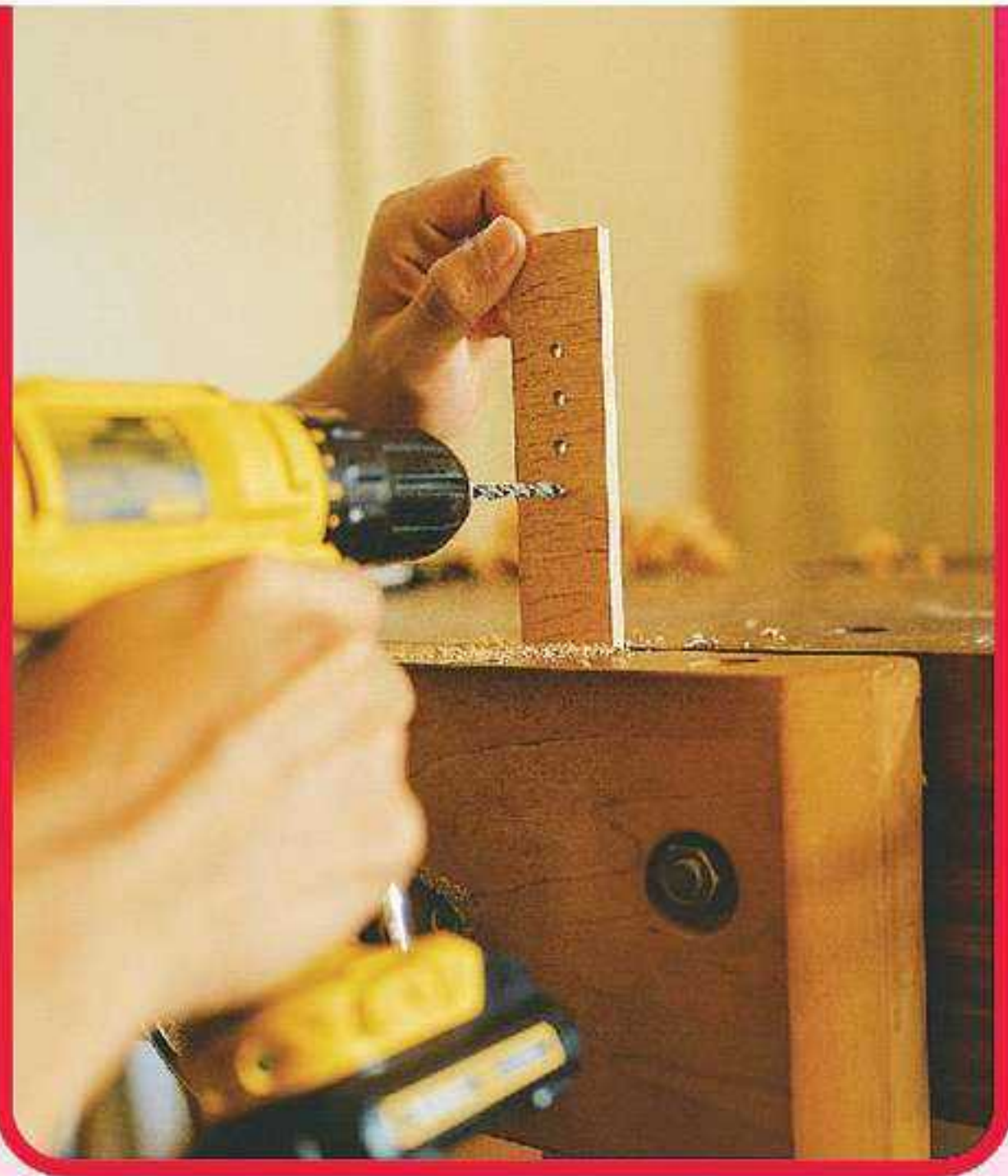
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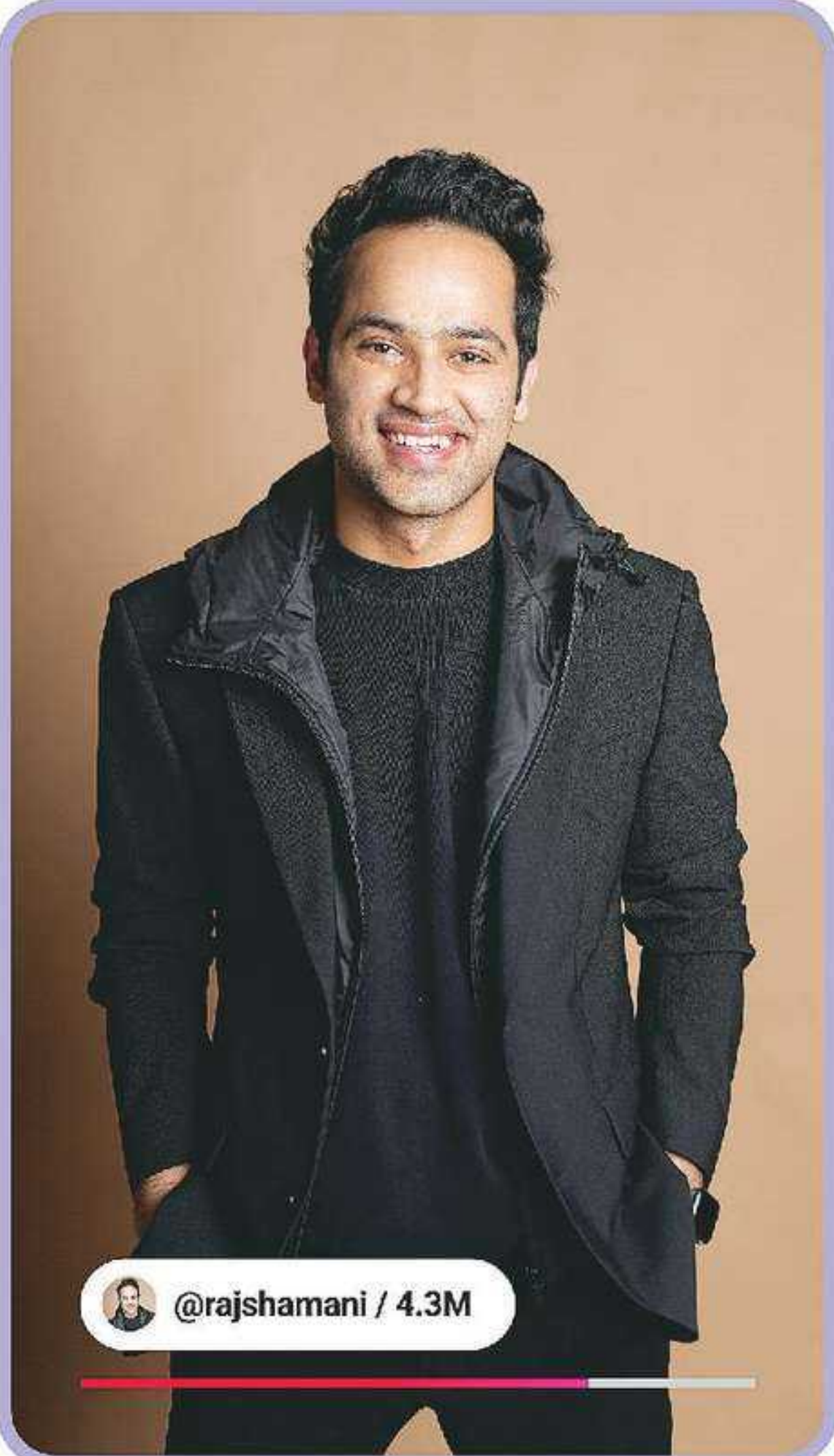
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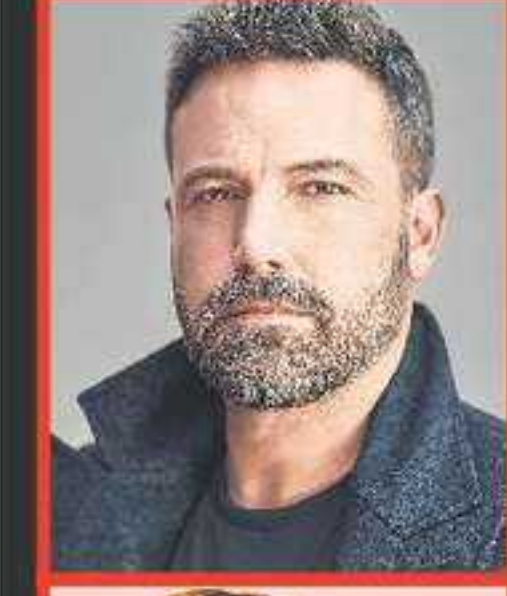
Actor Robert Pattinson and long-time partner, actor-singer Suki Waterhouse reportedly wed in the Caribbean over the New Year. The Daily Mail and Insta celeb gossip account Deuxmoi cited a source who claimed to be a waiter at the wedding. As per the source, "Robert Pattinson and Suki Waterhouse got married at NYE at the Caribbean resort I work at. They were so cute and sweet. Their baby was there in a gorgeous little bridesmaids dress (sic)." PHOTO: X

PHOTO: AFP

LA WILDFIRES FORCE H'WOOD STARS TO EVACUATE

Hollywood came to a standstill after wind-induced fires engulfed the city of LA, leaving destruction in its wake

CELEBS WHO FLED THE BLAZE



Actor-dancer Nora Fatehi, actor-filmmaker Ben Affleck and businesswoman Paris Hilton

Since Tuesday, raging wildfires have engulfed the Hollywood town of Los Angeles, California. Whipped up by the region's powerful Santa Ana winds, a series of five fires have destroyed over 15,000 acres across the US state. Among the worst-affected areas is the Pacific Palisades, a hillside neighbourhood that is home to several celebrity residences. Stars including actor Mark Hamill and singer-actor Mandy Moore evacuated their homes while actor-couple Adam Brody and Leighton Meester, singer Fergie and businesswoman Paris Hilton lost their houses in the blaze. Over 130,000 people are under evacuation orders in the metropolitan area. While California firefighters

mandymooremm I love you. Altadena. Grateful for my family and pets getting out last night before it was too late (and endless gratitude to friends for taking us in and bringing us clothes and blankets). Honestly, I'm in shock and feeling numb for all so many have lost, including my family. My children's school is gone. Our favorite restaurants, leveled. So many friends and loved ones have lost everything too. Our community is broken but we will be here to rebuild together. Sending love to all affected and on the front lines trying to get this under control.

markhamill * there "were" small fires* ^ (gimme a break- we were fleeing for our lives)

Stay Safe Everyone 🙏🙏

have been battling the flames, the fire continued to burn uncontained on Wednesday, destroying over 1,000 structures and clogging roadways. According to a map published by Page Six, several other Hollywood homes including the residences of actors Jamie Lee Curtis, Tom Hanks and Ben Affleck are located in the vicinity of the danger zone. Actor-dancer Nora Fatehi, who is also in the LA area, had to evacuate and shared her ordeal on an Instagram Story. "This is insane, we just got an evacuation order five minutes ago... I have a flight today and I hope it doesn't get cancelled because this s**t is scary," she wrote. Since Tuesday, the fires have consumed a total of 42 square miles and claimed five lives. HTC

priyankachopra 23h My thoughts are with everyone affected. Hope we are all able to be safe tonight. 🙏

AWARD SEASON PAUSED The Critics Choice Awards, scheduled for January 12, have now been pushed to February 26. The Writers Guild's annual WGA Award nominations have been postponed from January 9 to 13. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has extended the voting period for the Oscars, initially set to close on January 12, by two days. Meanwhile nominations for the Oscars will now be revealed on January 19.

H'WOOD LOCKED DOWN A number of movie premieres in the Los Angeles region were cancelled on Tuesday, including Wolf Man and Unstoppable. Universal Studios' Hollywood theme park also closed for the day on Wednesday due to smoky conditions. Additionally, over a dozen TV shows paused filming, while the permits for certain locations were withdrawn. These include Hacks, Suits LA, NCIS, Grey's Anatomy, Jimmy Kimmel Live, The Rookie and Abbott Elementary.



weekend planner

We have the perfect fix for your WEEKEND VIBE! Check it out on Pg 4

Sonu Sood slashes Fateh ticket prices to ₹99 for opening day

Fateh is a tribute to the resilience of the common man. I want everyone, regardless of their circumstances, to experience it.

SONU SOOD, Actor

In a generous move, actor Sonu Sood has announced that the opening day tickets for his film *Fateh*, releasing today, will be priced at a mere ₹99. While the industry often hikes prices for big releases, Sood's gesture reinforces his unwavering connection to audiences, making cinema more accessible. Inspired by real-life stories, the action-packed drama carries a powerful message of strength and unity. Sood's decision to cap ticket prices stems from the belief in the film's universal appeal. "*Fateh* isn't just a film — it's a tribute to the resilience and spirit of the common man. I want everyone, regardless of their circumstances, to experience it. This gesture is my way of thanking the audience for their unwavering support and making sure no one is left behind in celebrating this story of courage," says the actor, who also wrote and directed the project. In addition, Sood has pledged to donate the film's profits to charities and orphanages, reinforcing his 'Real Hero' title. As he puts it, "Every ticket that is sold will help those in need." Produced by Umesh KR Bansal under Zee Studios and Sonali Sood of Shakti Sagar Productions, *Fateh* is set to leave audiences spellbound. So, head to your nearest theatre to be part of a cinematic revolution that celebrates humanity. HTC

Industry pays tribute to late Prithish Nandy

anilskapoor 13h

Sudhir Mishra @IAMSudhirMishra · 12h Prithish Nandy changed my life . Only he could Hazaaron Khwahishen Aisi . He taught me so much . I am so sorry Prithish Da . I couldn't come up with an idea for the sequel .

Sanjay Dutt @duttсанjay · 12h A true creative genius and a kind soul, you will be missed sir. #PrithishNandy

Journalist, poet and filmmaker Prithish Nandy died in his Mumbai home on Wednesday. Nandy, a Padma Shri awardee, passed away at the age of 73 after a cardiac arrest. Actor Kareena Kapoor Khan, who starred in Sudhir Mishra's 2004 film *Chameli*, backed by Nandy, remembered the late filmmaker by sharing throwback pics from the set. Actor Anupam Kher also penned a heartfelt note for Nandy on X, recalling the time they were "inseparable": "He was my support system and a great source of strength in my initial days in Mumbai. He was also one of the most fearless people I had come across. I learnt so many things from him." Actor Anil Kapoor also took to social media to offer his condolences and wrote, "Shocked and heartbroken by the loss of my dear friend Prithish Nandy. A fearless editor, a brave soul, and a man of his word, he embodied integrity like no other." Actor Sanjay Dutt, who starred in Sanjay Gupta's 2002 action thriller *Kaante* and Leena Yadav's 2005 psychological drama *Shabd*, both produced by Nandy, wrote on X: "A true creative genius and a kind soul, you will be missed sir." Nandy's last rites were performed on Wednesday evening. HTC

#worldhindiday

Foreign actors recall their first language lessons

ELLI AVRRAAM I first studied Devanagari at Stockholm University (Scotland) before moving to India. After coming to India, I took few lessons but it never really helped, so I pushed myself to talk everyday and not feel shy about speaking it wrong. My favourite word to say is 'Ji' — I find it cute! I love Hindi and India; many times when I'm abroad I end up saying Hindi words because I'm so used to speaking in Hindi here every single day.

EDWARD SONNENBLICK Before setting foot in India, I got so hooked on Hindi movies that I got myself a book called 'Teach Yourself Hindi'. I loved it so much that by the time I got here, I had a head start and hit the ground running. The job I cut my teeth on in the industry was the TV serial Jhansi Ki Rani where I was the main villain in over 100 episodes. My Hindi got a lot better on the job. It's near impossible to perform well in a foreign language if you don't speak it and are just reciting foreign sounds.

Rishabh Suri

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM/EDWARDSONNENBLICK

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Poonam Dhillon's house burgled; culprit nabbed, valuables recovered

Yashika Mathur
yashika.mathur@hindustantimes.com

Actor Poonam Dhillon was left shocked on Sunday after discovering a burglary at her Khar, Mumbai flat. The thief, who stole diamond earrings, ₹35,000 in cash, and \$500, was apprehended on January 6. Speaking about the incident, the 62-year-old reveals that the crime was committed by a construction worker employed to paint the house. "None of us ate at home when this happened. There was some construction work going on, and the staff was looking after it. We quickly realised that a theft had occurred and reported the matter," Dhillon shares. While Dhillon resides in Juhu, Mumbai, her son, actor Anmol Dhillon, occasionally stays at the Khar flat. She explained that house staff were overseeing the construction work when the incident took place. "This person was working at our house as part of the construction process and had probably planned it. Three workers were present, and when my son returned, he noticed that valuables were missing and immediately took action," Dhillon says, adding, "We reported the matter right away. Otherwise, the items could have been sold."

The incident left the actor unsettled. "It's a shock to know that someone entered your house and stole your belongings. One does feel scared. I'm surprised this happened despite people supervising the construction process," she admits. The culprit, identified as 37-year-old Sameer Ansari from Malvani in Malad West, had been working at the apartment between December 28 and January 5. Investigations revealed that he took advantage of an unlocked cupboard. Ansari reportedly spent ₹9,000 on a party with friends before being apprehended. The police recovered ₹25,000 in cash, \$500, and the stolen diamond earrings, as confirmed in an official statement.

This person was working at our house as part of the construction process and had probably planned it.
POONAM DHILLON,
Actor



PHOTO: YOGEN SHAH



Yash rings in 39th b'day with a beachside bash, twinning with wife Radhika

Kannada star Yash celebrated his 39th birthday on Wednesday with a cosy gathering in Goa. Photos of the low-key celebration, featuring the actor cutting a cake on the beach, have been making waves online. The pictures show Yash's wife, Radhika Pandit, and their children, Ayra and Yatharv, joining in the festivities. Adding a delightful touch, Yash and Radhika twinned in matching green outfits. Ahead of his birthday, Yash had



Yash celebrated his birthday in Goa

urged his fans to "change the language of love" when it comes to celebrating his special day. This request came after a tragic incident last year, where fans lost their lives due to electrocution while putting up banners for his birthday.

HTC

PHOTOS: X

{ DAILY HOROSCOPE }
Friday, January 10, 2025
Dr Prem Kumar Sharma (Astrologer and Vaastu expert) can be contacted at: Delhi: 011-47033152, 40532026 (Sat to Mon); Panchkula: 91-172-2562832, 2572874 (Tues to Thurs); Mumbai: 09716145644 (Last week of every month)
PREMASTROLOGER
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ARIES MAR 21-APR 20 Engage in outdoor activities to refresh your mind and spirit. Family traditions will strengthen your bonds, so treasure these moments of unity. Travel plans might benefit from a serene experience. LOVE FOCUS: Meaningful discussions could deepen your commitment and bring shared happiness. LUCKY NUMBER: 6 LUCKY COLOUR: Grey	LEO JUL 23-AUG 23 A misalignment in professional vision may be frustrating but could prompt recalibration. A hiking adventure might uplift your mood. LOVE FOCUS: Consider opening your heart to avoid misunderstandings in love. LUCKY NUMBER: 3 LUCKY COLOUR: White	SAGITTARIUS NOV 23-DEC 21 Focussing on gut health might improve overall well-being. Workplace risk assessments may require collaborative efforts for clarity. Travel preparations should be meticulous to avoid stress. LOVE FOCUS: Quiet, shared moments can nurture mutual understanding. LUCKY NUMBER: 3 LUCKY COLOUR: Golden
TAURUS APR 21-MAY 20 Financially, your efforts to build credit are likely to yield positive results, ensuring greater stability. Family interactions may be tense, but empathy can pave the way for harmony. LOVE FOCUS: Expressions of affection are set to deepen the bond with your partner. LUCKY NUMBER: 7 LUCKY COLOUR: Silver	VIRGO AUG 24-SEP 23 Simplifying your lifestyle and avoiding excess could restore balance and focus. Refining operational strategies may pave the way for long-term success. LOVE FOCUS: Clarity in expectations will nurture harmony in your relationship. LUCKY NUMBER: 4 LUCKY COLOUR: Golden	CAPRICORN DEC 22-JAN 21 Mindful fasting may leave you feeling revitalised. Strategic work plans might feel slow but are likely to yield positive outcomes. A spontaneous family activity like a bike ride could bring joy. LOVE FOCUS: Joy in companionship will nurture your connection. LUCKY NUMBER: 1 LUCKY COLOUR: Orange
GEMINI MAY 21-JUN 21 At work, constructive feedback could help hone your skills. Planning a family outing could bring joy and ease lingering tensions. LOVE FOCUS: Clarity in romantic preferences could lead to meaningful connections. LUCKY NUMBER: 5 LUCKY COLOUR: Purple	LIBRA SEP 24-OCT 23 Financially, reassessing strategies might uncover opportunities for savings. Documenting travel through photos could create cherished memories. LOVE FOCUS: Expressions of love will bring warmth to your relationship. LUCKY NUMBER: 5 LUCKY COLOUR: Magenta	AQUARIUS JAN 22-FEB 19 Financial milestones may seem distant, but breaking them into actionable steps could enhance progress. Professional delays call for teamwork and a reassessment of timelines. LOVE FOCUS: Compassionate gestures will deepen mutual understanding. LUCKY NUMBER: 6 LUCKY COLOUR: Cream
CANCER JUN 22-JUL 22 Conflicts at work may arise but resolving them diplomatically will enhance your image. A helpful hand at home could allow for better family coordination. LOVE FOCUS: Shared dreams and heartfelt expressions will deepen your bond. LUCKY NUMBER: 2 LUCKY COLOUR: Peach	SCORPIO OCT 24-NOV 22 Spending wisely might help avoid unnecessary expenses. Embrace thrill-seeking travel like rafting. Exploring co-working spaces as an investment may yield interesting possibilities. LOVE FOCUS: Celebrating your connection will enhance your bond. LUCKY NUMBER: 22 LUCKY COLOUR: Baby Pink	PISCES FEB 20-MAR 20 Skill-building efforts may open doors to exciting professional opportunities. Create memories with loved ones to enhance familial bonds. Sustainable travel options can make journeys fulfilling. LOVE FOCUS: Conversations may ignite promising romantic connections. LUCKY NUMBER: 9 LUCKY COLOUR: Maroon

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Celebrating the timeless elegance of terracotta art

On Tuesday evening in the Capital, art connoisseurs and cultural enthusiasts gathered for an exclusive preview of Touchable Emotions, a solo exhibition by renowned sculptor G Reghu. Curated by Jyotirmoy Bhattacharya, the showcase offered a glimpse into Reghu's transformative terracotta sculptures. "Working with clay is a spiritual experience for me; it allows me to weave stories of life, emotions, and heritage," Reghu shared.



G Reghu



Anand Moy Banerji



Ina Puri



Saurabh Singhvi and Jyotirmoy Bhattacharya



Manish Pushkale



Shovin and Shampa Bhattacharjee



Sanjay Das



Bhushan Pradhan and Anusha Dandekar



Rumours about Shibani-Farhan expecting a baby went viral on Thursday, but Shabana later denied them

PHOTOS: YOGEN SHAH

Shibani Dandekar and Farhan Akhtar

Inside the triple birthday bash



Sajid Khan and Farah Khan

Thursday was a special day for the extended Akhtar family as it marked three birthdays — Farhan Akhtar, his cousin Farah Khan, and Anusha Dandekar, the sister of his wife, Shibani Dandekar. The family came together for a lively celebration. Here's a glimpse

#instastyle

New year calls for new transformations, and actor Shraddha Kapoor is embracing the change in style! Recently, she took to Instagram to share a series of pictures showcasing her freshly cut hair. Looking chic, she flaunted her front bangs in a set of mirror selfies clicked inside a salon. Captioning the post, she wrote, "Baal baal jach gayi."

► Shraddha Kapoor

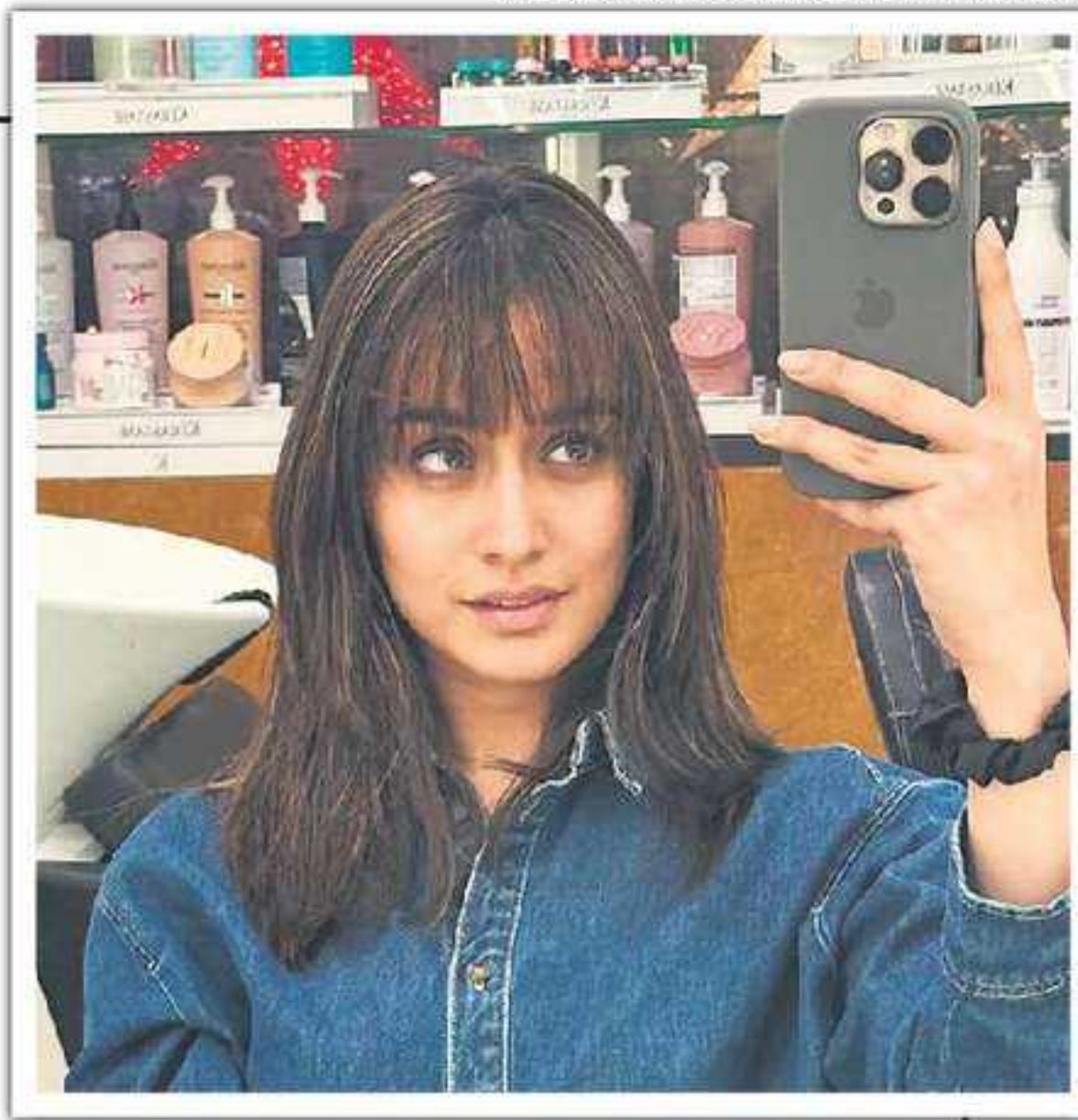


PHOTO: INSTAGRAM/SHRADDHAKAPOOR

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DELHI, GEAR UP FOR THE ALLURE OF AUTOMOTIVES

Auto Expo is vrooming its way to Bharat Mandapam this month, and bet you can't miss all the glitz and glam of awe-inspiring designs in the automobile space

Arun Changrani

arun.changrani@htlive.com

Play the drumroll for automobile enthusiasts as it's that time of the year when their love for wheels takes over Delhi-NCR. This piece is to prep you to save the date for the Auto Expo, which is being organised this year as part of the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025. Though the larger event is spread across three venues, the Auto Expo will take place at Bharat Mandapam, Pragati Maidan.

The biannual event, like its several previous editions, will showcase innovative technologies in vehicles. "This year, this motor show will offer a glimpse into the future of India's automobile sector with the highest-ever participation of 34 OEMs," shares Rajesh Menon, director general, Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), adding, "The main focus will be on decarbonisation and

sustainability, and visitors will get to see vehicles across all powertrains, including EVs, Hybrids, Ethanol, CNG and Hydrogen. But beyond vehicles, visitors will also witness many new technologies and concept models that exemplify the industry's transformative journey towards a greener and more innovative future."

For the autophiles, some of the latest offerings from the Indian automobile industry will include a showcase from a host of brands. In the four-wheeler space, one can check out stalls of Tata Motors, Maruti Suzuki, Mahindra & Mahindra, Toyota Kirloskar Motor, Hyundai Motor India, Kia Motors India, JSW MG Motors and Skoda Auto Volkswagen India. Besides their products on display, there will be a lot of chatter about the future of mobility, which combines cutting-edge technology with sustainable solutions. "We are excited to showcase the complete dimension of 'e For Me' at the upcoming expo, where visitors will experience first-hand how we are re-imagining the future of mobility in India," says Partho Banerjee, senior executive officer, marketing and sales, Maruti Suzuki India Limited, adding, "Our 'e For Me' vision represents a defining moment in India's electric mobility transformation."



We are introducing a revolutionary approach to electric mobility that puts the customer at the core."

In the luxury and premium category, Delhiites will get to witness German brands like Porsche, Mercedes-Benz and BMW. The category of two-wheelers will see the participation of TVS Motor, Bajaj Auto, Hero MotoCorp, Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India, Suzuki Motorcycles and Yamaha India. With respect to the electric mobility segment, vehicles from EV manufacturers like Ather Energy, TI Clean Mobility, Eka Mobility, Ola Electric, BYD and Vinfast will entice the onlookers!

CATCH IT LIVE

What: Auto Expo 2025

Where: Bharat Mandapam (Pragati Maidan)

When: January 18 (business day), January 19 to 22 (general public)

Timing: 10am to 6pm

Entry: Free (Register at www.bharat-mobility.com)

Nearest Metro Station: Supreme Court on the Blue Line

This motor show will offer a glimpse into the future of India's automobile sector.

RAJESH MENON, from Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers

We're excited to showcase the complete dimension of 'e For Me' at the upcoming expo.

PARTHO BANERJEE, from Maruti Suzuki India Limited

MODELS TO CHECK OUT:
Hyundai Creta Electric, Tata Sierra EV, Mahindra BE 6e, and Maruti eVX

#editorspickoftheweek



HT@100 MY COUNTRY MY LENS

Do you know that India has 15,106.7 Km of land border? What makes it more enchanting is the diverse geography of the country in these areas. Admiring one spot among these are these tourists enjoying a camel ride at Hunder Sand Dunes in Ladakh's Nubra valley. This site is popular for being one of the world's highest altitude deserts.

Photo by Mohit Sirpurkar

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Classical tales: An ode to Tansen by the maestros of Indian music and dance



Pt Hariprasad Chaurasia, Vidushi Shubha Mudgal, Pt Vishwamohan Bhatt and Ustad Shujaat Khan will perform in Delhi

Henna Rakheja

henna.rakheja@htlive.com

Imagine the musical notes from Pt Hariprasad Chaurasia's flute or Ustad Shujaat Khan's sitar or Pt Vishwa Mohan Bhatt's Mohan veena. The visual that conjures up is enough to entice aficionados of classical music at Swami Haridas-Tansen Sangeet Nritya Mahotsav.

Conceptualised on the gurusushya tradition, this festival attempts to honour the saint musician, Tansen, and musical

gurus. "This year, I will be accompanied by my disciples, two young musicians who are students of Vrindaban Gurukul, Mumbai," shares Pt Hariprasad Chaurasia, who will perform on day one. The day will begin with a vocal recital by Ustad F Wasifuddin Dagar. "I will sing some compositions on Lord Krishna, and a composition in raga Yaman, Adhar lagayi rus piyaai basuri bajaai," says Dagar.

Carrying the tradition forward, day two will see Pt Vishwa Mohan Bhatt spread the magic of his Mohan

veena along with Pt Salil Bhatt on Satvik veena. "This is one of the biggest festivals in Delhi where music lovers in huge numbers come to listen, and the auditorium always reverberates with their applause and appreciation, which we artists look forward to," says Pt Vishwamohan Bhatt, adding, "I will begin the performance with a classical segment that will have veena recital accompanied by the tabla. The classical will blend with the folk as Rajasthanian musicians will join us to sing. In addition, I will also

play some compositions from my Grammy-award winning album, *A Meeting by the River*."

The final day's schedule has a Kathak recital by Uma Sharma and her disciples. And the finale will have yet another mesmerising vocal recital by Parveen Sultana, who recalls, "Once (when I had to perform at this festival) it was very cold due to the fog and I couldn't get out of the hotel but the audience was waiting patiently for me. I will always remember that, these are true music lovers."

CATCH IT LIVE

What: Swami Haridas-Tansen Sangeet Nritya Mahotsav 2025

Where: Sir Shankar Lal Hall, Modern School, Barakhamba Road

When: January 10 to 12

Timing: 6pm

Nearest Metro

Station: Barakhamba Road on the Blue Line

weekend planner

JANUARY 11-12



flickfix

SATURDAY-SUNDAY

Where: In theatres

Time: All day

YEH JAWAANI HAI DEEWANI

Cast: Ranbir Kapoor, Deepika Padukone, Aditya Roy Kapur

THE RAJA SAAB

Cast: Prabhas, Malavika Mohanan

NOSFERATU

Cast: Bill Skarsgård, Nicholas Hoult

bitestop



SATURDAY

EXPLORERS CLUB | COCKTAILS, FOOD & MUSIC FESTIVAL

Where: World Tech Park, Sector 30, Gurugram

Time: Noon onwards

SUNDAY

LOHRI WITH FLAVOURS OF PUNJAB

Where: Andaz Delhi by Hyatt, Aerocity

Time: 12.30pm to 3.30pm

playdate



SATURDAY

RAHUL DUA LIVE

Where: Kedarnath Sahni Auditorium, Ajmeri Gate

Time: 8pm

SUNDAY

KABIRA KHADA BAZAAR MEIN

Where: Shri Ram Centre for Performing Arts, Mandi House

Time: 7pm

STANISLAVSKI THEATRE FESTIVAL

Where: Red House, B-203, Pocket B, Okhla Phase I, Okhla

Time: 6.30pm

grooveit



SATURDAY

THE BURRAH PROJECT 3.0

Where: Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium, India Gate circle

Time: 2pm

SUNDAY

CULTURAL EXPERIENCE

Where: Kathika Cultural Centre and Museum, Sita Ram Bazaar

Time: 11.30am

powerhour



SATURDAY

YAMUNA TOUR ON CYCLE

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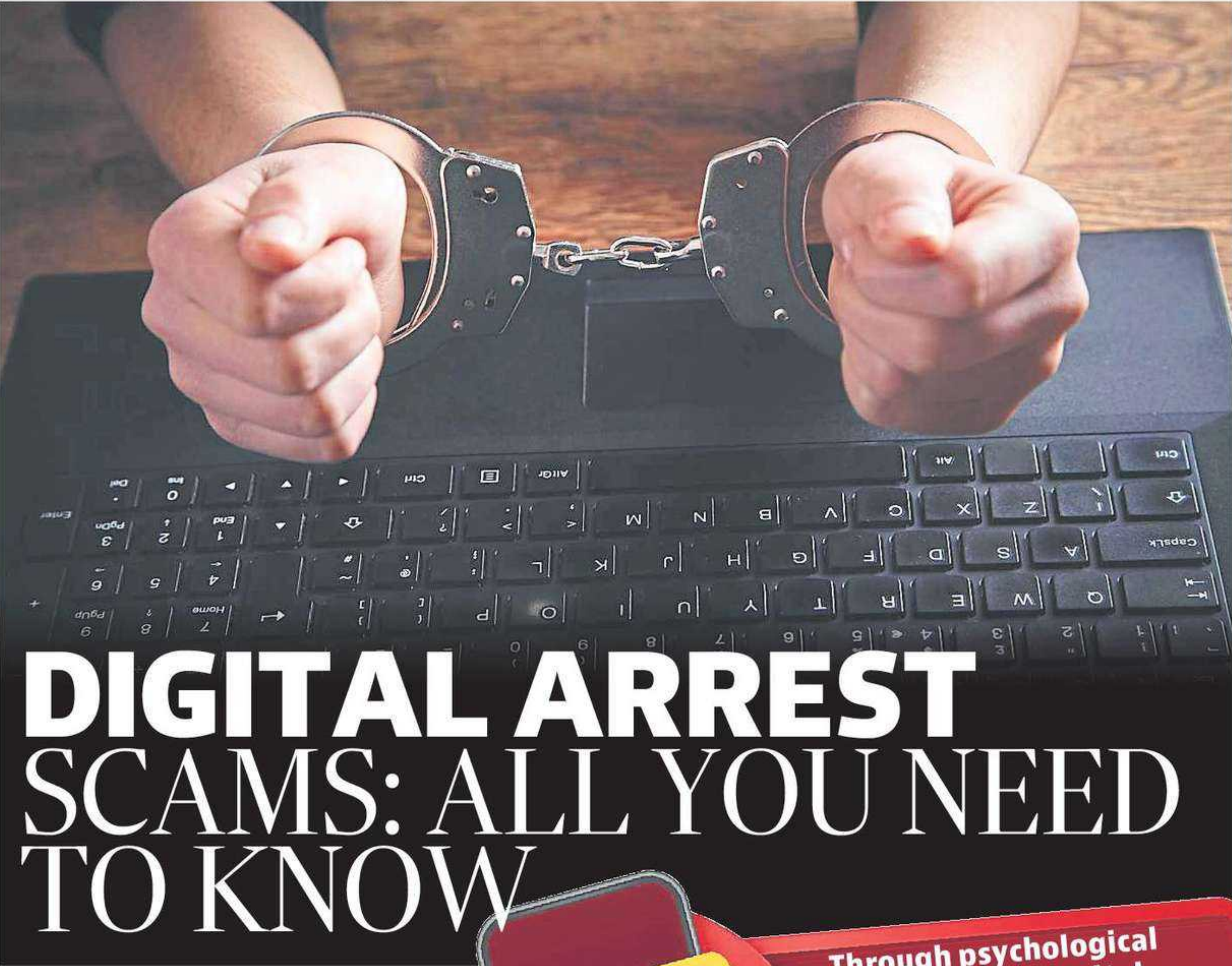
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DIGITAL ARREST SCAMS: ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

Ruchika Garg
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Every day, we hear about digital scams and fraudulent calls leading to significant financial losses, often targeting vulnerable individuals. However, a recent case serves as a reminder that scammers can target even the most educated and intelligent individuals. Influencer Ankush Bahuguna's experience of being digitally trapped for 40 hours underscores the urgent need for greater awareness and sensitivity toward cybercrime. Opening up about the ordeal, Bahuguna revealed how scammers "hypnotised" him into making a transaction and isolated him from his friends and family through a relentless 40-hour video call. He shared that the incident not only cost him money but also took a toll on his mental health. To better understand such scams and their psychological impact, we spoke to cybercrime and mental health experts.

THE MODUS OPERANDI OF DIGITAL SCAMS
Digital scams often follow a predictable pattern. Cybercrime consultant Mukesh Choudhary explains: "You receive a random call where the caller implicates you in a criminal case—for example, claiming a parcel in your name has been intercepted, containing drugs or illegal weapons. The caller may also threaten to permanently shut down your number or inquire about your outstanding phone bills. There are even nude video calls. The scammers then escalate the situation, posing as law enforcement or investigators, with fake letterheads and ID cards. They even create fake police stations and dress up like cops while video calling. The next step involves relentless demands for money, often through multiple accounts. They instruct you to

close your doors, draw the curtains, and avoid answering other calls, thereby creating a sense of isolation and urgency. Victims only realise it's a trap after transferring significant amounts. It's not just thousands or lakhs; people have been duped into transferring five or even six crores."

THE LATER PROCESS
Scammers often use fake Skype accounts for video calls and rely on rented bank accounts to receive money from their victims. Scammers quickly convert these funds into cryptocurrency, which complicates their traceability. By the time the victim reports the fraud to the police, the scammers freeze the amount, block the account, or later convert the cryptocurrency into real money. They also

purchase bank accounts, SIM cards, and other resources to facilitate their operations. Increasingly, these scams are being run from foreign locations like Bangkok and Cambodia, where tracing IP addresses poses significant challenges for investigation agencies.

THE POLICE'S PERSPECTIVE
Delhi Police have registered approximately 40 cases of fraud involving amounts above ₹50 lakhs, with the

majority occurring in 2024. "Only five cases date back to 2023, highlighting a clear rise in scams last year," says Hemant Tiwari, DCP/IFSO. To combat this surge, Delhi Police have implemented various awareness initiatives. "Our experts conduct special sessions in residential societies through RWAs, as well as in schools and colleges. We've also collaborated with the government to introduce awareness ringtones. Awareness is the key," Tiwari emphasises.

SOS
On receiving such calls, people should immediately report the incident on cybercrime helpline number 1930 or www.cybercrime.gov.in for assistance. One can also visit the nearest cyber crime unit to file the case.

AWARENESS IS KEY
Many fall for scams without realising that legitimate authorities will never demand money over a video call. Cybercrime consultant Mukesh Choudhary says, "In legal matters, individuals receive an official notice or summons from the respective agency or are approached by local police—not through a random phone call. Even in rare cases where the police might call, you should request a formal notice and consult your lawyer before taking any action."

WHAT HAPPENED WITH ANKUSH BAHUGUNA?
"It all started with an automated call from an international number, claiming a package scheduled for delivery had been cancelled. The message prompted him to press 'zero' for support—an action he later described as "the biggest mistake of his life." The call connected him to someone posing as a customer support representative, who alleged that a package linked to his name contained illegal substances and had been sent to China. The representative further claimed an arrest warrant had been issued against him. Fake police



officers and investigators joined the video call, completing the elaborate trap," says Bahuguna.

THE MENTAL HEALTH IMPACT
The rise of 'digital arrest' scams highlights the psychological toll these schemes inflict, far beyond financial loss. "Victims experience acute stress responses, including panic, hypervigilance, and emotional paralysis, as scammers exploit fear, authority, and isolation."

Prolonged manipulation can lead to post-traumatic symptoms like flashbacks, disrupted sleep, and pervasive anxiety," says psychotherapist Dr Chandni Tugnait. "Financial loss intensifies feelings of shame, guilt and diminished self-worth, while trust in institutions and digital platforms is severely eroded. Many victims face long-term consequences, such as

decision-making paralysis, digital distrust and social withdrawal. In severe cases, cyberphobia, or avoidance of online interactions, disrupts personal and professional lives. Recovery requires not just financial resolution but also emotional validation, professional support, and education to rebuild trust, confidence, and resilience in digital spaces," Dr Tugnait adds.



HIGH-RISK GROUPS
Different groups respond to digital arrest scams in varied ways, with some being more vulnerable than others. "We pick up the calls out of curiosity and continue it due to fear. When people get scared, the rational part of their brain stops working. The emotional part takes over. They are not thinking at that moment," says Sneha Sharma, a psychiatrist. Psychotherapist Dr. Chandni Tugnait explains, "Elderly individuals are at high risk due to limited tech familiarity. Young professionals, reliant on digital tools, often panic due to fears of reputational damage." Cybercrime consultant Mukesh Choudhary adds, "Fear of criminal charges can push retired professionals and those with reputations at stake into panic mode, making them easy targets."

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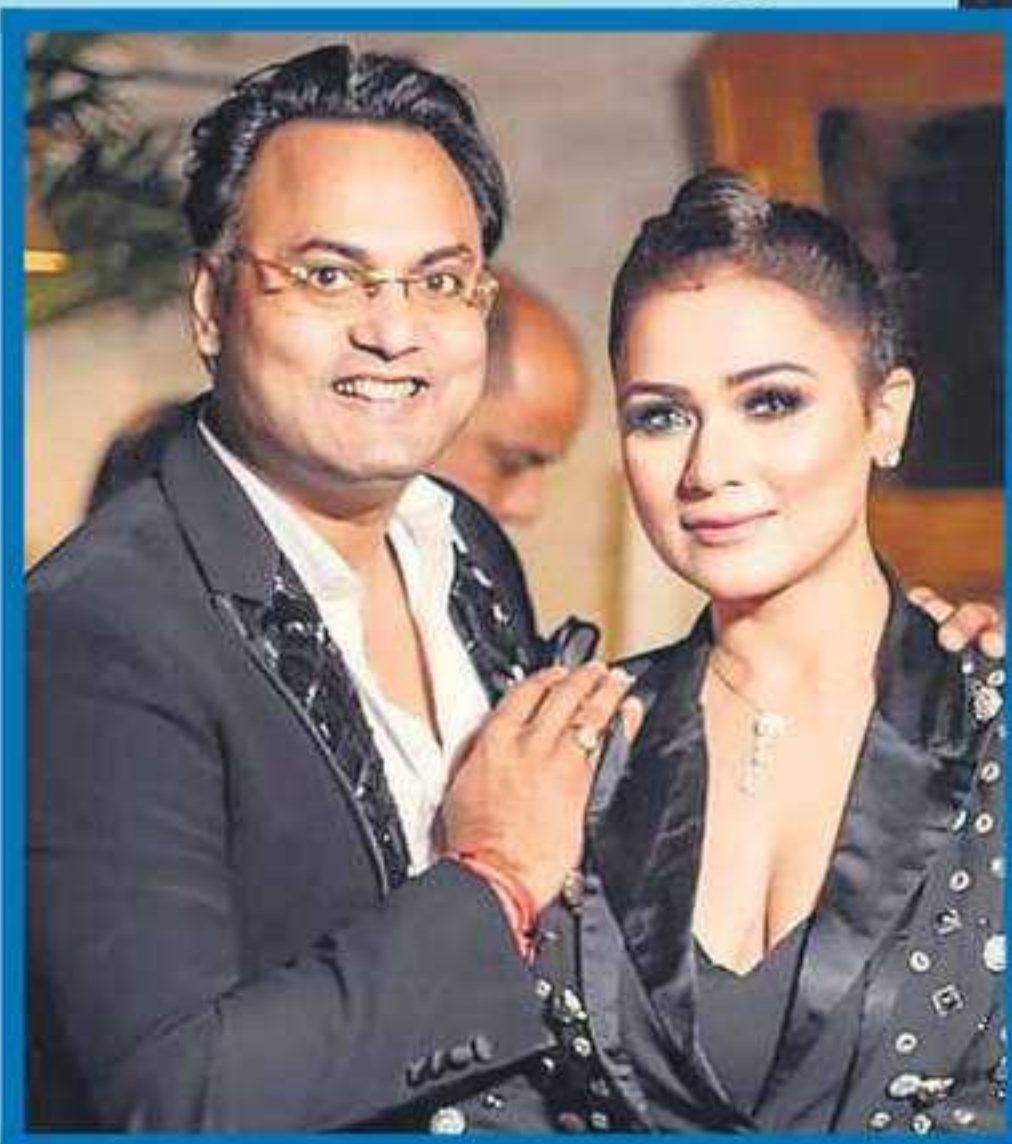
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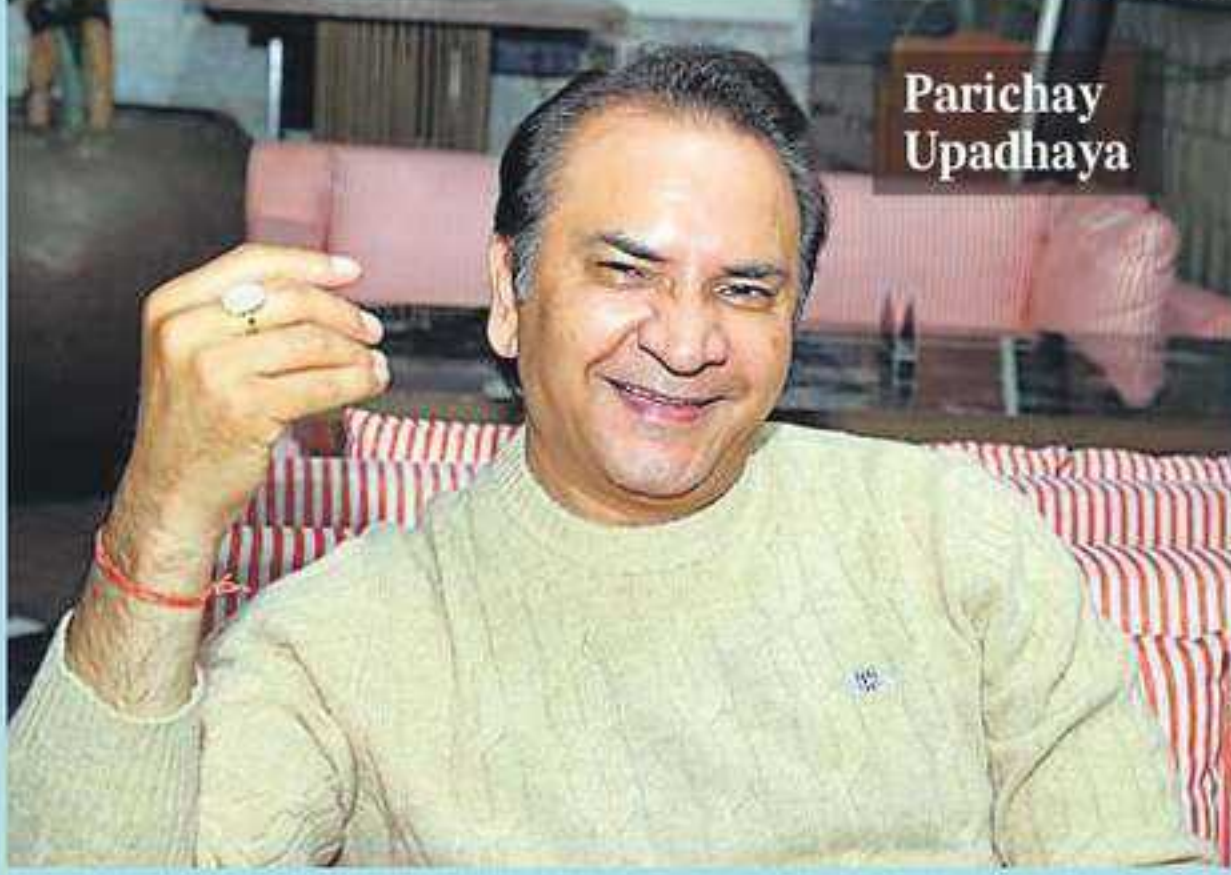
A starry musical evening



Rohit Khandelwal and Richi Khandelwal



(L-R) Chandani Kumari, Pallavi Mohan and Gagan Myne



Parichay Upadhaya



Ankoor Pasari and Rashmi Chhabra

The Capital witnessed a spectacular Saturday night fever at **Habbit**, hosted by Pallavi Mohan. The guests enjoyed a blend of commercial retro music, exotic cocktails and delicacies on offer. Music connoisseurs can now head to Habbit every Saturday night, 9pm onwards, to savour all the fun. "We will give the guests a new experience with cocktails and music every Saturday," says Richi Khandelwal, founder and owner of Habbit.

#lookbook

Sonam serves up effortless chic



Sonam A Kapoor
PHOTO: INSTAGRAM/
SONAMKAPOOR

Actor Sonam A Kapoor looked stunning in a head-to-toe neutral ensemble from Joseph. To ace this look, she opted for a classic black blazer and paired it with a flowing navy pleated skirt and striped scarf detail. Her Dior tote adds a pop of personality to her overall outfit.

Steal the style

Go for a simple white top as a clean base and layer it with a tailored black blazer. Pair this with a flowing navy pleated skirt and round off the look with black pumps or loafers. Opt for minimal accessories such as statement rings.

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FOR ME, HINDI IS HOME: NITANSHI GOEL

On World Hindi Day today, the actor reveals her special connection with the language and how it helps her connect with the audiences

Aakash Bhatnagar
akash.bhatnagar@partner.hindustantimes.com

For actor Nitanishi Goel, being called a Hindi film actor gives her an immense sense of joy. On World Hindi Day today, she shares, "It fills me with so much pride and love for my country and language. Even when I travel to foreign countries, if I spot an Indian, the first thing to come out my mouth is Namaste, and it makes me feel very warm."

Explaining her connection with the language, the 17-year-old shares, "In early school days, to celebrate Hindi Diwas, we would recite [writer] Premchand's poems. From then to now in films, whenever I speak in Hindi, it makes me feel connected to the audience — it makes the entire thing feel so authentic." She adds, "The

versatility of Hindi is magical. Woh poetry bhi ho sakti hai, smart bhi ho sakti hai, aur woh aapke dil ki baat bhi bayaan kar sakti hai. It offers you a homely feeling. So for me, Hindi is home."

Goel also reveals her favourite Hindi saying: "Yun hi nahin mil jati raahi ko koi manzil, ek junoon sa dil mein jagana padta hai. Ek din puchha maine chidiya se ki kaise bana aashiyana, wo boli bharni padti hai udaan baar baar aur tinka tinka uthana padta hai."

For Goel, Hindi should be celebrated on a global stage. "There are so many wonderful actors who represent Hindi so well, be it Amitabh Bachchan, Pankaj Tripathi or Manoj Bajpayee sir. As a fan of their work, I admire the way they feel pride in speaking, and I'd like to follow the same on an international level," she says.

contd. from p1

Hindi for beginners: Foreign actors' take on learning the language

On World Hindi Day, actors Mark Bennington and Mandana Karimi talk about their ongoing journey of grasping the language

MARK BENNINGTON
It was not daunting when I started off with Hindi projects. I had done Parmanu: The Story of Pokhran (2018), and after that, people kept calling me for work. [But] I remember, I had to deliver a big monologue for Kesari (2019), which I had to do over and over again. Even in my first Hindi film, Detective Byomkesh Bakshi! (2015), I pretended it was nice and easy. But I still struggle with the language.

MANDANA KARIMI
Almost a decade back, I came to India as a model. So for me, speaking Hindi while doing a photoshoot wasn't required. [But] when I shifted to Mumbai, my househelp told me, 'Aapko Hindi ya Marathi mein baat karna aana chahiye.' So, my first two teachers were my staff and my driver. Later, while auditioning I would just memorise the lines, without grasping the meaning. But then I felt I need to understand it. Now I'm fluent.

PHOTOS: INSTAGRAM

Rishabh Suri

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