

# ‘Made in Bahrain’ movie ‘to boost tourism sector’

Staff Reporter  
TDT | Manama

The first Bollywood film shot considerably in Bahrain is making waves among Indian viewers who are demanding a sequel to the horror comedy a week after its release on one of India's largest OTT platforms.

Khel Kood Aur Bhoot (KKAB)-roughly translated as Fun, Frolic, and Ghost - which also happens to be the first Bollywood film shot in the Kingdom of Bahrain, is the brainchild of Bahrain's award-winning journalist turned filmmaker Adnan Malik.

It was released on Friday, May 13, on MX Player, which has more than 300 million users globally, including countries such as India, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Nepal.

"I always promote the Kingdom as a key filming and tourism destination in the Middle East, and I'm overwhelmed by the response," Malik told the *Daily Tribune* exclusively from Mumbai. Malik has written, produced, directed, and acted in the movie.

"People are asking privately and also openly on social media platforms for a sequel and more importantly asking me about Bahrain and showing interest in traveling to the Kingdom for business and leisure, what else can I ask for?" said Malik.

Malik's lead pair Poonam Mohapatra couldn't agree more and told *The Daily Tribune* that, "Bahrain is so beautiful and so inviting. There is so much to do and so much to see and I'm really thankful that my acting

debut happened in this beautiful Kingdom," she said.

There are many firsts for this independently produced comedy-horror flick. It's the first Bollywood film to be shot in the Kingdom of Bahrain and Malik is the first and only Bahraini filmmaker in the prolific movie industry considered the largest in the world.

"It's a wonderful feeling for any independent filmmaker to see their movie release, and I'm grateful to God that such a renowned OTT platform like MX has partnered with us to showcase this movie," said Malik adding that the video streaming service attracts more than 200 million monthly active users in India alone. Its app on the Google store has reportedly already crossed a staggering one billion downloads.

OTT or over the top is a term used for media service offered directly to viewers via the Internet. It bypasses cable, broadcast, and satellite television plat-

forms, giving people a plethora of options for watching their favorite content on numerous devices like mobiles, smart TVs, computers, tablets, and more, and in various languages.

The Hindi-language movie, which has English subtitles, has been released under his Mumbai-based home banner, Malik Entertainment Movies Pvt. Ltd.

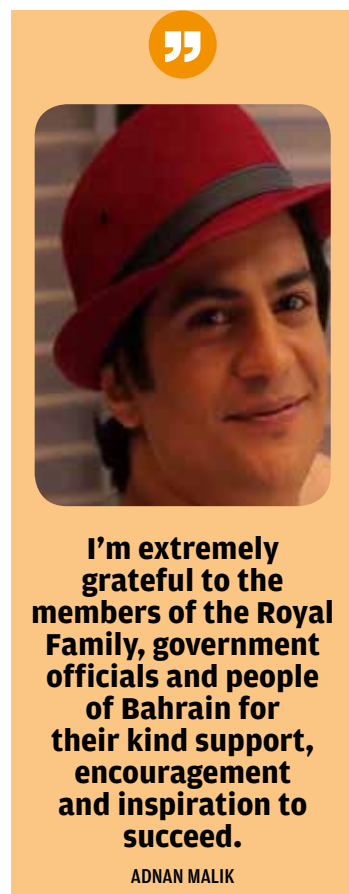
More than 85 per cent of the movie, including three songs, was shot in the Kingdom and the remaining 20 per cent in India. Besides the scare, the movie's unique selling point is some of the breathtaking cinematography, including aerial shots of the Kingdom and filming of various well-known locations in Bahrain, including the Al Fateh Grand Mosque, the Financial Harbor, Bahrain World Trade Center, Bahrain Fort, Bahrain City Center, the Ritz-Carlton Bahrain Hotel, and Spa, and the Lost Paradise of Dilmun Water Park.

A key highlight of the movie is that it opens with a tribute to the Kingdom's Royal Family, followed by the acknowledgment of support from the Information and Interior Ministries, and many other people in Bahrain and India.

"I'm extremely grateful to many members of our Royal Al Khalifa family for their kind support, encouragement, and inspiration to succeed."

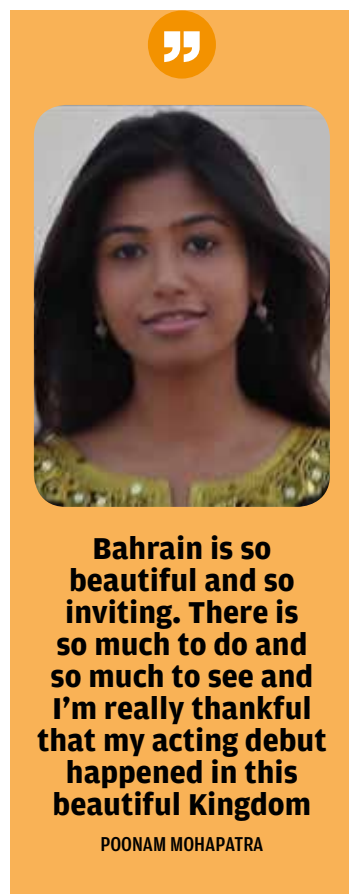
Malik said he was extremely overwhelmed by great words of HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, who wished him, "all the best for your movie" as he met him personally at one of his weekly majlis during the final stages of filming a few years ago.

"We are blessed with a kind, noble, wise, and educated leadership that supports, inspires, motivates, and encourages Bahrainis and its residents to follow their passion and achieve their goals," said Malik, who is a former Gulf Correspondent for the American Associated Press news



**I'm extremely grateful to the members of the Royal Family, government officials and people of Bahrain for their kind support, encouragement and inspiration to succeed.**

ADNAN MALIK



**Bahrain is so beautiful and so inviting. There is so much to do and so much to see and I'm really thankful that my acting debut happened in this beautiful Kingdom**

POONAM MOHAPATRA

## Fans demand a sequel for horror comedy film Khel Khood Aur Bhoot (May 13 release), which was shot in the Kingdom

this way," said Malik adding that the results paid off and he landed a two-year distribution deal with MX Player with one single meeting.

"In my view, OTT platforms have now become an essential part of the entertainment ecosystem worldwide. As producers we settled for digital release after weighing in all the options including the financial constraints, target audience, distribution options, availability of movie theaters, release roster and timing, and last but not the least, the shadow of the ever-evolving pandemic.

"Unlike traditional theatrical releases which have to struggle to get dates, adequate screens and worry about ticket sales and maintain extensive marketing budgets to promote films, OTT platforms are cost-effective and easily accessed, giving filmmakers the flexibility to release without the hassles.

"For an independent filmmaker like myself, OTT happened to be the best and the most suitable choice as it is the most cost-effective, it has a bigger reach, and it has also been the most resilient platform during the pandemic, which has disrupted and transformed consumption habits for content.

"The ultimate outcome has been that OTT platforms have given filmmakers a seamless distribution switch from traditional theaters and consumers the safer option of entertainment in the comfort of their homes while the threat of Covid-19 still looms," he explained further.

KKAB is a full-length feature inspired by true events. It is a story of six friends who embark on an impromptu documentary-film-making adventure to figure out whether ghosts exist or not. Their interviews with the Mumbai people lead them to a supposedly haunted house in the nearby suburb of Panvel where they come face-to-face with a haunting truth.

"I'm also very grateful to the people of Bahrain and India for the outpouring of support and kindness and also to all my brand partners.

"The movie's brand partners from Bahrain include McDonald's, Columbus Café, the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, Gulf Air, the Lost Paradise of Dilmun, and Forest Dew to name a few.

"Last but not the least, I would like to thank my parents - especially my dad - for their prayers and blessings, and all my family and friends for their love, support, and encouragement."

KKAB is the first Indian film shot in the Kingdom. The film's shooting began "way ahead" of Malayalam movie Mohavalayam, which was also shot in the Kingdom.

agency.

Malik, who assumed many roles in completing the film, co-edited the movie with award-winning Indian editor Abhijit Kokate. The film's music is directed by award-winning musician Vijayaa Shanker, who has also acted in the movie.

Meanwhile, KKAB's release on Friday, May 13, was timed with the horror-comedy theme of the 130-minute-long feature. "Since there was only one Friday the 13th this year, I'm grateful to God and thrilled that we were able to time our comedy-horror movie to release on this historically superstitious day," he explained.

He also released a curtain-raiser on social media on the same theme a day before the release. Malik said he shied away from making any announcements or engaging in any publicity about the movie until after all the distribution formalities were com-

pleted, the release date locked, and also because he wanted to use a last-minute "shock and awe" release strategy - an advantage of releasing a movie on a digital platform that would not be affected or hampered by the other theatrical releases.

"I wanted to release the movie to come unannounced just like how ghosts show up out of nowhere," he joked.

Prior to its release on the OTT, KKAB has already made some waves on the international film festival circuit. Shortly after the film's completion in 2019, it picked up an "honorable mention" at a prestigious film festival - Columbus International Film and Animation Festival - in the United States the same year.

The movie was scheduled for theatrical release in India and the region in 2020, but then Covid-19 happened, and cinemas throughout shut down. Many Bollywood films that were waiting for theatre release switched to releasing on OTT platforms and found their audience there.

More ambitious movies with massive budgets, however, continued to wait for the big screen. Since theaters opened to the public, India's current theatrical backlog is now swamped with major back-to-back releases amid the looming threat of another wave of the Covid-19 virus.

The lockdown, Malik said, was a "blessing in disguise," as it gave him time to further enhance the movie's visual effects, color, and sound in the later part of 2021 and also recently.

"There is always some room for improvement, and looking back I'm glad things panned out



A scene from the movie