

It's easier in India, say foreign filmmakers

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PANAJI: Foreign filmmakers from countries with smaller economies at the International Film Festival of India (Iffi) are envious of their counterparts in India. The envy, they say, is because unlike them, Indian filmmakers don't have to bank on state funds and the inevitable stranglehold on creativity.

"The Swedish film industry is very small and most of the films are government-funded. There are no big production companies in the country so filmmakers have to look for financiers, often from other countries. The filmmaker then has to walk a tightrope as sometimes there are multiple financiers and each one has a different opinion," explained director Simon Kaijser Da Silva, whose film Stockholm East is being screened at the ongoing Iffi.

If the Swedish market is small with a population of just nine million, it is even tougher for filmmakers in New Zealand with a head count of only four million.

"New Zealand has the most unbelievable film technicians. Lord of the Rings, Avatar and Tintin were some recent films made in the country with the help of local professionals. But the domestic market is not enough for local films to make profits. Some small budget filmmakers make very interesting films but their local content limits the audience they can go to," said New Zealand filmmaker Micheal Bennett.

In Algeria in North Africa, the ministry of culture funds a large share of the country's films. But to say that the ministry is tight-fisted about releasing funds is an understatement, filmmaker Fatima Zohra Zamaroum said. "In a good year, there are 10-12 films released in Algeria," she said.

Filmmakers in the country have to look to the prominent French film industry for funding, but creative freedom is compromised if the film contains political content.

The relative easy availability of funds for films in India has attracted the Algerian-who is only the third female filmmaker in her country- Eastwards for her next movie.

"I am researching in India for content for my next film. It will be collaboration with financiers in the country. I don't know what my film will be on as yet," said Zamaroum.

Portugal, where also most of the films are state-funded, the most expensive film is worth 7,00,000 euros which is available to be won by filmmakers as award money under a state scheme. But the catch is that the subject has to appeal to the authorities.

It is even tougher in Macedonia where only two films are made a year, for which the finances come from the local government. Filmmaker Milcho Manchevski from Macedonia said, "Indian filmmakers have more options available in terms of finances. When one has to woo financiers from bigger European countries, in case of countries like ours, there is always a battle for those wanting to make artistic films."