

India bids tearful farewell to Bollywood superstar Sridevi



Crowds gather behind the funeral procession of Indian Bollywood actress Sridevi Kapoor in Mumbai. — AFP photos



Indian Bollywood actor Anil Kapoor (left) stands with the body of actress Sridevi Kapoor (center) in the funeral cortege as they reach the crematorium for the final rites in Mumbai yesterday.



Indian Bollywood actress Shradha Kapoor.



Indian Bollywood actress Deepika Padukone.



Indian Bollywood actress Rekha.



Indian Bollywood actor Neil Nitin Mukesh (right) attend with his father and singer Nitin Mukesh.

Thousands of heartbroken fans and Bollywood actors paid their last respects to Indian superstar Sridevi Kapoor yesterday following her shock death from accidental drowning in a Dubai hotel bathtub aged just 54. Huge crowds of mourners—some carrying roses, others holding photos of the late actress—lined Mumbai's streets to see their beloved idol embark on her last journey. At one point police had to use batons to force back those unable to get into the hall where her body was laid out, wrapped in the Indian flag.

"It's a shock to believe that she is no more. We want to pay her one last visit today and thank her for all her wonderful performances," 32-year-old teacher Nandini Rao told AFP as she queued at the condolence event. After a public service, Sridevi's flower-bedecked funeral cortege made its way slowly to a crematorium where her family said their final goodbyes. She was cremated with full state honors at a private Hindu ceremony late in the afternoon after her husband, film producer Boney Kapoor, performed the last rites.

Bollywood stars, including actresses Aishwarya Rai and Kajol, were among the mourners at the Celebration Sports Club in the Andheri West area of Mumbai the home of the Hindi film industry. Several tearful fans chanted prayers as Sridevi's body was brought the short distance from her home to the club at 9:00 am (0330 GMT). "I'm an avid Sridevi fan. I loved her smiling personality. She had such a commanding presence in the Indian film industry. Her death was so sudden and I feel terrible," 45-year-old Kuldeep Singh told AFP.

Heavy security was in force along the streets to control the crowds, which included people who had travelled hundreds of kilome-

ters to be there. Sridevi was considered one of the most influential Bollywood actresses of all time and her sudden death at the weekend sparked an outpouring of grief in India. Tributes poured in from fans and fellow actors as well as Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Life in the spotlight

The star of hit films such as "Chandni" and "Mr India" drowned in her bathtub after losing consciousness late Saturday in a hotel in Dubai, where she was attending a wedding. Police in the emirate said a post-mortem examination found that she had drowned after losing consciousness. On Tuesday they ruled out any foul play and released the body to Sridevi's family. It arrived in Mumbai on a private jet on Tuesday evening, accompanied by her husband and her stepson, actor Arjun Kapoor.

Sridevi, born Shree Amma Yanger Ayappan in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, appeared in around 300 films and was awarded the Padma Shri, India's fourth highest civilian award, for services to the movie industry. She made her acting debut at the age of four and her career spanned more than four decades. Sridevi worked in India's regional Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam-language films before making her Bollywood debut in 1979.

She became a national sensation with a string of blockbuster films including "Mawali" ("Scoundrel") and "Tohfa" ("Gift"). Sridevi took a 15-year break from the silver screen after marrying Kapoor but returned in the 2012 hit comedy-drama "English Vinglish". Her most recent film was last year's "Mom". Sridevi was set to see Jhanvi, the elder of her two daughters, make her Bollywood debut in a movie scheduled for release later this year. — AFP



Indian Bollywood actress Aishwarya Rai Bachchan.



Indian Bollywood actor Anupam Kher (right) and film director Shekhar Kapoor (left) attend the funeral.



Indian Bollywood actresses Soha Ali (left) and Neha Dhupia.



Indian Bollywood actress and politician Hema Malini (left) and actress Madhu Shah.

Streisand says she cloned her dog—twice

Not once, but twice: before Barbra Streisand's dog died, she cloned it.

The US singer and actress disclosed this in an interview published Tuesday by Variety magazine. Streisand's dog Samantha—a Coton de Tulear, a small breed with a cotton-like coat—died last year. The cloned versions are named Miss Violet and Miss Scarlett.

Streisand, 75, did not give many

details of the cloning but said she collected cells from the mouth and stomach of her dying dog. Of the new dogs, Samantha, the two-time Oscar winner said: "I'm waiting for them to get older so I can see if they have her brown eyes and seriousness." When Streisand brought the dogs home she dressed them in violet and scarlet to tell them apart. She has a third dog, a distant relative of Samantha, that she calls Miss Fanny. — AFP

James Bond director Lewis Gilbert dies aged 97

British filmmaker Lewis Gilbert has died at the age of 97. James Bond producers said of the director famed for his work on three 007 movies. "It is with great sadness that we learn of the passing of our dear friend Lewis Gilbert," producers Michael G. Wilson and Barbara Broccoli said Tuesday, describing the director as "a true gentleman". "He made an enormous contribution to the British film industry as well as the Bond films... His films are not only loved by us but are considered classics within the series," the added.

Gilbert directed Sean Connery in the 1967 "You Only Live Twice", returning to the British film series a decade later with "The Spy Who Loved Me" (1977) and "Moonraker" (1979) starring Roger Moore. While most well-known for his work on the spy series, Gilbert also

directed a young Michael Caine in the 1966 movie "Alfie" which gained four Oscar nominations. Born in east London in 1920, Gilbert's first directing credit came in 1945 with "The 10 Year Plan", a documentary about postwar housing.

After a lengthy career including production and writing roles, his last of 33 directing credits came in 2002 with "Before You Go". "The BFI salutes the most prolific of British filmmakers," said Heather Stewart, creative director of the British Film Institute which had awarded Gilbert a fellowship for outstanding contribution to British film. Stewart praised the late director for telling stories of British wartime bravery, to creating working class heroes and "funny and real character studies of women" rarely seen on screen. — AFP