Himalayan Horizons Light Up IFFI 2026: Ladakhi and Kashmiri Stories Take Centre Stage

> From a young skater's dream on Ladakh's frozen ice to the children of Gulmarg and the last master woodcarvers of Srinagar, four films bring the spirit of the Himalayas to Goa

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The mountains, monasteries, snowbound villages and living crafts of the Himalayan region will find a vivid voice at the 57th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in Goa. Four films in Ladakhi and Kashmiri, including two feature films and two non-feature films, will bring the region's landscapes, traditions and everyday human stories to festival audiences. Becoming, the Ladakhi short that serves as the Opening Film of the Indian Panorama Non-Feature section, sets the tone for the selection.

Ladakhi Films:

Becoming, written and directed by Leena Yadav, is an 11-minute Ladakhi film that opens the Indian Panorama Non-Feature Films section. Set in Ladakh, it follows Rinchen, a young mother, and her son Agyal, who shows an unusual connection with nature from infancy. At the age of seven, Agyal experiences strange visions, feels drawn to the ancient Likir Monastery and recalls memories that seem to belong to another life. At the monastery, he identifies a box kept in a locked room, and the objects inside lead the monks to believe that he is the reincarnation of a respected Rimpoche. As Agyal begins his spiritual journey, the film explores rebirth, destiny and the links between past, present and future. The cast includes Rinchen Angmo and Tsering Wanggail. Leena Yadav is the award-winning writer, director and producer of Parched, Rajma Chawal and House of Secrets, as well as the Oscar-nominated Tell It Like a Woman.



Still from Becoming

Birds on Ice, directed by Sahil Shah, is an 85-minute Ladakhi feature film selected for the Indian Panorama Feature Films section and the Best Debut Feature Film of a Director category. Tashi, a young girl from Ladakh, lives with her grandfather while waiting for her shepherd parents to return. When she gets a pair of borrowed ice-hockey skates, a new dream takes shape. As she faces the challenges of growing up in the harsh Himalayan winter, she discovers difficult truths about family, grief and survival. Determined not to give up, Tashi and her best friend find their own way to pursue her dream. The film stars Semzang Skitdon as Tashi, alongside N. Chopal, Kunga Choskyab, Padma Chorol and Sonam Stobgais. Written by Shaan Pasricha and produced by Cameo Films, it marks the feature debut of Sahil Shah, whose first film is shaped by the ice-hockey community.



Still from Birds on Ice

Kashmiri Films:

Sledge, directed by Raja Shabir Mohammad Khan, is a 75-minute Kashmiri feature film that will have its Asia Premiere at IFFI 2026. It is featured in the Indian Panorama section and competes for Best Debut Director of an Indian Feature Film. In a snow-covered village near Gulmarg, Ali's wooden sledge is his family's only source of income. When he leaves home for a few days, his three children, Haziq, Eashel and Raima, are left with a freedom they don't fully understand. In a moment of play, they accidentally break the sledge. Desperate to repair it before their father returns, the children venture into the tourist world of Gulmarg, trying to earn money while enduring rejection and quiet humiliations. When they find a lost bag filled with money and chocolates, the solution seems within reach, but the temptation to use it collides with the growing weight of their conscience. Raja Khan is a Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute alumnus whose documentary Shepherds of Paradise won the National Award. The film is produced by Ryhana Productions and stars Haziq Mohammad Khan, Eashel Khan and Raima Khan.



Still from Sledge

Naqsh-e-Daur, a 12-minute Kashmiri documentary in the Indian Panorama Non-Feature Films section, is directed by Baba Tassaduq Hussain, who also serves as cinematographer. In the old streets of Srinagar, Ghulam Nabi Dar continues the traditional Kashmiri craft of walnut woodcarving, a skill he has practised for over six decades. Honoured with the Padma Shri, he creates detailed designs that reflect the region's history and culture. The film follows his life and work, showing his dedication to keeping the art alive in a changing world. As fewer people take up the craft, he remains committed to practising it and passing his knowledge on to the next generation, ensuring that Kashmir's woodcarving tradition continues. The film is produced by BBP Studio Virtual Bharat Pvt Ltd, with the story by Bharatbala.



Still from Naqsh-e-Daur

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