

For Immediate Release

**KORE-EDA, SENGUPTA, AND PIALAT AMONG PRODUCERS OF
25 HAF IN-DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS ANNOUNCE TODAY**



Hong Kong, 20 January 2025 - The Hong Kong International Film Festival Society (HKIFFS) has unveiled 25 in-development projects shortlisted for the 23rd Hong Kong - Asia Film Financing Forum (HAF23), featuring renowned filmmakers such as Kore-eda Hirokazu, Aditya Vikram Sengupta, Sylvie Pialat, Nai An, Lee Sinje, Stanley Kwan and Yeh Ju-Feng.

The three-day event, the anchor component of the expanded HKIFF Industry Project Market, is one of Asia's premiere film project markets. It will take place from 17 to 19 March 2025 at the Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre alongside the 29th Hong Kong FILMART.

According to HKIFF Industry Director Jacob Wong, HAF23 received 276 in-development project (IDP) submissions from 45 countries and regions, from Hong Kong to Thailand, Turkey, Kazakhstan, and South Korea.

"Those shortlisted are remarkable for their cultural diversity. They showcase extraordinary storytelling in a broad range of genres, from action to sci-fi, fantasy, suspense, and horror," Mr Wong said.

"There are nine projects from female directors this year, as well as several collaborations involving filmmakers from Asia, Europe, and North America, underscoring Hong Kong's position at the

crossroads of the global film industry. At least 13 HAF23 projects have already secured partial funding, with budget ranging from US\$200,000 to US\$5 million."

To facilitate and promote animation production in the region, Mr Wong said this year's HKIFF Industry Project Market will feature several animation projects at different stages of development or production in a new standalone section. HKIFFS will reveal those shortlisted animation projects in mid-February, following the HAF23 works-in-progress (WIP) shortlist announcement.

The second edition of the biannual HKIFF Industry - CAA China Genre Initiative (HCG), dedicated to Chinese-language genre films, will take place in 2026. CAA China will offer a new script development award during this year's HKIFF Industry Project Market.

Some of this year's IDP highlights are:

NEW TALENT SHOWCASE

Consistent with HAF's support for new talent since its inception, HAF23's IDP line-up showcases no fewer than ten emerging filmmakers making their directorial debuts. Renowned filmmakers, including Kore-eda Hirokazu, Aditya Vikram Sengupta, Sylvie Pialat, Nai An and Yeh Ju-Feng, are attached to produce some of them.

- Hu Wei's feature debut, **49 Days**, follows a divorced Chinese couple who reunite in Paris to arrange their son's funeral and confront their past. Sylvie Pialat and Nai An will produce this France-China collaboration.
- Produced by Yeh Ju-Feng for MV and TVC director Bill Chia, **Indigo Boy** is a fantasy that tackles depression and indigo children through two close friends who struggle with their mental illness. One of them would only come to life when the other disappears.
- Produced by Aditya Vikram Sengupta for new director Niladri Mukherjee, **Republic of Mahalaxmi Apartment** examines India's majority rule issues through a single-mother tenant who becomes her housing estate's public enemy when she flags a malfunctioning elevator.
- Produced by Kore-eda Hirokazu for new director Yamaura Miyoh, **YELLOW** is about a man who lives a life of self-punishment after a fatal car accident, but meeting the young son of his deceased friend helps him confront his loss and guilt.

NOVEL ADAPTATIONS

While most of the IDP are original stories, two feature screenplays adapted from novels.

- Adapted from Chinese sci-fi writer Gu Shi's Hugo Award-shortlisted novelette, **2181 Overture** focuses on a scientist who, upon waking up from cryogenic hibernation, must adjust to a new world while finding her lost daughter through a book she left behind. Wang Kunlin (*Obscure*) will direct.

- Based on Malaysian writer Li Zi Shu's bestselling novel, *The Age of Goodbyes* follows the complicated relationship between a woman, her stepdaughter and the latter's new lover in 1970s Ipoh. Tokyo International Film Festival Best Director winner Edmund Yeo (*Aqérat*) will direct.

HONG KONG HIGHLIGHTS

HAF23 spotlights five IDPs co-produced by Hong Kong companies. Two projects featuring Hong Kong directors are also in the mix.

- In Fan Ka Chun's feature debut, horror suspense thriller *Something in the Way*, a detective suffering from face blindness must stop himself from becoming a monster as repressed memories of his missing mother resurface.
- *Open Fire* by Sze Pak-lam and Lau Wing-tai (*Guilt By Design*) is a crime action-cum-disaster film that revolves around a firefighter who must rescue his wife from a slum fire ignited by Interpol during their raid on terrorism.

FILM LAB GRADUATES

Five projects by HAF Film Lab graduates are in the HAF23 IDP line-up. A trio of winning projects have received script development support from HKIFF Industry for six months. All the projects are Chinese-language directorial feature debuts.

- *Gone with the Wind* by Zhao Yanming is a coming-of-age drama about a high-school student determined to eradicate a gambling gang from his hometown in the Inner Mongolian prairie.
- *Somatization* by Sun Xiao is a sci-fi horror set against a town crawling with petrochemical plants where people turn into monsters after a mysterious explosion.
- *Waves Under the Sea* by Chan Sileong is an LGBTQ+ drama about two boys who grow up together by the seaside, but their life choices drift them apart.

PROJECTS FROM HAF/HKIFF ALUMNI

Filmmakers who have previously participated in HAF or have their films screened at HKIFF return with their latest projects.

- Jun Robles Lana (Tallinn Best Director Award winner with *Kalel, 15*) is back with *The Circumciser*, a drama about a 16-year-old boy in the 1920s US-ruled Philippines who wants to study English instead of succeeding his father as their island village's lone circumciser.
- Produced by actress Lee Sinje and Jin Ong (*Abang Adik*) and directed by Kethsvin Chee (*Hello, Tapir*), *Dead Tide* is about a recently discharged murder convict who returns to his

fishing village to atone for his past, only to get entwined with a mentally ill woman locked up in a room.

- Panu Aree and Kong Rithdee (*The Cursed Land*) return with ***Drive South Pray West***, which centres on a Muslim teenager from Thailand's troubled South who flees to Bangkok, where he faces a dilemma of whether to demand justice for his dead brother.
- ***Giant Salamander*** by Yang Heng (*Silent Ghosts*) follows a loner who moves to the countryside in central China to look after an old man and a giant salamander he hides in a cave.
- Saurav Rai (*Guras*, winner of the Proxima Special Jury Prize at Karlovy Vary) is back with ***Lanka***, a psychological revenge drama about how the feud between two families escalates into a cycle of revenge when a karate drill of their boys goes awry.
- Produced by Stanley Kwan and directed by Zheng Lu Xinyuan (Rotterdam's Tiger Award and HKIFF's Firebird Award winner *The Cloud in Her Room*), ***A Stranger at My Door*** follows an amateur film director who finds solace in a French composer while prepping a film about her mother's sexual abuse, as her mother's ghost continues to haunt her and her cast.

GUEST ACCREDITATION

Investors, festival programmers, and other industry professionals can now register as guests through <https://Industry.hkiff.org.hk/guest-registration>. Upon successful accreditation, all guests can arrange individual meetings with filmmakers to discuss their projects.

For specific information regarding all the shortlisted in-development projects, please consult the **Appendix**. To stay updated on the latest news and details about the HKIFF Industry Project Market, please visit our official website at <https://industry.hkiff.org.hk>, our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/hkiffindustry>, or our Instagram page at <https://www.instagram.com/hkiffindustry/>.

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HKIFF Industry Project Market

Inaugurated in 2024, HKIFF Industry Project Market incorporates the long-running Hong Kong - Asia Film Financing Forum (HAF), the biennial HKIFF Industry - CAA China Genre Initiative (HCG), and the new Animation section added in 2025.

The new setup continues HAF's mission to create a supportive ecosystem for filmmakers with working projects for co-production ventures. Attracting more than 1,000 filmmakers and financiers from at least 35 countries and regions, around 25 in-development projects (IDP), 15 work-in-progress projects (WIP) and 5 animation projects are selected annually to participate in the three-day event. HKIFF Industry Project Market is held with the Hong Kong Filmart, Asia's largest film market, with over 8,000 professionals attending.

Official website: <https://industry.hkiff.org.hk>

The Hong Kong International Film Festival Society Limited

The Hong Kong International Film Festival Society Limited (HKIFFS) is a charitable, non-profit and non-governmental organisation dedicated to discovering and promoting creativity in film's art and culture. It organises the annual Hong Kong International Film Festival (HKIFF) and the Hong Kong - Asia Film Financing Forum (HAF). Another highlight is the Cine Fan Summer International Film Festival (SummerIFF) held every August. In 2013, HKIFF introduced the repertory HKIFF Cine Fan Programme to enrich and deepen Hong Kong moviegoers' experience through a monthly programme of contemporary, retrospective, and thematic showcases. In 2021, HKIFFS restructures its film industry services and set up HKIFF Industry to promote and support non-mainstream film industry development through co-production and festival strategies and overseas distribution (HKIFF Collection).

Official website: www.hkiff.org.hk

Appendix: Full List of the HAF In-Development Projects

* First narrative feature projects

^ HAF Film Lab projects

11. **2181 Overture**, Mainland China, Canada

Director: Wang Kunlin

Producer: Zhao Zheyuan

Production Company: Yeahcheer Pictures Co.

12. ***49 Days**, France, Mainland China

Director: Hu Wei

Producers: Sylvie Pialat, Nai An

Production Company: Les films du Worso

13. **Aanaikatti Blues**, India

Director: Arun Karthick

Producer: Madhu Mohan

Production Company: Manvasanai Cinema

14. **The Age of Goodbyes**, Taiwan, Malaysia

Director: Edmund Yeo

Producers: David Tang, Edmund Yeo, Dennis Lai, Zhao Jin

Production Companies: Renaissance Films Limited, Happy Together Pictures

15. **Besik. Homecoming**, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan

Director: Iskandar Usmonov

Producers: Diana Ashimova, Yerlan Ibragim, Iskandar Usmonov

Production Company: A Team

16. **The Bird Chaser**, Mainland China

Director: Zeng Zhi

Producers: Li Tianyu, Joey Zhu Yinying

Production Company: Beijing Pinwu Cultural Communication Co., Ltd.

17. **The Circumciser**, The Philippines

Director: Jun Robles Lana

Producers: Perci Intalan, Ferdy Lapuz

Production Company: The IdeaFirst Company

18. **Dead Tide**, Malaysia

Director: Kethsvin Chee

Producers: Lee Sinje, Jin Ong

Production Company: Fast Forward Films Sdn Bhd

19. **Drive South Pray West**, Thailand

Directors: Panu Aree, Kong Ritthdee

Producer: Panu Aree

Production Company: Drive South Pray West Pictures

I10. ***Giant Salamander***, Mainland China

Director: Yang Heng

Producer: Yang Heng

Production Company: Xiangxi Meixi Space Culture Media Co.

I11. ****Gone with the Wind***, Mainland China

Director: Zhao Yanming

Producer: Aubrey Zheng Liyan

Production Company: Beijing Daxiwang Culture Media Co., Ltd.

I12. ****Indigo Boy***, Taiwan

Director: Bill Chia

Producers: Yeh Ju-Feng, Ivy Y.H. Chiang

Production Company: Fragrant Creative Integration Co., Ltd.

I13. ****Innocent Flesh***, Mainland China

Director: Lin Yihan

Producers: Li Yuwen, Hattie Yu

Production Company: Vast Vista Films

I14. ***Lanka***, India

Director: Saurav Rai

Producers: Saurav Rai, Ankita Purkayastha

Production Company: Neonate Audio LLP

I15. ***Mabui***, Japan

Director: Fukunaga Takeshi

Producers: Yamaguchi Shin, Eric Nyari

Production Companies: KNOCKONWOOD Inc., Cineric Creative

I16. ***Open Fire***, Hong Kong

Directors: Sze Pak-lam, Lau Wing-tai

Producer: Ivan Wong

Production Company: Scene One Picture Limited

I17. ***Pivot***, Turkey

Director: Melisa Önel

Producer: Alara Hamamcioğlu Bayraktar

Production Company: Vigo Film

I18. ****Republic of Mahalaxmi Apartment***, India

Director: Niladri Mukherjee

Producers: Aditya Vikram Sengupta, Priyankar Patra

Production Company: For Films

I19. ****See You There***, Mainland China, Hong Kong

Director: Wong Yi-kwan

Producers: Wang Hongwei, Song Dafa

Production Company: Beijing Density Blue Film and Television Company

I20. ***Seoulers***, South Korea, USA

Directors: Hee Young Pyun, Jiajun Oscar Zhang

Producers: Heejung Oh, Huang Yue, Christine Shen

Production Company: Seesaw Pictures

I21. ***Somatization***, Mainland China

Director: Sun Xiao

Producers: Wang Hongwei, Song Dafa, Lyu Hang

Production Company: Beijing Granary Film Culture Co., Ltd.

I22. ***Something in the Way***, Hong Kong

Director: Fan Ka-chun

Producer: Lam Suk-yin

Production Company: LOUDPROVISION

I23. ***A Stranger at My Door***, Hong Kong, Mainland China

Director: Zheng Lu Xinyuan

Producer: Stanley Kwan Kam-pang

Production Company: N/A

I24. ***Waves Under the Sea***, Macau, Hong Kong, Mainland China

Director: Chan Sileong

Producers: Chan Hing-kai, Robin Yung

Production Company: N/A

I25. ***YELLOW***, Japan

Director: Yamaura Miyoh

Producers: Kore-eda Hirokazu, Ohinata Jun

Production Company: BUNBUKU