



A road in Motijheel is blocked by cars parked illegally on the roadside.

## People craving for good films

FAIZUL KHAN TANIM

Long and enthusiastic queues for tickets, unusual but artsy design of posters and decorative colourful balloons and festoons has given a festive look to the Public Library -- one of the venues of the 9th International Short and Independent Film Festival.

From the reaction of the crowds, organisers feel that a strong message has been sent out that people are still craving for good films.

Robiul Islam, a fourth year student of economics of Dhaka University (DU) said: "Films are nothing but expressions of life. Therefore, it's really wonderful to see how emotions vary and are highlighted in different languages around the world".

While most come to the festival for recreation, a good number of them were keen on knowing the cultures and film making styles of other countries.

Shamsul Alamin, one enthusiast said he came mainly to see Iranian films, as the storylines are quite similar to that of Bangladesh.

"Under the slogan, 'Free Cinema Free Expression', the organisers plan to screen a total of 165 films from 27 countries of which 34 entries are from Bangladesh," said Filmmaker and vice president of the festival committee, Zahidur Rahim Anjan.

Zahidur said the main idea of organising such festivals is to show contemporary films made worldwide to the Bangladeshi audience, which in turn would encourage local filmmakers to get ideas to develop contemporary short films.

Zahidur added that despite the prevailing unrest in the city, the audience turnout is quite large.

Besides films from other countries, one of the main attractions of the festival is a competitive category titled 'Independent Shorts', for Bangladeshi filmmakers that has been introduced to give them some exposure, was well received by the audiences. The maximum length of each film is five minutes.

An elderly resident Azmat Rahmat-Ullah, going through the list of movies on display said: "The work of Bangladeshi filmmakers are definitely creative but if you compare their work with foreign films, the things that lack are technical support, experience and proper funding. Otherwise, the stories are high on emotion and full of life".

Two such young debutant filmmakers are Musfeq-Ussaleheen, one of the two directors for the film 'Photograph' and Rubaiyat Hossain, whose film is 'Balikar

Gollachut' based on social issues.

Rubaiyat said the festival is indeed a great platform for young directors. Interaction with the other directors from both in and out of the country helps them to gain more knowledge.

Musfeq added: "This type of festival is a great opportunity for us to display our work. Usually it is very expensive to screen the film".

Both Musfeq and Rubaiyat added they need patronisation for the young to develop good films. They said that these short films should be promoted and aired on Television, which will create a base and an audience who will appreciate this new genre of films.

Apart from host Bangladesh, films from 26 other countries -- Germany, The Netherlands, France, England, USA, Russia, India, Iran, Pakistan, Australia, Austria, Canada, Argentina, Mexico, Sri Lanka, Slovakia, Sweden, Estonia, Azerbaijan, Italy, Malaysia, Indonesia, Hungary, Norway, Poland and Lithuania are being shown at the festival.

But the organisers said that the lack of support from the government remained the same since Bangladesh Short Film Forum organised the festival for the first time in 1988. They said like previous years, many filmmakers did not get their visas and could not come.

The festival began on December 22 at Public Library in Shahbagh and is expected to end on December 30.

Other venues for the festival are National Museum's Shishu auditorium, German cultural centre etc.



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## More roads, new rules for legal parking

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

traffic jam on many of these roads," said Islam.

He also said that they would strictly not permit parking except the designated areas after the plan is implemented.

DCC earns around Tk 1.8 million a year from parking toll from seven city roads that they leased out many years ago.

The estate department of DCC leased out the roads surrounding New Market, the space in front of Shishu Park and roads in front of Mohammadpur kitchen market.

The planning cell of DCC leased out roads at Motijheel and Dilkusha, stretching from Shantinagar to Kakrail, roads in Gulistan area, and road between Baitul Mukarram and the GPO.

Officials of the estate department of DCC said that it would be a worthy decision to make the best use of their property.

"This will definitely add a big amount of revenue if the plan can be implemented. Legal parking also ensure security to vehicles," said Abu Taleb, chief estate officer of Haphazard vehicle parking causes

DCC.

The chief town planner said that they are hoping to offer a fixed amount for unlimited parking for 24 hours at designated parking spots in a particular area.

"We have already implemented the plan at Dilkusha and Motijheel area where one can park a vehicle for unlimited period within 24 hours against a ticket of Tk 10," said Sirajul Islam.

This system has been well accepted by vehicle owners especially the self-driven ones.

"I found this system quite good," said one vehicle owner. "I had a lot of work to complete in the Motijheel area, and left my car at a parking spot near the Balaka office for more than half a day," she said.

"As a female driver, it was convenient for me to get about my work without worrying whether or not the car would remain intact when I return and all for just Tk 10," she added.

Although DCC has not leased out any roads for parking in last four years other than the existing seven, on DCC roads.

there are more than 15 spots collecting parking tolls illegally in the name of DCC and other organisations.

Parking tolls are collected at Babu Bazar, in front of Dhamondi-15, Mohammadpur bus stand, Mirpur 10, Kakoli, Banani and in front of all the three intra-city bus terminals and two railway stations.

Many market authorities, too, collect parking fees from the vehicles parked along roads in front of their markets.

A DCC official said that the terminal authorities have the right to collect a parking fee inside the terminal but not from roads outside their area. Collecting parking fees from any other roads that has not been leased out is illegal, he added.

Chiefs of both the planning and estate departments said that they will mark the roads and would not allow any parking except at the designated spots.

Chief estate officer of DCC said that they would take action against the people who are involved in this these illegal parking toll collection on DCC roads.

## DHAKA INTERNATIONAL TRADE FAIR 2005

## Visitors rush but sales unsatisfactory

IMRUL HASAN

Traders grieved that though the number of visitors is increasing day by day to the month long Dhaka International Trade Fair (DITF) 2005, that started December 12, sales have not reached the traders' expectations.

"We are disappointed that sales have not reached our expectations and our products are not moving as fast as we expected them to go," said a staff member of the Rajshahi Silk emporium. Rajshahi Silks has been participating in the fair for the last five years.

The weekend consisting of three holidays drew large crowds, but sales read a 35 percent decline compared to last year.

"We have so far sold goods worth about Tk 8.0 million in the fair, but overall sales have dropped," said another salesman of the stall.

But they expressed optimism that the fair will gain momentum ahead of Eid-Ul-Azha, once workers and employees get their festival bonus.

"Twelve days after the fair began, a large number of visitors was seen last Friday and we sold 80,000 tickets on that

day, but the numbers were less than on a holiday in the previous year," said a leaseholder of the fair gate.

Visitors too were disappointed and said that neither did the local nor international products attract them.

"I am not satisfied with the display and quality of products. The display is not attractive," said Selina Akhtar from Rampura.

On December 25, at least four people including a couple were wounded when a homemade bomb exploded on the Mirpur Road near the DITF venue.

However, Masuda Begum had different feelings.

"In spite of fears of bomb blasts, I have come to visit the fair with my family. I have just checked out some items and their prices. I will buy a few once I get the Eid bonus from my

office," she said.

"Despite strong security measures, the fear of bombing has reduced overall sales and the number of visitors," said a member of Navana Distributors Ltd.

Sources said that although security forces are alert all around the fair but bomb blasts could not be stopped.

When asked, Ashraful Islam, the fair secretariat director, said:

"I think the number of visitors is more than the previous years. We hope the fair will be fully crowded despite the bomb explosion on Sunday."

"We have taken necessary measures to make the international fair a success," he added.

"Strict security measures have been taken to avoid any kind of untoward incidents. Besides the police force, BDR will stand as striking force. The

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) will continue to ensure security of the visitors to the fair," said Mir Shahabuddin Mohammad, chairman, Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) adding that other members of government law enforcing and security agencies in plain clothes will be deployed to ensure full time security in and around the fair area.

Mir Shahabuddin also said more than 40 CCTV cameras have

been set up in and around the fair premises. Dhaka Metropolitan Police has set up a number of archways and metal detectors.

All the visitors are checked with metal detectors at the entrance of the fair. Women police are deployed to check women visitors. A Dog squad is also being used to sweep the fairground," he said.

Besides tight security much attention has been given to the

beautification of the fair grounds to attract visitors. Various pavilions, stalls, restaurants and drinks courts are decorated with a view to attract sales, said EPB sources.

The fair is open between 10:00am and 9:00pm on weekdays and 10:00am and 10:00pm on official holidays. Entry fee has been fixed at Tk 10 for adults and Tk 5 for children below 12.



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