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Film festival at India Habitat Centre

Esha Mahajan, TNN Sep 1, 2012, 07.08PM IST

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NEW DELHI: Almost three decades ago Ram Chandra Biswas made a profession of cycling across the world. In that time, he has logged 6,27,200 km - almost a return trip from the moon - and 157 countries, getting by with odd jobs like photography, painting, and magic tricks. His story was told on screen at an ongoing documentary festival, Jeevika, at the Indian Habitat Centre.

Jeevika, organized by Centre for Civil Society (CCS) and in its ninth year, is part of a larger campaign to help develop public policy to clear the path for livelihood freedom. "We want to create a system for how the poor earn their livelihood, because many times bureaucracy gets in the way," says Amit Chandra, national coordinator of the Jeevika campaign, giving the example of NDMC asking for 15 years residential [proof](#) for registration of cycle rickshaw drivers.

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The festival, which will continue over the weekend, will screen films on issues related to livelihood freedom - plight of street performers, a fashion competition at a [Philippines](#) prison, Mumbai's night rat killers, and seaweed collectors, among others. From the 70 documentary submissions they received from Asian filmmakers this year, a screening committee selected 18 - 13 professional, five student-made. On the final day, they will award the best of the lot. "Films are a good way to bring important issues to the fore, and engage with the people. But sensitization doesn't stop here, and we will screen the films at colleges and NGOs," says Chandra.

Apart from the film on Biswas, directed by Ashjit Ganguli, the first day of the festival included documentaries on the power dynamics in [Cambodia](#), judicial system in India, children of sex workers in Kolkata, and lives of Maibi [women](#) priestesses on Meitei religion, and a panel discussion on law, liberty, and livelihood. "Profession and livelihood have different meaning for different people. A profession goes beyond just monetary remuneration, and though Biswas doesn't earn any money, he manages his life," says Ganguli, asserting the need to recognize and manage different means of livelihood.

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