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WHATSUP

RAMJHOL 2.0 BROUGHT CALCUTTA CLOSER TO RAJASTHAN WITH A DISCUSSION ON *SONAR KELLA* AND A LIVE PERFORMANCE



The session started with the camel-scene from *Sonar Kella*



Kushal Chakraborty and Sandip Ray engage in an intense discussion. "The seminar on *Sonar Kella* beautifully explored the cultural bridge between Rajasthan and Calcutta. It was both informative and enjoyable, filled with fond memories of working with Satyajit Ray in Jaisalmer. The engaging audience made the event truly memorable and delightful," said Kushal Chakraborty (left).



Internet sensation Rahgir made the evening of August 3 memorable for Calcuttans. The Rajasthan-born singer, known for his easy guitar riffs and relatable and heavily philosophical lyrics, started off with the song *Bhai rahgir*. Sensing the eager fans in his audience who wanted him to sing his most popular number, the singer and lyricist tweaked the song to *Aadmi bhutiya hai*. He made sure the fans didn't go disappointed and sang his other popular numbers like *Aalsi dopahar* and others.



Rahgir's performance was opened in a very traditional style with Zahid Hossain (left) and Palash Chaturvedi bringing flavours of the Rajasthani style of storytelling.



The amphitheatre was packed to capacity to listen to the artiste.

interactions with the audience, who eagerly absorbed the tales of the film's making and its lasting influence on both cinema and tourism. "Bengali people are quite travel enthusiasts. *Sonar Kella* transformed Jaisalmer into a must-

visit destination for them. While Jaipur and Jodhpur were the usual stops, this film spotlighted Jaisalmer. It popularised the place and that bridged Calcutta and Rajasthan. It led to noticeable demographic and economic changes. Still, locals there

hold the film's cast in high regard, reflecting their admiration and respect," said Ray.

Shreyasee Dutta (t2 intern)

Pictures: Pabitra Das and Rashbehari Das

The final day of Ramjhol 2.0, on August 4 at Kolkata Centre for Creativity, witnessed an engaging conversation that drew film enthusiasts and cultural aficionados alike. The session titled 'Bridging Kolkata and Rajasthan in *Sonar Kella*', focussed on the legacy of Satyajit Ray's classic film *Sonar Kella* and saw Sandip Ray, the award-winning filmmaker and the son of the legendary filmmaker, and the cast of the movie, including Siddhartha Chatterjee and Kushal Chakraborty, in attendance. The panel discussion was moderated by Pinaki De.

The panellists made us all note that *Sonar Kella*, directed by the late Satyajit Ray and the first in the hugely popular Feluda film series, is not only a thrilling adventure but also a cinematic window into the grandeur of Rajasthan. The film introduced audiences to lesser-known gems like Jaisalmer and Bikaner, beyond the typical tourist spots of Jaipur and Jodhpur. Through the eyes of its young protagonist, Mukul played by the then six-year-old Kushal Chakraborty, the film became a virtual tour guide for Bengalis, fuelling a surge in tourism and economic growth in the region.

The conversation featured heartfelt reflections from Kushal who shared his unforgettable experiences of filming in Rajasthan and the enduring



Siddhartha Chatterjee and Pinaki De

admiration he receives from locals. Siddhartha, who played Topsy, also reminisced about the excitement of filming and the camaraderie shared during the production. Both actors discussed the challenges they faced from logistical issues to the absence of modern conveniences like mobile phones. "The film remains timeless even 50 years later, appearing modern and relevant. As a travelogue and thriller, it highlights Rajasthan's unchanged essence. After the film we get to recognise its demographic and economic shifts. People go to Rajasthan, and tend to equate that to '*Sonar Kella*' travelogue," said Siddhartha.

Enriching the Sunday afternoon, Sandip Ray provided entertaining behind-the-scenes anecdotes and discussed the environmental impact of the film's locations, emphasising the importance of preservation. The session was marked by lively