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[ENTERTAINMENT]

OTHERS

Cannes fest chief reacts to India being 'Country of Honour'

India has become the Country of Honour at Marche du Film or Cannes Market, as the prestigious festival kickstarted its 75thedition today.

Cannes Film festival general delegate Thierry Fremaux stands on a balcony at the Hotel Martinez on the eve of the opening of the Cannes Film Festival. (REUTERS)

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By Gautaman Bhaskaran

India has been named the Country of Honour at Marche du Film or Cannes Market, which runs parallel to the Festival, whose 75th edition begins its 12-day run today, May 17. Six Indian movies, including Madhavan's Rocketry will be screened at the Market. These have been picked by the Indian Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, and are not part of the Cannes' official selections. **(Read also: Deepika Padukone and Aishwarya Rai to Nayanthara: Indian celebs set to make a statement at Cannes 2022 red carpet)**

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As far as the official selections go, there is one Indian documentary – Shaunak Sen's All That Breathes, apart from two re-imaged titles in the Classics Section – Satyajit Ray's Pratidwandi and Aravindan's Thamp.

At a press conference in Cannes on Monday, Thierry Fremaux, General-Delegate of the Festival, said in reply to a question why India, despite its stand on Russia in the context of the Ukraine war, was being welcomed at the event: "We didn't keep a list of the films or countries which supported or didn't vote at the UN. We have a different position from that of France or the European Commission. One might consider that you should sanction countries that support Russia – well no, we haven't gone that far."

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Earlier, Cannes made it clear that it would not welcome any movie or director or journalist who was connected with Russia.

This, though, is not a blanket ban. It will apply only to those who support Russian President Vladimir Putin regime's war. So, we have Russian director Kirill Serebrennikov's latest feature, a historical drama, Tchaikovsky's Wife, competing for the top Palm d'Or. He is a known dissident who has opposed Putin's policies, and had been under house arrest before fleeing the country early this year.

Referring to the underrepresentation of women directors in the Festival, Fremaux added that "there is no rule or quota on gender equality. I don't think the total of five movies out of 21 directed by women in Competition could be considered so few, and the Festival is proud to have given several major awards at last year's event to women, including the Palme d'Or, Camera d'Or and Un Certain Regard Trophy."

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Asked why there was hardly any Black representation in the official sections, he added that the world was just emerging from a pandemic, and we should not draw any conclusions. Some countries were impacted more than others, and film production had also taken a hit.

The Festival runs through May 28.

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