

# Grieving Bollywood fans pay their respects to Sridevi

By Rafiq Maqbool  
The Associated Press

**M**UMBAI, India — Lining up for hours and visibly grief-stricken, thousands of mourning fans paid their respects to Sridevi, the iconic Bollywood actress who drowned accidentally in a Dubai hotel bathtub.

Sridevi's body was flown home in a private plane owned by Anil Ambani, a Mumbai industrialist and entertainment baron.

People quickly lined up along a security fence outside the private club near Sridevi's home where the body had been laid. A string of Mercedes and Audis ferried family members, Bollywood stars, and VIPs in through another gate, with squadrons of private guards ensuring things stayed under control.

One mourner, a man who gave his name only as Prashant, arrived at about 7:00am, hours before anyone was to be allowed in.

"I'll wait until I'm able to pay my respects," he said, clutching a small bouquet of flowers.

"I saw all her movies," he said, grief clearly visible on his face.

Inside the club, the actress's body was placed on a raised platform in a hall decorated with flowers. Her extended family, including her husband, producer Boney Kapoor, and her two daughters, stood by the platform as fans and colleagues walked past in respect.

While the family had requested media leave their cameras outside while viewing her body, some photographs emerged on



**GRIEF-STRICKEN FANS.** Bollywood actress Sridevi performs during the International Indian Film Academy awards in Macau in this July 6, 2013 file photo. Thousands of mourning fans paid their respects to Sridevi, who drowned accidentally in a Dubai hotel bathtub. (AP Photo/Kin Cheung, File)

Bollywood debut in the late 1970s.

By the late 1980s, she was a name to reckon with in mainstream Hindi-language films and was able to command top billing and dominate screen space in a film industry in which the heroine's role was largely relegated to a few songs and a handful of romantic scenes as the leading man's love interest.

Despite a life spent entirely in the movie business, colleagues described Sridevi as quiet and shy on the sets until she faced the camera, when several of them recalled how she would "transform" into the character she was playing.

In 1997, she married Kapoor, a producer on many of her films, and stepped away from cinema for many years while she raised her two daughters.

Her Twitter bio read: "Actor-MOM-Housewife-Actor Again!"

Sridevi returned to films in 2012 with *English Vinglish*, where she played a quiet housewife who remains largely in the background until she decides to learn English to fit in with her family.

In 2017, she starred in *Mom*, playing a woman out to seek vengeance for the rape of her teenage stepdaughter.

Over the last few years, Sridevi had been grooming her older daughter, Janhvi Kapoor, for her debut Bollywood film slated for release later this year.

news sites and showed Sridevi's body dressed in a vibrant magenta and gold sari with a heavy gold necklace around her neck and a large red bindi, the decorative forehead marking many Indian women wear. The red bindi is traditionally a sign that the woman wearing it is married.

By late afternoon, her body, wrapped in an Indian flag, began its journey from the club to the crematorium where her funeral took place according to Hindu customs. The body was carried in a truck decorated with flowers and a giant poster of the actress.

Sridevi, 54, was in Dubai for a wedding in her extended family when she drowned in a hotel bathtub after losing consciousness. Investigators in Dubai, who said alcohol was found in her system, closed the case and handed the body to her family.

Condolences have poured in since the death of the actress, who redefined the importance of the female lead in India's largely male-dominated film industry.

Sridevi, who used only one name onscreen, began her film career as a child actress and went on to star in regional films in southern India before making her

## Hunt for missing Malaysian plane likely to end in June

By Eileen Ng  
The Associated Press

**K**UALA LUMPUR, Malaysia — The search for Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 by a U.S. company will likely end in June, a Malaysian official said, as families of passengers marked the fourth anniversary of the plane's disappearance with renewed hope that the world's biggest aviation mystery would be solved.

Malaysia inked a "no cure, no fee" deal with Houston, Texas-based Ocean Infinity in January to resume the hunt for the plane, a year after the official search in the southern Indian Ocean by Malaysia, Australia, and China was called off.

Ocean Infinity started the search on January 22 and has 90 search days to look for the plane. Malaysia's civil aviation chief, Azharuddin Abdul Rahman, said the 90-day term will spread over a few months because the search vessel has to refuel in Australia and bad weather could be a factor.

Azharuddin said the search is going smoothly and is expected to end by mid-June.

"The whole world, including the next of kin, have (new) hope to find the plane for closure," he told reporters at a remembrance event at a shopping mall near Kuala Lumpur. "For the aviation world, we want to know what exactly happened to the plane."

Officials have said there was an 85 percent chance of finding the debris in a new 9,650-square-mile search area — roughly the size of Vermont — identified by experts.

If the mission is successful within three months, payment will be made based on the size of the area

searched. Malaysia says it will pay Ocean Infinity \$20 million for 1,930 square miles of a successful search, \$30 million for 5,790 square miles, \$50 million for 9,653 square miles, and \$70 million if the plane or flight recorders are found beyond the identified area.

The plane vanished March 8, 2014 while flying from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing with 239 people on board.

The official search was extremely difficult because no transmissions were received from the aircraft after its first 38 minutes of flight. Systems designed to automatically transmit the flight's position failed to work after that point, according to a final report issued in January 2017 by the Australian Transport Safety Board.

Family members lit candles on a stage and observed a moment of silence during the three-hour event. Most are split over whether the search will be fruitful.

"It doesn't renew (any hope) because I also have to be realistic. It has been four years," said Intan Maizura Othman, whose husband was a flight attendant on the plane. She was pregnant when the plane disappeared and attended the event with her now four-year-old son.

Jiang Hui of China, whose mother was on board the plane, said he was grateful for Ocean Infinity's courage to mount the search, but that he hopes it will not be the end if the mission fails. He proposed a public fund be set up to continue the search.

"Without a search, there will be no truth," Jiang said.

## China defends planned scrapping of presidential term limit

**BEIJING (AP)** — A Chinese official is defending Beijing's plan to scrap term limits on the presidency that would enable Xi Jinping to rule indefinitely as a way to ensure that three of Xi's main leadership positions are unified.

Spokesman of the National People's Congress, Zhang Yesui, said the constitutional amendment is only aimed at bringing the office of the president in line with rules on Xi's other positions atop the party and a military commission.

This year's gathering of the ceremonial legislature has been overshadowed by the ruling Communist Party's surprise move to announce a plan to end two-term limits on the presidency.

That means Xi, already China's most powerful leader in decades, could extend his rule over China for life. Zhang did not comment on the prospect of lifelong tenure.



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