

# cinema



## A mix of Arab and Indian films at DTFF

One of the highlights of the Festival will be the competition for Arab films which will mark the political and social evolution of the region

By Gautaman Bhaskaran

**T**he Doha Tribeca Film Festival (DTFF) is all set to celebrate Indian cinema. To run from November 17 to 24, the Festival's fourth edition will, to begin with, honour one of India's top directors, Yash Chopra, who died recently in Mumbai from complications arising from dengue. He was eighty.

Chopra was often called the King of Romance, who filled his celluloid canvas with searing emotions and tender love, mounted on soulfully sweet melody. His last movie, *Jab Tak Hai Jaan*, will be screened there. Starring Shah Rukh Khan, Katrina Kaif and Anushka Sharma and set in London and Kashmir, the film will be shown on November 20, and so will the helmer's 1995 blockbuster, *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*, which also has Khan playing the lead.

*Jab Tak Hai Jaan* will be Khan's first cinematic outing with Kaif. The movie, which marked

Chopra's return to the director's chair after an eight-year hiatus, remained unfinished. The last song, which was to have been picturised in Switzerland with Chopra in attendance, could not be filmed, because the helmer passed away before that. Set to music by A R Rahman, *Jab Tak Hai Jaan* is a vintage story of passion, choreographed with captivating style.

Chopra came into the limelight with his 1965 *Waqt*, a pioneer of ensemble cast in Bollywood. Actors like Sunil Dutt, Shashi Kapoor, Raaj Kumar, Balraj Sahni, Sharmila Tagore and Sadhana were part of it. The 1975 Chopra's *Deewar* literally made Amitabh Bachchan. In 1981, the director was bold enough to script a story about Bachchan's off-screen romance with Rekha in *Silsila*. Chopra's 1989 *Chandni* ended Bollywood's run with violence, taking cinema back to an era of musicals.

Apart from the tribute to Chopra,

an array of Indian talent will be seen this year at Doha – something the Festival had hoped for even last year, but intervening Diwali celebrations kept most of India's movie fraternity at home.

This year, Anupam Kher will be present with his work, David O Russell's *Silver Linings Playbook*, which will be part of Special Screenings. Several discussions have also been planned during the eight-day Festival. Mira Nair will talk about her latest creation, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, which opened Venice in August, and which will also herald Doha. Director Ashutosh Gowariker (*Lagaan*, *Jodha Akbar*) will be part of a seminar on *Going Global: Can Bollywood Films Really Crossover?* Some of the other panellists will be director Shimit Amin (*Chak De! India* and *Rocket Singh: Salesman of the Year*) and Kher.

The Festival will screen 87 movies from all over the world, with strong sections on Arab and Qatari

cinema. One of the highlights of the Festival will be the competition for Arab films. Both the established and the emerging faces of Arab cinema will be on display.

Countries like Egypt, Qatar, Tunisia, Algeria, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Jordan, Palestine, Saudi Arabia and Syria will have their movies competing, all of which will mark the political and social evolution of the region. There will be 27 films in this section -- seven documentaries, seven narrative features and 13 shorts, and these will include first-time entries from the host, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. Among the features and documentaries, there will be five world premieres and two international premieres. The world premieres include *Asham: A Man Called Hope*, *Playground Chronicle*, *Die Welt*, *Goodbye Morocco* and *O My Body!* New directors such as Hanan Abdalla, Maggie M Morgan, Karim Alexander Pitstra, Brahim Fritah,

Tamara Stepanyan and Damien Ounouri will share the spotlight with established names.

With total prize money of over US\$440,000, the best feature narrative and documentary will each receive US\$100,000. An award of US\$50,000 will be awarded to the best directors in both categories. A best performance award of US\$15,000 will be presented in the narrative feature competition.

With an expanded format this year, the Festival will showcase more than 87 movies from across the globe under themed sections that will include Arab Film Competition, Made in Qatar, Contemporary World Cinema and Special Screenings.

**Life of Pi:** Oscar-winning Taiwanese director Ang Lee's *Life of Pi* will open the International Film Festival of India at Panaji in Goa on November 20.

*Life of Pi* is an adaptation of Yann Martel's 2002 Man Booker Prize winning novel whose story of a teenage boy and his family of father, mother and brother running a small menagerie begins in Puducherry (earlier called Pondicherry and just a two-hour drive from Chennai). Lee had wisely shot the first segment of his movie in Puducherry, and the later parts in Taiwan, where he recreated the Pacific Ocean in a gigantic water tank that was built in a disused airfield.

Lee has had an illustrious career with a fantastically diverse oeuvre. *Eat Drink Man Woman*, *Sense and Sensibility* (from Jane Austen's novel), *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (Oscar for the Best Foreign language Picture), *Brokeback Mountain* (Oscar for the Best Director), *Taking Woodstock* and *Lust Caution* among others have been some of his great hits, remarkably varied in content and treatment. While *Eat Drink Man Woman* traced the life of a chef, *Sense and Sensibility* was a haunting look at 19 century England with its rigid class divisions and suffering women. *Brokeback Mountain* looked at homosexuality, the only other work on the subject I cared for apart from Tomas Alea's *Strawberry and Chocolate*, made in the 1990s. And *Lust Caution* was a pacy political espionage thriller set in the World War II Shanghai.

The Goa Festival, to be inaugurated by Bollywood's Akshay Kumar, will showcase 200 movies in different sections like International Competition, Indian Panorama and so on. The Polish director Krzysztof Zanussi, will be conferred with a Lifetime Achievement Award.

(Gautaman Bhaskaran will cover the Doha Film Festival and also the International Film Festival of India at Goa's Panaji, and he may be contacted at [gautamanb@hotmail.com](mailto:gautamanb@hotmail.com))