

What is most important to rising pop-star Rita Ora? Her rocketing career, or being with the man she loves? That's the question which, according to insiders, is sending the 22-year-old pop diva to sleep with tears on her pillow. Ora is at the top of the charts. >B7



## OLYMPIC VIGIL

Soldiers walk past a welcome sign at the Olympic Park in Stratford, the location of the London 2012 Olympic Games, in east London. Britain may have to call up yet more soldiers to police the Olympic Games, the government said yesterday, after a failed private sector recruitment drive left an embarrassing hole in security and dashed London's dreams of a spotless showcase. — Reuters



RAJESH KHANNA: 1942-2012

# The romance is gone...

MEHRE ALAM

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**MUSCAT:** There will never be another Rajesh Khanna. There never was another like him. Why? For the simple reason that nobody else in the Indian film industry — no other star before or after him — had the kind of charisma to transform something most mundane into the most magical.

Kaka, as he was popularly known as, was simply 'The Phenomenon' during those years from the late 60's to the mid-70's. That was when he ruled the roost with his silken touch. Those were the times when Kaka's house in Mumbai reportedly used to figure on the tourist map of the city!

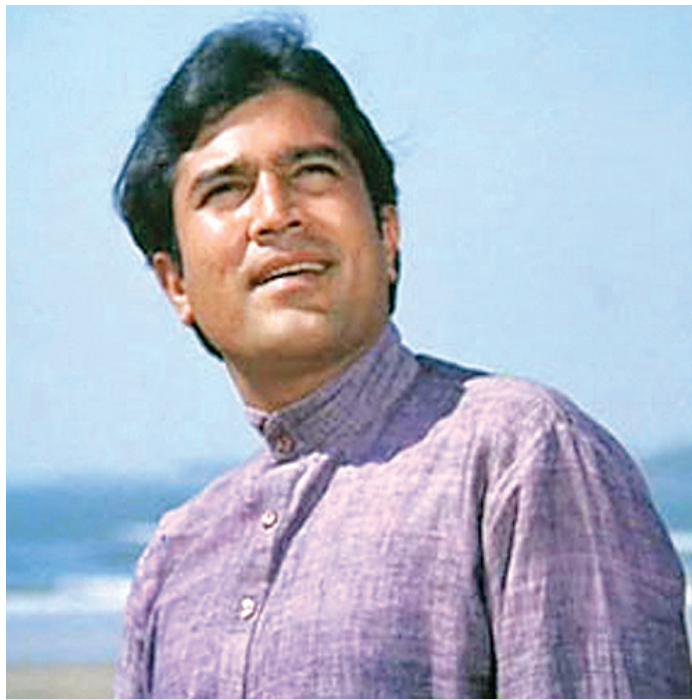
His death, in Mumbai yesterday, indeed marks the end of an era.

Just a few days ago, as Khanna was admitted back to hospital in Mumbai, a Facebook friend of mine posted on his wall, "It took an Amitabh to get past him..."

Yes, true! Kaka was indeed overtaken by the then emerging 'Angry Young Man' Bachchan. But then those times too suited Amitabh. The age of innocence was passe. India was coming to terms with the aftermath of the Emergency. There was growing frustration among masses. There was anger on the streets. So, Amitabh had an edifice that was more or less tailor-made to let loose his angry man histrionics onto — to be lapped up by a new, more impatient, and transformed audience.

This is not to take anything away from Amitabh, the other great, but Khanna, as sociologists would say, was not exactly a product of the times. He created his own genre. Those mannerisms, that unique way of dialogue delivery, the crinkling of his eyes, the head tilt, a bit of tilt here and a bit there — all his very own. But lo and behold, the hysteria that he would create among his fans, especially women, all swooning; he was indeed the real Superstar, aside from being anointed one for the first time ever in Bollywood. Before, him there were stars, no superstar.

There was something about Rajesh Khanna that the common man identified deeply



Those mannerisms, that unique way of dialogue delivery, the crinkling of his eyes, the head tilt, a bit of tilt here and a bit there — all his very own

with. Despite evoking a suave and urbane feel about him, there was this boy-next-door appeal to his persona. To think of an all buttoned-up kurta as an overwhelming male statement would be considered blasphemous by most style gurus in any other age. A simple kurta? And, lo, with lungi and sandals! Well, only a Rajesh Khanna could have catapulted such a mundane piece of wardrobe to a national style statement. And remember, there was no Internet then, and no mobile phones too!

### Unique charisma

It was quite simply that unique charisma of his that made the man with the boy-next-door looks out-do the likes of oh-so-hand-some-and-debonair Dev Anand. When he was at his peak, all other stars, including the big ones, were simply swept away in the Tsunami of Rajesh mania.

Sixteen solo hits between 1969 and 1972 testify what it meant to

be Rajesh Khanna!

However, as the saying goes, anything that goes up has to come down. In the mid-70's, his movies began to fizzle out at the box office. But he kept doing meaningful films. He resisted the temptation of moving with the times. But the question is, could he have done it any other way? He was Rajesh Khanna, one who in his glory days would pray to God that at least one of his films flops; such was his phenomenal run at the box office.

Kaka has gone. But the departure too had its share of ironical twist, just like some of his yesterday potboilers. He had been discharged from hospital just a day before and people expected him to recover. But, as Kaka's terminally ill character in the 1971 super-hit film, *Anand*, says, "...we are mere puppets in the game of life and death. Whatever happens here, we do not know, for it is all in the hands of the Almighty."

See also > A6 & B5

# Syria defence minister dies in bomb attack

## International community

condemns the attacks in Damascus

**BEIRUT/NEW YORK/LONDON/TEHRAN:** Syrian defence minister General Daoud Rajha died in a suicide attack in Damascus yesterday, as raging battles across the Syrian capital upped the stakes ahead of a Security Council vote on the Syria crisis.

State television said a suicide bomber targeted a meeting of ministers and security officials at the National Security headquarters in Rawda, a high security district in the heart of the capital, killing Rajha.

Security officials said that several other participants in the meeting were wounded in the blast and taken to Al-Shami hospital in the capital for treatment.

The officials said Interior Minister Mohammed Al Shaar was among the wounded.

Rajha, a Christian, was defence minister, deputy army chief and deputy of the Council of Ministers. Syria's army chief is President Bashar Al Assad.

The attack came as battles raged across Damascus and after the Free Syrian Army (FSA) comprising defected soldiers and civilians who have taken up arms against Assad's forces — warned the regime to "expect surprises."

Columns of black smoke rose over the capital, with the Local Coordination Committees, which organises anti-regime protests on the ground, reporting that Qaboon



**VIOLENT END:** Daoud Rajha, a Christian, was defence minister, deputy army chief and deputy of the Council of Ministers. — AFP

and Barzeh neighbourhoods were bombarded by loyalist forces.

Meanwhile, in Beijing, UN chief Ban Ki-moon yesterday urged the Security Council to act to stop the bloodshed in Syria, after holding talks with Chinese leaders hours ahead of a vote on fresh sanctions.

International envoy Kofi Annan, too, has asked the UN Security Council to delay the vote on the Western-backed resolution that threatens Syrian authorities with sanctions, Britain said.

### Resolution vote

"Joint Special Envoy Annan has asked to delay today's draft Syria resolution vote. With fellow co-sponsors (of the resolution) we're considering that request," the British UN mission said on Twitter.

Reacting to yesterday's bloodshed, US Defence Secretary Leon Panetta said Syria is "rapidly spinning out of control."

"It's obvious that what is happening in Syria represents a real escalation in the fighting," Panetta told reporters in Washington

alongside British counterpart Philip Hammond, who agreed with the Pentagon chief's assessment.

The White House, in its reaction, said the Syrian President was "losing control" of his country.

Pointing to "increasing" defections and a "strengthened and more united" opposition, National Security Council spokesman Tommy Vietor said there was growing momentum against Assad.

France said the suicide bombing showed the urgent need for a political transition and urged Bashar Al Assad to give up his "futile" struggle to stay in power.

Meanwhile, Iran condemned the suicide bombing in Damascus and said the foreign backing for "terrorist acts" would not succeed in destabilising Syria. "The Islamic Republic of Iran has repeatedly condemned violence and resorting to destructive measures, and believes that the only way of resolving the current crisis in Syria is through talks..." a foreign ministry statement published by Mehr news agency said. — Agencies

## TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

### OMAN OCCI to discuss growth strategy

**1** The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry will be inviting ministers, undersecretaries and specialists during Ramadan evenings to discuss ways for the further development of Oman. These gatherings will provide an opportunity for meaningful dialogue between leaders of various sectors. >A2

### REGION UAE okays first Gulf nuclear power plant

**3** The United Arab Emirates will be the first Gulf Arab state to start constructing a nuclear power plant in the region, where top oil exporters seek alternative energy resources to meet the soaring electricity demand that threatens to absorb their precious oil and gas reserves. >A5

### SPORTS Blake lays down marker for Bolt

**2** World 100 metres champion Yohan Blake showed he was in good heart to challenge compatriot Usain Bolt for Olympic sprint dominance in London by clocking 9.85 seconds to win at a meeting in Lucerne on Tuesday. Blake burst clear in the final 30 metres to win easily in the Swiss city. >A12



Airlines cut fares to woo travellers

A3



Yuvraj named in India squad

A11

## Hi WEEKLY

If you've not left town for your annual vacation, discover Oman this summer!

They gathered crowds and raised brows, the African Circus artistes

What's Lokhemat? Sweet balls of delight...check them out!

See who's going to London for the Olympics from Oman.

Plus, meet Mesehar Sa'ud, the guy who calls out 'Wake up Oman!' on radio FM.