

SAMIA ZAMAN

BANGLADESH IN CANNES

She is a renowned television personality. And no, she is not an actor or model. The audience knows Samia Zaman as the trusty news presenter and talk show host. But her talents don't end there. She is, in fact, the Editor and CEO of Ekattor TV. Her career in journalism spans many years with prestigious organisations, from Ekhushey Television to BBC World Service Radio in London. She also has a lifelong passion for filmmaking, having made "Rani Kuthir Baki Itihash" and "Aakash Koto Dure". She had attended the prestigious Cannes Film Festival not once, but twice, including the one that had taken place this year. After her visit, Star Showbiz spoke with her regarding her experience at the highly acclaimed festival.



The glitz and glamour of the red carpet, an army of photographers, the awards and the intense security is not what the Cannes Festival is about. These are only the tip of the iceberg. Visiting the festival's film market (which translates to Marche du Film in French) is an enthralling and useful experience.

"All the different kinds of stakeholders of the cinema – from technicians to makers to film critics – hailing from all over the world, take part in this market," Samia explains. "The primary objective may be to buy and sell films. But the film market is essentially an elaborate and international platform, which allows people from numerous countries who are somehow related to cinema, meet and share ideas."

The market hosts numerous booths of movie-related organisations from across the globe. Name any type of film-related stakeholder, and you have got them at Marche du Film.

Presentations and screenings are always going on to promote one's films.

And there are country booths as well, which usually do not have any commercial purpose, but rather

focus on promoting the respective countries to the cinematic world by arranging talks, showing their films, etc.

It is high time that Bangladesh starts actively taking part in such film markets. "The film festivals and their film markets are a tremendous platform to promote our movies. During the Cannes Festival, I have been asked numerous times about the status of our movie industry; many people don't know much about it," Samia pointed out. "Commercial or art, we need to at least get the word out in the global arena, which we can easily do by screening them at the film festivals. And this needs to be a continuous effort. Inconsistency or sporadic occurrences is not enough to register in the minds of the international film arena. Moreover, it is not just Cannes: there are many such international film fiestas where we ought to attend."

If you want to visit the market, you of course have to apply beforehand, and a prerequisite is that you need to be involved in films, currently or in recent past.

Samia had also signed up for a particular programme of the film market, called Producers Network. "One of the reasons I attended this programme was to add Bangladesh in the list of countries on the official document."

Many nations have bulks of producers attending this event, and it is not necessary that only the producers whose films are featured in the festival can take part.

Samia thought it would be some sort of a mere networking event. Little did she know that the seven-day programme would be a carefully designed system of rigorous sessions and discussions, with renowned and highly

respected people from all industries working as moderators in various groups focusing on different subject matters. "I met people from all over the world: Argentina, Korea, Canada, the European nations and what not. Through this process, we, as producers, gained a comprehensive understanding about a wide array of trends in the global movie industry," Samia talked about her experience.

The festival, with its market and various programmes like the Producers' Network, also allows meetings with the movie funding agencies.

There are even sessions that discuss issues like the movie industry's effect on climate change. Making a movie also generates carbon footprint. Minimising this is very important. On the other hand, such sessions also brought together people who work on climatic issues, be it international

organisations, volunteer groups, etc.

Need less to say, the Cannes Film Festival, with its many wings and programmes, is a window of opportunity. Apart from benefitting the country, you can also benefit yourself. The film market of Cannes swarms with investors looking for promising projects. An investor can either provide fund individually or collectively with other investors. An investor could also either fund a portion of the project (e.g. pre-production) or the whole of it. And of course, you can sell your rights (of scripts, the whole film, etc.).

Indeed, going to the Cannes requires paying a fee, but that fee is not very high or unaffordable. Given that you are somehow related to this industry, it would be money well spent.

So don't find comfort in a cocoon. GO BEYOND BORDERS AND EXPLORE NEW FRONTIERS.

By RAFI HOSSAIN & M H HAIDER