

Afsana Mimi

Diverse facets of an actress

ERSHAD KAMOL

OVER the last decade, popular TV actress Afsana Mimi reigned supreme on the small-screen. Nowadays, she has successfully emerged as the director of popular mega-series such as *Bandhan*, *Greeho Galpo* and *Share Tin Tola*. Now she is directing a serial titled *Kachher Manush*. Of the 80 episodes of *Kachher Manush*, Amlan Biswas directed nine episodes. Mimi directs the remaining episodes.

Explaining her divergence into direction, Mimi says, "When I embarked on the production house business, I could not devote much time for acting. Then I began working with a panel of directors of the mega-series. I found the job both challenging and exciting. Moreover, it does not clash with my production house business. That is why I direct TV serials. I emerged as a director of TV plays in the mega-serial *Bandhan*, in 2001, which is considered as the turning point of mega-series in Bangladesh."



Afsana Mimi

Any problems that she faced while making mega-series? Says Mimi, "The budget is the main constraint. In fact, mega-series have not yet taken proper shape. They should be aired as daily soaps. Moreover, the surfeit of news and commercials compel viewers to channel surf. As a result, viewers lose interest. I also feel that we have a shortfall of artistes, especially playwrights."

Mimi is of the opinion that all the channels as well as the production houses should jointly work to form a film institute in Bangladesh. As she says, "We need many actors, playwrights, directors and technical crew. An institute will give a boost to the growing package drama industry in Bangladesh by encouraging new talent."

According to Mimi, script writing is complex as it is totally based on imagination and a playwright does not get any technical support while writing the plays.

The conversation turns towards

upcoming satellite channels. As Mimi says, "Three more channels will launch programmes soon. However, I think the channels should be either news or entertainment-based. In the prime time, all the channels air news on an hourly basis and the viewers are compelled to switch to foreign channels."

In the near future, Afsana Mimi hopes to direct single episode plays. She says, "The single episode play *Off Beat*, that I directed, has earned huge appreciation. I would like to make a few other single episode TV plays. In fact, I want to bring about a change while making mega-series. Moreover, I wish to make a few other off beat TV programmes."

Besides acting and directing TV plays, Mimi has also won plaudits as a model in commercials. Mimi has received the Meril-Prothom Alo best critic award-2002 for her performance in the TV play *House Wife*. Moreover, she is the winner of the *Anyu Din Shirsho Dosh* award.

Obaydul Haque Sarkar passes away

Veteran actor, writer and columnist Obaydul Haque Sarkar died on November 9, at the Samorita Hospital, says a press release. He was born on October 21, 1930. He retired as the Deputy Public Relations Officer in 1989. His career as an actor began in 1944 in West Bengal. Among his memorable



roles in films are: *Abar Tora Manush Ho*, *Lathial*, *Bashundhara*, *Akangha*, *Anubhabh*, *Abhagi* and *Bandini*. He has done about 50 films and enacted different roles in TV plays, including *Shuktara* and *Mahaprosthan*.

The Culture Desk of The Daily Star condoles the demise of the artiste.

11th Kolkata Film Festival

A film for every taste

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

The eleventh International Film Festival began in Kolkata on November 10. About 140 films from 33 countries will be screened in eight movie theatres in the 8-day-long film festival. The Central Information and Broadcasting Minister of India, Jaipal Reddy

inaugurated the festival. Around 41 foreign guests will participate in the festival, which kicked off with the French film *The Chorus*.

A five-member representative team from Bangladesh is attending the festival. The members include General Secretary of Bangladesh Film Directors' Society, Shah Alam Kiron, film directors Abu Sayeed, FI

Manik, Abdus Samad Khokon and Mahiuddin Faruq. Five Bangladeshi films will be screened in the festival, which include Humayun Ahmed's *Shyamalchhaya*, Chashi Nazrul Islam's *Megher Porey Megh*, Maushumi's *Kakhono Megh Kakhono Brishti*, Mostofa Sarwar Farooki's *Bachelor* and Abu Sayeed's *Kirtonkhola*.

Entertainment industry looks for greener pastures

NOVERA DEEPTIA

TV plays, shot in foreign locales, are a major attraction for viewers. Among the favoured locations are Malaysia, Thailand, Nepal, China, Singapore and even further afield to the United States and United Kingdom. The trend of shooting overseas began in the early 1990s when several ambitious directors looked for foreign settings.

experiences in the course of that time. I believe that going abroad is a recreation for artistes and can be viewed as a perk.

However, we have faced several problems in the course of these shootings. Most of the public places in any country are open to cameras. There are, of course, some exceptions where it is necessary to take written permission from the local authorities. Then of course there is a language barrier

Chandni, actor: Both viewers and actors are enthusiastic about filming in new and exotic locations. Sometimes it is like a picnic for artistes. I was in Nepal last year for a special TV play. There we encountered some weird problems. In Nepal, for instance, on one occasion we lost our way and ended up outside the cantonment area. Seeking permission and getting it on time is another problem. However, I remember an amusing

memories still haunt me.

Jeetu Ahsan, actor: The main attraction of shooting abroad is to give viewers a glimpse of new and beautiful locales. The artistes also get an exposure to foreign countries. However, shooting abroad is very expensive. We have to work on a tight schedule; literally from dawn to dusk, only to save money. Because of a shortage of technical hands, the artistes have to

develop a script after I get a clear conception about the country in which I want to shoot my play or serial. I don't depend on instant scripts, whether shooting at home or abroad. While shooting abroad, I never make any change in my script -- which may be a common phenomenon for the other productions.

As for shooting in restricted spots where we needed official permission, I have always made the arrangements much before the shooting schedule. For instance, I shot one of my plays in Bangkok Pattaya Hospital after I had taken permission from the concerned authority in Dhaka. So, I didn't have to face any problems.

While at home I usually work with three assistants in every production. Because of budgetary constraints, I take only one assistant abroad. Sometimes due to the lack of production people, the artistes have to carry on with tasks such as make up. The remuneration of the artistes does not differ in this case. Another problem we face is a shortfall of production equipment. Again a limited budget is the problem. We don't have the studio facilities abroad. As a result we cannot maintain production quality.

AR Mantu, producer: I have acted and produced a play that was shot in Mauritius. I hardly face any problem while shooting abroad because of my distinctive production style.

One month prior to the shooting schedule, the scriptwriter of my plays reaches the country where I want to shoot the play. He does his homework there and develops his script. Meanwhile I do my planning and make the necessary arrangements that I would need abroad. I rarely face any trouble while shooting -- barring the reduced number of the unit members. I usually work with 30 people at home while I take 20 people to help me in my plays abroad.

Aranya Anwar, director: The experience of shooting abroad is not always pleasant for me. I basically

do their own make up and set arrangements. For this reason, in some plays the production is sub-standard. We cannot afford the local technical supports in those countries, so it often difficult to make quality productions.

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Popular model-turned-host Sharmin Lucky has recently acted in a new TV commercial (TVC) of RAK Ceramics. This new TVC was first telecast on Eid day. The script revolves around a man who surprises his parents with a new apartment especially bought for them. In this commercial, Lucky enacts the role of an old woman. Draped in a white saree, the bespectacled and grey haired Lucky had a whole new persona.

Lucky said, "It was an enthralling experience, since I have always wanted to act in different roles. I was completely fascinated by the script. However, some of my well wishers didn't view my role in a positive light. As one of them questioned, 'What got you into acting as an elderly lady?' However, I really like the commercial." Lucky added that the entire commercial had not been telecast which would have attracted more viewers.

Another new TV programme, *Barighar Thikthak*, hosted by Lucky was inaugurated on the occasion of Eid on ntv. A lifestyle-based programme, it was aired from the third day of Eid. In another piece of news, Lucky asserted that the shooting of the popular cookery show *Siddiqua Kabir's Recipe* would begin soon. "This show has a sizeable viewership and it is for this reason that we hope to revive the programme," she said.

Sharmin Lucky



ILLUSTRATION: DEEPTIA

Most of the popular Bangladeshi actors have at one stage or another winged their way out of the country for shoots. This correspondent talked to a few artistes who shared their experiences -- favourable and unfavourable -- while shooting abroad. Here are some excerpts:

Mahfuz Ahmed, actor: I have acted in about 20 TV plays set outside Bangladesh. I have had some interesting

between the directors and local people. Frequently, with a view to keep the budget low, the directors carry on without official permission. Also sometimes due to fund constraints the crew is small. As a result, the co-actors may have to take up other responsibilities such as lights and sound engineering. These are some of the stumbling blocks of shooting in foreign countries. On the whole, however, shooting abroad is always an enjoyable experience.

experience in the course of my visit to Malaysia. I had to share my hotel room with Azra, a promising model-turned-actress. Both of us felt that our room was haunted. Without any reason the lights of our room went off, but the rest of the rooms were bright. Again, when we returned after dinner, we found the door of our room wide open, although I did lock my room. The hotel management could not give a good explanation. These

The Last Legion: Aishwarya wows the film crew

Filming is well underway, rather, almost done in Tunisia for international star Aishwarya Rai on *The Last Legion*, a Dino De Laurentiis presentation, produced by Martha and Raffaella De Laurentiis and directed by Doug Lefler.

The Last Legion is a US \$70 million epic-adventure independently

financed by Quinta Communications' Tarak Ben Ammar and British co-producers Chris Curling and Phil Robertson of Zephyr Films.

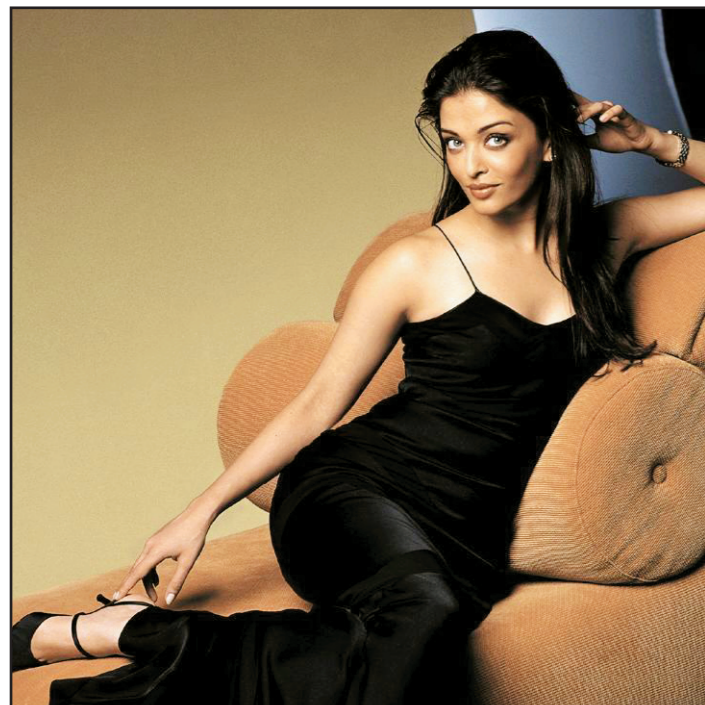
"Her fans will be shocked and thrilled with this 'never before seen Aishwarya'. She is simply marvelous," states Simone Sheffield, Rai's International Manager.

Stunt Coordinator Steve Griffin (*Terminator 3*, *Titanic*, *Mummy Returns*) says of Rai, "When I was told that Aishwarya was to be the leading lady in *The Last Legion*, I did my homework on her. However, the information I found mostly showed her as a pretty model. This of course put my panic in motion. Because of another work related commitment Aishwarya was unable to join us until we had in fact already begun filming in Tunisia. The first time she attended rehearsals, I found out she could move well and remember choreography easily. We put a sword in her hand and she just flowed, the next thing was to get her aggression up to make it look like she would kill somebody. She needed little motivation and her acting was superb."

Costume designer Paolo Scalabrino (*Gangs of New York*, *Troy*, *Seven Years in Tibet*) says, "My first impression of Aishwarya in our initial meeting in London was 'what a very beautiful, dainty lady she is'. However, when she turned up for work one month later (August 10), I found a toughened, well-toned (down 4 inches) and determined actress. I discovered a different person. You could see she had put lots of physical energy and mental training in to address the role."

The production has moved from Tunisia to Slovakia to complete the filming.

Source: Internet



Aishwarya Rai

Sharmin explores new possibilities

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

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Anuradha Kapur

Guiding young theatre talents

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Anuradha Kapur is a Professor of Acting and Direction at the National School of Drama (NSD), New Delhi. She has written widely on theatre. Her book, *Actors, Pilgrims, Kings and Gods: the Ramlila at Ramnagar* was published by Seagull Books, Calcutta (1993, 2004). She has taught and directed in India and abroad and most of her directorial works have been in collaboration with visual and video artistes. Among the artistes she has worked with are Arpita Singh, Bhupen Khakhar, Ein Lall, Madhusree Dutta, Nalini Malani, Nilima Sheikh, Sumant Jayakrishnan, and Vivan Sundaram. Anuradha co-directed, with Makoto Sato, *No Boat in Sight*, a dance-theatre collaboration between Indian and Japanese dancers, which travelled to India and Japan between December/January 2002/2003.

Amplifying on her role as direction teacher of NSD, Anuradha says, "I help the students to develop the power of their imagination. In fact, the text of a play belongs to the literature department while a stage play belongs to the dramatics department. I help the students to transform a text to a stage play. A person needs to visualise the directorial lines by reading the text of a play. In fact, a person should have sound aesthetic sense as well as the vision to become a quality director."

Anuradha is one of the founder members of Vivadi, a working group of painters, musicians, writers and theatre practitioners, which was formed in 1989. Her theatre work has travelled to Germany, Japan, Brazil, UK, and Korea, among other countries. In 2003, she was invited to curate the performance titled "Actors at Work at body city".

She says, "Vivadi is a Delhi-based theatre group. Several of our productions have got plaudits. But, in Delhi shows do not run for a long period. Because of the dominance of the film industry and TV plays,

Chicken Little wins big at box office

AP, Los Angeles

The sky is still falling in Hollywood, even though *Chicken Little* and the *Marines* have landed.

The box office tumbled again despite solid weekends for the animated *Chicken Little*, which debuted with US\$40.1 million, and the Desert Storm drama *Jarhead*, which opened with US\$28.8 million, according to studio estimates last Sunday.

Chicken Little and *Jarhead* each came in as much as US\$10 million ahead of industry expectations, a sign audiences are getting into the holiday movie-going spirit. Upcoming releases include *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, *King Kong* and *The*



A scene from Chicken Little

Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.

Chicken Little, with Zach Braff providing the voice of the fairy-tale fowl that proclaimed the sky was falling, is Disney's first fully computer-animated movie. It was Disney's second-best animated opening ever, behind *The Lion King* with US\$40.9 million. The debut includes US\$2.1 million from 84 theaters showing a 3-D version of *Chicken Little*.

Still, *Chicken Little* received so-so reviews, with some critics saying it's an undernourished story compared with hits made by Pixar or rival DreamWorks (the *Shrek* films, *Madagascar*).