One World, Countless Stories, Infinite Emotions: Goa Rolls Out Red Carpet for IFFI 57

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Somewhere between the first flash of light and the first frame on screen, the world finds a reason to come together. And today, Goa became that world. Against the shimmering backdrop of the Arabian Sea, Goa once again transformed into a global stage where filmmakers, celebrated screen icons and cinephiles converge, cultures collide and imaginations take flight.



With a spectacular inaugural ceremony at Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Stadium, Goa, the 57th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) opened its doors to a universe of stories, bringing together 86 nations and over 150 films in a celebration of the limitless magic of the moving image. Inspired by

the theme ‘Stories Without Borders’, this edition celebrates cinema's extraordinary power to transcend geography, dissolve cultural divides and turn different voices into one shared experience.



Addressing the gathering, Goa Chief Minister Dr. Pramod Sawant said that IFFI, now an integral part of Goa's cultural calendar for over 22 years, celebrates cinema's power to transcend boundaries and bring cultures together. Linking the festival's theme to India's timeless philosophy of ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’—the world is one family, he said, “Cinema allows us to experience different cultures and find the common ground that unites us.”

Describing the inclusion of Ramayana in the BRICS Cinema section as a proud moment for India, he highlighted IFFI's role in showcasing the richness of Indian cinema, particularly Marathi, Konkani and Goan films. He expressed hope that this recognition would inspire more young Goans to pursue filmmaking and take their stories to national and international audiences.



Outlining Goa's vision of becoming a comprehensive filmmaking hub, Dr. Sawant said, “We want Goa to be the destination where films are produced and completed.” He highlighted the Goa Film Shooting Act, 2021, the online single-window clearance system and financial assistance schemes for filmmakers as key initiatives to strengthen the state's film ecosystem. He also announced the vision of a film city equipped with pre-production, post-production, VFX and film education facilities.

Emphasising the opportunities emerging from technological advancements in animation, artificial intelligence and virtual production, he said Goa aims to equip its young creative talent to be part of the evolving global film industry.



Speaking on the theme ‘Stories Without Borders’, noted actor and Member of Parliament Ravi Kishan said that the theme resonated deeply with him, given his experience of working in nearly 700 films across different Indian languages and regions. He observed that audiences, irrespective of language or geography, connect with the same essential elements of cinema—truth, emotion and a compelling story.



“A story born in one corner of the world can find a home thousands of miles away. That is the magic of cinema,” he said, highlighting its power to transcend boundaries and create shared human experiences. He also acknowledged the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in strengthening India's vibrant film industry, noting that India is the world's largest film-producing nation.

Addressing the gathering, Shri Chanchal Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, highlighted cinema's power to transcend borders and unite diverse cultures and perspectives. Describing IFFI as more than a celebration of films, he said, “It is a meeting place of cultures, ideas, memories and human experiences.”



Quoting the Rig Vedic thought, *“Let noble thoughts come to us from all directions,”* he emphasised that openness to the world enriches India's identity. Calling cinema one of India's most powerful expressions of soft power, he noted that this spirit of cultural exchange is reflected in IFFI 2026 through special showcases from Russia and Spain and 21 films from BRICS nations.

Reflecting on this year's theme, ‘Stories Without Borders’, he said, “A story from one part of the world can enter another through emotion, imagination and human experience.” He also highlighted IFFI's commitment to fresh voices and inclusive storytelling, with 52 women filmmakers and 62 debut filmmakers featuring in this year's festival.

Setting the context for this year’s festival, IFFI Festival Director, Shri Ashutosh Gowariker reflected on the unifying power of cinema in a paradoxical era where hyper-connectivity often leads to cultural isolation. Articulating the philosophy behind this year’s festival theme, ‘Stories Without Borders’, he reminded the audience that division is often self-imposed. "Borders are not merely lines drawn on maps. They are also our habits we build around ourselves”, he flagged.



Highlighting how cinema dissolves these barriers, Gowariker observed that when viewers empathize with characters in an unfamiliar language, the distance between people immediately shrinks. "A story is one of the few things that can cross these borders without a passport," he remarked. To bring this vision to life, this edition of IFFI showcases an expansive slate of nine World Premieres, two International Premieres, 24 Asian Premieres, and 116 Indian Premieres, serving as an open invitation to transcend boundaries between nations, cinematic eras, emerging voices, and the vibrant host city itself.



The opening ceremony was graced by Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) Shri Sadanand Mhalu Shet Tanavade; Member of Legislative Assembly from Siolim and Vice Chairperson of the Entertainment Society of Goa Smt. Delilah Lobo; Chief Secretary of Goa Dr. V. Candavelou; Chairman, National Film Development Corporation of India Shri G. Krishnakumar; Chairman, Prasar Bharati Shri Prasoon Joshi; Managing Director, National Film Development Corporation Shri Dhiraj Singh; and Chief Executive Officer, Entertainment Society of Goa Shri Dipak Bandekar.



Film personalities including Kartik Aaryan and Sai Pallavi added star power to the opening ceremony.

International Competition Jury Chairman Mr Aanand L. Rai along with jury members Mr. Bogdan Mureșanu, Ms. Sol Berruezo Pichon-Rivière, Ms. María Alejandra Rojas, Mr. Ratchapoom Boonbunchachoke were felicitated in the opening ceremony. Chairperson of Indian Panorama Feature section Shri Madhur Bhandarkar and Chairperson of Non-Feature film section Shri Himanshu Sekhar Khatua were also felicitated.

Global musical performances add to the opening spectacle

The opening ceremony featured a series of musical and cultural performances celebrating the universal language of cinema. The symphonic orchestra led by three-time Grammy Award-winning composer Ricky Kej on the theme ‘A World of Cinema Through Music’ took audiences on a musical journey across cultures and storytelling traditions, highlighting cinema’s ability to transcend linguistic and geographical boundaries.



The inaugural night also featured ‘Music Without Borders’, an international musical collaboration involving musicians from different countries to celebrate musical traditions, harmony and cultural exchange. The festival’s iconic peacock motif was featured in ‘Beyond the Frame’, a special dance presentation that brought the IFFI emblem to life through movement and artistic expression.



WAVES Film Bazaar Celebrates 20 Glorious Years

Celebrating two decades of connecting Indian cinema with global opportunities, the 20th WAVES Film Bazaar opened in Goa on November 20, 2026, alongside the 57th IFFI. A special audio-visual presentation at the inaugural ceremony showcased its remarkable journey and contribution to film business, co-production, financing, networking and global collaborations. Organised by the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC), WAVES Film Bazaar has grown from 204 delegates across 18 countries in 2007 to a premier international marketplace, bringing together over 2,500 film professionals from more than 40 countries.



Highlights of IFFI-2026

The 57th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) promises a spectacular celebration of cinema, bringing together over 150 films from 86 countries under the inspiring theme, **'Stories Without Borders'.** Selected from more than 1,900 submissions representing 137 countries, the festival presents a compelling cinematic journey, with *Fatherland* as the opening film, *I Matter* as the mid-festival film, and *We Are All Strangers* as the closing film.

Adding new dimensions to the cinematic experience, this year's festival introduces two exciting sections—**Animation** and **Films About Films**. Spain takes centre stage as the Country of Honour, Russia joins as the Partner Country, while the **BRICS Cinema** showcase celebrates the diverse cinematic voices of emerging global narratives. The Indian Panorama further captures the richness of the country's storytelling traditions, featuring **76 films across 18 languages**.

With a strong commitment to nurturing fresh talent and promoting inclusivity, IFFI 2026 shines a spotlight on **52 women filmmakers and 62 debut directors**. The sixth edition of *Creative Minds of Tomorrow* will provide mentorship to 100 young filmmakers across 13 crafts, empowering the next generation of creative voices. Complementing this initiative, 14 masterclasses and panel discussions will create a vibrant platform for learning, collaboration, dialogue and creative exchange.

More than a celebration of films, IFFI 2026 is a confluence of cultures, perspectives and creative voices, reaffirming the power of cinema to transcend borders and bring the world together. Cinema, after all, speaks a language without borders, spins stories without boundaries and sets emotions in motion. As nine days of cinematic discovery unfold, one thing is certain: the world may be divided by borders, but in the dark of a cinema hall, we all dream in the same light.





Read IFFILOID here: https://www.pib.gov.in/iffi/57/iffiLoid.aspx?yr=2026&lang=1&reg=48

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