

# THE PADMAN HITS MALAWI

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India's trending film, *The Padman* continues to go places with the latest screening taking place at Golden Peacock Hotel in Lilongwe.

Already, the film has premiered and enthralled audiences in Russia, Ivory Coast, Iraq, United States, Canada and Japan, among others.

The film is modelled on a grassroots innovator Arunachalam Muruganantham and played by Akshay Kumar, who is propelled by the unconditional love he gets from the wife yet she lacks something important to her life; a decent life when it is that time of the month.

"You make such wonderful Malpuas [popular Indian pancake] for me, why can't I make sanitary pads for you?" The question is necessitated by the serious health hazards that the newlywed village woman exposes herself to by using a filthy rag when she is having her monthly periods.

The concerned husband buys a pack of sanitary pads. Unfortunately, it costs an arm and a leg and the wife is aghast.

"We'll now have to forgo milk," she contends in total dismay while wondering why her mechanic-husband should fret over a 'woman's problem'.

On the other hand, the husband



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The Padman main actor Akshay Kumar ( L ) with a co-actor Radhika Apte

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too, cannot fathom why sanitary pads are so expensive. "Why should the price of something so light be so heavy," he asks the medicine store salesperson, who is visibly oblivious.

That, however, is the motivation for the husband to devise a way of producing cheaper sanitary wear to protect the wife from harm while at the same time, saving the family budget from going wild.

While at it, he faces a number of challenges that culminate in his banishment from the village with many people calling him a mad man.

After getting everything right, the mechanic gets his long fought success with his low-cost sanitary napkins; he heads to the United Nations to deliver a talk.

The film has been screened in many countries to encourage governments to consider adopting a policy for free sanitary napkins for all women.

It is in that respect that the United Nations Population

## Using art to spread crucial messages across



Part of the audience that attended the screening

Fund (UNFPA) in Malawi, in conjunction with the Indian High Commission, organised the screening last Friday so that authorities can appreciate the need for safe sanitary wear.

"There is a need for sanitary pads zero tax and on all female hygiene products. Some countries in Africa that have pledged the zero tax are Botswana Uganda and

Kenya," said UNFPA country representative, Young Hong.

In an interview after the showing, Hong said it was screened to inspire Malawian men.

"The Padman movie has become famous globally and India has been one of the countries with many challenges against women's rights. It is quite inspiring to see a man, without education and money making a revolution by changing the culture of the country. If an Indian man can do it, Malawi man can also do it.

"We long to disseminate the film further with the cooperation of the Indian government. The first consideration is university students and we can go further," she explained.

Indian high commissioner Suresh Kumar Menon says there is need for funding to take the film to as many Malawians as possible.

"We have no issues with taking the film to rural areas unfortunately, we do not have funds for that. We have approached some people who are keen on doing it in Chichewa," he explained. ■

PHOTOGRAPH: NATION