

# Mixing with masters and living legends

Alexander Evans

The ultimate celebration of Asian excellence, the Asian Awards in partnership with Lebara dazzled with the calibre of those honoured. Across all spheres of endeavour, from business to philanthropy and sport to the arts, legends and masters from across the globe gathered to celebrate Asian excellence.

Recognising the power of Asian cinema, at home and abroad, the Asian Awards honoured exceptional talent in front of the camera and behind it.

Amitabh Bachchan, a world renowned actor named 'Star of the Millennium' by the BBC, has a distinguished career stretching back over four decades in Hindi cinema.

Having won numerous accolades for his art - including three National Film Awards, over 10 Filmfare Awards, and the Padma Shri honour - the charismatic

Amitabh was presented with a much deserved Lifetime Achievement Award at the Asian Awards 2010.

Yash Chopra, one of the most powerful men in Indian cinema, sits at the helm of India's biggest production house, Yash Raj Films, with offices in the US, UK, UAE, and South Asia.

The first Indian to be honoured by BAFTA in its history, and a recipient of France's highest civilian award, the Legion of Honour, Yash Chopra joined a host of cultural icons to receive his award for Outstanding Achievement in Cinema at the Asian Awards.

Another legend of Indian cinema crossing cultural boundaries, AR Rahman has col-



THE  
ASIAN AWARDS  
HONOURING ASIAN EXCELLENCE  
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  
Lebara

laborated with leading musicians and filmmakers all over the world and has garnered accolades including a Golden Globe, a BAFTA, two Academy Awards, and India's highest honour, the Padma Shri.

Described by one judge of the

Asian Awards as a "soul-stirring artist who embodies the universality of music", AR Rahman set the bar high as the first recipient of the award for Outstanding Achievement in Music.

As the Asian Awards 2011 draws ever nearer, excitement, curiosity and speculation is intensifying.

Once again, in 2011, we will welcome some of South Asia's most exceptional cultural, business and community leaders from around the world.

*The Asian Awards Ceremony on the 18th October in London, hosted by Lord Coe, provides a unique opportunity to network with the world's most affluent decision-makers, sporting stars, music legends, business tycoons, Bollywood celebrities and political leaders.*

*Tickets to the ultimate celebration of Asian excellence are available now at [www.theasianawards.com](http://www.theasianawards.com) or +44 (0) 207 234 8732.*



## Air India struggles to survive in fast market

Wasim Khan

Air India, a relic of state ownership threatened by losses, bloated costs and more nimble rivals, needs to secure a massive debt and operational overhaul if it is to survive in a market growing at 20 percent a year.

The airline has not posted a profit since merging with former duopoly partner Indian Airlines in 2007 and relies on handouts from the government to survive. It is behind on its payroll obligations and was forced one day last month to cancel a handful of flights because it had not paid its fuel bills.

Air India and 26 banks are in talks to restructure \$4 billion of working capital debt in a deal that would force lenders including State Bank of India to accept equity in the carrier and cut lending rates to about 8 percent from 11-13 percent, saving it \$133



million in interest costs.

Even if it can persuade banks to revise a payment schedule for \$3 billion in local currency debt due on June 30, Air India needs a drastic revamp or privatisation that may require more money and political will than the government can muster.

With New Delhi opposed to privatisation but unwilling to put it out of business and banks poised to agree to a restructuring for lack of a more attractive option, Air India may well limp along in its current zombie state.

Air India lost more than \$1 billion in the year that

ended in March 2010, the last year for which it posted figures. Its domestic market share has dropped to fourth from third, behind private sector rivals Jet Airways, Kingfisher Airlines and budget carrier IndiGo.

A recent 10-day pilot strike forced it to cancel 90 percent of domestic flights, costing it nearly \$56 million, further denting an already battered image and prompting it to lure back customers with costly discounts.

Air India, which is scheduled to take delivery of the first of its 27 Boeing Dreamliners by the end of the year, may defer some deliveries, according to people familiar with the matter. The carrier itself says the orders are on track.

Rivals are investing heavily in an Indian aviation market growing nearly 20 percent a year. Budget carrier GoAir said it ordered 72 Airbus planes worth \$7.2 billion.

## Khan makes civilian drones

In Pakistan's commercial hub, a Pakistani is developing his own drone technology despite security challenges arising from the current political climate and the public anger over the U.S. use of the unmanned aircrafts.

Located in a narrow industrial lane in Karachi is the 90,000 square-foot research facility called Integrated Dynamics. There, Raja Sabri Khan, the company's chief executive, makes unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), commonly known as drones. But his are for civilian and scientific research.

But when he tells Pakistanis what he makes, the initial reaction he gets is one of shock. Pakistan is obsessed with just one kind of drone - the Predator - that is used by the United States to kill militants in the country's northwest.

"The usual reaction I get when I tell people I make drones is: Are you the guy who is making the drones and supplying to the Americans so that they can come back and bomb them over

here?" said Khan.

The U.S. drone campaign is hugely unpopular in Pakistan, surrounded by criticism and controversy, and considered flagrant violations of sovereignty.

"One of the major areas is the misconception people might have about drones because the media has propped up the drone as something which is a completely different animal from what I do," said Khan.

Khan's markets are primarily the government, armed forces and also foreign exports for search and rescue operations, and agricultural monitoring among others. There are two other Pakistani drone companies, Satuma and East West Infinity, both based in Islamabad, but they mostly service military clients. Khan's is the only one specialising in civilian applications.

Khan supplies 12 to 18 drones a year on average, along with two to three support systems. He declined to comment on his total revenue, but said a typical system for a small civilian UAV

would cost around \$10,000 to \$15,000. But he runs a risky business. A few years ago he had to go into hiding after receiving copies of circulated emails, which accused him of making Predator drones. His company is now spread out throughout Karachi so he cannot be targeted in one location.

Part of Khan's business is trying to create more awareness about civilian drones despite the security challenges. "With the civilian and scientific application, you can change lives." But there is no government support for developing indigenous drone technology, he added.

He now works on using drones for insecticide spraying on crops, an operation that would cost less than using a conventional aircraft and could cover large areas quickly - something that would be useful for Pakistan's agricultural-dominated economy.

Japan has been using remotely piloted helicopters for years for crop spraying.