

India's film fest off to a flying start, Rekha lights lamp

The 39th International Film Festival of India (IFFI-2008) was inaugurated here Saturday as legendary Bollywood actress Rekha lit the ceremonial lamp and China's 'Warlords' was screened as the opening film.

The inaugural lamp was lit with the assistance of Telugu actress of Goan origin Illina D'Cruz.

Actress Amrita Rao hosted the star-studded inaugural function at the Kala Academy in the presence of Goa Governor S.S. Sidhu, Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting and External Affairs Anand Sharma and Goa Chief Minister Digambar V. Kamat as well as a number of Bollywood legends.

Sharma that as the curtain rises from the 39th edition of the festival, it brings together the film professionals from India and abroad on one platform to recognize the excellence in cinema, and creativity and dedication of hundreds of people who are involved in making films.

He said cinema is a powerful medium of connecting people within a society, nation and continent.

Noting that films are a powerful way of conveying a message and have great ability of influencing masses, Sharma said this, therefore, imposes a great responsibility on everyone associated with the film industry to look at how to use the power of cinema to do good for society through the portrayal of attitudes that help in building tolerant and harmonious societies.

The Indian film industry is believed to be the largest in the world - producing over 1,000 films a year in different languages.

'At a time when every sector of our economy is being influenced and in most cases taking the benefits of the currents of globalization, our film industry can utilize this opportunity too,' the minister added.

He assured the film fraternity of all possible support from the government to promote good cinema.

Festival director S.M. Khan announced that in the section of the Cinema of the World, 65 films from more than 40 countries will be screened.

In the Film India Worldwide segment of the International programming, 'Tandoori Love' (Switzerland), 'Death without Consent' (US) and 'Barah Aana and Chaurasta - Cross Roads of Love' (India) will be presented.

A specialized competition for feature films from Asia, Asia Pacific, Latin America, and Africa is being organized. Two Indian entries - S. Priyadarshan's Tamil film 'Kanchivaram' and Ramesh Laxman More's acclaimed Marathi film 'Mahasatta' - have been selected in the competition section along with 13 other films chosen from Bangladesh, Russia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Kazakhstan, Sri Lanka, Iran, Philippines, Argentina, China and Japan.

There are three Country Focuses this year - Russia, Switzerland and Iran.

The Foreign Retrospectives are on films of Aki Kaurusmaki (Finland), John Landis (US) and Wong Kar Wai (Hong Kong).

Eight restored heritage film classics are there in the Film Heritage - Thematic 'Women' section. Besides there will be a special tribute to Niki Karimi, Khan said.

The Indian programming at IFFI-2008 would be under seven different segments with screening of 83 films, besides the Indian Panorama section wherein 26 feature and 21 non-feature films will be screened.

The Indian programming would have a retrospective of legendary director Bimal Roy and L.V. Prasad.

Under the Lifetime Classics, 'Mughle-e-Azam', 'Hum Aapke Hai Kaun', 'Dil Ek Mandir', 'Anbe Vaa', 'Kittur Channamma' and 'Kabuliwala' will be screened.

Peter Chan, Marco Mueller, Niki Karimi, Lav Diaz and Tabassum Hashmi, the jury members of the competition section, were felicitated during the inaugural function.

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