



# UTTAM KUMAR

## Uncrowned KING of the silver screen

**66** It is the demise of a leading light of the Bengali film industry... There won't be another hero like him.

Uttam Kumar's hypnotic screen presence, mellow voice, unique charisma and dazzling smile made him not just a heartthrob, but also a legend of Bangla Cinema. To generations of Bangla film aficionados, he remains 'Mahanayak' (epic hero), the undisputed king of the Bengali silver screen. Today marks his 35th death anniversary.

Born as Arun Kumar Chatterjee on September 3, 1926 at Ahiritola, North Kolkata, he was called 'Uttam' by his maternal grandmother. The extended family had its own theatre group, 'Suhrid Samaj', which staged many amateur shows within the community. Besides acting, young Uttam was also into sports.



After graduation, the financial straits of his family forced Uttam to take up employment as a clerk at the Port Commissioner's office. In 1947, he received an offer for a cameo role in a Hindi film called "Mayador". The film never saw the light of day. His first

release was the Bengali film "Drishidaan" (1948), directed by Nitin Bose. Uttam was credited as Arun Kumar in the film, which turned out to be a flop. In 1949, he made his debut as the leading man in the film "Kamona", crediting him as Uttam Chatterjee. But this too bombed. By then the film industry had labeled him a "flop master". During this time, he married to Gauri Ganguli (in 1948). Fortunately for Uttam, "Basu Paribar" (1952), co-starring Sabitri Chatterjee, was a big hit.

Uttam delivered another big hit "Sharey Chuattor" in 1953. In the film he was paired for the first time with Suchitra Sen. With "Agnipariksha", the following year, again hitting the bull's-eye, the Uttam-Suchitra pair ushered in the so-called 'golden era of Bengali cinema'. They went on to become icons of Bangla romantic melodramas for over 20 years, becoming almost a genre in itself.

Their films were famous for the soft-focus close ups of the stars, particularly Suchitra, and lavishly mounted scenes of romance against windswept expanses and richly decorated interiors. The storylines often revolved around a pattern where the lovers would meet and fall in love. And then either the family or difference in status would pose hurdles in the romance. Some popular films of the pair include "Shap Mochoh" (1955), "Shagorika" (1956), "Harano Sur" (1957), "Shaptopodi" (1961), "Bipasha" (1962) and

"Grihadaho" (1967).

When Satyajit Ray made "Nayak" (1966), he created the role of actor Arindam Mukherjee, keeping Uttam Kumar in mind. Many people feel the film is reflective of Uttam Kumar's own life -- the sense of anxiety and restlessness of the character mirrored Uttam's insecurities about his phenomenal success and abiding fear that his superstardom might not last. Ray later confessed that if Uttam had refused the film, he would have abandoned it. The actor worked with Ray again the following year in "Chiriakhana" (1967).

When the Indian Government instituted the National Awards for Best Actor and Actress in 1967, Uttam Kumar was the first recipient of the Best Actor Award for his performances in "Chiriakhana" and "Anthony Firangee" (1967).

Uttam also tried his hand at Hindi films with the oft-criticised box office bomb "Chhoti Si Mulakat", a film he produced and starred in, among others that were better received.

A strict workaholic, he was rumoured to have said that his preferred demise would be on the floor of a studio, doing what he loved best, acting. Indeed, that is exactly how he died. While filming "Ogo Bodhu Shundori" in 1980, he died of a massive heart attack at the age of 54.

Compiled by Correspondent



## Musical tribute to Mahanayak "Uttam Gaan" on Channel i

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today (July 24) marks the 35th death anniversary of Mahanayak Uttam Kumar. To observe the occasion and to celebrate Eid, Channel i has organised an innovative musical programme titled "Uttam Gaan" today at 3pm. Planned by Faridur Reza Sagar, managing director of the channel, the programme has been directed by Shykh Seraj, director and head of news of Channel i.

Ambidextrous litterateur Syed Shamsul Haq hosted the programme in a boithoki adda with Supriya Devi, a co-artiste of Mahanayak. Bangladeshi singers -- Syed Abdul Hadi, Subir Nandi, Rafiqul Alam, Ferdaus Ara, Kanak Champa, Rizia Parveen, Monir Khan, Konal, Imran and Jhilik recorded popular songs lip-synched by Uttam Kumar.

Eminent personalities including, Barrister Rafiq-ul Haq, Rehman Sobhan, Abul Maal Abdul Muhit, Mahfuz Anam, Abul Hayat, Hasanul Haq Inu along with their better halves took part in the programme expressing their emotions on Mahanayak.



## "Jora Shalik" on Desh TV

A CORRESPONDENT

Eid special single-episode television play "Jora Shalik" will air on Desh TV today at 7:45pm. Written and directed by Mostafa Kamal Raj, the play encircles the romantic relationship between two elderly persons Hayat and Shirin. Hayat, a 60-year-old retired person wants to marry Shirin, an elderly woman. But because of the society they cannot marry. Meanwhile Hayat's nephew Junaed finds out the matter and he talks to Shirin's daughter who happens to be his girlfriend about his uncle's marriage. The play casts Tariq Anam Khan, Diti, Tawsif and Safa Kabir in the lead roles.

Prangonemore to stage "Roktokorobi" in Dhaka and Kolkata



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Theatre troupe Prangonemore will stage their much-acclaimed production "Roktokorobi" at the Experimental Theatre Hall of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy on July 26 evening. They will also stage the play at the Academy of Fine Arts auditorium in Kolkata on July 31. The play, a Tagore classic, has been directed by Nuna Afroze.

"Roktokorobi" features a fictional world called 'Jaggapuri' where there is only wealth and no humanity. The leviathan King of that place, according to the mythology, is Kubera, but Tagore calls him Makar-Raj. One day a young maiden Nandini, symbolising purity, comes to the place in search of Ranjan. She is in love with him. Every man, every element of the society, even the King, wants her. But Nandini will not respond to impurity.

At long last, the King breaks down the walls of prejudice, only for Nandini. A new conflict arises between the subjects and the King.

The play casts Nuna Afroze, Ananto Hira, Ramiz Raju, Awal Reza, Shishir Rahman, Polash Jasim, Saroar Saikat and others.

## Pop stars in 'Bad Blood' over VMA nods

### Minaj, Swift and Katy Perry get in Twitter scuffle

Nicki Minaj's criticism of the MTV Video Music Award 2015 nominations has descended into a full-on Twitter row involving loads of celebrities. The rapper told MTV that she was upset her videos for "Anaconda" and "Feeling Myself" hadn't had more recognition. In a stream of tweets, she suggests that white musicians were favoured over her.

MTV nominated Taylor Swift featuring Kendrick Lamar (for "Bad Blood"), Mark Ronson featuring Bruno Mars ("Uptown Funk"), Beyonce ("7/11"), Ed Sheeran ("Thinking Out Loud") and Kendrick Lamar ("Alright") for best video.

"Anaconda" has been nominated in the best hip-hop video category, but "Feeling Myself", which features Beyonce, has not been put forward for any awards. Minaj's tweet was interpreted by fans as a jibe aimed at Taylor Swift, who featured models and other female celebrities in her "Bad Blood" video.

Swift obviously took it that way too, but Minaj said she was miss-

ing the point. Minaj's rather arrogant tweets drew an invite from Swift for Minaj to join her

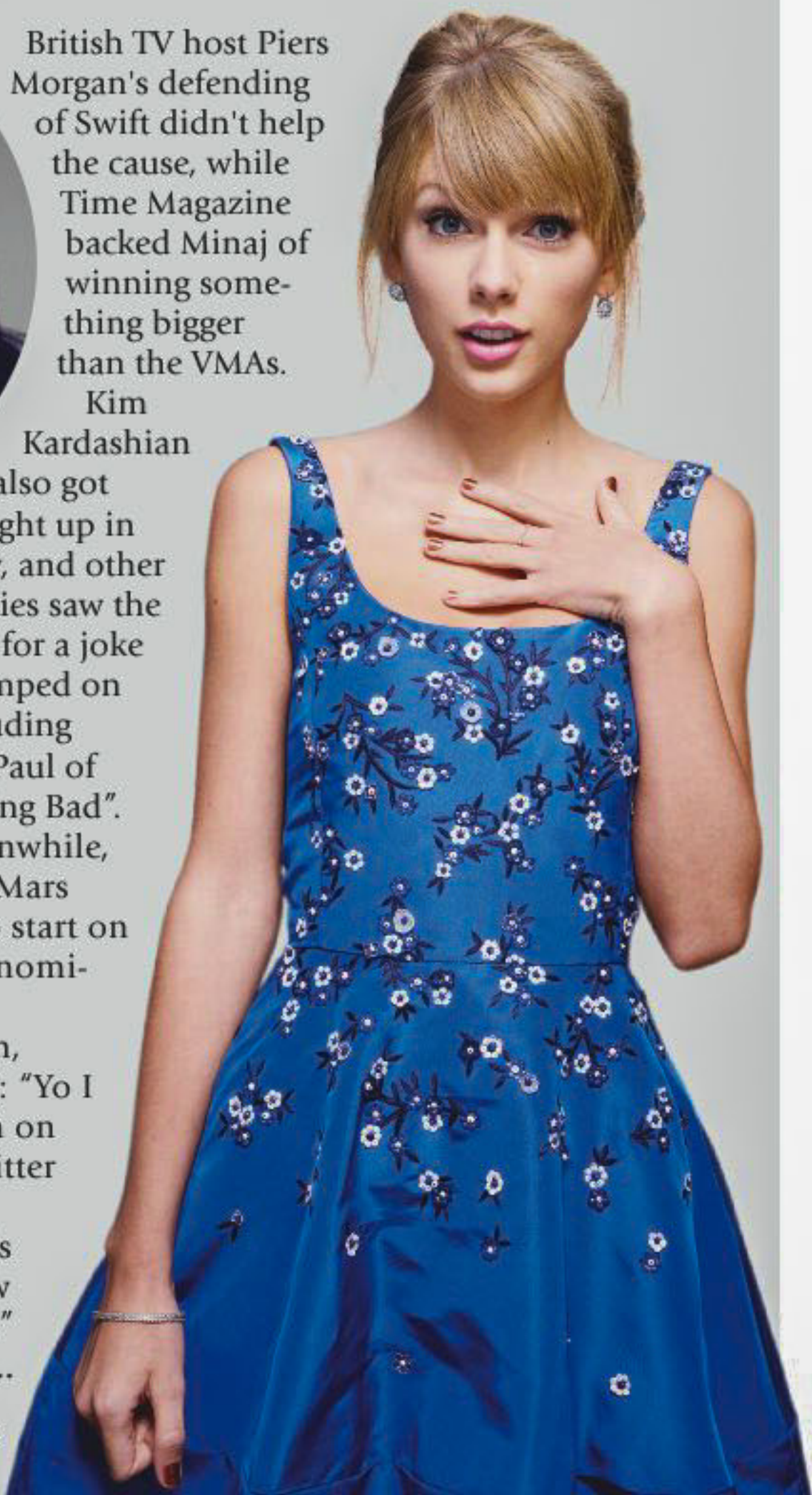


on stage if she won, adding "You're invited to any stage I'm ever on."

Swift's remark that Minaj was trying to "pit women against women" triggered a reply from Katy Perry, hinting at Swift's nominated "Bad Blood" (which is about two former female friends turning enemies), which is widely considered to have been written about Perry. Katy Perry also went on to hint that there's a conspiracy in play that kept Rihanna's highly-controversial "B\*\*\*h Better Have My Money" out of the running.

British TV host Piers Morgan's defending of Swift didn't help the cause, while Time Magazine backed Minaj of winning something bigger than the VMAs.

Kim Kardashian also got caught up in the row, and other celebrities saw the chance for a joke and jumped on it, including Aaron Paul of "Breaking Bad". Meanwhile, Bruno Mars tried to start on fellow nominee Ed Sheeran, writing: "Yo I want in on this twitter Beef!! VMAs is the new WWF!!" Source: Internet



## Burhan and Rehana Siddiqi's albums to be released

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Singer couple Burhan Siddiqi and Rehana Siddiqi's music albums are set to be launched today (July 24) at 7:30pm at AS Mahmud Hall of The Daily Star Centre.

The artiste duo recorded 100 songs each for two CDs. Burhan Siddiqi's album titled "Arup Tomar Bani" contains 100 Tagore songs, while Rehana Siddiqi has recorded 60 original Bengali songs and 40 songs of "Poncho-kobi" in her album "Kichhu Katha Kichhu Smriti".

The artiste duo will render a few songs following the launching of the albums.



Distinguished guests from cultural arena are expected to join the programme, including

for four decades. After retirement, the couple established a recording studio of their own. They have produced 150 Tagore Songs of Bangladeshi artistes in 15 CDs and released them on July 24, 201, to mark the 150th birth anniversary of Rbindranath Tagore.

Burhan Siddiqi is a former IGP and Secretary of the Government of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh.

Professor Emeritus Anisuzzaman, Dr. M Enamul Haq, a number of noted Nazrul singers including Rezwana Chowdhury Bannya, Tapan Mahmud, and others.

Rehana Siddiqi and Burhan Siddiqi have been pursuing music

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