



PEEPING TOM

A conventional controversy

PM Narendra Modi, a biopic on the incumbent Indian Prime Minister has been at the centre of a political controversy for some time, with its release date having been postponed twice already, in view of the ongoing *Lok Sabha* elections. Earlier, 47 retired Indian civil servants and some political parties had urged the EC to defer its release until after the parliamentary election results have been announced. In a letter to the Election Commission, the retired civil servants wrote, "You [the chief election commissioner] will appreciate that such a film would create enormous electoral mileage for the Prime Minister and the party in power...It is, therefore, necessary to examine whether the release of this biopic after the announcement of elections and the coming into force of the MCC [Model Code of Conduct] is consonant with the principles of a free and fair election." Although the film was originally slated to be released on April 5, 2019, six days before the General Elections began, its release had been postponed to April 12, with the movie's producer Sandip Singh tweeting on April 4, "This is to confirm, our film *PM Narendra Modi* is not releasing on 5th April". In the meantime, the Central Board of Film Certification in India gave the movie a 'U certificate', giving it the green signal, ahead of its new release date. In a similar development, the movie's screening set for April 12 was postponed again till the end of the elections, by the Election Commission on April 10; the order reading, "Any biopic material in the nature of biography / hagiography sub-serving the purposes of any political entity or any individual entity connected to it, which is intended to, or which has the potential to disturb the level playing field during the elections, should not be displayed in electronic media including cinematograph during the operation of the MCC (Model Code of Conduct)". In response, the producers moved the Indian apex court on April 12, against the stay imposed by the EC. The Indian Supreme Court, which had earlier rejected a plea by a Congress leader seeking to stop the release of the film, saying it was up to the Election Commission to decide whether the movie will tilt the balance in favor of the ruling BJP, agreed to hear the case and asked the EC to submit a detailed report after watching the movie. The EC submitted the report on Monday, and the next date of hearing was set for yesterday. With comedian and political novice, Volodymyr Zelensky, who played the President in a popular TV show *Servant of the People*, scoring a landslide victory in the Ukrainian elections held on April 21, this year, people's concern about the ability of the media to influence voters' choices is only understandable. Only time will tell, how much *PM Narendra Modi*, the film, or the controversies surrounding it have been able to influence the voters of India.

CHIT-CHAT

PEYA JANNATUL

Can you describe yourself in three words?

I would have to say I am balanced, passionate and a hard worker.

What is your favourite childhood memory?

My favourite memory is dressing up for coaching classes by following different fashion catalogues.

If you could have any superpower, what would you choose?

I would want women to have more freedom – freedom of speech, freedom of having their own thoughts and opinions, and more freedom in their work places.

What are the first three items in your bucket list?

Firstly, I would like to create an institution for models, editors, journalists and people involved with the media, where they can practice their skills; I would also like to create more job opportunities for women. Lastly, I would love to share my achievements with others.

If you could work with any international artist, dead or alive, who would you choose?

I would choose Cristiano Ronaldo.

What is your favourite place

to visit?

My favourite place to visit is definitely Paris. In Bangladesh, I like visiting Cox's Bazaar.

What is your favourite food?

My favourite food is the traditional Bangladeshi cuisine - rice with vegetables and bhortas.

Who was your first celebrity crush?

My first celebrity crush was Shahrukh Khan.

What would you do if you were the president for one day?

I believe the prime minister always takes rational decisions, so I would follow her footsteps and do what she has been doing.

What kind of music helps you relax?

I like listening to soft, slow music to help myself relax.

What is your favourite movie of all time?

It's difficult to name one single movie, but *Pretty Woman* is one that comes to my mind.

What do you like to do during your leisure time?

I actually plan what to do next. When I was younger, I'd read or listen to music but I'm too busy nowadays.

If you could be any animal, what would you be?

Since I don't have any experience of being a different animal, I would choose to be a human being.

By Shreya Shomoyeeta

