

# "Doob" to compete at Moscow Int'l Film Festival

No love at home for Farooki's film

FAHIM FERDOUS

Mostofa Sarwar Farooki's much-talked-about film "Doob" ("No Bed of Roses") may not have sat well with Bangladesh's censor board authorities, but it is beginning to make waves internationally already. The film, one of India's most internationally-sought-after Irrfan Khan, has been selected for the main competition of the 39th edition of the prestigious Moscow International Film Festival, set to begin June 22.



The announcement came from the first official press conference of the festival on Thursday at the StandArt Hotel in Moscow, where the festival's artistic director Kirill Razlogov and other top officials were present.

"Doob", a joint venture between Bangladesh's Iqbal Multimedia and India's Eskay Movies, became the epicenter of a whirlwind controversy when in November last year, an Indian newspaper reported that the film was based on iconic Bangladeshi novelist, the late Humayun Ahmed's life. Humayun's widow Meher Afroze Shaon expressed concerns over the matter, but Farooki summarily declined the claims that it is a biopic. The Bangladesh Film Development Corporation (BFDC) in February issued a no-objection certificate (NOC) to the film, but after Shaon sent a letter to the Censor Board Chairman about the film portraying Humayun Ahmed in bad light, the NOC was suspended by BFDC just the day after on grounds of a letter from the information ministry.

Farooki told The Daily Star that his film is currently at the Censor Board, so there has been some progress. "In my film, I tell stories of people and emotions of this region of the world. Films have an appeal to a broader audience, but it is saddening that there is a delay in reaching the film to this audience because of a strange and unbelievable com-

plaint," Farooki said. "I have faith in the Bangladesh government that they will not do anything to hinder freedom of expression, and the film will be cleared soon," he said.

About being nominated at the festival, Farooki said "Many filmmakers have influenced my filmmaking and Andrei Tarkovsky is one of them. It is very emotional for me to have my film go the land that he came from."

The first 11 films in the main competition were revealed at the press conference, including films from China, Denmark, Spain, Argentina, Finland, Japan, South Korea, hosts Russia and a German/Austrian joint venture. "Doob" was also labeled a Bangladesh/India joint venture on the list.

Four members of the jury for the main competition were also announced at the press conference. Italian actress Ornella Muti, Finnish director-screenwriter Jari Johanna Donner, Spanish director-screenwriter Reza Mirkarimi will award Best Film, Best Director, Jury Prize, Best Actor and Best Actress from the competition titles.

Irrfan Khan, the film's lead actress Nusrat Nazim Tisha, director Farooki and the producers will join the red carpet and awards night of the festival on June 29.



PHOTO: STAR

## Shajal has an unusual iftar habit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Popular actor Shajal spends a particularly busy time ahead of the Eid season, as small screen directors and producers rush to make a massive number of TV plays to fill the airtime. Shajal, who observes the fast on as regular basis even when he is hard at work, has a rather unique formula to eat healthy after the fast.

Shajal prefers to have rice for iftar, with a side of fish, meat or vegetables. "I like to stay away from the fried food that is usually served for iftar, because that is bad for your health," This has been Shajal's habit for many years now.

This Ramadan, Shajal has not yet had a chance to break his fast at home, as he has been working, and usually has his iftar at the shooting spot. When asked if it is hard for him to work while fasting, he says "It's not really a problem for me."

Shajal also told The Daily Star that he usually shops very late into the month, but he usually doesn't buy his own Eid clothes. "My mother buys my clothes, and I shop for family and friends. It has been an Eid tradition for me to shop on Chand-Raat, the eve of Eid. There have been times when I have shopped till the dawn of Eid day. Shajal also revealed that he still receives Eid during Eid for his every year," he said. "It's something I have always looked forward to and I love it."

On the work front, Shajal has already completed eight TV plays for Eid, and will be working throughout the month. He is playing a variety of roles in the plays, from a balloon seller to a bulldozer driver.

## Mad Thetar's "Noddiu Notim" at BSA today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Theatre troupe Mad Thetar is set to stage their first play "Noddiu Notim" at the Experimental Theatre Hall of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy today. This will be the 22nd staging of production, and the first at the venue.

The play is an adaptation of the Humayun Ahmed novel "Ke Kotha Koy". Asadul Islam has adapted the script and directed it. Anisul Haq Baran has assisted in direction, with light and set design by Faiz Zahir.

The play centres on Motin, who is a poet. Although often lost in the big world of his imagination, in a parallel person of an Uzbek poet, Noddiu Notim, he is not estranged from reality, and knows that his loved one, Nishu, is out of his league. He finds a tutoring job at an attractive remuneration, but when he loses the job, his student, a specially-abled child, insists on talking to her, and the play takes a big turn from there.



## Julia Roberts' first TV series lands on HBO

HBO has nabbed Julia Roberts' TV series "Today Will Be Different", reports Variety.

The short project was first announced late last year and then shopped around in the New Year to streaming and cable networks, before landing at HBO, which has put the drama into development as a limited series. "Today Will Be Different" is based on the book of the same name from author Maria Semple who is also penning the TV adaptation. Annapurna Television is producing.

The series marks the first-ever TV show for Roberts, who will also serve as an executive producer. The project is also a homecoming for Roberts at HBO, after she broke in the network's television movie, "The Normal Heart". Best known for her iconic roles in films like "Pretty Woman" and "Erin Brockovich", Roberts' TV credits only include smaller guest roles before she catapulted into A-list territory, becoming one of the most lucrative movie stars of all time.

"Today Will Be Different" is the story of Eleanor Flood (played by Roberts), who wakes up determined to be her best self, but then life happens. Taking place over a single day, it's a rollicking portrait of one woman's fumbling but valiant attempt to navigate the knotty perils and slay grace of modern life.

Roberts is executive producing through her Red Om Films banner, alongside Semple and Annapurna's Meghan Ellison and Sue Naegle. For Annapurna, the limited series is the latest collaboration with Semple, whose novel "Where'd You Go, Bernadette" is being adapted by the company in a film starring Cate Blanchett and directed by Richard Linklater.

Source: Variety

## Chitrangada returning to Bollywood

Will be seen as Saif's wife in "Baazaar"

Bollywood actress Chitrangada Singh is all set to return to the big screen with Nikkhil Advani's "Baazaar". The 40-year-old actress has been roped in to portray the role of Saif Ali Khan's wife in the film, reported DNA. Earlier, reports suggested that Prachi Desai had been cast opposite the 46-year-old actor. However, Nikkhil Advani dismissed the reports, saying Chitrangada was the first choice for the role. Speaking to DNA, director Nikkhil Advani said that Prachi Desai "expressed interest" to work with him but for another project. "Baazaar", directed by Gaurav K Chawla, revolves around the Indian stock markets and Saif portrays the role of a businessman.

"I'm happy that the cast is looking so exciting. We have Saif, Chitrangada, Radhika Apte and Rohan Mehra. The shoot has just begun and will be wrapped up by mid-August while the film is slated for a December release," DNA quoted Nikkhil Advani as saying.

Chitrangada Singh last made a cameo appearance in 2015 movie "Gabbar is Back", starring Alshay Kumar and Shruti Haasan. "Baazaar" will mark her comeback to the big screen after a gap of two years.

Referring to the actress's two-year hiatus as "instrumental", the Gaurav K Chawla told DNA: "I won't call it a comeback but just the fact that she hasn't done anything for quite some time was instrumental in us considering her, because it's a powerful character that's silent and simmering, like a volcano about to erupt. Casting her opposite Saif makes the film about strong actors and characters."

The first poster of "Baazaar" was unveiled by the makers of the film earlier this month.

Source: NDTV Movies



## NEWS bytes

### ARETHA FRANKLIN planning new album

Soul music legend Aretha Franklin may be retiring from the stage -- at some point -- but she has no plans to stop making music.

Franklin is hard at work on a new album she hopes to have out in January, featuring collaborations with Stevie Wonder, Elton John (on a version of "Your Song"), Lionel Richie and Yitzhak Perlman. "Lionel's working on his piece. Stevie's working on his piece; they're both originals," Franklin is also co-executive-producing the album. No title has been determined yet.



which will be Franklin's first studio set since 2014's "Aretha Franklin Sings the Great Diva Classics" and first to feature new material since "Aretha: A Woman Falling Out of Love" in 2011.

Franklin plans to continue recording even as she acknowledges "winding down her five-decade performing career," as she revealed earlier this year. Franklin has not set an actual retirement date yet, but says it will become obvious that she's slowing things down.

Source: Billboard