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ROOPA IYER PAYS MARVELLOUS TRIBUTE TO
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CHIEF EDITOR DESK



Dear Readers,

On behalf of National Awareness Times (India's National Weekly), the editorial board and the team of our journal would like to wish all the readers a wonderful week ahead and Happy Republic Day to all.

Azad Bharath is a 2026 Indian Hindi-language historical film that revisits one of the most powerful yet underrepresented chapters of India's freedom struggle.

Indian-origin astronaut Sunita Williams has officially retired from NASA, bringing to a close one of the most inspiring careers in the history of human spaceflight.

US President Donald Trump has once again sparked controversy by claiming that the United States played a mediating role in achieving a ceasefire between India and Pakistan.

In a major political development, Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Tejashwi Yadav has been appointed the National Working President of the party, marking a significant moment in the evolution of the RJD.

Deepak Singh,
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ROOPA IYER PAYS MARVELLOUS TRIBUTE TO SUBHASH CHANDRA BOSE

By Editor – Gaurav Singh



Azad Bharath is a 2026 Indian Hindi-language historical film that revisits one of the most powerful yet underrepresented chapters of India's freedom struggle. Set against the backdrop of the Indian National Army (INA), the film brings to the forefront the extraordinary contribution of women soldiers, especially those who formed the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. Directed by Roopa Iyer and produced by Zee Studios in collaboration with India Classic Arts, the film was released worldwide in theatres on 2 January 2026. With a blend of history, emotion, and

patriotism, Azad Bharath attempts to restore the legacy of women whose courage and sacrifice have often remained absent from mainstream historical narratives.

At its core, Azad Bharath is a story about resistance, identity, and the transformative power of courage. The film explores the role of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment, an all-women combat unit established under the leadership of Subhas Chandra Bose within the INA. This regiment symbolized not only armed resistance against British colonial rule but also a radical break from traditional gender roles of the time. By

focusing on this regiment, the film highlights how women stepped beyond societal boundaries to actively participate in the armed struggle for India's independence.

The narrative unfolds through the life of Neera Arya, portrayed by Roopa Iyer herself. Neera's journey serves as the emotional and thematic anchor of the film. Through her experiences, the audience witnesses the challenges faced by women who chose the path of armed resistance—rigorous military training, emotional sacrifices, ideological conflicts, and the constant threat of



violence. Neera is presented not merely as an individual character but as a representation of countless women who stood shoulder to shoulder with men in the freedom movement, often without recognition or remembrance.

Shreyas Talpade delivers a significant performance as Subhas Chandra Bose, the charismatic and visionary leader of the INA. His portrayal emphasizes Bose's belief in equality, discipline, and national pride, as well as his unwavering faith in the potential of women as soldiers and leaders. Through his interactions with the women of the regiment, the film underscores the ideological foundation behind the creation of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment—an idea rooted in empowerment, courage, and the conviction that freedom must be fought for by all, regardless of gender.

The supporting cast adds depth and nuance to the film's narrative. Veteran actor Suresh Oberoi plays Chhaju Ramji, a character that embodies

experience, discipline, and moral strength. His presence lends gravitas to the story, particularly in moments that explore the ethical dilemmas and emotional toll of war. Indira Tiwari's portrayal of Saraswati Rajamani stands out as a symbol of youthful determination and unyielding spirit, reflecting the diversity of women who joined the INA from different backgrounds and age groups. Priyanshu Chatterjee appears as Shrikant Ranjan Das, adding another layer to the film's exploration of loyalty, ideology, and sacrifice. The ensemble cast works cohesively to create a narrative that feels both personal and collective in its scope.

From a technical and artistic standpoint, Azad Bharath places strong emphasis on authenticity. The film's production design, costumes, and settings are crafted to reflect the historical period with care and attention to detail. Military camps, training grounds, and wartime environments are portrayed in a manner that immerses viewers in the era of the

1940s, when the INA was actively mobilizing forces across Southeast Asia. The visual tone of the film balances realism with cinematic expression, allowing the emotional weight of the story to resonate without excessive dramatization.

Music plays a crucial role in enhancing the film's emotional impact. The music and background score, composed by Gautham Srivatsa, support the narrative by blending patriotic intensity with moments of introspection and sorrow. The lyrics, written by Sameer Anjaan, reflect themes of sacrifice, hope, and unwavering love for the nation. The film's anthem, sung by Amruta Fadnavis, stands out as a stirring tribute to the spirit of resistance and remembrance, reinforcing the film's central message of honoring forgotten heroes.

Upon its release, Azad Bharath received mixed to positive responses from critics. Some





reviews pointed out shortcomings in execution and narrative pacing, suggesting that the film's ambitious subject matter was not always matched by its cinematic treatment. However, many critics acknowledged the importance of the story being told and praised the film for drawing attention to a neglected aspect of India's freedom struggle. Several reviewers highlighted the emotional core of the film and its sincere attempt to celebrate unsung women warriors who played a vital role in the fight for independence.

Audience reactions reflected a similar range of responses. For many viewers, *Azad Bharath* was a moving and inspiring experience that sparked curiosity about the Rani of Jhansi Regiment and the women who served in it. The film resonated

particularly with audiences interested in history, patriotism, and stories of empowerment. Its emphasis on remembrance and recognition struck a chord, especially in a time when discussions around representation and historical justice are gaining prominence.

Beyond its cinematic qualities, *Azad Bharath* holds cultural and educational significance. By centering its narrative on women in the INA, the film challenges conventional portrayals of India's freedom movement, which have traditionally focused on male leaders and figures. It encourages viewers to rethink historical narratives and acknowledge the diverse contributions that shaped the nation's journey to independence. In doing so, the film serves as both a tribute and a reminder—freedom was not achieved by a few celebrated names alone, but by countless individuals whose bravery often went unrecorded.



In essence, *Azad Bharath* is more than just a historical drama. It is a cinematic attempt to reclaim memory, honor courage, and give voice to women who fought not only against colonial rule but also against societal limitations. While it may not be flawless in execution, its intent and message carry undeniable weight. By shining a light on the Rani of Jhansi Regiment and figures like Neera Arya, the film contributes meaningfully to the ongoing effort to preserve and reinterpret India's freedom struggle for future generations.

EVENTS



The Union Minister for Home Affairs and Cooperation, Shri Amit Shah offers prayers and darshan of Mokshadayini Maa Ganga at Rishikesh, in Uttarakhand.

The Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan releases Military Quantum Mission Policy Framework. The Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi, Chief of the Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi, Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal AP Singh and Chief of the Integrated Defence Staff Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit are also present on the occasion.



The Vice President of India, Shri C. P. Radhakrishnan felicitated Freedom Fighter Shri Mayadhar Mallick and Wing Commander B. S. Singh Deo (Retired), and honoured family members of INA veterans at the Parakram Diwas celebrations, in Cuttack, Odisha.



Glimpses of the High Tea and Interaction of beneficiaries of various schemes of the Ministry of MSME with Senior Officers of the ARI Division, Ministry of MSME, KVIC and Coir Board, in New Delhi.

PM pays tribute to martyrs at Rashtriya Samar Smarak on 77th Republic Day, in New Delhi.



The Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Shri Hardeep Singh Puri, Dr Pramod Sawant, Chief Minister of Goa and H.E. Dr. Sultan Al Jaber, Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology and ADNOC MD and Group CEO, UAE, during the inaugural ceremony of the 4th edition of India Energy Week in Goa.

FROM EARTH TO THE STARS: SUNITA WILLIAMS BIDS FAREWELL TO NASA



Indian-origin astronaut Sunita Williams has officially retired from NASA, bringing to a close one of the most inspiring careers in the history of human spaceflight. Known for her grit, humility, and extraordinary achievements beyond Earth, Williams' retirement marks the end of an era not only for NASA but also for millions of admirers across India and the global Indian diaspora.

Born in Euclid, Ohio, to an Indian father from Gujarat and a Slovenian-American mother, Sunita Williams always carried a multicultural identity that resonated with people worldwide. Her journey from a naval aviator to one of NASA's most accomplished astronauts is a story defined by discipline, courage, and an unshakable commitment to exploration. Over the years, she became a symbol of what perseverance and scientific curiosity can achieve.

Williams flew to space twice and spent a total of 322 days aboard the International Space

Station, making her one of the most experienced female astronauts in history. She served as the commander of the ISS, a role that placed her among an elite group of astronauts trusted with leading complex missions in the harshest environment known to humankind. Her work in orbit included conducting hundreds of scientific experiments that advanced research in medicine, physics, biology, and space technology.

One of her most remarkable achievements was setting records for spacewalks by a woman. Williams completed seven spacewalks, spending over 50 hours outside the space station, floating above Earth while performing delicate and dangerous tasks. These moments captured the imagination of the public and helped redefine perceptions about women in science and space exploration.

Beyond statistics and records, Sunita Williams was admired for her calm leadership and

ability to connect with people on Earth. She frequently interacted with students, scientists, and space enthusiasts, encouraging young minds to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. In India especially, her achievements were celebrated with pride, as she often spoke fondly of her roots and the inspiration she drew from Indian culture and values. Her retirement from NASA comes at a time when space exploration is entering a new phase, with private players, international collaborations, and ambitious plans for the Moon and Mars. Williams played a quiet but significant role in mentoring younger astronauts and supporting NASA's transition into this new era, including work related to commercial crew programs. As she steps away from active duty, Sunita Williams leaves behind a legacy that extends far beyond her missions. She changed how the world views astronauts, proving that determination matters more than background, and that the dream of space belongs to everyone. Her journey continues to inspire countless young people to look up at the sky and believe that no frontier is out of reach. While her official chapter at NASA has closed, Sunita Williams' influence on space science and human aspiration will continue to shine brightly, just like the stars she once orbited.

INDIA REJECTS TRUMP'S CEASEFIRE MEDIATION CLAIM



US President Donald Trump has once again sparked controversy by claiming that the United States played a mediating role in achieving a ceasefire between India and Pakistan. The statement, made during a recent public interaction, was swiftly rejected by the Indian government, which categorically denied any third-party involvement in its bilateral matters with Pakistan. New Delhi reiterated its long-standing position that issues between India and Pakistan are resolved strictly through direct dialogue, without external mediation.

Trump's claim suggested that American intervention helped prevent escalation between the two nuclear-armed neighbours at a time of heightened tensions. While he did not provide specific details, he implied that US diplomatic pressure was instrumental in calming the situation. This assertion immediately drew attention, given India's consistent and firm stance against outside mediation, particularly on matters related to national security and cross-border tensions.

Responding to the claim, official sources in India described the statement as factually incorrect. The government emphasized that decisions related to ceasefire

understandings or de-escalation are taken independently by India, based on its own assessment of security conditions and national interest. Indian officials stressed that no foreign leader or country has acted as a mediator in such matters, either formally or informally.

India's rejection of mediation is rooted in its diplomatic doctrine. Since the Shimla Agreement of 1972, India has maintained that all issues with Pakistan must be addressed bilaterally. This principle has been reiterated across governments and leadership changes, regardless of the party in power. Any suggestion of third-party involvement is therefore seen as undermining India's sovereignty and established foreign policy framework.

Trump has a history of making similar claims during his presidency and even after leaving office. On multiple occasions, he stated that he had offered to mediate on the Kashmir issue or had played a behind-the-scenes role in easing India-Pakistan tensions. Each time, India firmly denied these assertions. Analysts view these repeated claims as part of Trump's broader tendency to project himself as a global dealmaker, often stretching or oversimplifying complex

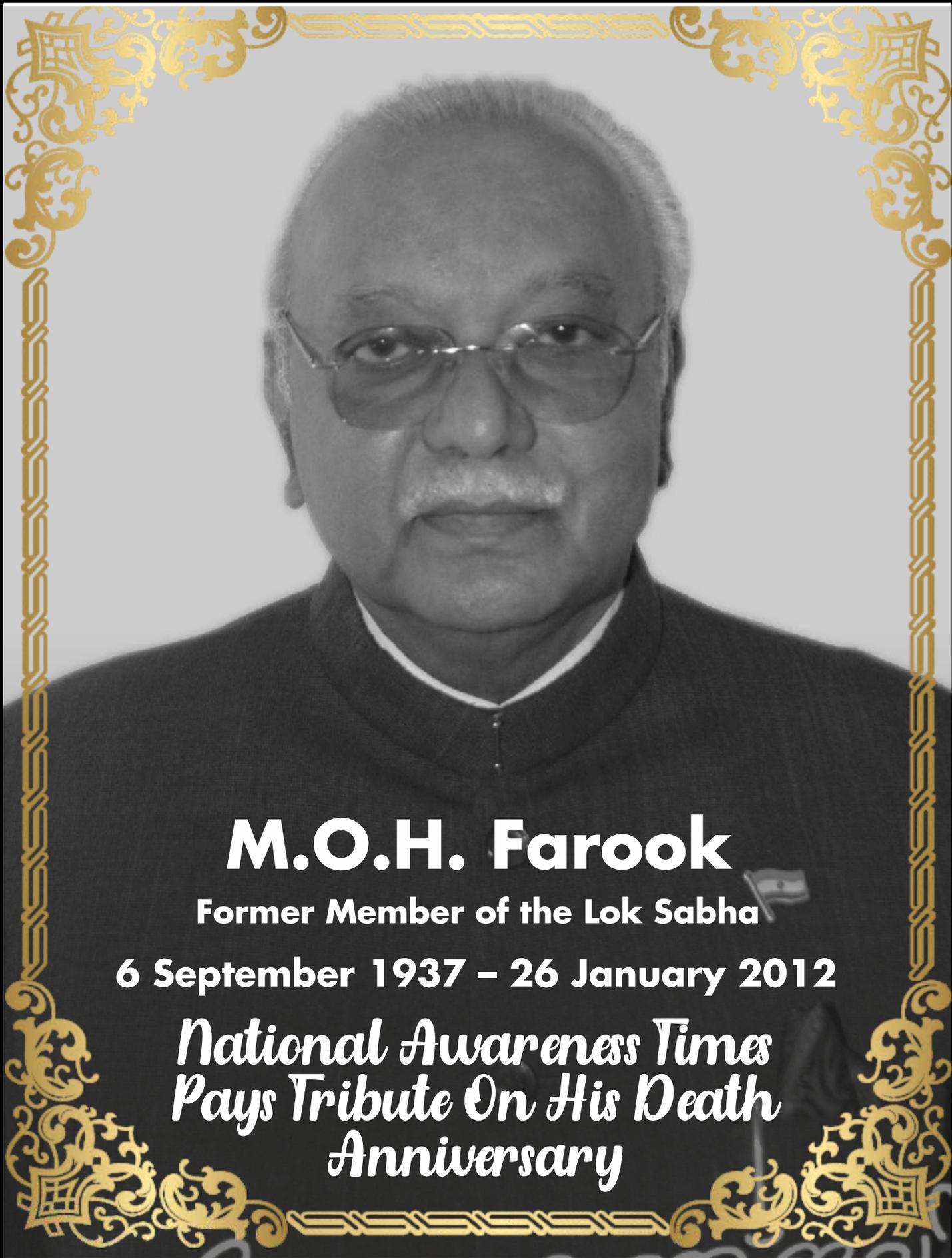
diplomatic realities.

Pakistan, on the other hand, has at times welcomed the idea of international mediation, especially by major powers like the United States. This difference in approach further highlights the contrasting diplomatic strategies of the two South Asian nations. While Islamabad often seeks external involvement, New Delhi remains resolute that bilateral engagement is the only acceptable path.

The latest controversy also comes at a sensitive time in global geopolitics, when misinformation and political messaging can have real diplomatic consequences. Experts warn that inaccurate statements by influential leaders can create confusion, fuel misperceptions, and complicate already fragile regional dynamics. In the case of India and Pakistan, where trust deficits run deep, clarity and accuracy are particularly crucial.

India's strong rebuttal of Trump's claim serves as a reminder of its consistent foreign policy posture. New Delhi has repeatedly made it clear that it does not require, nor accept, mediation from any country on issues involving Pakistan. By dismissing the claim outright, India aimed to shut down speculation and reaffirm its position to both domestic and international audiences.

As global attention moves on, the episode underscores a familiar pattern. While political leaders may seek credit for diplomatic outcomes, the realities of international relations are often more complex. For India, the message remains unchanged: peace and stability in the region can only be achieved through direct engagement, mutual responsibility, and respect for sovereignty, not through external claims of mediation.



M.O.H. Farook

Former Member of the Lok Sabha

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TEJASHWI YADAV APPOINTED RJD NATIONAL WORKING PRESIDENT



In a major political development, Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Tejashwi Yadav has been appointed the National Working President of the party, marking a significant moment in the evolution of the RJD. The move signals a clear generational transition within the party founded by veteran socialist leader Lalu Prasad Yadav and reflects an effort to strengthen organisational leadership ahead of key electoral battles.

Tejashwi Yadav, the former Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar and a prominent face of the RJD, has emerged as the party's principal strategist and mass leader in recent years. His appointment formalises a role he has largely been performing in practice, as he has led election campaigns, negotiated alliances, and articulated the party's political vision both within Bihar and at the national level.

Party leaders described the decision as an organisational necessity aimed at sharpening the RJD's national profile. While Lalu Prasad Yadav continues as the party's National President, the creation and assignment of the

working president's post to Tejashwi is seen as a step toward delegating responsibilities and ensuring continuity in leadership. Senior leaders believe this structure will help the party respond more effectively to the fast-changing political landscape. Tejashwi Yadav's political journey has been closely watched since his entry into active politics. From being perceived initially as a political heir, he has gradually built his own identity through aggressive campaigning, sharp attacks on opponents, and a focus on governance-related issues such as employment, social justice, and development. His performance as Deputy Chief Minister during the Bihar government's tenure earned him both administrative experience and wider recognition. The RJD's decision also reflects its attempt to reconnect with younger voters. Tejashwi, often described as one of the youngest mass leaders in Indian politics, has consistently highlighted issues affecting youth, including unemployment, education, and migration. Party insiders believe

his elevation will help bridge the gap between the RJD's traditional support base and a new generation of voters.

Politically, the appointment comes at a crucial time. With upcoming elections on the horizon, the RJD is keen to consolidate its position within opposition alliances and present itself as a disciplined and forward-looking organisation.

Tejashwi's role as working president is expected to involve strengthening state units, coordinating with allies, and shaping campaign narratives beyond Bihar.

Opposition parties reacted with mixed responses. While allies welcomed the move as a logical step, critics questioned whether the appointment reinforces dynastic politics. RJD leaders, however, rejected such criticism, arguing that Tejashwi's elevation is based on his electoral performance, leadership abilities, and acceptance among party workers rather than lineage alone.

Within the RJD, the mood appears largely optimistic. Grassroots workers see the appointment as a message of stability and clarity in leadership. Senior leaders have expressed confidence that Tejashwi's energy and organisational focus will revitalise the party and prepare it for future challenges.

As National Working President, Tejashwi Yadav now carries the responsibility of translating popular support into sustained political success. His elevation not only reshapes the internal power structure of the RJD but also underscores the broader trend of generational change in Indian politics, where younger leaders are increasingly being entrusted with steering established parties into the future.

BORDER 2 FEVER GOES NEXT LEVEL; GETS POST-MIDNIGHT SHOWS; MORE THEATRES SET TO JOIN



Border 2 has taken a great start and the word of mouth has been unanimously positive from the audience and critics alike. Realizing that the film is going to put up a huge number over the weekend and have an insane demand, the theatres have started to increase shows. The popular cinema chain MovieMax has taken the initiative and has already organized post-midnight shows of the war drama in their key properties for Saturday, January 24.

In Mumbai's MovieMax Huma Kanjurmarg, one can catch Border 2 at 1:20 am. There's a 1:15 am show of the film, in MovieMax Mira Road as well as MovieMax Sion. In Pune's MovieMax Amanora, 6 shows will be held between 12:00 am and 8:00 am – at 1:15 am, 1:45 am,

2:15 am, 3:00 am, 7:00 am and 7:30 am. In all, the property will play a whopping 30 shows a day of Border 2. MovieMax Gold, also in Pune, will play three shows post-midnight at 1:15 am, 2:15 am and 3:15 am. MovieMax Nagpur, meanwhile, has allotted a show at 1:15 am.

Other cinemas are also following suit. Maxus, one of the pioneers for post-midnight shows, will play a show at 12:45 am, followed by 7:00 am at their Bhayander theatre near Mumbai. PVR Sangam in Andheri East, Mumbai has decided to showcase Border 2 at 1:55 am. Once the demand kicks in big time, more and more cinemas will jump onto the bandwagon. Moreover, these post-midnight and early morning shows won't just be played on January 24 but also on Sunday, January 25 and Monday, January 26. The latter is a National Holiday on account of Republic Day.

Border 2 stars Sunny Deol, Varun Dhawan, Diljit Dosanjh and Ahan Shetty. With unanimously positive buzz and extra late-night slots, the biggie is poised to roar through the weekend and Republic Day, rewriting January box-office records nationwide.

A history of post-midnight shows

The trend of having post-midnight shows began in the post-pandemic era. Sooryavanshi (2021) was the first one to take the initiative and then it was followed by hits like Gangubai Kathiawadi (2022), Drishyam 2 (2022), Jawan (2023), Pathaan (2023), Avatar: The Way Of Water (2022), Oppenheimer (2023), Gadar 2 (2023), Animal (2023), Stree 2 (2024), F1: The Movie (2025), Sitaare Zameen Par (2025), Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba – The Movie: Infinity Castle (2025), etc. Dhurandhar was the last film to achieve this feat before Border 2.

NO ADDITIONAL SHOOTING WITH ARJUN RAMPAL FOR DHURANDHAR 2



Almost every day we hear a new yarn being spun about Dhurandhar 2. There were reports of Vicky Kaushal's character from Uri suddenly appearing in Dhurandhar 2, which proved hilariously fabricated.

Now, comes the "news" that Arjun Rampal has 'secretly' shot additional footage for Dhurandhar 2 earlier this month. The venue and time of the ostensible shooting has also been provided.

However, a source very close to the project has shot down all speculation on Arjun Rampal's additional shooting.

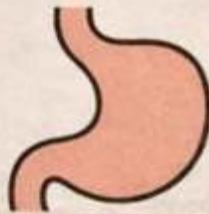
"There is no extra shooting with Arjun Rampal or any other actor. The content of Dhurandhar is edited and locked, ready for release on March 19," said the insider.

Let's hope these speculative flights of fantasy on Dhurandhar 2 will stop.

Health Benefits of Hot Water with Honey in the Morning



✓ Aids Digestion



Warm water helps stimulate digestion and improve bowel movements

🔥 Boosts Metabolism

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💧 Cleanses the Body

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🛡️ Supports Immunity

Honey has antioxidant and antibacterial properties



👄 Soothes the Throat

Warm honey water can coat and calm your throat

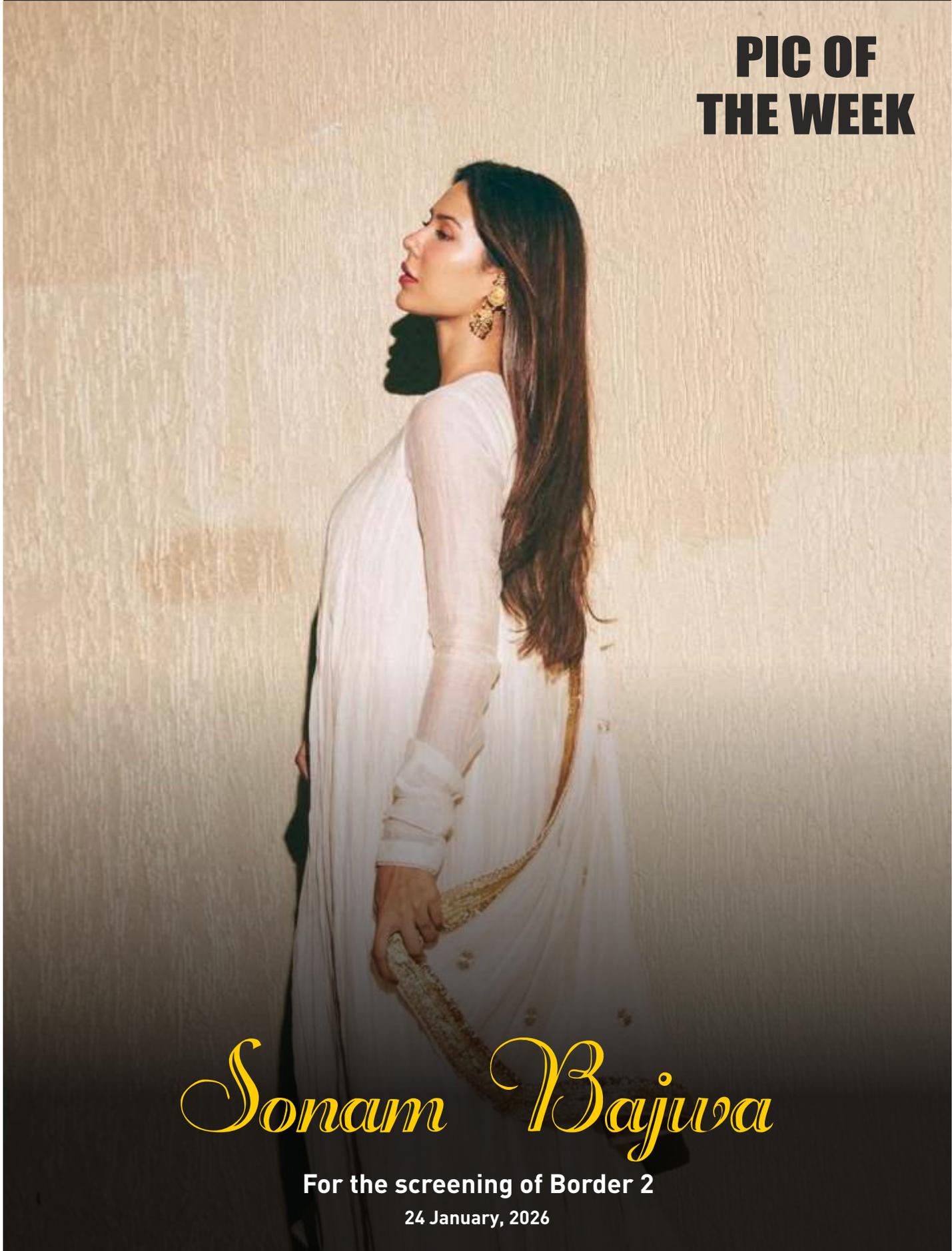
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**PIC OF
THE WEEK**



Sonam Bajwa

For the screening of Border 2

24 January, 2026

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