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## Prize money will attract young talent to Mumbai fest: Shabana

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[New Delhi](#), Oct 26 (IANS) From struggling to get Rs.10 lakh to giving away a [cash prize](#) of \$150,000, the [Mumbai Film Festival](#) (MFF) has come very far in the last 11 years, says Shaban Azmi, who is associated with the fest since its inception. She gives credit to Reliance Big Entertainment for its present size and stature.

[The festival](#) is starting Oct 29 this year.

“The festival has certainly covered a great distance. Just a few years ago we were running with jholas (bags) to Maharashtra government for just Rs.10 lakh. Today, we are giving away a cash prize of \$150,000 to the best debutant director,” Shabana, who is one of the trustees of Mumbai Academy of Moving Image (MAMI), told IANS on phone from Mumbai.

**Ads by Google** “When I told Shekhar Kapur about the prize money, he actually fell off the chair in shock. He said it is huge money for a debutant director. It also shows that our focus is on finding young talents,” added the veteran actress.

MFF is an initiative by Reliance Big Entertainment and is being organised by MAMI. It carries some of the biggest cash awards such as the Golden Gateway of India trophy for the Best Film, the Silver Gateway of India trophy and \$50,000 for the Jury Grand Prize. This year MAMI is introducing the Audience Choice Award - Silver Gateway of India trophy and cash prize of \$20,000.

“Reliance Big’s contribution is a huge shot in the arm. The budget is big and now our job is to put the festival on the world map. The prize money will attract youngsters,” said Shabana.

However she also feels that “money is important for the festival but composition of the films is more important”.

Academy Award winning director Steven Soderbergh’s “The Informant”, a dark political comedy based on true events, will

open the fest. Angelopoulos's "The Dust of Time" that covers the eve of Stalin's death, Nixon's resignation in the US and the fall of the Greek junta, will close it Nov 5.

This year 200 films from 56 countries will be screened. Greek filmmaker Theo Angelopoulos will be bestowed the international lifetime achievement award at the film festival.

"We are happy that we have got people like Paul Schrader and Theo Angelopoulos. We sent them the invite and they have accepted our invitation - it's a big thing. India is one of the largest filmmaking industries and the world has started taking notice of us," Shabana said.

"What we were lacking earlier was market section and this year we have got that too," said the actress who feels that the industry can make the fest a success with their active participation.

"The success of this film festival depends upon how much ownership film industry takes up. The industry people should not treat themselves as guests. Mumbai is the hub of films and we always wanted a film festival of the industry. Now we have it and it's really incumbent on us to make it a success."

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