

# Education key to women empowerment: SRK

Shah Rukh Khan presenting the scholarship to Gopika Kottantharayil Bhasi



Simi Garewal



Sriram Raghavan



Mitu Bhowmik Lange

A female researcher from Kerala was awarded the Shah Rukh Khan La Trobe University PhD Scholarship at the IFFM kickoff celebration

## AGE CORRESPONDENT

With the 11th edition of the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne (IFFM) coming up in August this year, there was a grand opening ceremony in Mumbai that was attended by the Badshah of Bollywood, Shah Rukh Khan. In preparing for the event, festival director Mitu Bhowmik Lange vows to make it grand.

Interestingly, the Shah Rukh Khan La Trobe University PhD Scholarship was announced at the previous edition of the festival, which has been dedicated to a female researcher named Gopika Kottantharayil Bhasi from Thrissur (Kerala). Bhasi, who was also present at the event, was awarded the four-year scholarship. The researcher — who was chosen from over 800 Indian applicants — is working on farming practices through animal science, ecology and molecular studies.

Khan congratulated Gopika on her efforts and the scholarship. "I would like to personally thank Mitu. I take myself as the first-hand ambassador of Melbourne; I attended the Indian film festival of Melbourne last year and it was such a warm and hospitable experience. The way forward for everyone is to gain an education, and there's never an end to learning," said the actor, who is a staunch believer in the power of education.

"The key to empowering women world over is only by providing them with education.

I think education in India or anywhere else in the world is a step forward. Gopika is fortunate that she's soon going to be studying at La Trobe, a fantastic university, and I'm glad she's getting this opportunity to do a PhD on her research. I admire Gopika's dedication and determination. This scholarship will enable her to travel to La Trobe in Melbourne, Australia where she will pursue her dreams of helping to improve India's agriculture sector. I wish her well," added the actor with a smile.

For Lange, while the journey has been overwhelming, she is happy to have witnessed the lines between commercial and independent cinema blurring. "It has gathered strength

from all quarters in the past 10 years and the content landscape has changed. It's the celebration of great stories now. IFFM continues its dedicated work towards supporting diverse voices and cinema. I am ecstatic about the initiatives we have taken, especially our association with La Trobe University, which takes us beyond what is

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—SHAH RUKH KHAN

covered under the purview of a standard film festival," she said, adding, "We are looking at the growth of a community and taking the spirit of cinema to the masses. Having Shah Rukh Khan support a young researcher's dream is a step towards us collectively furthering our social responsibilities."



Malaika Arora