

Honours for Tanvir Mokammel in India

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA,
New Delhi

Acclaimed Bangladeshi filmmaker Tanvir Mokammel is poised to add two "firsts" to his career. He will inaugurate a festival of short and documentary films in Bhubaneswar, capital of Orissa on December 12, and then have a retrospective of his work in Kolkata and Delhi later this month.

Mokammel has been chosen by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) to showcase his feature and documentary films.

The filmmaker will inaugurate a four-day short and documentary film festival to be held in Bhubaneswar, in memory of artist Jatin Das, father of acclaimed Indian actor Nandita Das. The festival's theme is films on performing arts, wild life and environment with a special focus on Bangladesh.

Three of Mokammel's feature and short films -- "Lalon," "Achin Pakhi" and "Bonojatri" -- will be



Bonnya Mirza and co-actor in a scene from "Rabeya"



Tanvir Mokammel

screened at the Bhubaneswar festival.

Also for the first time, a retrospective of Mokammel's films is on the cards towards the end of this month under the aegis of ICCR.

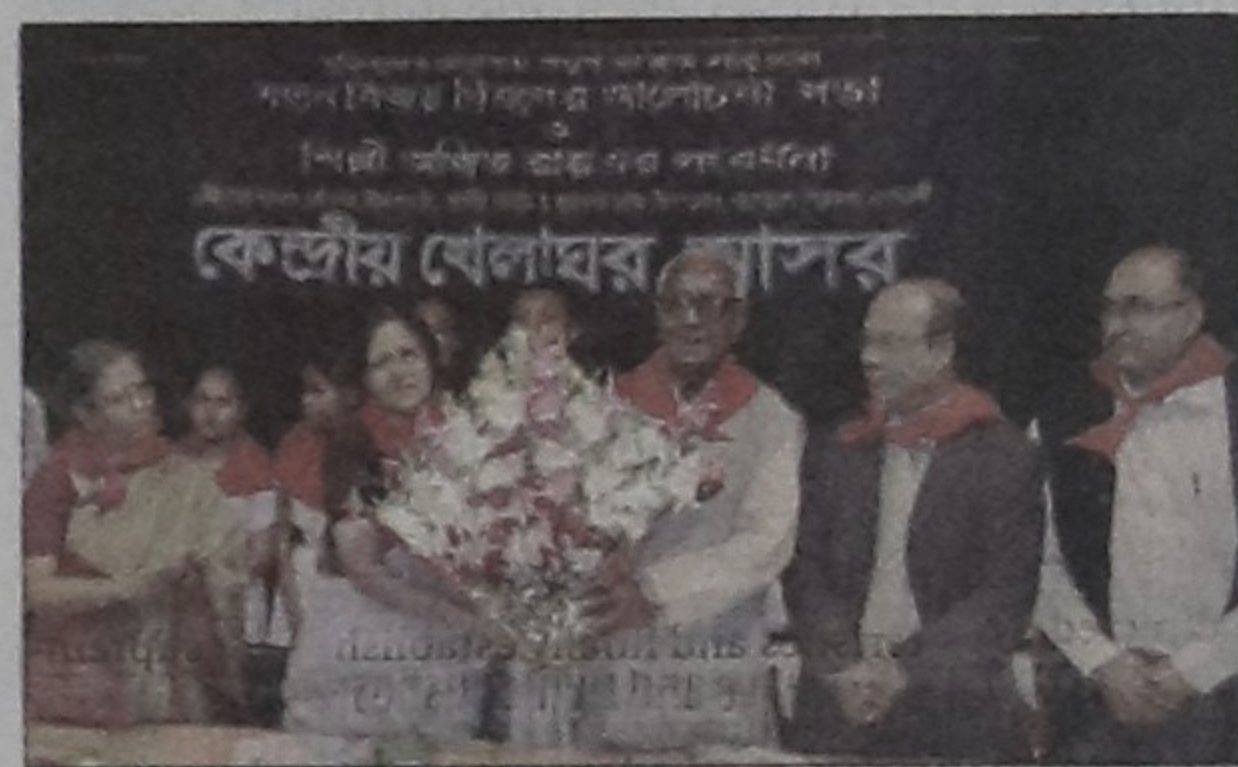
Among the films which are likely to be in the retro are "Chitra Nadir Pary," "Lal Shalu," "Lalon" and his latest work "Rabeya," which the director describes as a "deconstruction of the Sophocles play 'Antigone,' placed against the backdrop of the Liberation War."

The drama in "Rabeya" is played out at a remote village on the bank of Rupsha river where Rabeya and Rokeya, two orphan sisters, live in a conservative household of their uncle. The latter is a member of a rich and powerful landed gentry and a local Muslim League leader.

The uncle, fired by political ambition, collaborates with the marauding Pakistani army. However Rabeya's brother Khaled, a college student, joins the guerrilla group of Freedom Fighters to battle the Pakistani troops.

Victory Day celebration by Khelaghar

Ajit Roy honoured



Eminent artiste Ajit Roy receives a bouquet from Professor Panna Kaiser, President of Khelaghar. Professor A.K. Azad Chowdhury and Advocate Sultana Kamal also seen in the photograph.

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

On the first day of December, the month when Bangladesh became a sovereign country in 1971, cultural organisation Kendriyo Khelaghar Ashor arranged a programme at the National Music and Dance Centre, Bangladesh Shilpakala

Academy.

The programme was part of the organisation's Victory Day celebration. Eminent artiste and a singer of Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra, Ajit Roy, was honoured at the programme.

A discussion was held prior to the cultural programme. Human rights activist Advocate Sultana Kamal; Professor A.K. Azad Chowdhury, former VC of Dhaka University and Dr. Sarwar Ali, trustee of Liberation War Museum spoke at the programme.

Among others, Khelaghar members Shafiqur Rahman Shahid, poet Zahidul Haque and Nur-ur-Rahman Selim also spoke on the occasion.

President of Khelaghar, Professor Panna Kaiser, presided over the programme.

Ajit Roy was honoured for his contribution during the Liberation War. In his speech Ajit Roy said, "We have yet to fully implement the values of the Liberation War. Heading to children's needs and their aspirations is a major part of that bigger goal."

The cultural programme by child artistes of the organisation featured music and dance highlighting the theme of Liberation War.

An announcement of a competition for children, featuring story and poetry writing, was made at the programme. The organisers informed that the finale of the competition would be held on Independence Day (March 26) next year. A compilation of best 20 stories and poems would also be published at that programme.

Bachchan, Aamir blog about Mumbai attacks

The feeling of helplessness and shock in Bollywood over the Mumbai terror attacks was evident in the blogs of actors Amitabh Bachchan and Aamir Khan, two of the most prolific bloggers of Mumbai's film industry.

The actors, in their effort to reach out to the public in the hour of crisis, described their numbness at the events that unfolded in their beloved city. "My pain has been the sight and plight of my innocent and vulnerable and completely insecure countrymen, facing the wrath of this terror attack. And my anger has been at the ineptitude of the authorities that have been ordained to look after us," says Bachchan in his new blog post.

Similarly, Aamir says he feels, "Shocked, heartbroken, helpless and angry" and writes he felt sick while watching the TV images of a terrorised Mumbai. "I have been watching television since yesterday and to see various locations in Mumbai turned into a war zone is shocking and heart-breaking to say the least," he wrote.

"My heartfelt condolences to families of persons killed and taken hostage. I was feeling sick in the stomach when the fire broke out at the Taj," he added.

Amitabh Bachchan confessed that he has been living in a constant fear since the attacks. "Last night, as the events of the terror attack unfolded in front of me I did something for the first time and one that I had hoped never ever to be in a situation to do. Before retiring for the night, I pulled out my licensed .32 revolver, loaded it and put it under my pillow. For a very disturbed sleep," he wrote on his blog.

Both stars expressed their solidarity with the slain police officers and offered their condolences.

"Brilliant officers and police personnel have laid down their lives for us. I can only but salute them and respect their sincerity in the

call of duty," said Bachchan.

Paying his homage to Hemant Karkare and other officers, Aamir said, "Hemant Karkare of the ATS, who in the recent past was being targeted by various political parties for the work that he was doing. When will these politicians realise and admit that terrorists have no religion?"

"Terrorists are not Hindu or Muslim or Christian. They are not people of religion or God. They are people who have gone totally sick in their head and have to be dealt with in that manner," an angry Aamir said.

Bachchan said he was disgusted with the often-repeated cliché of "spirit of Mumbai." "Yes Mumbai is strong and resilient and shall not be cowed down by any such occurrence. But let us not conveniently use it as our cover sheet, pull it over our heads and go off to sleep," an angry Bachchan said.

While Aamir, who had played a young idealist police officer fighting against terrorists in his film "Sarfarosh," warned against politicians taking undue advantage of the situation for petty gains. "I dread to think of how various political parties are now going to try and use this tragedy to further their political careers," he wrote.

The actor appealed to all political parties to set aside their differences and unite in the hour of crisis. "At least now they should learn to not divide people and instead become responsible leaders. An incident such as this really exposes how ill equipped we are as a society as far as proper leaders go.

"We desperately need young, dynamic, intelligent, honest and upright leaders, who actually care for the country," Aamir's blog said.

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