

**For Immediate Release**

## **HAF24 ANNOUNCES FIRST IN-DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS**



**Hong Kong, 19 January 2026** – The Hong Kong International Film Festival Society (HKIFFS) today announced the first 17 In-Development projects shortlisted for the 24<sup>th</sup> edition of the Hong Kong - Asia Film Financing Forum (HAF24).

These projects are currently in the scriptwriting and financing stages. They will be showcased at HAF24 from 17 to 19 March at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, as part of the HKIFF Industry Project Market, alongside the 30<sup>th</sup> Hong Kong International Film & TV Market (FILMART).

HKIFFS plans to announce additional shortlisted In-Development projects, focusing on genre and animation, as well as Work-in-Progress projects, in the coming weeks.

This year, HKIFFS received 414 submissions of In-Development projects from 38 countries and regions, with Asian entries accounting for 82% of the total. These submissions included projects from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Macau, Mainland China, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam.

The selection highlights compelling storytelling and diverse cultural perspectives, covering genres from comedy and fantasy to suspense and romance. The programme features work by emerging directors such as Sasha Chuk, Story Chen Jianying, and Emma Kawawada, as well as projects by established filmmakers who are mentoring as producers, including Stanley Kwan, Anthony Chen, and Shiina Yasushi.

### **Highlights of HAF24's 17 In-Development projects:**

#### **HONG KONG FLAVOUR**

Following the critically acclaimed *Fly Me to the Moon* (2023 Tokyo IFF), director Sasha Chuk and producer Stanley Kwan reteam on **131**. The drama revolves around two masseuses and a construction worker as they reshape their futures, moving between Shenzhen and Hong Kong.

Director Vincci Cheuk (*Vital Signs*, 2023 HKIFF closing film) collaborates with Japanese producer Koga Shunsuke (2022 Berlinale's *Small, Slow but Steady*) on **38.83**, an intergenerational comedy about a 38-year-old woman's unexpected connection with her 83-year-old grandmother on an unavoidable trip.

TV series writer-turned-director Cheung Wai-yu and producer Peter Yam (*Sunny Side of the Street*, 2022 Golden Horse Awards winner) wholeheartedly embrace **Mama Mia Let Me Go!**, a lively comedy-drama centred around a young woman who organises for her mother to meet a young beau to escape her stifling home.

Produced by Chan Hing-kai, Guo Yu-tian's **Forgetting She is She** narrates a story of conflicted identities and twisted love: having mistaken her stalker for her lost sibling, the writer confronts a haunting past involving a long-buried murder.

## FANTASY AND ABSURDITY

A Malayalam absurdist parable set along Kerala's coast, **Fishers of Men** by Sanju Surendran (2025 Busan's *If on a Winter's Night*) depicts an Indian vegetarian banker's transcendent transformation that begins with an inexplicably frantic obsession with fish.

**Have a Good Trip** by Xu Jianming (*Crow*, 2025 Shanghai's Best Live-Action Short Film Winner) weaves seven strange tales together through a band of eerie characters in a small town: a doctor who hasn't left his clinic for decades, a town fool, and a man who claims to have ants in his ears.

Set in Xinjiang, **The Flower Seller** by Emetjan Memet (*Good Drink Pub*) explores the inner world of a depressed man whose whimsical encounters with a flower seller reignite his will to live.

## LOVE AND BEREAVEMENT

**A Drop in the Sea**, produced by Zhang Fan (*Living the Land*, 2025 Berlinale Silver Bear winner) for Paris-based director Xiao Baer, follows an entrepreneurial Chinese woman as she travels to Algeria for her brother's Janazah (a Muslim funeral), uncovering an aspect of her sibling's life previously unknown to her.

**Funeral Flowers**, the feature debut of Liza Diño and Ice Segueria, takes place entirely in a chapel during the wake of a political patriarch, where the politician's daughter must confront estranged siblings and mistresses while navigating the public spectacle.

Produced by Takahashi Naoya of Toei Company for director Emma Kawawada (2022 Berlinale title *My Small Land*), **Life is Yours** narrates the revenge story of an elderly cleaner who plans to reclaim her stolen land at a ski resort in Niseko.

***My Phantom***, directed by Story Chen Jianying (*The Water Murmurs*, 2022 Cannes Palme d'Or for shorts), takes its characters on a dreamlike journey through Kyoto as a Chinese writer encounters a man who resembles her late fiancé, whom she lost on their wedding day.

***The Funeral March***, produced by TIFFCOM chief Shiina Yasushi for director Fujita Naoya (*Confetti*, 2023 Skip City International D-Cinema Festival's opening film), highlights a woman recluse who steals her mother's corpse and ventures into the snowy landscape of Hokkaido to fulfil a burial promise.

## BORDERS WITHIN

***Heading South***, Yuan Yuan's feature debut produced by Wang Jing (2021 Cannes' *Are You Lonesome Tonight?*), introduces the world of a 13-year-old Mongolian girl who feels torn between her traditional roots and the appeal of K-pop dance and city life.

Produced by Anthony Chen (director of the Cannes Camera d'Or winner *Ilo Ilo*) for director Tan Ce Ding, ***Somewhere in the South*** centres on an aimless young man caught up in a political campaign during a by-election in a small Malaysian town.

***Stuck Like Babies*** by Dastan Zhapar Ryskeldi (2024 Busan's *Deal at the Border*) is a comedy-drama about a hardened Kyrgyz commander who forms an unlikely bond with a compassionate Tajik doctor when they find a baby of unknown nationality at a tense border.

Based on a novel by Ryohei Machiya, ***The Blue Breaks*** from Uchiyama Takuya (*Numb*, 2025 Tokyo Filmex Special Jury Prize) portrays the life of a Japanese drifter born through sperm donation. Through encounters with strangers and an old lover, he gradually reconnects with his surroundings.

***Vulnerable Observer*** by Jiang Xiaoxuan (*To Kill a Mongolian Horse*, 2024 HKIFF Firebird Award winner) follows an anthropologist travelling to the Mongolian region to seek breakthroughs in her academic research, only for the local guide's initially friendly motives to become unclear.

## GUEST AND MEDIA ACCREDITATION

Investors, festival organisers, industry professionals, and media can now register via <https://industry.hkiff.org.hk/guest-media-registration>. Once accredited, all guests will be able to request one-on-one meetings with filmmakers. Media representatives will have access to all official events.

For specific information on all the shortlisted in-development projects, please refer to 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> and our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/hkiffindustry>, or our Instagram page at <https://www.instagram.com/hkiffindustry>.

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The HKIFF Industry Project Market serves as the Hong Kong International Film Festival Society's flagship industry platform. It aims to support filmmakers by facilitating project funding, co-production collaborations, and networking opportunities, advancing outstanding cinematic projects from development to the international stage.

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).

Website: [www.hkiff.org.hk](http://www.hkiff.org.hk)

**Appendix: Full list of the 24th HAF-IDP Projects**

\* First narrative feature projects

^ HAF Film Lab projects

I1. **131**, Hong Kong

Director: Sasha Chuk

Producer: Stanley Kwan Kam-pang

Production Company: The Flow of Words Limited

I2. **38.83**, Hong Kong, Japan

Director: Vincci Cheuk

Producer: Koga Shunsuke

Production Company: 2882 ProdCo Limited

I3. **The Blue Breaks**, Japan

Director: Uchiyama Takuya

Producer: Satoh Naomi

Production Company: Differentia

I4. **\*A Drop in the Sea**, Mainland China, Algeria, France

Director: Xiao Baer

Producers: Khir-Din Grid, Zhang Fan

Production Company: Nouvelle Toile, Bifun Pictures

I5. **Fishers of Men**, India

Director: Sanju Surendran

Producers: Pramod Sankar, Rajeev Ravi, Kiran Kesav

Production Company: Cloud Door Films

I6. **The Flower Seller**, Mainland China

Director: Emetjan Memet

Producer: Wang Hongwei, Derek Zhang

Production Company: Wuhan Yidapai Culture Media Co., Ltd.

I7. **\*^Forgetting She is She**, Hong Kong

Director: Guo Yu-tian

Producer: Chan Hing-kai

Production Company: People's Productions Ltd.

I8. **\*Funeral Flowers**, The Philippines

Directors: Liza Diño, Ice Seguer

Producer: Krisma Fajardo

Production Company: Fire & Ice Media

I9. **The Funeral March**, Japan, Mainland China

Director: Fujita Naoya

Producers: Shiina Yasushi, Aiken Zou, Zou Lin, Fujita Kanako

Production Company: Y'S LTD., AHAVERSE

I10. \***Have a Good Trip**, Mainland China

Director: Xu Jianming

Producer: Bi Guangming

Production Company: Zhanyangfan Pictures (Hangzhou) Co., Ltd.

I11. \***Heading South**, Mainland China

Director: Yuan Yuan

Producer: Wang Jing

Production Company: To be confirmed

I12. **Life is Yours**, Japan

Director: Emma Kawawada

Producer: Takahashi Naoya, Eiko Mizuno-Gray

Production Company: Toei, Loaded Films

I13. \***Mama Mia Let Me Go!**, Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan

Director: Cheung Wai-yu

Producer: Peter Yam

Production Company: 70 Plus Production Company Limited

I14. **My Phantom**, Mainland China

Director: Story Chen Jianying

Producers: Li Xiaoyuan

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

I15 \***Somewhere in the South**, Malaysia

Director: Tan Ce Ding

Producers: Anthony Chen, Edward Lim, Yap Khai Soon

Production Company: Giraffe Pictures

I16. **Stuck Like Babies** (Zholdogu Bala), Kyrgyzstan

Director: Dastan Zhapar Ryskeldi

Producers: Veronica Rhyme, Fernanda Renno, Florence Stern

Production Company: Kyrgyzfilm

I17. **Vulnerable Observer**, Hong Kong, Mainland China, Malaysia

Director: Jiang Xiaoxuan

Producers: Zhao Ziyang

Production Company: HUniche Pictures