

HILL NEWS

by Francesca
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EXHIB ORGS DECLARE ONE-DAY STRIKE IN INDIA

India's two largest exhibition trade associations recently organized a one-day strike in protest against the government's entertainment-related taxes, which they claim hurt the territory's single-screen movie venues. The Theatre Owners Association and Cinematograph Exhibitors Association of India originally had called for independent theatres throughout Maharashtra to closed down in mid-May in response to the state minister's "indifference" to demands for lower local entertainment taxes and adjustments to existing service charges, electricity tariffs and exit policies. The trade groups, however, postponed the strike for three months based on assurances from the government that their grievances would be seriously considered. Exasperated by what they perceive as the state's lack of progress, the associations called on single-screen operators to shutter their theatres for one day in mid-October. Local observers, however, have been skeptical of the overall impact of the 24-hour closure, considering that the region's multiplexes had remained open during the one-day period.

RESEARCH PINPOINTS FILM PIRACY ON INSIDERS

Based on data compiled by software created by AT&T Laboratories and the University of Pennsylvania, researchers have ascertained that many of the pirated films available online originate from film industry insiders. The results, if ultimately correct, would contradict the claim made by many Hollywood executives that bootlegged films largely originate from cam-corder recordings made inside cinema auditoriums. The software tracked the highest-grossing box-office releases between January 2002 and June 2003 that were available on web-based file-sharing networks. Statistics indicate that 77 percent of the uploaded films were made either during the production or distribution process, far before their theatrical release.

OZ CITY COUNCIL REJECTS EXHIBITOR'S CINEMA SITE BID

Australian exhibitor Metro Cinemas has demanded to know why the city council of the Oz town of Launceston denied the circuit's bid to develop a new theatre. According to local reporters, the circuit's offer of AUS\$720,000 (US\$475,000) far exceeds what was ultimately the winning bid from a competing outfit. Sydney-based Metro also notes that in addition to the financial sum, the company offered to provide thousands of free movie tickets to Launceston youngsters. A representative from the city council, however, has stated that there was no value placed on the tickets and that only Metro's initial bid of AUS\$448,000 (US\$296,000) was taken under consideration by the board.

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