

Showcasing 252 films from 74 nations, 22nd Dhaka International Film Festival begins

January 21, 2024

Online Desk: The 22nd edition of the coveted Dhaka International Film Festival (DIFF), one of the longest-running film events in the world, was inaugurated on Saturday with 252 films from 74 countries – choring the slogan “Better Films, Better Audience, Better Society.”

Finance Minister Abul Hasan Mahmud Ali inaugurated the festival as the chief guest of the opening ceremony, while the subcontinent’s renowned Indian-Bengali actress Sharmila Tagore was present as the special guest at the inaugural ceremony.

Yue Liwen, Cultural Counselor of the Embassy of China in Bangladesh and Md Mokammel Hossain, Secretary of the Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry also spoke at the event.

Presided over by the DIFF chief patron and former State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md Shahriar Alam, the welcome remarks were delivered by festival director Ahmed Muztaba Zamal, founding organiser of this coveted film festival.

Inaugurating the 22nd DIFF, Finance Minister Abul Hasan Mahmud Ali said, “Cinema has no border, and the audiences in Bangladesh are now watching almost every film beyond the boundaries. Through festivals like the DIFF, our audiences have been able to enjoy quality films from the entire world, and foreign audiences are also learning about our films and culture through this festival.”

Expressing gratitude to the organizers and lauding DIFF’s slogan “Better Films, Better Audience, Better Society,” eminent actress and this year’s distinguished guest and jury member Sharmila Tagore said, “Through good films, we understand the world, and a lot of things. I think there is nothing better than films that can communicate to everyone, because images stay with you – and it does not matter whether you speak Bengali, English, Chinese or any other language, because images eventually get through to you. I am really honoured to be here and looking forward to watching the films, and meeting my other co-jurors from tomorrow.”

This year’s festival began with the Iran-Bangladesh joint production film ‘Fereshteh’ starring acclaimed actress Jaya Ahsan and directed by Morteza Atashzamaz, under the Wide Angle Film Poster Exhibition section. The inaugural session on Saturday evening also showcased the Shyam Benegal-directed ‘Mujib: Ekti Jatir Rupokar’ (Mujib: The Making of a Nation).

Moviegoers can watch the films at different venues including the Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Auditorium (main auditorium) and Poet Sufia Kamal Auditorium of Bangladesh National Museum, National Art Gallery Auditorium and National Music and Dance Auditorium of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA), Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Academy Auditorium and Alliance Française de Dhaka (AFD), Dhanmondi in the capital.

The films will be screened under the Asian Competition Section, Retrospective Section, Tribute, Bangladesh Panorama, Wide Angle, Cinema of the World, Children’s Film, Spiritual Films, Short and Independent Film and Women’s Film Session.

The ‘10th International Women Filmmakers Conference’ on the role of women in films will be held on the 3rd floor of the Samson Lounge, Dhaka Club, from January 21-22 as part of the festival. Department of Film & Television, Jagannath University will cooperate in this and UNDP will be a strategic partner.

Eminent Indian actress and the esteemed guest of this year's festival Sharmila Tagore will formally inaugurate the '10th International Women Film Makers Conference,' which will be chaired by DIFF Chairperson Kishwar Kamal on January 21 at 9:30 am. State Minister for Women and Child Affairs Simin Hossain Rimi will be present as the Chief Guest at the conference.

Minister of Social Welfare Dr Dipu Moni will inaugurate the Wide Angle section of the 22nd DIFF on January 22 at the Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Auditorium of Bangladesh National Museum, which will be joined by the Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Yao Wen and Deputy Chair of Shanghai Film Association and distinguished film scholar Dr Shi Chuan as the special guests.

Apart from this, there will be a unique masterclass-day for the second time in the festival's history which will be held throughout the day on January 27 at Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Auditorium of Bangladesh National Museum. The first session of the day will be addressed by eminent film scholar Dr Shi Chuan, Deputy Chair of the Shanghai Film Association of China, while the second session will feature the globally renowned Iranian filmmaker Majid Majidi and the third session will feature Indian filmmaker, actor and singer Anjan Dutt.

The sessions will be moderated by Bangladeshi film critic Bidhan Rebeiro. Registration will be required to join the masterclasses and the registration link will be available on the Facebook page of the festival. However, the registration must be completed before January 27.

Initiated by Rainbow Film Society, DIFF is supported by the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Information, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Cultural Affairs, The Embassy of China in Dhaka and Summit Group, alongside the festival's longstanding partners – Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Dhaka Club Limited, Bangladesh National Museum, Alliance Française de Dhaka, Norwegian International Film Festival Handsund, Religion Today Film Festival, Shanghai International Film Festival, Channel I, Ekattor TV, Sense for Wave, and CloudLive.

Open to all, the 22nd Dhaka International Film Festival will conclude on January 28 this year. Details regarding the festival including the screening schedule are available at <https://www.dhakafilmfestival.org/>.