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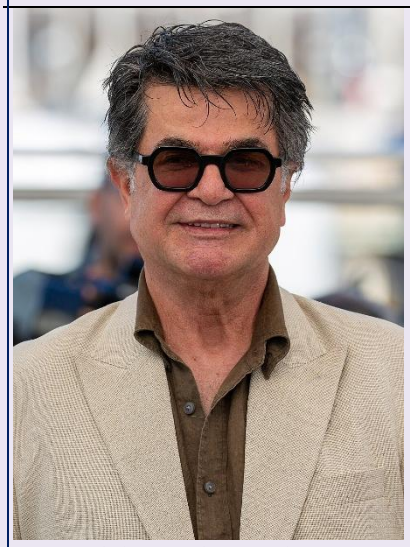
INDIAN CINEMA MAKES A STRONG IMPACT AT BUSAN FILM FESTIVAL

The 31st Busan International Film Festival, held from 6 to 15 Oct 2026 in Busan, South Korea, witnessed a significant presence of Indian cinema, with nine Indian films selected across different sections and several important international honours coming India's way. The festival provided an important platform for contemporary Indian independent cinema, representing diverse languages, regions, cultures and social realities. The most outstanding achievement was Shashank Walia's *Birds in the Dark* (Punjabi, 2026, 142 min) which won the prestigious New Currents Award (in pic), one of the festival's principal awards recognising emerging Asian filmmakers. The film also received the Songwon Vision Audience Award – Asia, carrying a cash prize of 10 million Korean Won. Set against the backdrop of the farmers' movement in Punjab, the black-and-white film explores an unexpected human relationship between a police officer and a man under suspicion. Another significant achievement was Sailesh Rathnakumar's *Selvi* (Tamil, 2026, 97 min), starring Anjali Patil, which received two awards: the Hylife Vision Award and the Taipei Film Commission Award. The film explores the struggles and invisible labour of migrant home-care nurses. Indian cinema was also represented by films exploring contemporary social and cultural concerns. These included *The Soul Whisperer* (Malayalam, 2026, 95 min) by Leo Thaddeus, *Khoriya* (Nepali, 2026, 81 min) by Vishwendra Singh, *About an Intimate Matter* (Bengali, 2026, 95 min) by Sandeep Kumar Paul, *Lovers in the Blue Night* (Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, 2026, 108 min) by Anuparna Roy, *Not a Hero* (Assamese, Hindi, 2026, 97 min) by Rima Das, *Birds on Ice* (Tibetian, 2026, 86 min) by Sahil H. Shah, and *Salt Electric* (English, 2026, 12 min) by Paromita Dhar. The Indian presence was further strengthened by the participation of prominent filmmakers. Rima Das served on the prestigious New Currents Award Jury, while Anuparna Roy was a member of the Sonje Award Jury. The festival also announced several international awards. The Busan Award for Best Film went to *Midday Meal* (Iran, 2026, 129 min) directed by Majid Majidi; the Special Jury Prize to *My Mother* (Indonesia, Japan, 2026, 96 min) by Eddie Cahyono; and the Best Director Award to Lee Yun Chan for *To Be Ordinary* (Taiwan, 2026, 112 min). India's achievements at Busan reaffirmed the growing international recognition of its independent filmmakers and regional-language cinema. The success of *Birds in the Dark* and *Selvi*, together with the participation of Indian filmmakers in festival juries, demonstrated the expanding influence of Indian cinema in the global film festival circuit. FIIPRESCI Prize in Busan Festival this year awarded to the film *Zogsool* (Mongolia, Germany, 2026, 109 min) by Sakhya Byamba. The FIPRESCI Jury comprised Chul-Hwan Roh from South Korea, Xingxu Ma from China, and Teresa Vena from Germany.



JAFAR PANAHI GETS FIVE YEARS' IMPRISONMENT

Internationally acclaimed filmmaker Jafar Panahi has been sentenced to five years and one month in prison by Tehran's Revolutionary Court. The verdict, announced on 28 Oct 2026, also orders the confiscation of all his movable and immovable assets and imposes a two-year ban on travelling abroad and using social media. According to Panahi's lawyer, Mostafa Nili, the latest judgment was delivered in absentia, without the filmmaker being properly notified of the court hearing. The specific charges underlying this latest conviction have not been publicly clarified. His lawyer also reported that Panahi's bank accounts had been frozen. The new sentence comes on top of an earlier one-year prison sentence, upheld by the same court in June 2026, on charges of propaganda against the Islamic Republic. Thus, he faces a potential total of six years and one month of imprisonment in the two cases. His legal team has indicated that several proceedings against him remain pending. Panahi's confrontation with Iranian authorities dates back many years. In 2010, he was sentenced to six years in prison and prohibited from filmmaking and travelling abroad for 20 years. Despite these restrictions, he continued making films, often clandestinely. He was arrested again in July 2022 and spent nearly seven months in detention before being released in Feb 2023 following a hunger strike. The latest prosecution has attracted international concern, particularly from the global film fraternity. Panahi, whose film *It Was Just an Accident* won the prestigious Palme d'Or at the 2025 Cannes Film Festival, remains one of the most celebrated voices of contemporary world cinema. His case has once again brought international attention to the struggle for artistic freedom and freedom of expression in Iran.

CBFC ISSUES STRINGENT ADVISORY

The Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) has issued a stringent advisory to film producers and filmmakers, making it clear that announced theatrical release dates will no longer be grounds for expediting certification. The advisory, dated 26 Oct 2026 and signed by the CEO of CBFC Rajendra Singh, applies to all applicants under the Cinematograph Act, 1952, and the Cinematograph (Certification) Rules, 2024. According to the advisory, films submitted for certification must be in their complete and final form, including titles, credits, subtitles, disclaimers, background score, sound mix and accessibility features such as closed captions and audio description. Only the certified version of a film will be permitted for theatrical exhibition. The CBFC has also clarified that a film's title, even if already publicised through trailers, teasers or promotional material, cannot be considered final until formally approved. Examining or Revising Committees retain the authority to recommend changes. Applications containing work-in-progress prints, temporary graphics, scratch scores or incomplete accessibility features may be returned, delayed or rejected. An application will enter the certification queue only after all prescribed documents and formalities are completed. The most significant aspect of the advisory is its categorical rejection of release-date pressure. Neither an announced theatrical release nor a scheduled trailer or teaser launch will influence the certification process. The CBFC has stated that applications will be processed strictly according to the prescribed procedures and timelines, and it will not accept responsibility for delays arising from producers' self-imposed schedules. Producers will now need to finalise their cuts, sound, graphics and accessibility requirements well in advance. This move signals a stricter approach to certification and places greater responsibility on filmmakers.

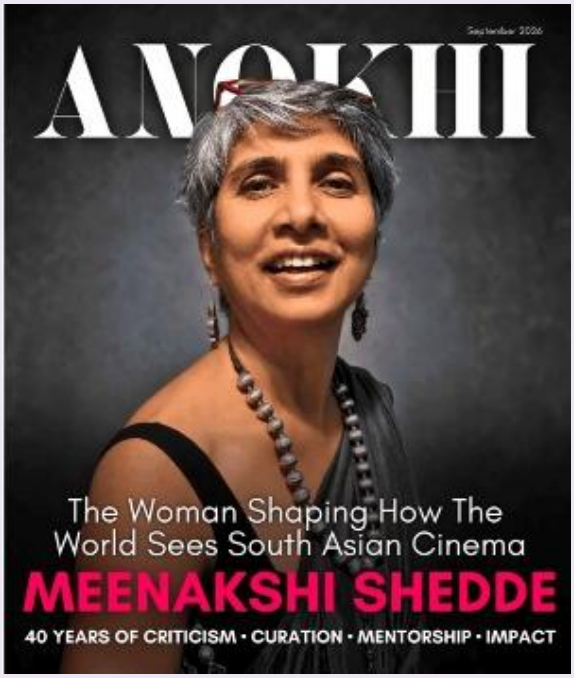
ANNA VETTICAD IN LIT. FESTIVAL

The 15th edition of the Khushwant Singh Literary Festival, held at Kasauli, Himachal Pradesh, from 23 to 25 Oct 2026, featured an engaging and thought-provoking session with the veteran journalist and film critic Anna M. M. Vetticad (a member of FIPRESCI) in conversation with lawyer and author Mihira Sood. The discussion focused on women's fundamental rights, gender equality, individual freedom and dignity, examining the gap between constitutional guarantees and the realities of women's lives. The conversation highlighted that freedom, happiness and a dignified life are not privileges but fundamental rights. The session was particularly relevant to the festival's overarching theme, "The Art of Disagreement: Conversations Across Divides," encouraging critical engagement with contemporary social realities.

RWITA DUTTA IN BUSINESS FORUM

Dr. Rwita Dutta (Rita Dutta) film critic and film scholar, Editor of the international film journal FilmBuff (a member of FIPRESCI) participated in the Second Russian-Indian Business Forum "TIME: Tatarstan Initiative Mutual Efficiency", held on 15–16 Oct 2026 at the Centre for Unique Craftsmanship, Kazan, Republic of Tatarstan, Russia. She was invited to speak on "Film Criticism as a Bridge Between the Cultures of Russia and India". Her contribution highlighted the role of film criticism in promoting cross-cultural understanding, strengthening cinematic exchanges and fostering closer cultural relations between India and Russia. The Forum brought together representatives from diverse sectors of both countries, providing a valuable platform for dialogue, collaboration and development of new avenues for creative partnerships.

MEENAKSHI SHEDDE ON ANOKHI MEDIA



Indian film curator, critic and journalist Meenakshi Shedde (a member of FIPRESCI) has received significant international recognition, being featured as the cover story of ANOKHI MEDIA, Canada, under the title "The Woman Shaping How the World Sees South Asian Cinema", on the eve of the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) 2026. The extensive profile, written by Raj Girn, documented her lifelong contribution to cinema, particularly her work in promoting Indian, South Asian, Indigenous and diaspora cinema on the international stage. The recognition celebrates her remarkable contribution to bringing South Asian cinema to global audiences and strengthening its international visibility.

UTTAM KUMAR CENTENARY

The birth centenary of Mahanayak Uttam Kumar (1926–1980), the legendary superstar of Bengali cinema, was commemorated through a special programme titled Cinescope 2.0, organised by the Xaverian Film Academy, St. Xavier's College, Kolkata, on 29 Sept 2026. FIPRESCI Members Premendra Mazumder and Siladitya Sen were invited to participate as panellists in the discussion, alongside BFTCC President Firdausul Hasan, Uttam Kumar's granddaughter Nabamita Chatterjee, Anjan Bose of Aurora Film Studio, and Prof. Anindya Sengupta of Jadavpur University. Prof. Shenjuti Dutta moderated the discussion, which revisited Uttam Kumar's extraordinary contribution to Bengali cinema and celebrated his enduring legacy as an iconic actor whose magic continues to transcend generations.

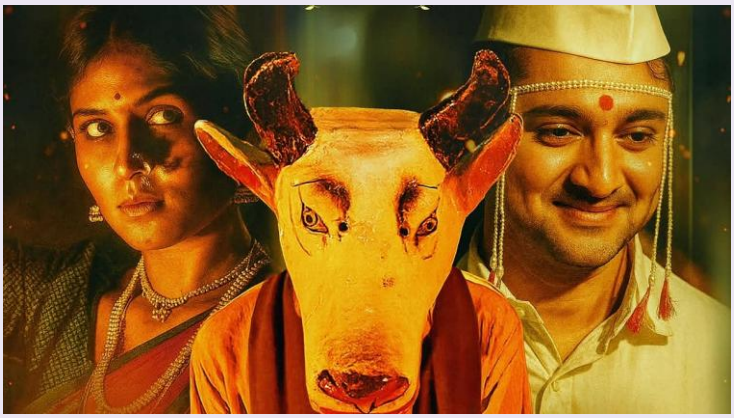
FIPRESCI-INDIA AWARD AT JAGRAN

FIPRESCI-India National Critics' Award at the 14th Jagran Film Festival, Mumbai, 28–31 October 2026, was conferred on *Moham-Desire* (India, Malayalam, 111 mins) by Fazil Razak in the National Section, and on Shakkar (USA, 97 mins) by Nasim Kiani in the International Section. The Jury, comprising Meena Karnik, G. P. Ramachandran, and Meghachandra Kongbam, in its motivation for Fazil Razak's film said, "*Moham* sensitively explores postpartum depression, the emotional scars of motherhood and the lasting impact of trauma on vulnerable lives. Through a deceptively simple narrative, the film compellingly reveals the hidden psychological complexities behind ordinary human fears and behaviour." The Jury, in its citation for the film *Shakkar* by Nasim Kiani, said, "While addressing the issues of women's rights and child abuse, the film sensitively explores the power of human connection to inspire hope amidst loneliness, abuse and emotional suffering." (In Pic: Meena Karnik and G. P. Ramachandran with Nasim Kiani.)

RAHUL ROYE WINS AT BFI LONDON

Indian filmmaker Rahul Roye's short film *Aman* (Hindi, 2026, 16 min) won the Short Film Award at the 70th BFI London Film Festival, announced on 18 Oct 2026. The film, an international co-production involving India, UK, USA, and France, had its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival. It explores questions of identity, masculinity and fatherhood through the story of a transgender man confronting an unexpected pregnancy before gender-affirming surgery. The award represents an important international recognition for Indian independent filmmaking.

GONDHAL: INDIA'S OFFICIAL ENTRY FOR THE 99TH ACADEMY AWARDS



Marathi feature film *Gondhal* (2025, 120 min) written and directed by Santosh Davakhar, has been selected as India's official entry in the Best International Feature Film category for the 99th Academy Awards (Oscars 2027). The Film Federation of India (FFI) announced its decision on 18 Sept 2026 in Mumbai, selecting the film from 33 submissions representing various Indian languages. The 14-member selection Jury was chaired by Kannada filmmaker P. Sheshadri. The other members were Vijay Patkar, Hitu Kanodia, Sanjib Parasar, Shanth Kumar, Narasimha Nandi, Sanjay Patil, V. J. Sabu Joseph, Anil Thomas, Vasanth, Viveck Vaswani, Tannishtha Chatterjee, Bijon Dasgupta, and Firdausul Hasan. Set in rural Maharashtra, *Gondhal* is a psychological thriller unfolding against the backdrop of the traditional Gondhal folk ritual, combining music, dance, devotional storytelling and mythology. The film explores human relationships, desire, obsession, betrayal and the darker dimensions of social and cultural traditions. Significantly, *Gondhal* had already earned critical recognition while it figured among the Top-10 films in FIPRESCI-India's Grand-Prix 2025. It also received the FIPRESCI Award at the Bengaluru International Film Festival, while Davakhar won the Silver Peacock for Best Director at IFFI-Goa-2025.

INDIAN FILMS RELEASED IN OCT'26

October 2026 witnessed a diverse range of Indian film releases, reflecting the continuing vibrancy of the country's multilingual film industry. Among the most anticipated Hindi releases was *Drishyam: The Conclusion*, (pic) directed by Abhishek Pathak and starring Ajay Devgn, Tabu, Shriya Saran and Jaideep Ahlawat. The latest instalment of the popular crime-thriller franchise attracted considerable audience attention. *Udta Teer*, featuring Ayushmann Khurrana and Sara Ali Khan, offered a comic take on mistaken identity and espionage. Another significant release was *Prahaar: The Untold Story* of Ujjwal Nikam, directed by Avinash Arun, with Rajkummar Rao portraying the noted public prosecutor alongside Wamiqa Gabbi and Jaideep Ahlawat. Yami Gautam's fantasy-horror comedy *Nayyi Navelli* also added variety to the month's Hindi releases. Tamil cinema witnessed considerable excitement with Nelson Dilipkumar's *Jailer 2*, featuring Rajinikanth, S. J. Suryah and Suraj Venjaramoodu. The film emerged as one of October's major box-office attractions. Telugu cinema drew attention with *Ranabaali*, starring Vijay Deverakonda and Rashmika Mandanna. Malayalam cinema contributed several releases, including *Avaraachan & Sons*, *Don't Trouble the Trouble* and *Bethlehem Kudumba Unit*. Bengali cinema also had a notable presence with *The Eken: Kerala-e Kurukshetra*, *Bohurupi: The Golden Daku*, *Emperor vs. Sarat Chandra,* and *Keu Bole Biplobi, Keu Bole Dakat*, representing different genres and storytelling approaches. Other noteworthy releases included *Little Thomas*, featuring Gulshan Devaiah and Rasika Dugal, and *Doosra*, directed by Abhinay Deo. The month also witnessed a substantial number of Indian films making their digital premieres across major OTT platforms, reflecting the growing importance of streaming in film distribution. Notable releases included Karthi-starrer Tamil action thriller *Sardar 2* on Amazon Prime Video, *Pooja Meri Jaan* on ZEE5, and Malayalam films *Bethlehem Kudumba Unit* on JioHotstar and *Khalifa: The Ruler* on Prime Video. Other significant releases included Tamil films *Mandaadi* and *Dorothy*, Telugu film *The Paradise*, and Malayalam productions *Aasha* and *Dhoomakethu*. Netflix, Prime Video, ZEE5 and JioHotstar remained major platforms for regional-language cinema.

NANA PATEKAR (1951–2026)

Indian cinema lost one of its most distinctive and formidable acting talents with the passing of Nana Patekar on 8 Oct 2026, at the age of 75. An actor of extraordinary intensity, individuality and versatility, Patekar carved out a unique identity in Hindi and Marathi cinema through performances that frequently transcended conventional definitions of heroism, villainy and character acting. Born Vishwanath Patekar on 1 Jan 1951 in Maharashtra, he developed an early interest in theatre and the performing arts. After studying commercial art, he gravitated towards Marathi theatre before making his film debut with *Gaman* (1978), directed by Muzaffar Ali. His early association with meaningful and socially conscious cinema helped establish him as a performer capable of bringing remarkable psychological depth to complex characters. His breakthrough came with Mira Nair's internationally acclaimed *Salaam Bombay!* (1988). His unforgettable performance in Vidhu Vinod Chopra's *Parinda* (1989) established him as one of the most compelling actors of his generation. He subsequently delivered memorable performances in *Angaar* (1992), *Krantiveer* (1994), *Agni Sakshi* (1996), *Khamoshi: The Musical* (1996), *Yeshwant* (1997), *Shakti: The Power* (2002), *Ab Tak Chhappan* (2004), *Apaharan* (2005) and *Welcome* (2007). His portrayal of Appa in the Marathi film *Natsamrat* (2016) remains among his most celebrated performances. Patekar's acting style was unmistakably his own. His penetrating eyes, distinctive voice, controlled aggression, expressive silences and explosive dialogue delivery enabled him to inhabit characters with extraordinary conviction. Equally effective in intense dramatic roles, antagonistic characters and comedy, he resisted the limitations of conventional stardom. His work demonstrated that an actor's individuality and commitment to character could be more enduring than commercial image-building. He also ventured into filmmaking, directing *Prahaar: The Final Attack* (1991), in which he explored military discipline, social responsibility and moral conflict. Beyond cinema, his humanitarian concerns found expression through his association with the 'Naam Foundation', which works for drought-affected farmers and rural communities in Maharashtra. A recipient of three National Film Awards and the Padma Shri (2013), Nana Patekar earned recognition for his contribution to Indian cinema and theatre. His death in Goa following a cardiac arrest was mourned by his innumerable admirers across the country. He was accorded a state funeral in Pune. He leaves behind a remarkable body of work that will continue to inspire generations of actors and filmmakers. He was not merely a performer but an institution of acting, fearless, unconventional and uncompromising. His unmistakable screen presence will remain an enduring part of Indian cinematic history.

SCHLINGEL INTL. FILM FESTIVAL

FIPRESCI Prize in 31st Schlingel International Film Festival for Children and Young Audience, Germany, 2-10 Oct 2026 awarded to the film *Iron Boy* (France, 2026, 90 min) by Louis Clichy. The Jury, comprising Reinhard Kleber (Germany), Ivan Magrin-Chagnolleau (France), and Artavazd Yeghiazaryan (Armenia) in their motivation said, "We chose a film about growing up in a family going through difficult times. A film in which hardship and hope coexist, where serious themes are balanced with tenderness, humour, poetry, and imagination. We were moved by its delicate visual world, mixing reality and fantasy, its remarkable use of music, sound design, and silence, and the way a young outsider gradually finds friendship, freedom, and his own path. While the world around him seems to be falling apart, his own world slowly begins to open up."

RIO DE JANEIRO INTL. FILM FESTIVAL

FIPRESCI Prize in 28th Festival do Rio - Rio de Janeiro Int'l Film Festival, Brazil, 1-11 Oct 2026 awarded to the films *Six Months in a Pink and Blue Building* (Mexico, 2026, 104 min) by Bruno Santamaría Razo in Premiére Latina section, and *London* (Brazil, 2026, 90 min) by Victor Di Marco, Márcio Picoli in Premiére Brazil section. The Jury, comprising Valentina Giraldo Sánchez (Colombia), Laura Pertuy (France), and Arthur Gadelha (Brazil) in their motivation for *Six Months in a Pink and Blue Building* said, "We are honoured to present this award to a film that carefully weaves past and present, inviting us to draw close to an intimate story. The generosity of this film lies in the tenderness of a child's gaze and the courage of a mother, reminding us that cinema can be a meeting place: a way of creating kinship, of finding one another, and of entering, with tenderness, the fissures of family history…."

WARSAW INTL. FILM FESTIVAL

FIPRESCI Prize in 42nd Warsaw International Film Festival, Poland, 9-18 Oct 2026 awarded to the film *Through the Wall* (Poland, 2026, 120 min) by Maciej Sobieszczański. The Jury, comprising Pawel Mossakowski (Poland), Tilda Sixue Li (China), and Vladimir Angelov (North Macedonia) in their motivation said, "*Through the Wall* (Przez ścianę) is an original and unconventional love story set behind prison bars during one of the dark chapters of Polish history, under Stalin rule. The striking black and white cinematography is both visually powerful and stylistically distinctive. The film communicates a universal message of hope and human connection that resonates with our contemporary world." Young Critics' Prize awarded to the film *Lover, Not a Fighter* (Slovakia, Czech Republic, 2026, 109 min) by Martina Buchelová.

FESTIVAL DU NOUVEAU CINÉMA

FIPRESCI Prize in 55th Festival du Nouveau Cinéma, Montreal, Canada, 7 -18 Oct 2026 awarded to the film *Mauvaise étoile* (France, 2026, 125 min) by Yann Berlier and Lola Cambourieu. The Jury, comprising Elijah Baron (Canada), Manon Marcillat (France), and Ruben Peralta Rigaud (Dominican Republic) in their motivation said, "For its honest and organic depiction of an abusive relationship and its impact on a child, using a combination of improvisational dark comedy and psychological terror, we award the FIPRESCI Prize to *Under a Bad Star* by Lola Cambourieu and Yann Berlier."

EL GOUNA FILM FESTIVAL

FIPRESCI Prize in 9th El Gouna Film Festival, Egypt, 15-23 Oct 2026 awarded to the film *Whispers in May* (China, 2026, 95 min) by Dongnan Chen. The Jury, comprising Elena Rubashevska (Ukraine), Henda Haouala (Tunisia / France), and Haytham Mofed (Egypt) in their motivation said, "Through a sensitive look, this film captures the fragile transition from childhood to adulthood, between who a girl is and what the world expects her to be. Filmed from the girls' point of view, the camera shows their world with deep gentle feeling and humanity. The film smoothly blends fiction and documentary, giving the story a true sense of authenticity."

FREDRIKSTAD ANIMATION FILM FESTIVAL

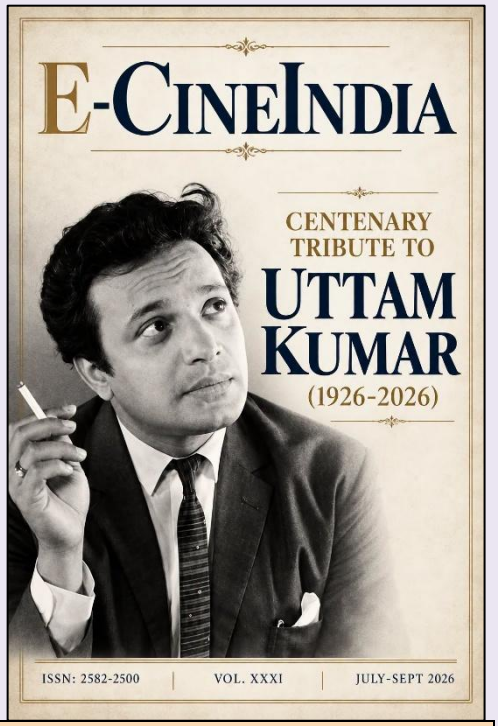
FIPRESCI Prize in 30th Fredrikstad Animation Film Festival, Norway, 21-25 Oct 2026 awarded to the film *Uka-uka* (Estonia, 2026, 12 min) by Henri Veermäe. The Jury, comprising Jan Storø (Norway), Maximilian Schäffer (Germany), and Chiara Spagnoli Gabardi (Italy) in their motivation said, "The film is a powerful black comedy that seamlessly blends a wide range of techniques, from 3D animation to puppetry, bringing its characters to life across diverse settings through compelling cinematography. Its dark humour is delivered with impeccable timing, embracing the absurd to striking effect."

JI.HLAVA INTL. DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL

FIPRESCI Prize in 30th Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival, Czech Republic, 23-31 Oct 2026 awarded to the film *Journey* (Congo, 2026, 70 min) by Eli Maene. The Jury, comprising Marc Glassman (Canada), Tereza Brdecková (Czech Republic), and Hugo Emmerzael (The Netherlands) in their motivation said, "Within a highly globalised debut section, this film struck us as the most authentic. It's an honest portrait of an unforgiving metropole that still gives space for spiritual connection, artistic creation and existential reflection. The filmmaker dares to depict his immediate surroundings as being in damnation. Yet, his generous gaze makes us believe that salvation still seems within reach…."

LEIPZIG FESTIVAL FOR DOCU AND ANIMATION

FIPRESCI Prize in 69th International Leipzig Festival for Documentary and Animated Film, Germany, 26 Oct to 1 Nov 2026 awarded to the film *Auber 89* (Italy, 2026, 80 min) by Giuseppe Schillaci. The Jury, comprising Igor Angjelkov (Macedonia), Marco D'Agostino (Italy), and Matthias Dell (Germany) in their motivation said, "The FIPRESCI Jury is honouring a film that achieves the remarkable feat of being both intellectually complex and widely accessible. It tells deeply human stories while simultaneously engaging with political issues that could hardly be more relevant today…"



E-CINEINDIA: CALL FOR PAPERS

FIPRESCI-India Calls for Papers/Articles for the next issue of its Quarterly Film Journal E-CINEINDIA. Deadline for sending the proposal: 20 NOV 2026. Deadline for sending the final Paper/Article: 30 NOV 2026. Mail to: indiafipresci@gmail.com

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