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Deaf film festival gives voice to silence

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Bengaluru: They may not be able to hear but they are out to make themselves heard, and that too through the big screen. In its fourth edition, the India International Deaf Film Festival, being held at Jain University, Jayanagar, is screening short films themed on "Human relations amongst the deaf, hard for hearing and the hearing". The festival has received around 70 submissions of varying lengths, of which 32 entries are from India and 38 from foreign filmmakers.

Inaugurating the festival on Wednesday, C Senthil Rajan, director, directorate of film festival under the ministry of information and broadcasting, said the directorate would look at partnering with festival organizers — Deaf Leaders Foundation (DLF) — to ensure the movies get maximum visibility.

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"With each passing year, DLF has been organizing the festival on a larger scale. The visual medium is particularly effective in making a statement. The directorate is hoping to partner with DLF to organize more such events. We will also ensure that the films are viewed by a diverse audience. We will extend our support by screening the films at film festi-

als organized by us as a tribute to the community of deaf filmmakers," said Rajan.

Referring to Modi's Accessible India campaign, he added that the directorate would also look into how the skills of the deaf filmmakers could be enhanced at the community level.

Speaking on the occasion, Parvinder Singh from CBM India, an NGO, expressed his admiration for the deaf community and spoke of overturning mindsets organically. "I can feel the strength of your silence. It's an invisible issue, even within the disabled community. We need to move towards an inclusive mainstream society that can accommodate and treat differences with respect. Their silence does not mean they are voiceless," he said.

Sunil Sahasrabudhe, whose short film about visual access to information, earned a round of applause

from the 120-odd members of the audience, emphasized the need for sign language to be recognized as an Indian language. Apart from India, there were participants from Hong Kong, the UK, Sri Lanka and Australia.

"There are so many languages spoken and recognized in India but sign language isn't recognized yet. It's an age-old linguistic right that we are all entitled to," he said.

The inauguration was preceded by a lecture educating the deaf community on how to go about making animated films. Professor B Satish of the department of animation at Jain University drew a parallel between the works of famous mime artist Charlie Chaplin and the hearing impaired. "Deaf people are so expressive that they can blend great emotions in animated characters. Sometimes they understand nuances better than us," he said.