

# Cow-dung patties selling like hot cakes online in India

By **Nirmala George**  
The Associated Press

**N**EW DELHI — Like consumers around the globe, Indians are flocking to the online marketplace in droves these days. But there's one unusual item flying off the virtual shelves: Online retailers say cow-dung patties are selling like hot cakes.

The patties — cow poop mixed with hay and dried in the sun, made mainly by women in rural areas and used to fuel fires — have long been available in India's villages. But online retailers including Amazon and eBay are now reaching out to the country's ever-increasing urban population, feeding into the desire of older city folks to harken back to their childhood in the village.

Some retailers say they're offering discounts for large orders. Some customers are asking for gift wrapping.

"Cow-dung cakes have been listed by multiple sellers on our platform since October and we have received several customer orders" since then, said Madhavi Kochar, an Amazon India spokeswoman.

The orders come mostly from cities where it would be difficult to buy dung cakes, she said.

In India, where Hindus have long worshipped cows as sacred, cow-dung cakes have been used for centuries for fires, whether for heating, cooking, or Hindu rituals. Across rural India, piles of drying cow dung are ubiquitous.

Radhika Agarwal of ShopClues, a major online retailer in India, said



**PEAT PATTIES.** An Indian woman prepares to dry balls of cow dung, which are used as fuel for heating, cooking, and Hindu rituals, in Gauhati, India. Like consumers around the globe, Indians are flocking to the online marketplace in droves these days. But there's one unusual item flying off the virtual shelves: Online retailers say cow-dung patties are selling like hot cakes. (AP Photo/Anupam Nath)

demand for the cow-dung cakes spiked during the recent Diwali festival season, a time when Hindus conduct prayer ceremonies at homes, factories, and offices. On a recent day, ShopClues' website showed that the patties had sold out.

"Around Diwali, when people do a lot of pujas in their homes and workplaces, there is a lot of demand for cow-dung cakes," said Agarwal, referring to rituals performed during the popular festival.

"Increasingly, in the cold weather, people are keeping themselves warm by lighting fires" at outdoor events, she said, adding that people who grew up in rural areas find the peaty smell

of dung fires pleasant.

"It reminds them of the old days," she said.

Online retailers said people also bought the dung cakes to light fires for ritual ceremonies to mark the beginning of the new year and for the winter festival known as *Lohri*, celebrated in northern India.

The cakes are sold in packages that contain two to eight pieces weighing seven ounces each. Prices range from 100 to 400 rupees (\$1.50 to \$6.00) per package.

Dung cakes are also used as organic manure and some sellers are marketing them for use in kitchen gardens.

## Japan festival offers nearly \$1 million to make a short film

By **Yuri Kageyama**  
AP Business Writer

**Y**OKOHAMA, Japan — A Japanese festival focused on the art of the short film is offering a new award of nearly a million dollars to a director from anywhere in the world with a great pitch for a movie.

Organizers say short video is where audiences are going, as entertainment is increasingly consumed on smartphones and tablets. They also believe the format holds potential for novice filmmakers, bringing fresh insight and energy to the industry.

The deadline for submitting a 500-word pitch on what's billed as a "thrilling, exciting, moving" storyline is February 29. The pitch must be written in either Japanese or English.

Five finalists will be chosen first. Each receives a 500,000 yen (\$4,000) cash prize. Then one among the five will be picked, and receive 100 million yen (\$800,000) in funding to make his or her movie. That winner will receive an additional 1 million yen (\$8,000) award.

Rieko Muramoto, executive director for digital business at the Japanese entertainment company Avex Digital, which is providing the contest funds, believes it's a worthy investment for finding fresh content for online services, pioneering a genre, and nurturing talent. She stresses she isn't out to make a quick buck.

"The short film holds a lot of potential for busy people who are watching video on smartphones, which means a complete story must be told much more quickly," Muramoto said.

Scoring success can get tougher than for regular movies and television shows. Switching to another piece is a mere click away — far easier than walking out of a theater where you paid for a ticket, she added.

"Survival is tougher," she said. "You have to move an audience in 15 minutes."

The winning work will be shown at the 2017 Short Shorts Film Festival & Asia, an annual event devoted to short films in Tokyo and nearby Yokohama, which is running the contest.

"Movies aren't about length," said Tetsuya Bessho, an actor who founded the festival in 1999, likening the best short films to the minimalist but fine-tuned concentration of haiku poetry.

"There are Hollywood flops with everything thrown in



**CATERING TO CONSUMERS.** Tetsuya Bessho, a Japanese actor who started a film festival because of his love for short films, speaks during an interview at the Brillia Short Shorts Theater in Yokohama, near Tokyo. A Japanese festival focused on the art of the short film is offering a new award of nearly a million dollars (100 million yen) to a director from anywhere in the world with a great pitch for a movie. Organizers say short video is where audiences are going, as entertainment is increasingly consumed on smartphones and tablets. They also believe the format holds potential for novice filmmakers, bringing fresh insight and energy into the industry. (AP Photo/Shuji Kajiyama)

for marketing. You can't decide if it's a comedy, a love story, or an action film. People are getting bored with that kind of movie," said Bessho, whose films include *Godzilla vs. Mothra* and *Solar Crisis*, with Charlton Heston.

His festival has showcased the best in short films, such as *Toyland*, which won an Oscar, and the light-hearted comedy *I Hate Musicals*.

It also honors less conventional work from a new breed of creators, including Indonesian auteur Yosep Anggi Noen, who was also featured at the Rotterdam and Busan international film festivals.

His *A Lady Caddy Who Never Saw a Hole in One*, which depicts how farmland in Indonesia is being destroyed by golf courses, won the Grand Prix at Short Shorts last year. It took just a day and a half to shoot, and involved a team of just six people.

"It can be more free, more independent," Anggi said of the short film format. "Nobody tells me how to make that film."

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		7	9	2	4	3		
	3	5				7	4	
8	5		4		9		7	3
1								8
4	7		8		3		9	6
	8	1				9	3	
		9	2	3	8	5		

Difficulty level: Easy #79243

Instructions: Fill in the grid so that the digits 1 through 9 appear one time each in every row, column, and 3x3 box.

### Solution to last week's puzzle

Puzzle #41268 (Hard)

All solutions available at <www.sudoku.com>.

3	5	8	9	4	1	7	2	6
4	6	9	8	2	7	1	3	5
7	2	1	3	5	6	9	4	8
6	8	7	1	9	3	4	5	2
2	1	3	5	8	4	6	9	7
5	9	4	6	7	2	3	8	1
1	7	2	4	3	8	5	6	9
8	3	5	7	6	9	2	1	4
9	4	6	2	1	5	8	7	3