



Photo: Abhinav Kame, Make-up: Rajan, Hair: Alim

Arjun Rampal

Looking ahead...

The terror attacks were devastating no matter what the date, says actor Arjun Rampal whose birthday falls on 26/11 today

Aakanksha Naval-Shetye

That his birthdate '26/11' now also happens to be a painful reminder for the city of the terror attacks that rocked the nation in 2008 continues to be something that actor Arjun Rampal's acutely aware of. There's no denying that the date does weigh heavy at the back of Arjun's mind, but the actor clarifies that it's the same as every Mumbaikar. "The terror attacks were devastating, no matter what the date. Had it happened on any other date, it would still have been an equally tight slap on the face of humanity," he says. And though the actor admits that "moving on" is hardly easy considering the lives lost, "life does go on!" "For me it's always going to be a reminder of why we need to respect and treasure humanity. I also pray for the innocent victims who've lost their lives. Whether we admit it or not, life's not been the same. I think the ones left behind, including those who were watching it on their TV sets thousands of miles away, now value what they have more."

There were rumours of him having a close call that year on the day, but Arjun dismisses it all insisting that it's something that he'd rather not talk about. "Too much has been lost for anything to be said," he feels. Bringing in his birthday on a positive note, Arjun will be in Delhi with family and his set of close friends at his nightclub. It's been a good year for the actor as he's seen recent successes at the box office with films like *Rajneeti* and *Housefull*. "I will be planning the weekend in Delhi, before I fly off to Dubai next week," he reveals about his birthday plans. Personally, Arjun's on a high and work-wise too it couldn't have been better. As for his birthday wish, "Well, I'm just thankful to God for whatever I have been blessed with," he signs off.

a_shetye@dnaindia.net

Safety first

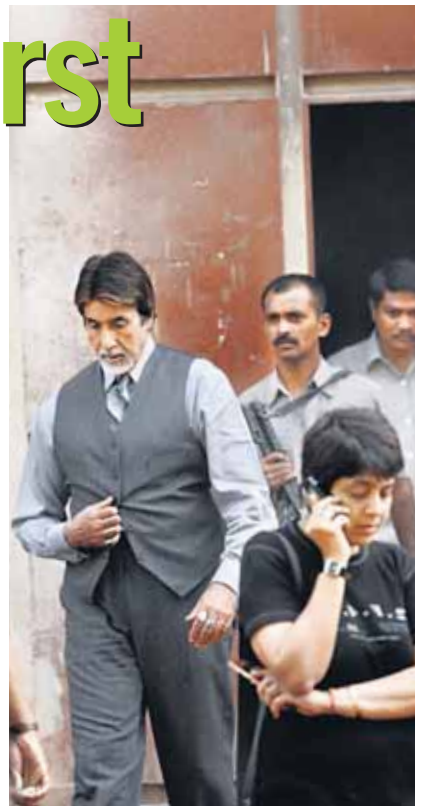
Post 26/11, B-Town security profiles changed forever, and for the better

Soumyadipta Banerjee

It's been two years since the gun-shots stopped ringing at the Taj and Oberoi hotels but their echoes still haunts Bollywood. Sources confirm that a lot of stars including the A-listers have applied for gun licenses since that fateful date. One of them, who already has a gun license, is actor Amitabh Bachchan.

"Before retiring for the night, I pulled out my licensed .32 revolver, loaded it and put it under my pillow," Bachchan, 66, wrote in his blog a few days after the incident. Bachchan is among the few Bollywood biggies who are already armed. "I also have a licensed firearm which I have kept for my personal security. I decided to have a firearm handy after there was an armed robbery at my house a year back which deeply affected my wife and children.

For the first time I felt what deep impact these things can have in your life," says a prominent filmmaker who also holds a license for a pistol. A lot of stars, without exception, have refused to travel



HIGH PROFILE PROTECTION: Amitabh Bachchan

to Pakistan or certain areas of India even if a red-carpet have been rolled out to them. Some of them admit to paranoia while shooting in terror-stricken zones.

Recalls actor Bipasha Basu of the time she shot for a film in Kashmir, and stopped the shooting mid-way, "A huge crowd used to gather around the shooting area. They demanded to know how Kashmir would be portrayed in the film. One day, it went out of hand and got scary."

Most stars seek terrorist combat experts when shooting in public places vulnerable to terror attacks. "We have upgraded ourselves and tied up with a foreign security agency to upgrade ourselves in close protection (bodyguards).

Things have changed a lot post 26/11 which was actually a national security breach. But the changes are for the better," says actor Ronit Roy, who specializes in star security and operates a private security of his own.

s_banerjee@dnaindia.net

Hollywood: India's frequent visitor now

India's a hotspot with international celebs and has bounced back stronger since the terror attacks

As hoteliers excitedly speak of heavy winter bookings and tourist inflows foretell a 10 percent growth this year, the Indian travel industry seems to have bounced back since November 2008 when the Mumbai terror attacks dealt it a huge blow.

According to a tourism ministry official, between January and October this year, 4.32 million tourists arrived in India — a growth of 9.9 percent over the corresponding period in 2009.

Hoteliers have gone so far as to say the winter season has exceeded their expectations and the upward cycle will peak in 2012.

"With winters here, the tourist season is in full swing and the slump of 2008 seems to be finally over," said Rajan Mehta, a tour operator. It's a far cry from the time when the travel trade fell victim to 26/11, a setback that was

compounded by swine flu and global recession.

Says Sabina Chopra of *yatra.com* said: "In the first three months after the Mumbai attacks, from November to February, there were almost no travel bookings at all and there were mass cancellations."

She said while the more robust domestic market jumped back soon after the attacks, the international market took time to recover. Jean Hoerni, a French national who is in Delhi on a work-cum-pleasure trip, said he was in India last year too. "I had gone to Goa then. This year I am planning to visit Kerala. As far as security is concerned, tell me which country is safe from terrorist threats today? But that doesn't mean that



THEY CAME TO INDIA: Katy Perry with Russell Brand; (inset) Julia Roberts

we remain in fear all the time and stop living! So why should we stop travelling?" Hoerni asked.

—Indo-Asian News Service

She'll steal your heart with bhajans

Gujarati-origin London girl Shivali Bhammer speaks about her music album of *bhajans*

Devika Chaturvedi

Today when bhajans are usually associated with the older generation, this 23-year-old has surprised us by coming up with a music album of *bhajans*. What is more revealing is that this Gujarati-origin girl has actually been raised in UK.

Right from her childhood, Shivali Bhammer had a dream of becoming a professional singer. And now her vision has become a reality in the form of the music album, 'Bhajan Project'.

Her album is a contemporary expression of spirituality with an eclectic mix of beats and sounds from the genre of R&B, soul, rock and pop. Talking about her musical journey, Bhammer says, "One day I made my friend Arjun Coomaraswamy listen to *Hanuman Chalisa*. Arjun told me that he somehow could not understand it or relate to it.

That is when we decided to 'revamp' bhajans to give them a feel that today's youngsters would relate to." She adds that her album is a collection of some of the most popular *bhajans* and *mantras* that a lot of Indians have grown up listening to not only in India but also across the world.

Bhammer says, "Arjun plays several instru-



Shivali Bhammer

ments like acoustic guitar, piano, sitar and tabla. Together we have made this album possible." During her school days, Bhammer participated in piano concerts in school and was the lead singer of a full-fledged musical band. She was also a part of professional ballroom dancing, high school theatre and even a women's cricket team.

Encouraged by her family to pursue her dream, Bhammer took up singing professional-

ly recently. Three years ago, after her graduation in economics and philosophy from the University of Nottingham, Bhammer decided to take up devotional music.

Bhammer feels her album will change the way people look at *bhajans*. "I have tried to give a new lease of life to *bhajans* through my album," she says. Bhammer, who is a great fan of Bollywood music, loves listening to musician Anoushka Shankar.

'26 is not a bad number'

Astrologers speak to After Hrs on the significance of the number 26

Ankit Ajmera

26 combines (2+6) to become number 8, which is the number of planet Saturn — the powerful planet of both success and upheavals.

According to numerologist Bhavikk Sangghvi the number 26 can go to great extremes. "The number can give some person a great high in love and career or take him down into lows. The number is associated with undercurrents of struggle and may represent insecurity to an extent. For instance a person may own the greatest car in the world but he might be insecure that somebody might shoot him and take his life/wealth," he explains.

Astrologer Ajai Rai Madan defines number 26 as the number of eventful happenings. "This number adds up to number 8 and among all numbers this is one such number which doesn't have a beginning or an end. All the other numbers end at some point. But 8 does not. It

represents unexpected events, both good and bad. It represents events which we as human beings may not have any control over (both good and bad). A loss of job or a lucky prize in a lottery is all governed by number 8. But when it come to terror activity or explosive happenings, number 26 or 8 is not responsible alone. The planet of Mars which governs number 9 always has a role to play," he says.

Says astrologer Bejan Daruwalla, "People have a very wrong perception about the number 26. I agree catastrophes have happened on this date but on the other hand many great events have also taken place simultaneously. India's present prime minister Manmohan Singh was born on the 26th of September. India's even celebrates its Republic Day on the date 26th of January. Like nature is plentiful, it is impossible to brand the number 26 as bad forever. After couple of years it's quite possible that a great event might take place in India on the very date of November, and change the perception of the date." a_ankit@dnaindia.net



WAIT AND WATCH: Irrfan Khan

Why would I need a wish list!

Actor Irrfan Khan wants to keep his options open, or at least, not spill the beans

Dipannita Ghosh Biswas

HE'S a busy man, undoubtedly, what with all the travelling to and fro between USA and Mumbai to complete shooting schedules. But Irrfan Khan still likes to believe and make others believe that Bollywood is where he has maximum stakes. While his teleshows in the US, *In Treatment*, has made quite a name for itself, Irrfan says, "I still feel that it's not worth all the time that I invest in working there."

Among his many forthcoming films, Irrfan seems to be the most upbeat about Timangshu Dhulia's *Paan Singh Tomar*, which is based on the real life story of a steeple chase runner. "This is one role that has challenged me physically and I'm glad I could live up to Timangshu's expectations. The amount of physical training and endurance I had to go through to play Paan Singh Tomar was simply unbelievable — I think it's the maximum I could have ever stretched myself," says Irrfan.

In fact, Irrfan also has a film with Vishal

Bharadwaj, a director he's worked with earlier and whose film-making style entices him. "I play one of Priyanka Chopra's many husbands in *Saat Khoon Maaf*," he informs.

Quiz him on what it felt like to be one of the many husbands and Irrfan replies, "I did it for Vishal —there's no way I could have refused him."

In fact, he also gave me the liberty to choose my role and I decided to play a poet, something I have never done before."

And that too meant a lot of preparation, when it came to diction. Of course, hailing from an orthodox Muslim family in Jaipur paved the way but Irrfan has some more to add. "Urdu's my language, but I must admit that I haven't seen too many *mushairas*. Hence, the authenticity and the diction took me some time to perfect.

The streak of romanticism wasn't hard to master — I have been living with a Bengali, my wife of course, for the last 15 years," he sheepishly admits.

There is also Anees Bazmee's *Thank You* and Sudhir Mishra's *Yeh Saali Zindagi*. Ask him if he has a wish list and Irrfan says, "No, I feel having a wish list is like restricting my wishes. I'd like to keep the sky as my limit."

g_dipannita@dnaindia.net

