

In Conversation

Ferdaus: Much sought after in two movie industries

ERSHAD KAMOL

FERDAUS Ahmed, popularly known as Ferdaus, is perhaps the only Bangladeshi film actor to have become hugely popular in two movie industries -- Dhaka and Kolkata. Before him only Rahman had achieved this distinction (in Urdu and Bangla films).

While a student of journalism of University of Dhaka, Ferdaus was involved with the film society movement but he had no idea that he would become a film star. In those days, he used to be a ramp-model for international super model turned designer Bibi Russell. Seeing his impressive credentials, director Anjan Sarkar cast Ferdaus in the lead role of his movie *Prithibi Amarey Chay Na* (1996). After the death of Salman Shah, Ferdaus completed a half done movie titled *Buker Bhitokey Agun*, which Salman could not complete. Seeing the rush print of *Buker Bhitokey Agun*, Indian director Basu Chatterjee picked Ferdaus to play the protagonist for a joint venture titled *Hotat Bristhi*. Indian actress Priyanka Trivedi was paired up with him. The movie became a blockbuster in Bangladesh and Bangla-speaking regions in India.

"For that movie I received two major awards in both countries: National Award for Films in Bangladesh (1998) and Anandalok Award in Kolkata," continues Ferdaus. "My feelings at the film's success can't be expressed in words. My portrait beside those of Indian superstars including Shahrulkh Khan and Salman Khan was really amazing."

Ferdaus became so popular in Kolkata that at the initial stage of his career he did more movies in the Tollywood film industry compared to Dhaliwood. He even performed the main role in a Hindi movie titled *Mitti* (2001), directed by Iqbal Durani. Sharbani Mukherji, who made her debut in the blockbuster movie *Border*, played the female lead.

On his experience of acting in a



Bollywood movie, Ferdaus said, "Though *Mitti* was an average movie, I had a wonderful experience working

in a professional film industry. It takes much time to complete a movie in Bollywood, which might have had an

adverse impact on my career in Dhaliwood and Tollywood, where I'm reigning."

Ferdaus has continued to perform in four or five movies in Kolkata and 10 to 12 movies in Dhaka. According to him, "So far, I've played the lead in over 30 movies in Kolkata, most of which have been hits. Judging my popularity, the city dwellers often invite me to inaugurate their major festivals like Durga Puja, Kali Puja and others. Lately, because of my family responsibilities, I can't put in much time in India. That's why I'm doing more movies in Dhaka."

After working in three movie industries, Ferdaus evaluates the Dhaliwood movie industry as 'technically backward'. To quote him, "We have a few talented actors, directors and technical hands. But, the major problems we face here are low budgets combined with the lack of technical equipment such as camera and editing panels."

"None of the directors do their spade work before making movies in Dhaka. We are still using the same techniques of the 1970s for cinematography. The allocation for make-up artistes is low. Even the costume designers are few and far between, which impedes the quality of the films. And the actors should be physically fit and aware of recent trends in fashion."

Ferdaus is planning to develop a troupe, including movie stars, singers and others for live stage performances. He said, "I have performed in several stage shows with leading Indian actors like Mithun Chakraborty, Karishma Kapoor, Rituparna Sengupta and others. Seeing the warm response of the Bangladeshi expatriates at the shows in Dubai, London and New York, I'm planning to develop a professional troupe."

In future Ferdaus hopes to become a film director. With this goal in mind, he plans to study filmmaking in New York.

Closeup 1 '06

New voices, unadulterated popularity

KHALID-BIN-HABIB

Three contenders, Muhin, Salma and Nishita were pitted against each other at the recent grand finale of *Closeup 1 Tomakei Khujchhey Bangladesh '06*. The live telecast of the show, held at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre, roped in a pack of cultural celebrities. The high point of the programme was performances by finalists from last year's *Closeup 1* and the current contenders. There was tension in the air as the curtains went up with the four finalists of *Closeup1, 2005* and 40 finalists of *Closeup1, 2006* singing a medley, *Drishti amar digontey*.

Towards the close of the event, a nervous Salma and Muhin awaited the announcement of the winner of *Closeup1, 2006*. Finally the hosts Debashish Biswas and Samia Afton jointly made the much-awaited announcement with their characteristic flair. The youngest among the finalists, Salma Akhter from Kushtia won the coveted title. She walked away with Tk 10 lakh, a brand new car and loads of other gifts. She received 17,96,931 SMS votes from the viewers and 40 marks from the judges. The chairman of Unilever Bangladesh Ltd, Sanjiv Mehta, handed over the cheque to the winner while Naushad Chowdhury, director, Brands and Development, Unilever Bangladesh Ltd; Asaduzzaman Noor, deputy director of Asiatic and Aly Zaker, chief executive officer of



Clockwise (from top): Salma, Nishita and Muhin at the finale of Closeup 1 '06

Asiatic were also present.

Muhin from Rajshahi and Nishita from Chittagong were the first and second runners-up respectively. The first and second runner-up received Tk 5 and 3 lakh. Rest of the top seven contestants received Tk 1 lakh each. The top 10 will get a chance to perform at concerts in Europe and North America.

The trio who judged the event are familiar faces in the Bangladeshi music industry -- Ahmed Imtiaz Bulbul, Fahmida Nabi and Kumar Bishwajit. However, the final decision was made by TV viewers through SMS and Internet votes.

Here's what the three finalists of *Closeup 1* had to say:



Salma:

An elated Salma said, "I am very happy. I never thought of reaching this level. I feel bad for those who couldn't make it to the top, but I think we all are winners."

Going back to those eventful days of *Closeup 1*, Salma said, "I still remember the day when I was standing amidst a huge crowd in Khulna and wondering whether I had a chance. It was a great feeling to be here for six months. There was pressure, as there were so many talented singers around. I never thought of participating in a talent show on television."

Talking about her achievements, she said, "There is a major improvement in my singing. I can't

explain how it happened. I have tried to improve my Bangla diction and singing. The judges have helped in my grooming process and supported me throughout the contest."

Muhin:

Asked about his instant reaction after results, Muhin said, "I was hoping for the best but prepared for the worst. At the back of mind I always had a feeling that I might be eliminated someday. So I always faced the audience boldly. But at the same time I have worked very hard to give my best."

About his future plans, he said, "I want to take up singing as a career. My parents have encouraged me to sing since my childhood. Without my parents I couldn't have become a singer."

Nishita:

Talking about her performance in the final round, Nishita said, "I believe that there was no shortfall in my performance. The audience seemed very happy with my performance during the final recording. I gave my 100 percent. I don't think anything went wrong in the final performance. But I don't think that the audience was wrong either. I feel bad because I couldn't fulfil the expectations of everyone. There were three contestants and only one could receive the title. I am happy for Salma."

"I got more than I expected. And yes, I will prove myself in the music industry," she added.



TV WATCH

Telefilm 'Shosagora Konya'



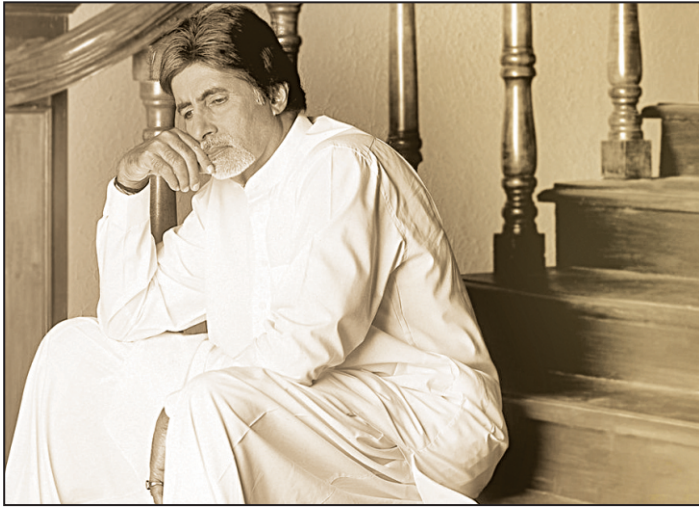
A scene from *Shosagora Konya*

Written by Abdus Selim and directed by Gazi Rakayet, telefilm *Shosagora Konya* will be aired today at 2:40pm on ATN Bangla.

In the telefilm Dr Wahab remarries Elita who finds it difficult to cope with her in-laws. She was adventurous; she had a genuine fascination for the sea. The story becomes complicated when a sailor returns to Elita's life.

The telefilm features Azizul Hakim, Fazlur Rahman Babu, Apurbo, Alif, Shams Sumon and Chandni among others.

Amitabh to narrate Tagore songs



Amitabh Bachchan has decided to lend his stentorian voice for narration in a music album that contains songs composed by Rabindranath Tagore. The album, which is a tribute to the Nobel Prize winner, has been titled *Mere Mann Mein Dhadkhan Mein - Rabindra Shradhanjali*.

Bollywood actor Ashmit Patel and Tollywood star Rituparna Sengupta have performed in an exclusive music video for the album. The video is scheduled to

go on air on different channels by the end of this month.

Bachchan already has a lot on his plate with movies like *Nishad*, *Eklavya* and *Ram Gopal Varma ke Sholay*, which are set to release this year. However, the busy actor found time to record for the *Rabindra Shradhanjali* at the Sound City Studios a few weeks ago.

Source: Internet

'Indiana Jones' returns

REUTERS, Los Angeles

Nineteen years after chasing down the Holy Grail in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, Harrison Ford will return to the big screen in the character of the globetrotting archaeologist in May 2008.

Producer George Lucas and director Steven Spielberg confirmed details of the project last Monday after Lucas tipped off the media to Indiana Jones' imminent return.

After years spent in script development, a fourth instalment of the hit franchise is set to begin production in June in locations around the world and in the United States. It

will mark Spielberg's next directorial outing.

"George, Harrison and I are all very excited," Spielberg said. "We feel that the script was well worth the wait. We hope it delivers everything you'd expect from our history with Indiana Jones."

In a statement, 64-year-old Ford said he was ready for another action-packed turn. "I'm delighted to be back in business with my old friends," he said. "I don't know if the pants still fit, but I know the hat will."

Added Lucas: "These films are such great fun to make. I'm looking forward to reuniting with the team and starting this new journey."

Cross Currents

A music video on Grameen Microcredit

Los Angeles-based The Green Children Foundation is creating a music video on Grameen Microcredit, says a press release. For this music video, a group from the Foundation recently travelled to Dhaka.

The group, which included singer Camilla Sunde and her writer Thomas Schofield, spent seven days shooting the video with their crew in the villages of Bhawal Mirzapur of Gazipur and Bhawal Rajabari and Sreepur of the same district. This was the Grameen Bank branch area just outside of

Dhaka. Camilla performed as the lead singer in the video, which included dances by the children from the pre-school of Grameen Shikkha.

Explaining the genesis of the music video, Schofield points out that on a visit to Bangladesh in February 2006, he was astonished to see the impact of microcredit on the poor. This inspired him to write the song *Hear me now* while he was in Dhaka. Later, in the US he and his friend Camilla composed the music. Subsequently they returned to Bangladesh to make

the music video, which follows the life of Monika Rani, a Grameen Bank Microcredit borrower.

Schofield asserts that youth worldwide are the target group for this music video. A portion of the income from this music video, which is likely to hit the market soon, will be spread across Grameen Shikkha, Grameen Health Care and Grameen Trust. At the end of this year, The Green Children will return to Bangladesh to premier the music video in Dhaka and the village of Gazaria at Sreepur.



Camilla Sunde (C) with students of Grameen Shikkha pre-schools

UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards '07

To recognise and encourage private and public-private initiatives for restoration and conservation of structures that are over 50 years old, Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO (BNCU) and Ministry of Education are offering UNESCO Asia-Pacific heritage Awards 2007 for cultural heritage conservation. The award includes attractive prizes and certificates, according to a press release.



PHOTO: STAR To mark the 92nd birth anniversary of Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin, a children's painting competition was held at the Zainul Abedin Sangrohoshal, Mymensingh. The Director General of National Museum, Kazi Akhter Hossain (L) distributed prizes to the winners while the artistes of Shilpakala Academy performed a dance number

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