



From, right, actors Rishi Kapoor and Neetu Singh and filmmaker Habib Faisal, left, at the *Do Dooni Chaar* premiere, which kicked off the 11th Annual New York Indian Film Festival at the Paris theater, May 4

Actress and director Aparna Sen, left, whose *Iti Mrinalini* is the centrepiece of the festival, and actress Madhur Jaffrey at the premiere



PHOTOGRAPHS: PARESH GANDHI

Chintu & Neetu in New York

Never mind the praise Neetu Singh received for her performance as the beleaguered wife and mother in *Do Dooni Chaar*, she is not looking at the success to re-launch her career, she said after the film's American premiere at the 11th edition of the New York Indian Film Festival last week. The film opened the festival (earlier known as the Mahindra IAAC Film Festival), organized by the Indo American Arts Council. Neetu, who appeared in a lead role after a gap of nearly 30 years (barring a cameo in *Love Aaj Kal*), also admitted that if she came across a script like that again, she might accept. She was answering moderator Asem Chhabra, director of the festival, after the screening. Her husband and co-star in the movie Rishi Kapoor and director and story writer Habib Faisal also attended the

discussion. Neetu said when Faisal contacted Rishi about offering her the role, Rishi discouraged him and even suggested a few alternatives. Out of curiosity, she let Faisal narrate the theme and the story — about a middle-class family with unrealistic aspirations. And she fell for it. Rishi, who plays a struggling school teacher pushed to buy a car as a status symbol, said he took up the part because he had not played a middleclass man in a good film. For most part he played the glamorous rich kid. Faisal said many people told him that they found his film 'cute.' But he considers it a tragedy. The director said he knew the risks of making a film that is a departure from the formula films, but had hoped the Rishi-Neetu pairing would make up for it. It did, and how!

— Arthur J Pais



IAAC head Aroon Shivdasani. Though the festival features films starring actors like Aamir Khan (Raakh), Irrfan Khan (Yeh Saali Zindagi), Jaya Bachchan (Meherjaan), Shabana Azmi (A Decent Arrangement) and sisters Raima and Riya Sen (Noukadubi), they were not present at the premiere. The concluding day of the festival, May 8, was expected to draw festival friends like filmmaker Mira Nair and novelist Salman Rushdie



Actors Samrat Chakraborty, left, Ajay Naidu, second from right, and Sarita Choudhury, right, with an unidentified friend