



### **Centre to make cinema a crucial publicity tool to spread its word**

The Centre seems to have woken up to the importance of cinema as a crucial publicity tool for its initiatives, the key ones being Swachh Bharat Mission, digital payments' promotion and Make in India, among others.

The information and broadcasting ministry has decided to put to use the repository of films available with Films Division (FD) --under the ministry-- by pushing digital cinema theatre to start screening them, aside regular films, to spread the government word.

Films available with the FD include films on government schemes, important speeches of India's Prime Ministers in India and abroad and also documentaries on national, cultural personalities and other nationally-relevant subjects.

In 2017 till date, the FD has got eight films listed, of which four are on government initiatives --three on digital payments and one of Swachh Bharat Mission.

As per FD's website, the Films Division of India holds more than 8,000 titles including Indian News Reviews, documentaries, short films and animation films in its archives.

The move is significant, with the FD having lost its past sheen over the years, with the government relying heavily on other media such as print, TV, radio and now social media for publicising its schemes and initiatives.

In fact, the I&B ministry was on the verge of truncating FD by letting go of as 450 posts. It has already been downsized to 515 posts and against 813 posts.

The ministry was also considering merging FD with the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC), making them a single film-medium body for the central government.

A senior official from the ministry said, as part of the existing rules, it is mandatory for cinema theatre to run movies with public service messages.

The official said earlier used to be an important tool for dissemination of information on government schemes, especially in areas where people didn't have access to other media.

"However, cinemas stopped screening such films completely for several years after that and there was no enforcement from the government too. This government is trying to revive it now through digital cinema distributors," the official said, adding that FD makes some wonderful documentaries which should be screened for the larger audience.

Digital cinema distributors, who will now have to ensure that the FD films are changed to the compatible form for digital theatre are not happy about the change.

**Rajesh Mishra, CEO (Indian Operations) at UFO Moviez India Limited**, told DNA that his organisation has been changing the format of FD films regularly, enabling digital theatre to screen them.

However, representative of another prominent cinema distributor said they are incurring a cost to change the format of FD films publicising government's initiatives and hence the government should pay them the cost.

"Moreover, we aren't even sure if the theatre are screening it and even if they are, but is there any way to check if people actually watching them?" one of them asked, refusing to be quoted officially.

## Centre will use cinema to promote its initiatives

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