

Nostalgia is not an 'old person' sentiment anymore. It's real and it's hovering above us every minute of the day. Do you ever find yourself going through letters, post cards and old birthday cards received from friends and family members living all over the world? What about catching a movie or a TV show re-run that you grew up watching? That warm feeling that you get while doing all of the above is probably what we call nostalgia, or a sentimental emotion that still helps us stay connected to our past.

According to an online forum

won by independent India in the Olympics', 'Raazi' is the story of a young girl in her late teens who is sent off to foreign lands as a spy and 'Podmaavat'—the tale of the ancient land where kingdoms fought for almost anything—money, resources and in this case, love and dignity. While the first two are based on actual events, the last story is said to be a blend of reality and sagas carried forward for centuries by the locals. Not only were the viewers fascinated by the glamorous looks, but the picturesque locations, fantastic art direction and the very factual details of

romance drama set in 19th century Europe stole the hearts of many. The story revolves around a community during the ongoing World War II, trying desperately to survive. Surprisingly enough, the sudden formation of a book club saves the day. Eventually, the club

from the west. However, it is a different story for books. Even though the digital world has almost taken over the realm, sales of books and paperbacks are on the rise, especially in South Asia. Young authors writing and publishing is all the rage at the moment, especially if one is

| MUSINGS |

# RUNNING ON NOSTALGIA

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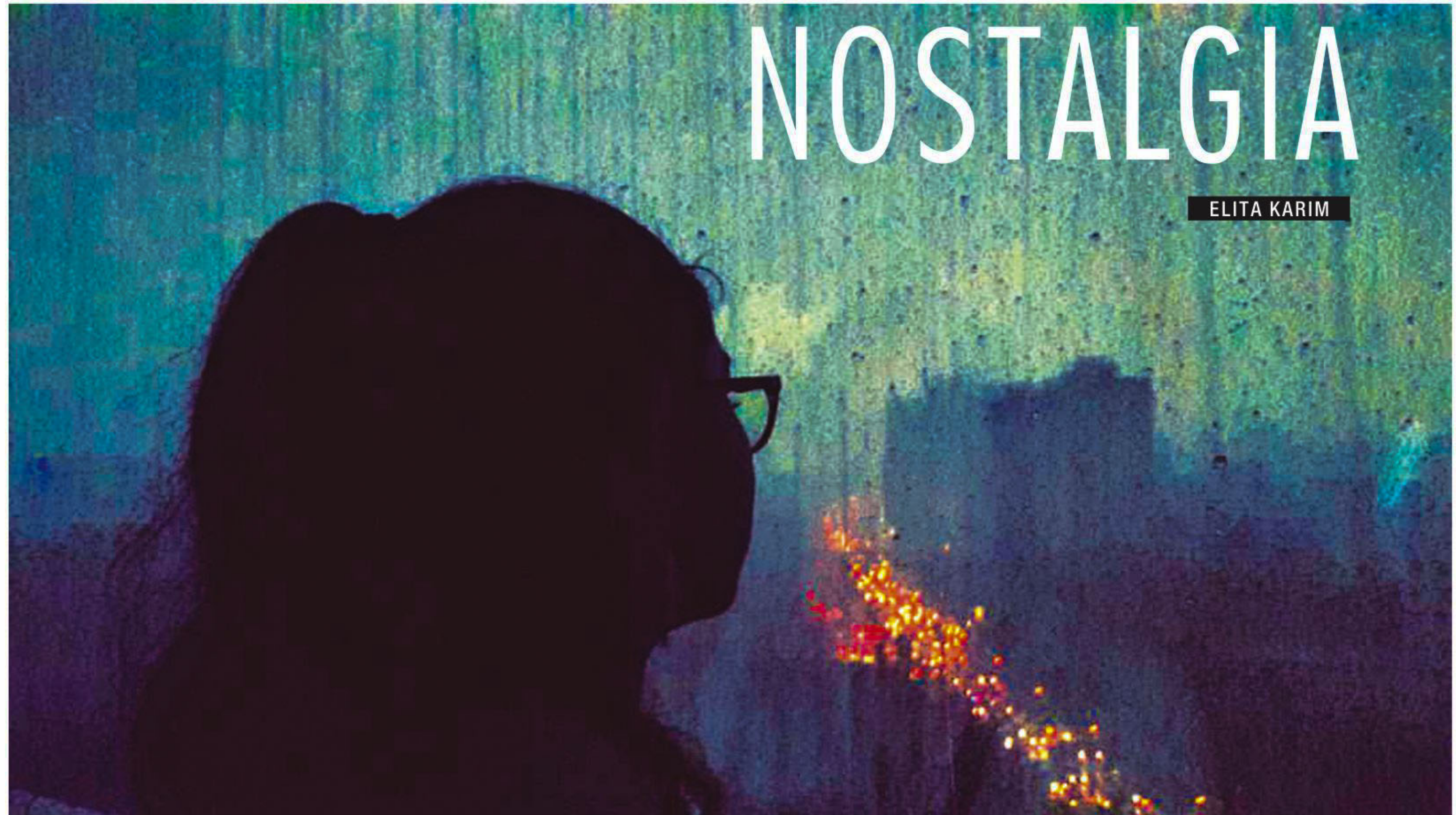


PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

discussion on nostalgia, it's actually a very useful emotion, especially for someone who needs to deal with loneliness and isolation. However, getting stuck in the past is definitely a risk, like in the movie 'Midnight in Paris,' where Gil Pender, played by Owen Wilson, bumps into historical figures and ends up partying with authors, writers and has a small taste of the life he had always wanted. Because after all, the past is always so much more glamorous!

The 90s is back and this is apparent in the colours that we wear today, the people who we still admire and the stories that many of us in our 30s, still remember. Hints of the past are everywhere around us, especially the movies that we choose to watch and many of the books that we read today.

Three of the most talked about Indian movies which were released this year all seem to showcase the nostalgia element. 'Gold' is a story of the first gold medal

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the eras inspired the audience to dig more into the stories of the characters.

In an article titled 'How to Use Nostalgia to Your Advantage (Instead of Getting Stuck)' written by Thorin Klosowski, the Swiss physicians would believe nostalgia to be a disease similar to homesickness. Today we know that it definitely is not a disease but a way to rehash the good old days now and again.

Yet another movie—'The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society'—a

begins to change their lives for good. Available on Netflix in many countries (unfortunately not in Bangladesh yet), the story gives a feeling of warmth and belongingness to viewers. Not only does the movie take the audience on a joy ride of affection and books, it also takes them away from the current reality of the parallel world and gives them a feel of genuineness.

Disappearing newspapers are probably hitting the headlines, especially

writing a memoir or a biography. A look into the Goodreads app, and one will find readers listing classics from different centuries in their 'to read' catalogue. To add to it all, the major cities in Bangladesh today are coming up with bookstores, complete with comfortable cafes and cozy mats so that purchasing books or sitting and simply reading feels good, just like the good old days.

So, is the world running on 'nostalgia' mode at the moment, or is it just me? The hands-on, practical, once campaigning for zero paper space, would definitely disagree. However, it is probably the ones who fuss with notebooks, bookmarks and exotic fountain pens (though rapidly decreasing in number), who would rejoice over this simple sentiment—that keeps them alive, fighting and surviving the tablets and blocks.

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| INTERVIEW |

In terms of ticket sales and admissions, it holds the bragging rights for the biggest annual film festival in the world, but the Berlin International Film Festival—or Berlinale, as it is better known as—is not just about its numbers. One of the major film festivals of Europe—and the world at large—has not really seen too many ripples being made from Bangladesh, but with efforts of documentary project market Dhaka DocLab and International Film Initiatives Bangladesh (IFIB), and a little help from Goethe Institut (GI) Dhaka, at least an avenue was created for exactly that.

Dorothee Wenner—a festival delegate from the programmer forum—and Meenakshi Shedde—festival consultant for India and South Asia at the festival were in Dhaka for the 'Berlinale Spotlight' over the first week of September, where they presented the

both festival programmers nod as if they were waiting for it. Shedde agrees that there is “so little to talk about” Bangladesh's history with the Berlinale, but Wenner offers an interesting counterpoint. “It's also one of the tricks of the trade to find the right festival for your film at the right moment. There is way more on offer than to say 'My goal is to get into competition of Cannes, Berlin, Venice'; there are a lot of things that can happen to a film made in Bangladesh.” She however agrees that there is more happening in Bangladesh than what is visible from the European festival circuit. “We were quite impressed at the number of projects in the making, and let's hope that the presence of Bangladeshi cinema in our festival will increase. This is why we came here,” she says.

But it's not like Berlinale has been an impenetrable wall for Bangladeshi film talent. “When we were researching what

have been at the front and centre at Berlinale, the presence of Bangla films has been there for a long time. Satyajit Ray has had seven of his films at the festivals, winning two Silver Bear and one Golden Bear (for *Ashani Sanket*, 1973)—the highest prize of the festival. “Buddhadev Dasgupta has been in competition, and in sections like Panorama, and Forum—which is a more experimental space,” says Shedde. More recently, 'cult' director from West Bengal 'Q' (Qaushiq Mukherjee)—whose film *Gandu* was at Berlinale, and this year he had *Garbage* at the festival. “Over the

course. Because the filmmakers share these films with us in confidence, and if I say a name you'll know that the film was rejected from the Berlinale,” says Wenner.

“We have more than 40 programmers, and there are others programmers bringing films from Kazakhstan, from Finland and from Peru,” she adds. “Eventually we select about 400 films, and year by year, we are dealing with more and more submissions; that is the flipside of digital filmmaking. And as a filmmaker when you look at this number, you have to think, why am I

## BERLINALE DROPS BY DHAKA

FAHMIM FERDOUS

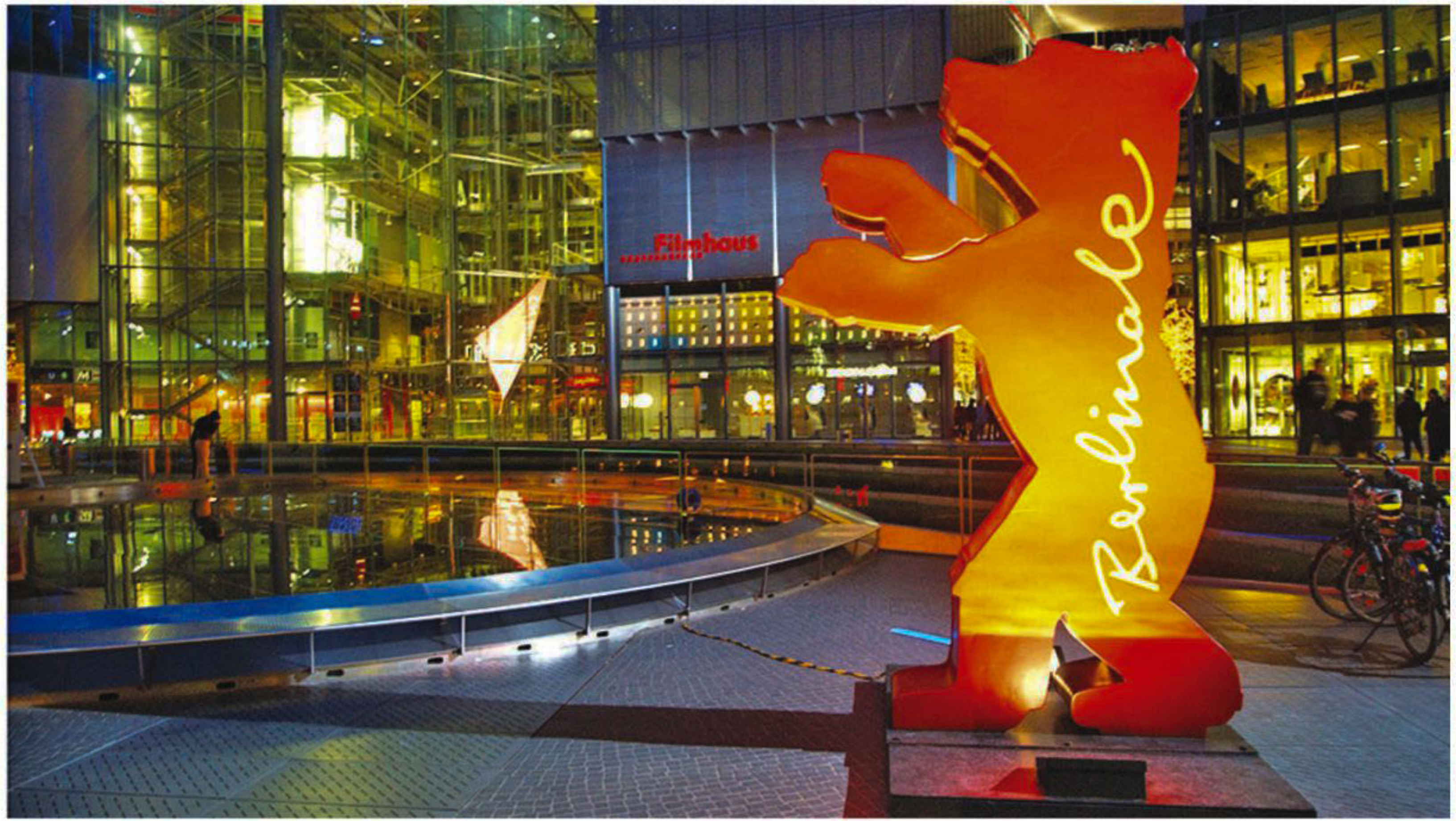
programmes Berlinale has to offer for Bangladeshi filmmakers, producers and film critics, as well as some film screenings.

Along with Dr. Kirsten Hackenbroch, director of the Goethe Institut Bangladesh, the two Berlinale delegates sat down with *The Daily Star* to talk about their impressions of what the Spotlight looks to achieve, the Bangladeshi filmmaking community and more.

“The filmmaking community here is going through not such easy times and with not very easy infrastructure,” Wenner says. “We won't be able to change greatly the situation you have in your country; you are responsible for that. But we have certain offers which partly fit together,” she adds, about why the festival decided to have an event here.

“The Spotlight was designed by all of us so we at least sketch out all the opportunities,” adds Hackenbroch, while admitting that the Goethe Institut has taken cinema as an issue of focus. “We felt like we haven't worked with film very much in last couple of years. We have film screenings, but we have not put together a project for the filmmaking community,” she says, adding that with the support from Berlinale and other partners here, the German cultural centre is looking to invest in it.

The moment I booked the interview, I knew one of my questions would be about why there is so little representation of Bangladeshi cinema at major European festivals, and when I do,



Berlin Film Festival Placeholder Berlinale

PHOTO: COURTESY

Bangladesh's participation has been – we found nine Bangladeshi filmmakers who have been part of Berlinale through various programmes. There's Kamar Ahmad Simon, there's Rubaiyat Hossain, there's Syeda Nigar Banu – there have been nine Bangladeshi participants – something the average person does not know – including two women!” says Shedde. “This is what we want people to know, that there are Bangladeshi filmmakers who have already made it there.”

Although Bangladeshi films may not

decades, but also across all sections—features, documentaries, shorts, experimental—there have been Bangla films, so we also wanted the community here to know that they can be there too,” says Shedde.

Despite the optimism, it's not as simple. I ask if they have had films from Bangladesh in recent times that they liked, even if it didn't make the festival bill, and both of them affirm. “Yes, we have, and we really liked them, and fought for them,” says Shedde.

“But we cannot give you the names, of

adding another film to that? Am I producing for the shelf? That's also an important question. You don't want to become a filmmaker for the sake of being a filmmaker.”

Bangladesh's independent (and even middle) cinema has been making its presence felt in the last few years, particularly across Asian festivals, and Europe seems like the next logical target. With the Berlinale Spotlight, a route map is at least taking shape, and that is a lot to look forward to for the Bangladeshi independent cinema community.