

## Maharashtra Government to open Centre of Excellence in film and Entertainment Industry in Mumbai: Ashish Shelar

### *23rd PIFF was inaugurated in a grand ceremony*

Pune, February 13, 2025: "Government of Maharashtra is a leader pertaining to IT and film industry. We have allotted 10 acres of land in the film City to start a one of its kind centre of excellence that will have global experts teaching about the advance technologies and developments in films and entertainment industry", said Ashish Shelar, Cultural Affairs Minister of Maharashtra. He was speaking as a chief guest at the inauguration of the 23rd Pune International Film Festival (PIFF) held at the Ganesh Kala Krida Mach.

The Cultural Affairs Minister of Maharashtra, Ashish Shelar inaugurated the Festival. Vikas Kharge, Principal Secretary, Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Swati Mhase Patil, MD, Film City and Shaji Karun, legendary filmmaker. Legendary playback singer Kavita Krishnamurthy and veteran actor Shubha Khote were also present for the occasion. Dr Jabbar Patel, director, PIFF, Ravi Gupta, secretary, Pune Film Foundation, Satish Alekar, trustee, Pune film Foundation, Samar Nakhate, creative director of PIFF, Abhijeet Randive, member, selection committee of PIFF, Dr Mohan Agashe, Trustee, PIFF. The ceremony was hosted by Shreya Bugade and Kshitish Date. The ceremony began with unveiling of the official PIFF catalogue.

Shelar further said that the centre of excellence would be named AVGC that stands for Animation, Visual, Gaming and Comic.

The 23rd PIFF, which is being organized jointly by the Pune Film Foundation and the Government of Maharashtra between February 13 and 20, 2025 is based on a theme 'Celebrating the Showman' to mark the birth centenary of Raj Kapoor. At the Inauguration ceremony veteran actress Shobha Khote was honoured with PIFF distinguished award for outstanding contribution to Indian Cinema. Legendary playback singer Kavita Krishnamurthy was honoured with S.D. Burman International Award for creative music and sound.

After receiving the award, Kavita Krishnamurthy expressed her gratitude towards her gurus and people who she worked with. She also performed her celebrated song 'Pyar Hua Chupkese'.

Shobha Khote also expressed her gratitude and shared memories of becoming a comedian instead of a leading actor.

Special guest IAS Vikas Kharge said, "PIFF has become a brand now in Maharashtra. Government of Maharashtra considers film industry as an important industry because films are not only for entertainment but also for spreading important social messages. It contributes to 2 percent of the national GDP and CAGR of the entertainment industry is 8 percent. Hence, Maharashtra government is not only supporting regional films and international films as well. We want people in Maharashtra to watch world cinema. We must create a platform for collaborations."

He further added that Maharashtra is a great destination for film shooting. It has all the infrastructure, location and facilities for filmmaking. He appealed to national and international filmmakers to explore Maharashtra for their filmmaking projects.

Dr Patel spoke about the expanse of the festival. He said, "This year PIFF will paying homage to the greatest showman of Indian Cinema, Raj Kapoor." He further added that this year, the Festival received 1500 films. Out of which 150 films from 81 countries will be screened in the Festival. The Festival contains categories such as World competition, Marathi competition, Global Cinema, Marathi Cinema and Indian Cinema.

Dr Patel added that PIFF will also highlight important questions pertaining to the state of Marathi cinema which is suffering due to the introduction of OTT.

Dr Patel also announced that PIFF will conduct an international short film festival in Pune.

He further informed that during the festival, several discussions, lectures and workshop would take place. Some of them include the prestigious Vijay Tendulkar Memorial lecture which would be delivered by Actor Boman Iran on the 'Art of Acting' on February 16. Other programs include Government

Scheme to Promote Marathi Cinema by Swati Mhase Patil (Feb 14), Talk on Documentary featuring renowned filmmakers Umesh Kulkarni, Anupama Shrinivasan, Sarvnik Kaur, and Kuldeep Barve (Feb 15), Cinema and Soul: Tapan Sinha by Swapan Kumar Mallick and Goutam Ghosh (Feb 17), Creating Content with AI Films by Pacco Torres (Feb 18), Marathi Panel: Challenges in Marathi Cinema – From Production to Audience with industry stalwarts Paresh Mokashi, Aditya Sarpotdar, Adinath Kothare, and Sunil Phadtare (Feb 19).

On this occasion the International Jury of the Festival to judge World Cinema Competition and Marathi Film competition was also felicitated. It included Marco Bechis – Chilean-Italian film director and screenwriter, Margarida Gil – Portuguese filmmaker and educator, Petri Kotwica – Finnish filmmaker, Tamineh Milani – Iranian filmmaker and screenwriter, Djordje Stojiljkovic – Serbian cinematographer, Sudath Mahaadivulwewa – Sri Lankan film director, Urvashi Archana – South Indian actress, Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury – Indian film director.

Consulate General representing several countries including Francesca Amendola – Director, Istituto Italiano di Cultura di Mumbai, Markus Biechele – Director, Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan Pune, and Amélie Weigel – Director, Alliance Française de Pune were also felicitated at the ceremony.

The inauguration ceremony featured a performance by the renowned percussionist Vijay Chavan and team. They performed a program titled Taalkacheri as a tribute to late Ustad Zakir Hussain. The ceremony was followed by the screening of the Opening Film titled ‘Gloria’ directed by Margherita Vicario from Italy.