



Azharuddin Mohammed Ismail, child star of the hit movie "Slumdog Millionaire," center, holds his pet kitten, as his mother Shameem Ismail, left, looks on outside their home in Mumbai, India, Monday, April 27, 2009. Eight Oscars and US\$326 million in box office receipts have so far done little to change the lives of the film's two impoverished child stars. Rubina Ali and co-star Azharuddin still live in the same wretched slum they were born to, despite multiple offers of new houses and scholarships. (AP)

No happily ever after yet for 'Slumdog' kid stars

MUMBAI, India (AP) - Rubina Ali's house is flooded with sewer water, and her feet itch. She's discovered a world of creepy-crawlies in the opaque gray water: scorpions, rats and slithering creatures with lots of legs.

Two months ago, the child star of the hit movie "Slumdog Millionaire" was worrying about what to wear to the Oscars. Now she has come home to a very different problem: How to get the fetid water out of her family's one-room shack.

The 9-year-old picked up a plastic bucket Monday and began to scoop, but it was hopeless. "There are a lot of rats," she told The Associated Press with a shudder, standing in water above her ankles. "In the night also."

Eight Oscars and \$326 million in box office receipts have so far done little to improve the lives of the film's two impoverished child stars.

Rubina and co-star Azharuddin Mohammed Ismail have been showered with gifts and brief bursts of fame, but their day-to-day lives are little changed. In some ways, things have gotten worse: Azhar's neighborhood has grown crowded and tense.

"I am dreaming of a house," she said. "I'm going to die, I think, before I get that new house."

Azhar's dad finally woke up, and started off down the road just before noon.

Asked where he was going, he flashed a toothy yellow grin. "To drink," he said.

Azhar took off on his new bicycle, a gift from a fan from England. "I want to play, man," he said.

But there was no open space, and he kept bumping into piles of trash.

Rubina's house is flooded. And fame has brought both opportunity and shame.

If there is a happily ever after, Azhar and Rubina haven't found it yet.

"Slumdog" filmmakers insist they've done their best to help. They set up a trust, called Jai Ho, after the hit song from the film, to ensure the children get proper homes, a good education and a nest egg when they finish high school. They also donated \$747,500 to a charity to help slum kids in Mumbai.

Producer Christian Colson has described the trust as substantial, but won't tell anyone how much - not even the parents - for fear of making the children vulnerable to exploitation.

Azhar and Rubina finished their first term at the English-language school the filmmakers enrolled them in and plan to return in June when classes resume.

Noshir Dadrawala, a Jai Ho trustee, said the families have been shown several apartments in Mumbai, but rejected them all.

"They said it's too far from where they are now living. We are going to do a second round. We hope they will like what we are offering," he said.

"We are not dragging our feet. It's they who are dragging their feet," he added.

There have been other offers, but none have materialized so far.

Developers promised the children houses in a fancy new development billed as an eco-friendly sanctuary of villas and high-rise apartments being built in Kerala, on India's far-southern tip. But it's nearly 1,000 miles away and neither family wants to leave Mumbai.

The government offered them apartments closer to home, but has

coveted - and pricey - international baccalaureate degrees, also offered them scholarships, though school officials declined to comment.

And then there are the scandals.

A few days after the British tabloid News of the World reported that Rubina's father offered to sell her to one of its reporters disguised as a rich sheik, an Indian businessman who lives in Qatar came forward with an offer to pay for the girl's education through college, her family said.

"The fake sheik and the real sheik," Rubina's father, Rafiq Qureshi said, laughing.

Qureshi denies all wrongdoing, and has not been charged with any crime, but the incident opened old family wounds.

Rubina's estranged mother, Khurshida Monish Dewade, reappeared after seven years, and images of her and Rubina's stepmother, Munni, pulling each other's hair were broadcast around the world.

Rubina tries to ignore the drama. Asked if she wants to live with her dad, she nodded "Yes," then stuck the headphones back in her ears and belted out off-key lyrics to one of her favorite "Slumdog Millionaire" songs.

Both children have become adept at dealing with the packs of journalists who descend on their homes with each new twist in the "Slumdog" saga. And fame has brought small opportunities.

The children landed roles in a new Bollywood film. Azhar got hired for a photo shoot. They both starred in a fashion show in New Delhi and a concert in Chennai.

But after each brief tour, they return home to the place they know best, the slum of Garib Nagar, "the city of the poor."

make way for a municipal park, but since the Oscars they've been able to rebuild. Now shacks of corrugated metal stand where people once huddled beneath tarpaulins.

"Since Azhar is here, there is no worry for us," said neighbor Ramdas Ambadas Gaikwad, a 35-year-old rickshaw driver. "Because of Azhar the demolition has stopped."

Still, even Azhar's celebrity was no match for the local slumlord who came in and built nine new shacks on the already overcrowded spit of land where his family lives. New families were crammed in, and relations between the newcomers and the old-timers are not good.

"There are anti-social elements," said Azhar's mom, Shameem Ismail, complaining of too much cursing, drinking and hashish. "I just don't want to stay here with these people."

She worries for her celebrity son. "He has a name and fame. We have security concerns. He's not the same Azhar he was before," she said, reaching across the rough board where the 10-year-old lay next to his sleeping father.

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Around him, neighborhood children complained of boils. A baby who was an extra in "Slumdog Millionaire" lay in a strip of shade beneath a cloud of flies, sucking on a bottle of sugar water. His mother said she doesn't have money to buy him milk.

Azhar crouched beside the child. "Help these people," he said, looking up.

Rubina said that since the flooding she hasn't been eating as much because it's impossible to cook in her sewage-filled house.

She and her neighbors have no real way of getting clean. They bathe in their flooded homes, amid floating plastic bags, used shampoo packets, old shoes and discarded coconut shells, using buckets of water carted from a common tap.

The local eunuch, a tall figure in a purple sari who lives a few doors down, tries to keep his chickens dry, hoisting them to the upper racks of their frayed wooden coop.

The filthy water has brought a new game to the children of Garib Nagar: The mud fight.

On Monday, Rubina was the one to start it. She reached down into the muck outside her house and smeared her sticky brown palms across her friend's face.

Shrieking with laughter, the girls hurled fistfuls of mud at each other. They rubbed it into each other's skin and ground it into each other's hair.

Then they doused Rubina with buckets of gray water. She shivered with giggles and her face broke into a glowing smile.



Rubina Ali, child star of the hit movie "Slumdog Millionaire," right, wades through sewage water that has flooded her shanty, as her stepmother Munni, left, and father Rafiq Qureshi look on in Mumbai, India, Monday, April 27, 2009.

yet to deliver. By law, politicians cannot distribute such gifts in the run-up to national elections, which conclude next month.

The families say the D.Y. Patil International School, which offers

Here, neighbors cling to Azhar's fame like a charm, saying he has become the de facto protector of their community.

Slum residents say authorities tore down their homes last year to

TV GUIDE

ALFS4

ITN

A.M.	03.03	Sinhala Film (Cont'd.)	
04.30	Station Opening	04.00	Peyen Peya Puwath
04.35	Pirith Deshanaya	04.03	Kekulu Kodewawa
04.42	Jayamangala Gatha	04.30	Dedunu Hendewa
04.46	Davase Siltuvili	05.00	Peyen Peya Puwath
05.00	Thakshilawa	05.03	Dedunu Hendewa (Cont'd.)
06.00	ITN Puwath	05.30	Lama Puwath
06.15	Davase Palithara	05.45	Theruwana Namadimu
06.55	Jeevithaya Jayaganna	05.50	Jaya Piritha
07.00	Halthveni Peya	06.00	News - Tamil
08.00	Peyen Peya Puwath	06.30	Denumai Vasanavai
08.05	Pahan Dora Magazine	07.00	News and Current Affairs (Sinhala)
08.30	Sal Mal Yaya	07.30	Muthu Kirilli
09.05	Batti	08.00	Paba
10.00	Peyen Peya Puwath	08.30	Ithin Eeta Passe
10.05	Nimthera	09.00	Api Api Wage - Tele Drama
11.00	Discussion	09.30	News - Sinhala
Noon	09.55	Biz News	
12.00	Noon News	10.00	News - English
P.M.	10.10	Thulawa	
12.30	Sihinayaki Oba	M.N.	
01.00	Sinhala Film	12.00	News - Sinhala
02.00	Peyen Peya Puwath	A.M.	
02.03	Sinhala Film (Cont'd.)	00.20	Pirith Deshanaya
03.00	Peyen Peya Puwath	00.30	Close

SWARNAVAHINI

A.M.	05.30	Ehi Passiko	02.00	Uduvayan
06.00	04.00	Ama Dahara	03.00	Avanika
06.30	05.30	Mul Pitwa	04.00	Jeevithaya Lassana
07.00	06.30	Loka Sithiyama	05.00	Samanala Wasanthaya
07.30	07.00	Mobi Dick - Cartoon	05.30	Mini Toons
08.00	07.30	Kidi Toon Movie	06.00	Musix
09.00	08.00	Hello Sri Lanka	07.00	Sports Hitz
10.30	09.00	Channeld	07.30	Gaja Muthu
11.00	10.30	Mahajana Sewaya Pirisai	08.00	Live @ 8
Noon	08.30		08.30	Abhimaan
12.00	09.30	Live @ 12	09.30	Rosa Katu
P.M.	M.N.		09.30	Living Star
12.30	01.00	Ransaliya Handa Rendu Peya		

ETV

A.M.	01.00	VH1
06.00	02.00	Channel News Asia
06.45	04.30	Telemarketing
06.55	05.00	As Told by Ginger
07.01	06.00	Channel News Asia
07.30	07.00	VH1
09.00	07.45	Debrief
09.30	07.55	Lanka Business Online
10.00	08.01	American Idol Season 8
10.30	08.55	Lanka Business Online
Noon	09.01	The Bold & The Beautiful
12.00	09.45	Debrief
P.M.	09.55	Lanka Business Online
12.30	10.00	Channel News Asia

SHAKTHI TV

A.M.	01.15	Thirai Koodam
04.00	04.00	Children Movie
05.30	05.30	Shakthi Chat
06.30	06.30	Kolungal
07.00	07.00	Kalasangam
07.30	07.30	Siraman Thirai
08.00	08.00	News 1st
08.30	08.30	Sahvi
09.00	09.00	English News
09.30	09.30	Lakshmi
10.00	10.00	Thirumathi Selvam
11.30	11.30	Nenjham Marappathillai
12.00	12.00	Putham Puthusu
12.30	12.00	Close of Transmission

DERANA

A.M.	01.30	Mix Songs
05.55	04.00	Dragon Tales
06.00	04.30	Cartoon
07.00	05.30	Bid To Win
08.00	06.00	Mumbai Masala
08.30	07.00	Dream Star Academy
10.30	07.30	Lanka Soy Rasa Meevitha
11.00	08.00	Ada Derana
12.00	08.30	Saraa
12.15	09.00	Doo Kumariyo
12.15	09.30	Vaada Pitya
12.30	11.00	Bid To Win

CHANNEL EYE

A.M.	04.30	Cartoon Series (English)
06.29	05.00	Cartoon Programme (Tamil)
06.30	05.30	Super Top 10 (Tamil)
06.45	06.00	Sokkuthey Manam (Tamil)
07.00	06.30	Natyangalee (Tamil)
07.15	07.00	News & Weather Report (Tamil)
07.30	07.30	Puthuyugam
08.00	08.00	Kana Kanam Kanangal
08.30	08.30	Appuvakaga
11.00	09.00	Vasana Sampatha
11.30	09.15	Jayoda Lottery
12.00	09.30	News and Weather Report
Noon	09.55	Insight (English)
12.00	10.00	Top Score
P.M.	10.30	Ullithamachara (English)
01.00	10.30	Ullithamachara (English)
01.30	12.00	End of Transmission
01.45		Tamil Feature Film

RUPAVAHINI

A.M.	02.05	Tele Drama
04.48	02.30	A Documentary
04.50	03.00	News
	03.05	Documentary (Cont'd.)
	03.30	Tele Drama
05.00	04.00	News
05.55	04.05	Cartoon
06.00	04.30	Tele Drama
06.06	05.00	News
06.30	05.05	Havasa Paya
07.00	06.00	Defence News
07.05	06.05	Partiganaka
	06.30	Paradeesaya
08.00	06.30	Nena Piyasa
08.05	06.58	Vismitha Charka
09.00	07.27	Sihina Kumari
09.05	08.00	News (Sinhala)
10.00	08.30	Pasubima
10.05	08.35	Tele Drama
11.00	09.05	Kadulla
11.05	09.32	Tele Drama
Noon	10.00	Vasana Sampatha
12.00	10.05	Jayoda Lottery
P.M.	10.10	News
12.30	10.30	Ullithamachara
01.00	M.N.	
02.00	12.00	End of Transmission

ART TV

A.M.	P.M.	
12.30	12.30	CNN Today
01.30	12.57	Slate of Business (3 min)
02.30	01.00	World Business Today
03.00	01.30	World News
03.30	01.57	Slate of Business (3 min)
04.30	02.00	Eco Solutions
06.30	02.30	Larry King Live
07.00	03.30	World News
07.15	04.00	World Sport
06.30	04.30	Fraggle Rock
07.00	04.57	Slate of Business (3 min)
07.15	05.00	Conan
07.30	05.30	World News Asia
08.30	05.57	Slate of Business (3 min)
09.30	06.00	Telescreen Marketing
09.30	06.30	World Business Today
09.57	06.57	Slate of Business (3 min)
10.00	07.00	Top 10 Hits
10.30	07.45	World News
10.57	08.15	The State of Business
11.30	08.30	John & Kate
11.30	08.57	Slate of Business (3 min)
11.57	09.00	CSI Vegas
M.N.	09.57	Slate of Business (3 min)
12.00	10.00	Larry King Live

PREHISTO