

The Gold Bracelet: Raz revisits terror closer home

KALYANI VASAN

Hollywood, Calif.

The *Gold Bracelet*, a feature film directed by Hollywood actor Kavi Raz, will premiere at a private screening at the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, in Hollywood California on January 28. A true-lie story, the film is the chronicle of a Sikh family in the aftermath of the 9/11 tragedy.

Arjun Singh, an Indian professor, migrates to the US with his wife Baljit (Archana Puran Singh) and two children, Simrun (Mehrunnisa Hassan) and Ranjit (Arsh Singh) and opens up a mechanic shop. He leads a simple life and begins to love his adopted country but finds his beliefs tested on the anvil of bigotry.

The tale begins with Arjun seeking the help of his Muslim friend, Mirza (Ari Barak) to find a suitable boy for Simrun. Simrun agrees to meet the boy and finds in him a soul mate. The wedding day—Sept 11, 2001—is replete with much grandeur, bhanga and music. The Singh household comes together in its moment of pride, love and faith in God. How-



A still from the film

ever, the day ends with the shadow of shock and sorrow rocking the happy wedding party.

Arjun joins the nation in this mourning and wonders who were the perpetrators of the crime. His pride at being an American is

never shaken and he tries to continue his life as a hard-working person taking care of his family. A gold bracelet (*Kada*) dug out by Arjun becomes a symbolic representation of the family.

But the 9/11 tragedy hits close to home, threatening the family's existence. At this time of darkness, a hitherto suppressed neighborliness in the form of Mel Harris (Joseph Whipp) extends its hand. An inherent apathy for other cultures turns into an avid interest as Harris steps in to provide a real, meaningful hand of support to the Singh household, symbolically represented by the 'gold bracelet'. He offers the Singh family brotherly love at a time when their very identity is being questioned.

Born in Punjab and raised in England, Raz came to Los Angeles in the mid seventies with dreams of making it big in Hollywood. His persistence landed him a role as Dr V.J. Kochar in the hit serial *Elsewhere* in the early eighties. Soon Hollywood took notice of this passionate actor and he landed roles in *Hunter*, *Mash*, *The A Team*, *NYPD Blue* and others. The big screens of Hollywood also beckoned with roles in *Warning Signs*, *Terror Squad* and *Night Train to Kathmandu*. Raz marks his directorial debut with this feature film. Inder Daclani, Bhikhubhai Patel and Raz are the executive producers of *The Gold Bracelet*.

Alameda county leads in solar power generation

SAM RAO

Union City, Calif.

SINCE the first installation of a mega-watt solar array system atop Santa Rita county jail in Dublin in 2002, the three-acre project remains the largest solar rooftop system in the country, capable of generating 1.18 megawatts of power.

Now, Alameda county—home to Fremont, Union City, Oakland and Berkeley—has become the foremost county to generate more solar energy than any other county in the nation.

With an estimated cost of \$7.5 million, the solar arrays have been built by Berkeley-based PowerLight Corp, and are installed at seven government buildings in the county. These include the Office of Emergency Services in Dublin, the Winton Avenue Government Building and Public Works building in Hayward, the Wiley Manuel Courthouse in Oakland, and Environmental Health Services in



Alameda. Solar tracking carports were installed at the Fremont Hall of Justice and Municipal Court and Hayward public works.

The arrays generate a total 1.1 megawatts of power—equivalent to what it takes to power more than 1,000 homes. Alameda County can now generate 6 percent of its total power by harnessing the sun's energy, saving about \$700,000 a year on electric bills.

Interestingly, the Alameda county also boasts of a high Indian-American population. At the Fremont Municipal Court parking lot—one of the sites of the solar arrays—the annual Festival of India is held every year to celebrate India's independence day. The celebration draws between 30,000 to 50,000 people.

In the East SF Bay area, at the New Haven School district, serv-

ing Union City, Hayward and parts of Fremont will also be the first Fremont area school district to power a school campus with solar energy.

The New Haven School board voted unanimously this week to install a solar energy system at Conley, Caraballo, the new alternative high school that opened this fall in South Hayward.

Solar panels will be installed in the coming weeks on the school's rooftops and are scheduled to be running by late February. It is expected to meet roughly 85 percent of the school's electrical needs. The school district anticipates saving \$35,000 per year in electricity costs with the new system, freeing up more money for teachers, books and classroom supplies. The school district is using funds from Measure A, a \$120 million bond passed in 2003, to pay Third Rock Inc. \$440,000 to install and monitor the system, with the state is contributing about \$400,000 for the project, according to reports.

Ismail Merchant conferred Lifetime Achievement Award

KALYANI VASAN

Los Angeles, Calif.

LEGENDARY filmmaker Ismail Merchant was conferred a posthumous Lifetime Achievement at the 2006 Asian Excellence Awards (AXA) here on January 19. Hailed as the last of the "Great Independents", a short documentary highlighting Merchant's achievements was aired. Parminder Nagra, star of the hit film, *Bend it like Beckham* and currently playing a role in the television serial, *ER*, received the award.

Started by AZN Television Network in 2001, the awards honor outstanding achievements by Asian Americans in the field of entertainment. This awardees include Indian Americans like Shekhar Kapur (2001) and Mira Nair (2002).

This year's awards was hosted by Kelly Hu and Bobby Lee and held at the Wiltern LG Theater in Los Angeles. It will be aired on the AZN Television Network on January 29. The event had TV celebrities sharing stage with the likes Dr David Ho, who discovered the HIV/AIDS drug cocktail cure and former Basketball players Earvin 'Magic' Johnson.

However, there appeared a lack of representation of the Indian American community despite Indian faces like Parminder Nagra and Naveen Andrews being among the nominees in the Outstanding Television Performance category.

Born in Mumbai, Merchant spent most of his time in the West. His partnership with James Ivory began when they met en route to the Cannes Film Festival in 1961. Merchant Ivory Productions won six Oscars for films including *A Room with a View*, *Howard's End*, *The Remains of the Day*, *Roseland* and *Heat and Dust*. Merchant also directed feature films, including *Mahatma and the Mad Boy*, *In Custody* and *The Proprietor*.

The gregarious film director and producer was 68 when he passed away on May 25, 2005 in a London Hospital due to stomach problems.

Hasan takes Bollywood to the Golden Globes

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

Los Angeles, Calif.

SHEERAZ Hasan of LA's popular weekly television show *Tinsel Town* has invited Academy Award-winning filmmaker Ang Lee Ang Lee to direct a Bollywood film.

The special invitation was extended to Lee during the Golden Globe awards ceremony, said Hasan, CEO and founder of <http://www.Hollywood.tv>, one of the biggest web-TV channels in the world.

Hasan was probably the only South Asian to be invited as special guest to the 63rd edition of the annual prestigious awards ceremony. In his role as the "Hollywood Ambassador to Bollywood", Hasan met large number of Hollywood celebrities presenting the case of the Indian film industry to them—

either be part of Bollywood or invite actors, actresses and film directors from there.

Hasan attended exclusive after-parties held by Warner Bros, Fox, HBO, NBC Universal and The Weinstein Company and took time to educate Hollywood's elite about the latest developments in Bollywood. He spoke with George Clooney, *King Kong* director Peter Jackson, Sir Anthony Hopkins, Producer Harvey Weinstein, Oscar Winner Adrien Brody, Mariah Carey, Brandon Routh (who plays Superman in upcoming *Superman Returns*) and director Robert Rodriguez.

Subjects discussed varied from possibility of shooting future Hollywood productions in India to the need to bring Indian and South Asian actors over to Hollywood. Hasan also congratulated Jonathan Rhys-Meyers who was honored as best actor for his title role in

the CBS series *Elvis*. Rhys-Meyers got his big break with director Gurindha Chadha's hit film *Bend It Like Beckham*.

According to a media release, Hasan also discussed Indian cinema with Philip Berk—president of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association—the organization behind Golden Globes and explained that Bollywood was the only thing missing from the event.

Born in Pakistan and raised in London, Hasan came to Hollywood some three years ago and launched *Tinsel Town*, which soon became the number 1 program in its target market, being carried around the world on 11 networks. With a unique mix of Hollywood and Bollywood movie news, international music videos, in-depth celebrity interviews, and a spiritual focus, *Tinsel Town* has become a cultural bridge between the east and the west.

