

Ministry amends film grant rules to ensure integrity

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Online Desk: The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting during a recent committee meeting announced that it is changing policies regarding the selection process of grant-in-aid films to ensure integrity. Under the new process, the final selection of films will be made across multiple stages with cinema experts getting involved throughout the entire process.

The government proposed invitations for ten full-length and ten short-length films from respective personnel and organisations last year. According to the ministry's film section, a total of 253 screenplays have been submitted for the 2023-24 fiscal year till September 30, 2023 (deadline), for 20 full-length and short-length films. Among them, 195 are for full-length films, and the remaining 58 are for short-length films.

In the next phase, the films' scripts will be transferred to the primary selection committee. Actress Afsana Mimi, a member of this committee, said, "We have submitted all 195 films from the selection committee. I have mentioned those that I think are appropriate. Our work at this stage is now complete. However, we will always be available to assist the committee with any cooperation needed. The ministry will decide on the next steps." She mentioned that the committee related to government grants will also work in the selection process.

In previous years, a brief list of 204 films would be made after completing the primary selection. Another committee would then discuss the preferences of the 204 films on that list with relevant individuals. The final decision would be made accordingly. This process will see changes now.

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Deputy Secretary Md Saiful Islam (Film-1) said, "We have received the films from the selection committee. The process of shortlisting according to the new rules is underway. The shortlist will then be sent to the grant-approval committee. Our minister has introduced some new procedures this year. The final selection process will take place after that."

He mentioned that they will select a total of 50 full-length films and 30 short-length screenplays in their primary selection before the grant approval committee. However, the numbers might vary.

On March 4, a meeting was held in the ministry's conference room to exchange views with members of the selection committee, for the full-length film grant for screenplay and full-length film grant, formed to provide government subsidies for the 2023-24 fiscal year. At the meeting, Information and Broadcasting Minister Mohammad Ali Arafat stated that more transparency and professionalism would be ensured when providing government grants to film production.

Minister Mohammad Ali Arafat further stated that grant aspirant applicants will present their ideas, thoughts, vision, plan, and budget regarding the films to the selection committee members. Based on these presentations, the committee members will recommend creating a more concise list for further review by the ministry. Members of the full-length film subsidy committee will attend the meeting as observers.

An official source from the Ministry also mentioned that the new policy has been taken to discuss the transparency of subsidies that have taken place at various times. "It can be seen that even those not professionally involved in cinema become the grant applicants. There is no barrier to the rules; anyone can apply as a producer or director," the personnel said.

"Applicants will have to face interviews where their previous experience and intentions to make films will be discussed." Wishing to remain anonymous, the respective official said, "Through this new process, those aspiring to receive subsidies from the government and have a proper plan to execute their respective films will be identified. Many aspects will be discussed and they will be marked accordingly. This way, the subsidy committee will proceed towards the final process."

Director Amitabh Reza Chowdhury welcomed this new process. He has been working with relevant individuals on government grant-related procedures for a long time. He said, “In this new process, applicants will have to pitch in front of everyone. Members of the subsidy committee, officials from the ministry, and even journalists will be present. Everyone will know why a producer or director wants to make a film – how they will work and what their goals are with the films. The best projects will be selected through this process. Congratulations to the authorities for taking this step. Once this is ensured, there will be no more questions about certain films receiving subsidies over others.”