



**Editorial**

**Battle to save India's biodiversity**

**Testing times**

The recent developments in Haryana's political circles have again brought to the fore the intricacies of coalition dynamics. The Jannayak Janta Party (JJP), a key player in the State's politics, has decided to align with the Congress in demanding a floor test for the BJP-led Government in the Haryana Assembly. This comes on the heels of the withdrawal of support by three Independent MLAs to the ruling coalition, turning it into minority with 44 legislators in the House of 90. The Congress, buoyed by the latest developments and perhaps sensing an opportunity to tip the scales in its favour, has seized upon this moment to mount pressure on the BJP Government. However, in the backdrop of this high-stakes political manoeuvring, the JJP finds itself grappling with internal discord. Reports have emerged suggesting that three of its MLAs held clandestine meetings with former Chief Minister ML Khattar, raising eyebrows and fuelling speculation about potential defections. The apparent dissonance within the JJP underscores the complex interplay of interests and ambitions that often characterises coalition politics. For a party like the JJP, which emerged as a key player following the fractured mandate in the last State elections, maintaining cohesion within its ranks while balancing competing demands from its coalition partners is no easy feat. To jog the memory, it was in Haryana that 'Aaya Ram Gaya Ram' culture started, which continues unabated. The outcome of this internal tug-of-war will not only shape the immediate political landscape in Haryana but also have far-reaching implications for the State's future. As alliances shift and allegiances waver, the only constant is the relentless pursuit of power and the drive to stay one step ahead of the competition. With the House strength being 90 members, a political party needs the support of 46 MLAs to cross the halfway mark and form a Government. After the withdrawal of support by three Independents, the BJP is short of two MLAs to continue in the Government. The BJP now has 40 MLAs, besides the support of a lone Haryana Lokhit Party legislator and at least three Independents (earlier, it had six Independents in support), which brings to a total of 44 in the House. For the BJP, it is a double whammy, all this is happening days ahead of the Lok Sabha polls to the 10 Haryana seats on May 25. In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP won seven of these seats in Haryana with a 35 per cent vote share. In 2019, the BJP won all 10 seats with a 58 per cent vote share. In the current situation, however, it might be a Herculean task. JJP's Dushyant Chautala has mounted pressure on the Nayab Singh Saini Government for a floor test, which he is likely to get the Chair's nod for. If the JJP breaks, it would give the BJP the much-needed elbow room but what is certain for now is that it is time for horse trading in Haryana.

India, a land of diverse climates and rich ecosystems, is a global treasure trove of biodiversity. From the majestic Himalayan ranges to the vibrant coastal reefs, our country's biodiversity sustains countless life forms and plays a crucial role in regulating ecosystems. It's not just a vital resource for human sustenance, providing food, water, shelter and medicine, but also a critical indicator of our planet's health, a testament to our rich heritage and a responsibility we all share. However, the delicate balance of India's biodiversity is now facing unprecedented threats from climate change. Recent studies warn that India may lose a staggering 35 per cent of its GDP by the year 2100 due to climate change, highlighting the deep interconnection between the nation's prosperity and its natural heritage. Rampant deforestation and habitat degradation, particularly in regions like the Western Ghats, are pushing car-

bon sinks towards becoming sources, exacerbating the climate crisis. The time for action isow. Impact of Climate Change: A Looming Crisis The repercussions of climate change are becoming quite evident in altering ecological balance, extreme weather events and increasing health risks. In an era marked by escalating environmental challenges, the climate crisis demands urgent and concerted action. According to a [i]United Nations' InterGovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, climate change is imperilling human well-

being and planetary health, focusing strongly on interactions between climate, biodiversity and human society. The report suggests that the rise in extreme weather conditions has led to some irreversible impacts as natural and human systems are pushed beyond their ability to adapt. Not only this, a report by the Reserve Bank of India highlights how climate change poses challenges for monetary policy, with frequent weather shocks threatening economic growth and stability. Moreover, a recent study predicts that climate change

could cut global income by up to 19 per cent in the next 25 years, with the most vulnerable countries suffering the most severe impacts. To overcome these challenges, India has embarked on a journey to mitigate climate change and safeguard its biodiversity. With the G20 presidency last year, India has positioned itself as the voice of the Global South to lead the way in climate action and leveraged this positioning to drive impactful outcomes in various realms related to climate action. Tackling deforestation, reducing emissions and restoring ecosystems

are key strategies. With over 26 per cent of the country grappling with expanding drought conditions, urgent measures are being taken to build resilience against environmental degradation. Pioneering Climate Action Tamil Nadu, a coastal State in the heart of southern India, is emerging as a beacon of hope and leading the charge in climate change efforts. The State has become a forerunner in climate action by announcing three major missions, namely Climate Change; Biodiversity Conservation and Greening; and Wetlands. Through initiatives like the Tamil Nadu Biodiversity and Greening Project (TBGP), the State aims to achieve a 33 per cent forest and tree cover by 2031. With approximately \$90 million in investments, Tamil Nadu's Climate Change Mission, Green Tamil Nadu Mission and Tamil Nadu Wetlands Mission demonstrate a commitment to sustainable development and ecosystem

restoration. Driving Solutions: Addressing the climate crisis necessitates collaborative efforts from all stakeholders. Supported by startups and Government interventions, public-private partnerships are essential to drive innovation and scale climate solutions. Startups are pivotal in developing innovative technologies that reduce carbon footprints while contributing to economic growth. International collaboration, exemplified by agreements like the Paris Agreement, provides a framework for collective action on a global scale. India's leadership in renewable energy, particularly through initiatives like the International Solar Alliance (ISA), underscores its commitment to driving sustainable development and fostering a harmonious co-existence between humanity and nature. As India addresses the intertwined challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss, the steps taken today will shape the legacy for future generations.



**Xi embarks on a strategic journey across Europe, a move laden with symbolism**

Geo-political adjustments are getting done, bilaterally and plurilateral, even as the world's largest democracies are busy calming their domestic constituencies, where a key rallying agenda is China. The two largest democracies, India and the US, both of whom have their own set of issues with China, are in the middle of some of the most competitive election processes, ever seen across the globe. Meanwhile, the EU, or at least many of its member countries, not to mention US allies such as Australia are carefully recalibrating the entangled web of engagement with China. It is by no coincidence that Chinese Premier Xi Jinping, was on a strategic three-nation

tour of Europe, earlier this week. This tri-nation tour, during which the Chinese premier, also met the European Union president Ursula Von der Leyen, comes after a gap of almost 5 years and is also a time when many European nations have been blaming China for pushing highly subsidised electric vehicles into their markets, making several European auto factories redundant. The Europeans also wanted to focus on China playing a larger role in stabilising its "friends without limits" Russia, in the war against Ukraine, pushing up fuel-aided inflation across the region. The Europeans in the plain speak, they are known for, outlined clearly in the

president's press statement, "the first topic where we exchanged views on was the geopolitical situation. We especially discussed Ukraine and the conflicts in the Middle East. We agree that Europe and China have a shared interest in peace and security. We count on China to use all its influence on Russia to end Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. President Xi has played an important role in de-escalating Russia's irresponsible nuclear threats, and I am confident that President Xi will continue to do so against the backdrop of the ongoing nuclear threats by Russia. We have also discussed China's commitment not to provide

any lethal equipment to Russia. More effort is needed to curtail the delivery of dual-use goods to Russia that find their way to the battlefield. And given the existential nature of the threats stemming from this war for both Ukraine and Europe, this does affect the EU-China relations. "The message from the EU to China was, don't help Russia in its unjust war on European soil, or else the bilateral relation would be in trouble. No surprises, Ukraine and the Middle East didn't feature, till the bottom three paragraphs of the press statement issued by the Chinese team, post the trilateral meeting. Also no surprises with the language which read "On the Ukraine crisis, Presi-

dent Xi pointed out that China, France and the EU all wish to see an early ceasefire and return of peace in Europe, and support political settlement of the crisis. China has been working vigorously to facilitate talks for peace. China's objective and just position and its constructive role have been widely recognized by the international community. China is ready to stay in communication with relevant parties." The other significant element of these conversations was traded, as all parties involved are feeling the constraints of escalating fuel costs, the volatile geo-political environment and, the post-Covid, supply chain mismatch. The EU provided sharp pointers on Chinese subsidised products, free and fair

access to each other's markets and supply chain resiliency in their conversations. A defensive China maintained that the two sides have extensive common interests and broad space for cooperation in green and digital transition. It is necessary that they properly address economic and trade frictions through dialogue and consultation, and accommodate each other's legitimate concerns." China has started making, the right moves to woo back some of its largest market partners, at a time when India and the US, the other key stakeholders in the Indo-Pacific theatre, are busy with their elections. India will get over elections in about a month, and an agile nimble China policy outlook awaits.











# FROM SKY TO SEA: HOW BIRDS INSPIRE TEAMWORK

During a calm and peaceful evening, while watching the sunset, have you ever noticed groups of birds flying high in the sky? If yes, then you must have noticed that many groups fly in a shape that resembles the English alphabet "V".

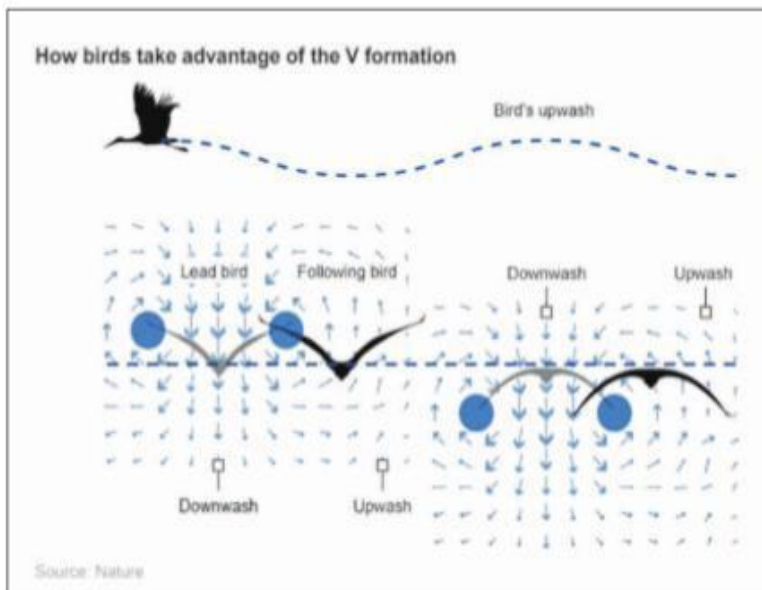
There's an old African proverb which says, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." This idea is demonstrated well by birds such as flamingos who travel long distances, covering thousands of kilometers.

But have you thought about why they fly like this? Is there a reason for such particular pattern?

When a bird flaps its wings, it creates a swirling wind called a rotating vortex. This swirling wind pushes some air down behind the bird and some air up and to the sides. This makes special areas in the air called upwash zones and downwash zones, where the air flows either up or down.

If a bird flies in one of these zones, it gets a boost from the air and doesn't have to work as hard to stay up. That's why birds in a group can glide behind the leader without flapping their wings as much. They're catching a free ride on the air!

This way, birds can get the most out of this flying pattern while using less



energy from flapping their wings.

Another interesting thing is, there's no one bird that always leads. A study by Oxford University found that a bird spends about one-third of its time flying behind another bird and about the same amount of time leading the group. This shows how well the birds work together as a team.

In military circles, they have a special name for this flying pattern: the 'Vic' formation. You'll often spot it in thrilling air shows too. But what's really fascinating is where this idea came from

originally.

It all started with observing those clever bird flocks that have captured our admiration for ages!

Imagine, long before airplanes and fancy maneuvers, birds were already mastering the art of efficient flying. Their teamwork and coordination inspired humans to adapt this formation for our own purposes, like in the military and in air shows.

It's a fantastic example of how nature can teach us some of the best lessons!

## Do you want to be a writer?

Here are some fun story prompts for the Booktern issue of June 24.

### WHAT DO YOU DO NEXT?

- Pick a prompt
- Write a story without taking any help from AI.
- Send it to us on admin@booktern.com before 25th May, 24
- We will publish selected stories in the June issue. We also conduct story-writing workshops online to help you write stories.

### PROMPT 1: MAGICAL STORYTELLER

In the heart of Littleton village, there's a quaint shop named "Chamatkari Kahaniyan" (Magical Stories). Inside, there's a wise magician named Mithranath who weaves enchanting tales. One sunny afternoon, curious children—Raj, Priya, and Arjun—stumble upon Mithranath's shop and are whisked away on an adventure. Through mystical forests and ancient palaces, they learn about bravery and friendship. As their journey ends, they realize the magic of Mithranath's stories lives within them, sparking their imaginations forever.

### PROMPT 2: THE FINAL BATTLE AT HOGWARTS (Credits to JK Rowling)

In a world gripped by darkness, Harry Potter and his friends must unite once more against the resurrected Voldemort and his dark forces. With Hogwarts as their stronghold, they journey through perilous lands, facing daunting challenges and fierce adversaries.

As they confront their fears and stand together against the darkness, they discover that their true strength lies in friendship and love. In the epic showdown at Hogwarts, Harry and Voldemort engage in a final duel, where courage and sacrifice ultimately triumph over evil.

With Voldemort vanquished and peace restored, Hogwarts shines brighter than ever, a testament to the enduring power of hope and unity.

# Deer, oh Deer!

With the newfound respect and knowledge from the monkeys, Bizzie's iridescent wings vibrated with newfound confidence. She plunged deeper into the lush green embrace of the forest, her mission burning brighter than ever. Her destination – a sun-dappled clearing filled with deer, creatures renowned for their elegance and, unfortunately, their fleeting memory.

The deer, their coats glistening in the sunlight, nibbled on the grass in a tranquil manner. They moved gracefully, a dance of nature in itself. Bizzie, however, noticed something more in this peaceful setting. The deer's calmness wasn't just because of their serene environment; it was also because they momentarily forgot about the lurking dangers.

Curiosity buzzing in her tiny antennae, Bizzie approached. "Good deer," she began, her voice a delicate mix of caution and hope. "I am Bizzie, a bee with a vision. I wish to understand and protect our forest, and I believe I can help you stay alert to the dangers you so swiftly forget."

The deer listened with a kind of peaceful detachment, their skepticism as clear as the babbling brook nearby. Not from mistrust, but from the ephemeral nature of danger in their minds. The eldest stag, his voice as gentle as the breeze, finally replied, "Little bee, we live in the sunlit moment, and danger is a flitting shadow for us. Your intentions are clear, but how you can aid our tribe remains hidden."

After the eldest stag expressed his gentle skepticism, Bizzie felt a flicker of disappointment but also a spark of determination. She recognized this as a challenge, a chance to prove her worth. So, with a resolve as strong as the flowing stream, she decided to take on the role of the deer's guardian, even if they were yet to fully believe in her.

Determined to demonstrate her value, Bizzie leapt into action, her small size and quickness becoming her greatest assets. Like a nimble sentinel, she weaved through the trees, keeping a vigilant eye on the surroundings and alerting the deer to the Tiger's hidden presence, particularly when they became complacent.

Over time, as the days melted into weeks, Bizzie's presence among the deer transformed from a fleeting curiosity to a staple of their daily life. Her buzz became a soft, persistent call to caution. Whenever the deer lost themselves in their peaceful world, overlooking the lurking dangers, Bizzie would dart down, her wings shimmering in

earnest, buzzing a reminder, "Be vigilant, be safe." This would snap the deer back to reality, their eyes widening briefly with understanding as they moved to more secure spots.

Slowly, the deer, who often let their guard down, grew to rely on Bizzie's steady reminders. They began to see her as more than just a minor buzzing figure; she became their watchful guardian, a small bee with a heart larger than life and a dedication even more immense. For Bizzie, this role brought a profound sense of purpose and joy. She reveled in her days, now filled with the important task of protecting these graceful, though sometimes forgetful, creatures.

## Bear in mind

But as Bizzie continued her vigilant watch, she encountered a creature far less welcoming than the deer. The lumbering sloth bear, known for his solitary ways and his penchant for honey raids, eyed her with an indifference that bordered on disdain. Unlike the deer, he needed no warnings; his survival hinged on his own strength and keen instincts.

"Little bee," he rumbled, his voice thick with molasses, "your buzzing and flitting hold no weight with me. I tread my own path, and no danger in this forest holds sway over me."

Despite her efforts, Bizzie could not bridge the gap.

The sloth bear was an island unto himself, seeing no use in her warnings or the alliances she had forged.

As the sun dipped below the horizon, casting the forest in a warm ember glow, Bizzie returned to the deer, her heart heavy with the sting of rejection. She had made a difference with the deer and the monkeys, but the sloth bear's dismissal was a sobering reminder that her journey was paved with challenges she had yet to overcome.

Her quest to protect the forest and its inhabitants was far from over. Tomorrow was another day to learn, to grow, and to continue her buzzing symphony of vigilance.

(This is chapter 4 from the book, *To Bee Or Not To Bee*. To access the full book, please log in using your ID and password at [asymmetrical.ai](http://asymmetrical.ai))



PIC: FREEPIK

# Nature's wisdom: For human challenges

### 'Thrills': Protective shield!

Vellus hair refers to the fine, short hair that covers our bodies. When these hairs stand upright, we often describe the sensation as having "thrills." Thousands of years ago, primitive humans likely had a specific purpose for this phenomenon. Over time, as human bodies evolved, this purpose diminished. However, some animals and plants still retain specialized structures related to these "thrills."

The numbat, a marsupial native to Australia, has an interesting adaptation related to its skin. Unlike other marsupials, numbats lack a stomach pouch and are not noc-

turnal. They also lack a thick fur layer like kangaroos. Instead, numbats have clusters of tiny "romas" (hair-like structures) all over their bodies.

Numbats feed on very tiny insects, which is not a sufficient diet to produce the required amount of heat in their body. So they have a special arrangement on their skin. They have clusters of vellus hair or 'roma's on their body.

The skin between these clusters of "romas" is exposed to direct sunlight, helping regulate body temperature. On cold days, numbats' "thrills" come into play. These structures trap warm air near the skin, preventing heat loss. When cold winds blow, the "romas" tense up, creating a

warm layer that shields the body from the cold.

Alpine Edelweiss, a plant genus, also exhibits a similar structure. The network of "romas" on its outer cover fades when sunlight falls on it, trapping UV rays and redistributing heat. This warm layer helps the plant survive in cool conditions and even stores humidity from the air.

Researchers are currently exploring whether the unique properties of alpine edelweiss as well as hair on numbats can be harnessed to create safety mechanisms for organisms or processes vulnerable to UV rays. The natural defense against UV radiation could potentially benefit various applications.

Efforts are underway to uti-



lize the protective adaptations seen in both numbats and alpine edelweiss. These adaptations help regulate temperature and shield against environmental factors such as air temperature, wind, sunlight, and humidity.

Scientists are actively studying how to enhance hu-

man comfort by incorporating the protective "roma" shield found in these natural adaptations. Applications range from clothing to luxurious construction materials. Exciting times ahead!

# JOURNEY AROUND THE GLOBE

Hi! I am Andy, an ant. This is the story about my adventure around the globe.

I was always curious about what was going on around the world near me. So, I decided to embark on a journey around the globe outside my anthill. But my relatives said, "Andy, the world today is not safe for us ants. You may get crushed under the feet of larger beings. So just be careful and watch your step."

I bid goodbye to my relatives and set off. I first decided to go to the Taj Mahal in Agra, India. After 12 days, I reached Agra. The quaint street markets and the scent of yummy street food left me fascinated as I admired each and every thing in the market. Soon, I was hungry and I searched for some leftovers on the

ground. After some time, I found a leftover packet of chips. I took the packet and ate the chips. After 20 minutes, I reached the Taj Mahal. It was so amazing that I couldn't take my eyes off it.

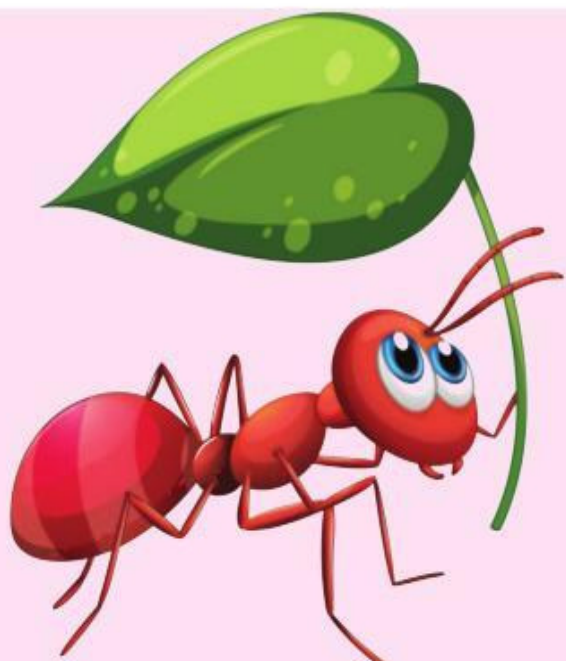
After spending time in India, I decided to go to the Amazon forest in Brazil, South America. I heard that there was a flight from Delhi to Brazil. I sneaked past the security checkers and breezed through the airport. After some time, I was on the flight and off to Brazil! After 21 hours, I was in Brazil! After some time, I headed off to the forest where I saw weird birds, weird animals, weird trees, and weird insects. As I went further, I saw the mighty Amazon River. I was very thirsty and just as I

was about to drink the water, the strong water currents took me with the flow and I was petrified! Somehow I found a piece of log and climbed on it, managing to reach the shore. I thought "Whew, if I had not found the piece of log, it would surely have been my end today."

After this horrible experience, I decided to leave the Amazon and go to the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France. I took a flight from Manaus (Brazil) to Paris and reached there after 8 hours. Mmmm...the sweet smell of croissants made my mouth water as I watched the people eating. But I wanted to see the Eiffel Tower so I headed towards it and reached there after 30 minutes. It was so huge, the image was not fitting in my eyes. I climbed up to the

top floor and I could see the whole city!! But as I looked down, I started to feel dizzy. Somehow I managed myself and decided to leave. I took a flight back to Agra from Paris. I boarded my flight to Agra and after 12 days, I reached my anthill.

I was so happy to see my dear anthill. All my relatives welcomed me. I told all about my journey. And, this was a journey that I would always remember. This was my story about my journey around the globe. We'll meet again, friends!! Until then, this is Andy, Bye Bye!



PIC: FREEPIK

How I Met My Partner

# Husband's healing touch

Actress Grusha Kapoor discusses her relationship with her husband Bikram, recounting how they met through a common friend and eventually married

**I** couldn't have asked for a better life partner," exults Grusha Kapoor, who is married to the down-to-earth affluent farmer Bikram, engaged in cash crop farming. The silver lining to the story is her in-laws love her too. Grusha's mother gushes, "We must have donated pearls in our last birth to get a son-in-law like Bikram."

**When and how did you meet your husband?**  
We met through a common friend. Bikram was studying law at KC College.

**What was your initial reaction when you met him?**  
The first time I met him, he came across as a thorough gentleman, very chivalrous and old school. I liked him from the first day itself as he was extremely handsome but also came across as a good human being.

**Where did you guys go for your first date?**  
For three months, we were in the friend zone, going out for movies and lunches. I was very clear that I wanted to marry him but he never said anything. But after 4-5 months finally he said that if he ever gets married it'll be to me. I was the one to express my feelings first, as Bikram is a very shy person.

**Would you guys fight during your courtship days?**  
Yes, but on very small issues.

**Who is the more possessive one?**  
I was the more possessive one, or at least I was more vocal about it. Bikram is very possessive but doesn't express it. He's an old soul. He is my rock of Gibraltar. Not only is he a great husband but an extremely loving and caring father too. I always seek his advice in all matters of life no matter how trivial they are.

**Did you face any opposition during your marriage?**  
I am a Hindu Punjabi and he is a Jat Sikh. However, there was no opposition. My brother-in-law, who is one of the biggest criminal lawyers in India (and I was very scared of him), approved of our relationship, and he fixed the date for our marriage, February 14.

**What are the qualities that attracted you to him?**  
My husband is a very giving person. He is always there for everyone. I am so blessed to have him in my life. In fact, he introduced me to European cinema as he's a big movie buff. He is very passionate about cinema which rubbed off on me too.

**What are your common interests?**  
We both love nature and always talk about settling down in a remote village in the mountains one day.

**Who is a cleanliness freak between the two?**  
I am a cleanliness and order freak whereas Bikram is very relaxed.

**Who is short-tempered between the two?**  
I am short-tempered; Bikram is cool as a cucumber.

**How has the relationship changed from the time you both were girlfriend-boyfriend to now being husband and wife?**  
There is more understanding and maturity after marriage. Love for me is having your husband as your best friend; one who's there with you through thick and thin. In 2019, I underwent surgery but post-surgery, I was diagnosed with Septicemia. My temperature wouldn't come down from 105 for 7 days. Bikram took care of me day and night. My liver had become the size of a football. I was only on fluids. But Bikram nursed me back to health.



Actress embarks on Char Dham Yatra, shares serene moments from Kedarnath visit



## Spiritual sojourn



CJ DESK

**T**he Char Dham Yatra in Uttarakhand began on Friday, drawing thousands of people seeking spiritual solace and divine blessings. Among the pilgrims embarking on this journey was Bollywood actor Shilpa Shetty, who made her way to Kedarnath. Shilpa Shetty shared glimpses of her sojourn on her Instagram account, capturing the tranquil beauty of snow-clad mountains and her accommodation amidst the serenity of Kedarnath, accompanied by the soul-stirring anthem 'Namo Namo' from the movie 'Kedarnath'. The commencement of this year's Char Dham Yatra coincides with the auspicious reopening of the Kedarnath Dham after a hiatus of six months. The first puja at the shrine in the early hours of Friday was conducted in the name of Prime Minister Modi, marking the commencement of the pilgrimage season. Welcoming the pilgrims, Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami presided over the inaugural puja at Shri Kedarnath Dham temple, invoking prayers for the safe journey and spiritual fulfillment of all embarking on the Char Dham pilgrimage.

## SEQUEL ALERT

Actor drops big hint about a sequel of Sarfarosh

CJ DESK

**A** special screening of the Aamir Khan-starrer Sarfarosh was held in the Juhu area of Mumbai. The event was attended by the starcast of the film including Aamir Khan, Naseeruddin Shah, Sonali Bendre, Pradeep Rawat and others. The team gathered to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the film.

From the team members of the film to the eminent celebrities from the entertainment world, the screening was a starry affair.

Aamir hinted at the sequel to the film at the event as he said: "I can commit about one thing, that we will definitely give it a really serious shot now of coming up with the right script and a right kind of film for it. So John you will have to get to work here."

He added "Sarfarosh 2' banni chaiye ('Sarfarosh 2' should be made) even I feel that."

The film, which released in 1999, is known for its riveting screenplay, slick action, stellar performances and great music.

## CAUGHT ON CAM

A special screening was held in Mumbai on Thursday for the cast, crew and makers of Sarfarosh as the film clocked 25 years



Aamir Khan



Director John Matthew Matthan and Naseeruddin Shah



Sonali Bendre

Govind Namdev



Pradeep Ram Singh Rawat



Makarand Deshpande



Upasana Singh



Akhilendra Mishra