

SPOTLIGHT

It's a popular concept around the world to release mainstream commercial movies during major festivals like Eid, Diwali or Christmas. Kakrail, the *Chhobipara* of our film industry, is also preparing to showcase the grandest releases of the year during this festival, while film producers, distributors and booking agents are at their busiest best. It is that time of the year when all the treasured actors and actresses light up the big screens with their latest releases. That time of the year when the young Bangladeshi film fans, who return to their hometowns for Eid, has saved up their Eid to catch the first day, first show screening of the movie that they've been most excited about. Just this excitement should be enough to help us understand the vast popularity of our films among the masses.

"My fans are everything for me. Their love and support have gotten me where I am today." This expression of love by a film celebrity, followed by a flattering smile, has been a staple feature across all media – be it newspapers, film magazines or TV interviews – since forever. While this may sound like a clichéd quote, if you visit Dhaka's Cinema Para, you will understand that it is truly the love of the fans of our film stars that shot them to the pinnacle of fame. You might squint hard at the impossible stunts, or laugh at the same old repeated dance moves, but at the very mention of Shakib Khan, Jeet, Opu Biswas or Mahiya Mahi, there will be thousands among the masses to look up in excitement, and eventually break into chatter about their favourite films and movie stars.

"My son loves Shakib Khan. If he is in any cinema, whether Eid or not, we will have to go watch. He wants to grow up to

number tend to stay back and enjoy the delicate delights that Dhaka has to offer during this time of the year.

Eid cinemas, altogether, have a different appeal to the audience. Not that our cinemas lack any spunk and zeal throughout the rest of the year, but during Eid, people want no less than star-studded blockbusters. "One of the main criteria of an Eid cinema is that it has to have stars. The bigger the stars, the more your cinema will gain recognition and a strong fan base, especially during Eid," says Mostofa Kamal Raj, director of film Samraat, starring Shakib Khan, Opu Biswas, and Kolkata's Indrani Sengupta. "What I have noticed is that the target group (TG) changes completely when it is time for Eid. I usually make my cinemas

to my friends and family," says Azad Ali, who works as a driver, with a laugh.

Along with Samraat, there are many other films to hit the screens this month, including those made with the collaboration of Kolkata and Bangladeshi productions. Some of the big names are Shikari, starring Shakib Khan and Srabanti Chatterjee, Niyoti, starring Arifin Shuvo and Falguni Rahman Jolly, Dhaka Attack starring Arifin Shuvo and Mahiya Mahi, and more. These stars and their cinemas are what make up Eid for an entire group of people.

Bangla cinema fanatics have more than just interesting and unique stories to share. 17-year-old Shafiq's tale of "stealing" film posters is one such example. To Shafiq, a tea-stall vendor,

movie posters are one of the most fascinating wonders of the film world. "Just before a week or so of the release of a movie, you will find the 'film people' posting posters all over the walls around the city, on the back of the buses and trains," says Shafiq. "I always keep an eye out for the time that they post them, especially at midnight. So that once they leave and while the glue is yet to dry, I can take one or two posters off, and take them with me when I go home. I have been doing this for the past few years, and I have a great collection posted all over a wall in my house," he says, with pride evident in his eyes. His friends would taunt and tease him, calling him 'the poster thief' but we think 'poster collector' would be a more appropriate title!



DHALLYWOOD: THE CRAZE!

NAZIBA BASHER and FAYEKA ZABEEN SIDDIQUA

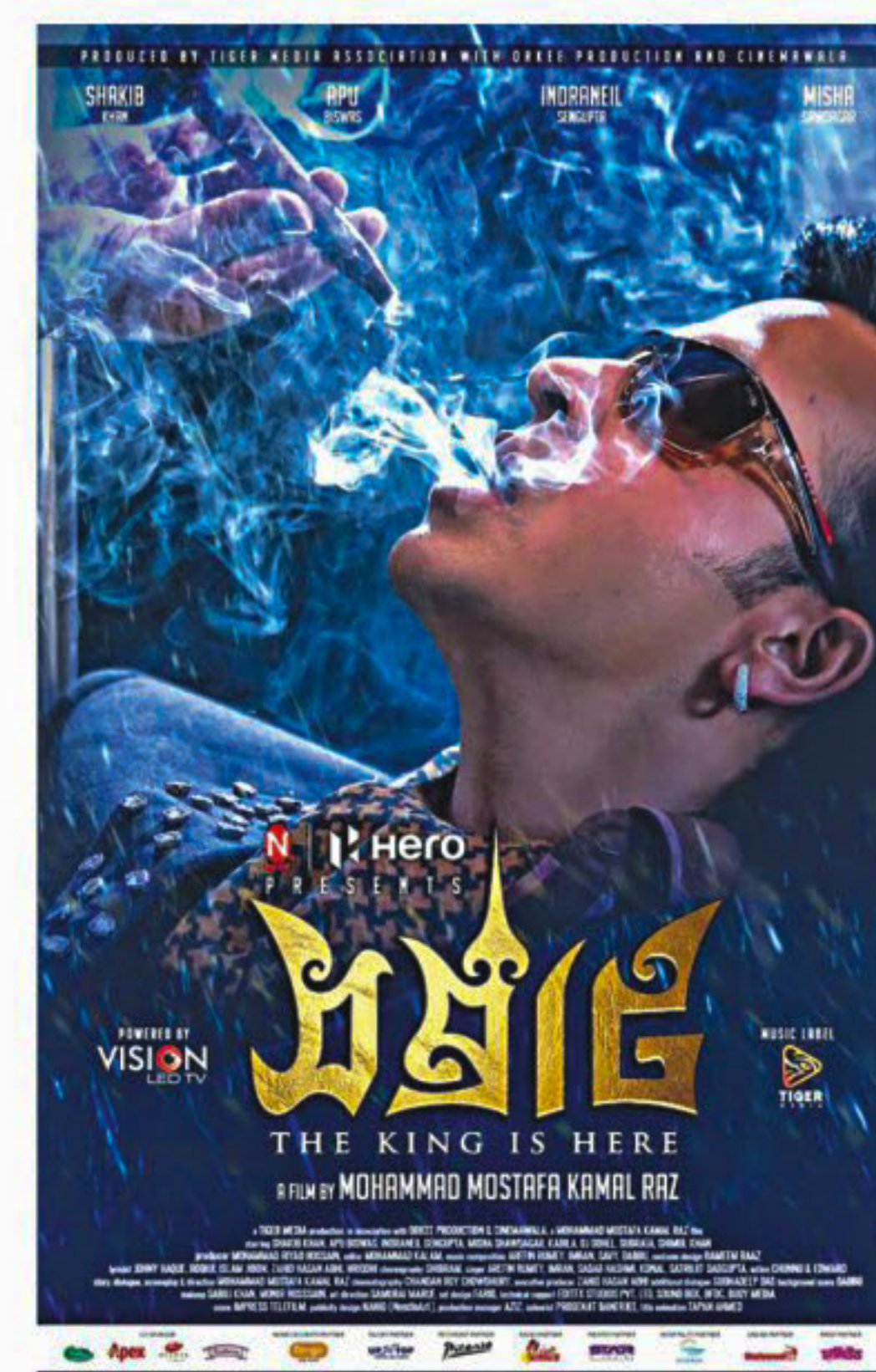
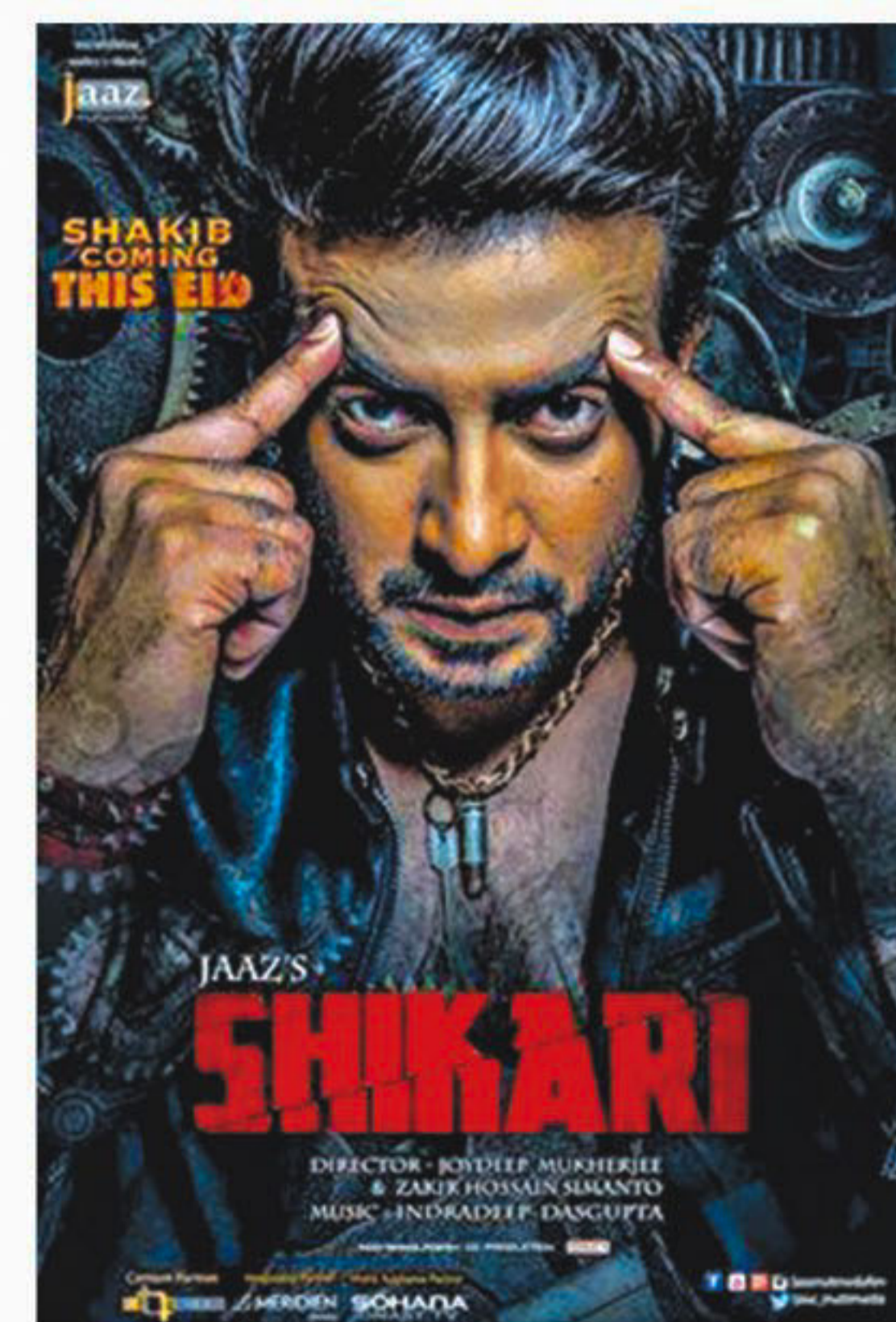
PHOTOS: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

be like Shakib!" laughs Fatema Johara, a domestic worker at a Dhanmondi residence. Fatema only gets two days off during Eid. And while many others go back to their home towns, Fatema has to stay and enjoy her vacation in the city. "Thankfully, my husband and son live in the city too. So I can enjoy my holidays with them. Every Eid must consist of a visit to Shishu Mela, and then we go and drop by at a cinema for a good Eid film," she says.

Many, like Fatema, opt to stay in the city for one of the two Eids. "It is easier to stay in the city during Eid-ul-Fitr. I would rather go back to my village for Qurbani Eid," says Shompa, a garment worker. Although many do opt to go to their villages during Eid-ul-Fitr as well, a good

with a TG in mind. This time, while making Samraat, I made it the way I make any of my cinemas but I tried to keep the 'Eid TG' in mind as well," he says.

You might think that Dhallywood, as we've cleverly named Dhaka's film centre, is a dwindling industry. However, the craze of the fans who go to watch Bangladeshi movies is to be seen to be believed. If people can't meet their favourite stars, they will absorb every bit of information - however insignificant - they can get about the country's filmdom and its inhabitants. "Every year when I return home for Eid, my friends and neighbours ask me if I met any actor in Dhaka. Once I got to see bits of a film shooting that was taking place in a park in Gazipur. I repeated that story fifteen times



It goes without saying that our film industry, in its existing state, is in a vulnerable condition. The number of cinema halls is decreasing alarmingly across the country, and there is no dearth of criticism about the content of the films we produce. But even in the face of difficulty, the industry is trying to get over the formulaic stories and coming up with better quality films that contain superior

stories, action, stunts and effects so that more mainstream audiences can be drawn to the cinema halls. We can surely look forward to better and bigger, but for now the smiles and stories of the fans of Bangladeshi movies are enough to fill our hearts with a simple kind of joy, that is especially important during this festival.

With that in mind, here's wishing our readers Eid Mubarak! ■