

From Ladakh to the World: Renowned Filmmakers Showcase Power of Inclusive Cinema at MIFF 2026

Cinema Must Be a Voice for Every Child, Say Shweta Parakh and Jitendra Mishra

Mumbai, 17 June 2026

The transformative power of cinema to foster understanding, celebrate diversity and amplify unheard voices came into focus at a press conference organised by the Press Information Bureau (PIB) on the sidelines of the 19th Mumbai International Film Festival (MIFF) 2026 today.

Filmmakers, educators and producers associated with the documentary *Naayab – Through the Teacher's Lens* and the short fiction film *Sona aur Sonam Ke Sapane (Little Big Dreams)* emphasised the need for cinema to serve as an empowering medium for every child.



The session brought together filmmaker Shweta Parakh, educationist and project mentor Swati Popat Vats, renowned filmmaker and project mentor Pathik Vats, and National Award-winning producer Jitendra Mishra. The panellists shared insights into the making of the films and reflected on the role of

storytelling in nurturing inclusion, creativity and confidence among children.

Speaking about the importance of grassroots storytelling, Shweta Parakh, director of *Naayab – Through the Teacher's Lens*, stressed the need for children to see their own realities reflected on screen. She observed that stories rooted in local cultures help children connect with their identities, traditions and communities. Such stories also create meaningful spaces for self-expression and dialogue.



Highlighting the importance of inclusivity, Swati Popat Vats said society must move beyond labels and recognise the shared aspirations, emotions and potential of all children. Reflecting on the protagonist of *Sona aur Sonam Ke Sapane (Little Big Dreams)*, she remarked that the young girl was not merely pursuing education or independence, but was “chasing life”. The phrase, she said, captured the film’s deeply human and aspirational message.

Pathik Vats, filmmaker and Filmfare Award winner, emphasised cinema’s role as a powerful educational tool. He noted that films do far more than entertain. Describing cinema as a form of practical learning, he said it can inspire empathy, broaden perspectives and shape social attitudes.

Sharing the journey of *Sona aur Sonam Ke Sapane (Little Big Dreams)*, National Award-winning producer Jitendra Mishra highlighted the growing global appeal of local stories. He noted that children themselves actively participated in the filmmaking journey. They contributed not only as performers but also as storytellers and creators.



Mishra further observed that narratives rooted in local cultures have the power to resonate with audiences across the world. He noted that the film has already attracted invitations from prominent international film festivals following its showcase at the Cannes Film Festival. The film is scheduled to be screened at several international platforms in the coming months.

The discussion underscored a shared philosophy reflected in both films: shifting the focus from limitations to possibilities. The panellists stressed that children with special needs should be recognised for their abilities, talents and contributions to families, classrooms and communities. They should not be defined by labels or perceived constraints.



The press conference concluded with the panellists affirming that children's cinema must transcend conventional entertainment and become a catalyst for inclusion, understanding and social change.

Great films resonate through passionate voices. Share your love for cinema with #MIFF2026. Tag us @pibmumbai on X, and we'll help spread your passion! For journalists, bloggers, and vloggers wanting to connect with filmmakers for interviews/interactions, reach out to us at miff.mediadesk@pib.gov.in with the subject line: Take One with PIB.

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