

MSE-SPICE SCHEME

The MSE-SPICE (Micro and Small Enterprises - Support for International Cooperation and Export) scheme is a government initiative designed to enhance the global competitiveness of micro and small enterprises (MSEs) in India. This scheme primarily aims to assist MSEs in their efforts to explore international markets and expand their export potential. It is part of the broader strategy of boosting India's export capabilities and encouraging small enterprises to scale their businesses globally.

The scheme supports MSEs in building collaborations with international businesses, organizations, and institutions. It encourages participation in international trade fairs, exhibitions, buyer-seller meets, and other global platforms that provide exposure to foreign markets.

One of the central goals of the MSE-SPICE scheme is to promote the export potential of micro and small enterprises. By fostering international connections, the scheme helps MSEs understand global market trends, standards, and consumer preferences, thus boosting their export performance.

Under the scheme, MSEs are provided with financial assistance for international cooperation activities. This may include expenses related to market research, international travel for business meetings, participation in trade fairs, and engaging in promotional activities in foreign markets. Financial support is offered on a reimbursable basis, and the extent of assistance depends on the activity. The scheme also focuses on the capacity-building aspect of MSEs. It supports training programs and workshops that help entrepreneurs and their teams develop skills required to succeed in international markets, including knowledge about export documentation, logistics, marketing strategies, and compliance with international standards. MSE-SPICE helps small enterprises adopt new technologies, improve product quality, and innovate to meet international market demands. This is particularly important in sectors where India has a competitive advantage, such as textiles, handicrafts, and information technology.

To avail of benefits under the MSE-SPICE scheme, an enterprise must be classified as a Micro or Small Enterprise under the definition provided by the Government of India. The enterprise should be registered and involved in manufacturing or service provision and must demonstrate a commitment to expanding into international markets.

The MSE-SPICE scheme serves as a crucial enabler for micro and small enterprises in India, offering them the tools and resources needed to access global markets, build international collaborations, and boost their export activities. With increased support for technology, market access, this initiative aims to empower small businesses.

IFFI 2024: A Cinematic Celebration, A Record-Breaking Showcase, and A Few Laughs Along the Way

■ SHEKHAR KAPUR

As I sit here reflecting on the 55th International Film Festival of India (IFFI), I believe cinema is not just about the length of a film, but the impact it leaves behind. And has IFFI 2024 left an impact! If this year's festival were a movie, it would have been a blockbuster - filled with new stories, unforgettable performances, and a plot twist or two that left us all wide-eyed.

Cinema has been at the heart of our nation since 1913, when India released its first film. Since then, our audiences have embraced it like no other, making us the largest creators and consumers of films in the world. This year, I asked the festival authorities to celebrate the very people who have made this possible - our audiences. It's because of their unwavering support that we've grown to where we are today.

The festival has once again proven that cinema is a universal language, transcending time, borders, and generations. From record-breaking attendance to the incredible stories told by young filmmakers, IFFI 2024 was like a classic movie - full of vibrance, colour, and unforgettable moments. But unlike most films, the credits won't roll after this. Instead, we're all left waiting for the next chapter.

Let's start with the numbers: 11,000-plus attendees, marking a 12% increase from last year. The Film Bazaar emerged as one of the biggest film markets, with a staggering 142% growth in delegates and 1,876 participants. This meant more collaboration, more partnerships, and more creative minds coming together.

We even expanded our screening venues to six new locations in Goa - because let's face it, when you have a festival this grand, you need more screens than a multiplex. We also added

a Kala Academy temporary theater to give everyone in Goa a front-row seat to the action - and the venues saw people's faces lit up during the screenings.

IFFI 2024 was all about youth - and not just the kind you can find in the films, but in the filmmakers behind them. With the theme "Young Filmmakers: The Future is Now," we showcased the best of what's coming up next in Indian cinema. While watching some of the 66 films by debut filmmakers, it truly echoes, "We are witnessing the birth of new legends right here."

The Creative Minds of Tomorrow (CMOT) program was one of the highlights, bringing 100 young filmmakers together to create and innovate. And as if that wasn't enough, they were thrown into a 48-hour short film challenge that had the energy of a thriller - fast-paced, high-stakes, and full of excitement. The results? 62 offers from major production houses! That's not just the future - that's the future knocking on your door.

There was also an emphasis on new expertise, with masterclasses on cutting-edge technologies like AI. These sessions underscored that the future of storytelling lies in evolving formats and fast-changing tools, but at its core, the art of storytelling remains timeless.

While we were all excited about the young voices of today, IFFI also took a moment to honour the titans of Indian cinema - the ones who created the very language of storytelling we celebrate today. This year, we paid tribute to Raj Kapoor, Mohammed Rafi, Akkineni Nageswara Rao, and Tapan Sinha. Their films are like the great classics we all turn to, the ones that remind us why we fell in love with cinema in the first place.

Special screenings of their timeless classics like Awaara, Devadasu, and Hum Dono had

us reliving the magic, while a stunning sand art installation by Sudarshan Pattanaik at Miramar Beach had us all appreciating the legacy of these legends in a new light. Also there was tribute to these legends through the 'MY STAMP' to immortalize their contributions. If there's a stamp that captures the essence of cinema, it's one with their faces on it.

Each year, IFFI celebrates the cinematic achievements of a focus nation. This year's Focus Country was Australia, and what a fantastic choice - a choice close to my heart given the incredible Australians I've had the honor of working with - Cate Blanchett, Geoffrey Rush, Heath Ledger, Abbie Cornish, Jill Bilcock.

Along with seven Australian films, we had the privilege of hosting Hugo Weaving and Phillip Noyce. We also had a robust delegation of Australian producers and filmmakers, sparking a new chapter of collaborations between our two film industries. Expect to see some India-Australia co-productions soon - and no, I'm not talking about a Bollywood-Western hybrid (though that would be fun).

A film festival is a celebration, and where better to celebrate than in Goa?

This year's IFFIESTA wasn't just a side event; it was a celebration in itself. From the food stalls to live performances by Asees Kaur and PARADOX, it was a carnival that showed what happens when cinema meets culture. And the NIFT fashion show celebrating six decades of Indian cinema - a true tribute to the Indian Cinema. And the 'Journey of Indian Cinema' exhibition by the Central Bureau of Communication? 18,000 visitors later, I can safely say that Indian cinema's legacy is alive and kicking. As I look back on IFFI 2024, I can confi-

dently say we've set a new benchmark for what a film festival can be. I feel immense pride in how far we've come. We adopted Western technology to create Raja Harishchandra, India's first film, and have since built the largest film industry in the world. Our audiences deserve the best, and this year's IFFI delivered just that - the largest and most dynamic edition yet.

IFFI 2024 was a celebration of the past, present, and future of cinema. We celebrated new voices, honoured the legends, and embraced storytelling in all its forms. This edition of IFFI wasn't just a festival; it was a celebration of what makes cinema truly magical.

Running a festival of this magnitude is no small feat. My heartfelt thanks go to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the Entertainment Society of Goa, the National Film Development Corporation, and others who made this possible.

Thank you to everyone who made this possible, the filmmakers, the delegates, the volunteers, and most importantly, the people of Goa. The people of Goa are the soul of this festival. Their warmth and hospitality make IFFI truly special. IFFI is poised to grow further, with the support of the industry and the people of Goa as its pillars.

And yes, I've learned one thing from all this: cinema is like a good plot twist - you never see it coming, but when it hits, it hits hard. Here's to the magic of storytelling and to the sequel of this incredible journey.

As for me, I'll be waiting for the sequel, and this time, I promise I'll get some sleep before it starts.

(The writer is Festival Director, 55th International Film Festival of India 2024)

ISRO's latest space feat-PSLV-C59/Proba-3 Mission

■ OMKAR DATTATRAY

Indian Space Research Organization known as ISRO is persistently and continuously adding new feathers to its research achievements. ISRO PSLV-59 successfully launched with European Space Agency's Proba-3. After being rescheduled for a day due to anomaly detected, the ISRO on Thursday successfully launched the European Space Agency's [ESA] Proba-3 mission aboard the PSLV-C59 rocket. PSLV-C59 carried Proba-3 spacecraft into a highly elliptical orbit as a Dedicated commercial mission of New Space India Limited [NSIL] on December 5, 2024 at 16.04 Hrs. Proba-3 is an In-Orbit The vehicle took off with a powerful roar, precisely at 4.04 Pm from the first launch pad at the SDSC, Sriharikota, the home to several rocket launches in India. This mission marks a global milestone as the world's first precision formation flying demonstration in space. It aims to study the Corona, which is hotter than the Sun's surface, and explore the solar wind which is a stream of charged particles emanating from Sun, says P.V.Venkitakrishnan, former director of the capacity Building Programme office, ISRO headquarters. He said that another flawless launch by the Indian Space Research Organization's reliable workforce, the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle -PSLV, the PSLV -C59/PROBA-3 today on

5th December 2024 successfully launched European Space Agency [ESA] PROBA-3 Satellites into a highly elliptical orbit. This marks the successful collaboration of New Space India Ltd [NSIL], ISRO & ESA. Proba-3 is ESA's and the world's first precision formation flying mission. A pair of satellites were flown together, maintaining a fixed configuration as if they were a single large rigid structure in space, to prove innovative formation flying and rendezvous technologies. The launch was originally planned at 14.08 hrs on Wednesday that is 4th December, but was delayed by a day due to an anomaly detected in the PROBA-3 spacecraft. At 14.04hrs today on 5th December, the rocket left the First Launch Pad from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre [SDSC], Sriharikota, and roared into the clear blue sky. The "PSLV-C59 has successfully soared into the skies, marking the commencement of a global mission led by NSIL, with ISRO's technical expertise, to deploy ESA's groundbreaking PROBA-3 satellite. A proud moment celebrating the synergy of international collaboration and India's space achievements," ISRO said in its social media post. Proba-3 is an In-Orbit Demonstration mission of the ESA. The mission goal is to demonstrate the precise flying of formations. It consists of 2 spacecraft-the Coronagraph Spacecraft and the Occulter Spacecraft -and was

launched together in a stacked configuration. Proba-3 will function as an orbital laboratory, demonstrating acquisition, rendezvous, proximity operations and formation flying while validating innovative metrology sensors and control algorithms, opening up novel methods of OSC blocks out sion control. The two satellites will adopt a fixed configuration in space, 150m apart, while lined up with the sun so that OSC blocks out the brilliant solar disk for the CSC. This will open up continuous views of the sun's faint corona, or surrounding atmosphere, for scientific observation. ESA's website said, "A pair of spacecraft were launched together today from India with the potential to change the nature of future space missions. ESA's twin Proba-3 platforms will perform precise formation flying down to a single millimeter, as if they were one single giant spacecraft. To demonstrate their degree of control, the pair will produce artificial solar eclipses in orbit, giving prolonged views of the Sun's ghostly surrounding atmosphere, the corona." Fourteen ESA Member States, including Canada, came together on this mission, which was set to demonstrate game-changing European technology in the areas of autonomous operations and precision maneuvering by delivering never-before-seen science results. Stacked together, the two satellites separated from their upper at age about 18

minutes after launch. The pair will remain attached while initial commissioning occurs, overseen by mission control at European Space Security and Education Centre, ESEC, in Redu, Belgium. Proba-3 mission manager Damien Galano said, "I am grateful to ISRO for this picture-perfect ascent to orbit. Now hard work really begins, because to achieve Proba-3 mission goals, the two satellites need to achieve positioning accuracy down to the thickness of the average fingernail while positioned one and half football pitches apart." The latest and historical feat achieved by ISRO is the launch of PSLV-C59/PROBA-3 mission and by its launch most recently ISRO has once again created history. The PSLV-C59/PROBA-3 mission has successfully achieved its launch objectives, deploying ESA's satellites into the designated orbit with precision. Global Space Exploration Conference - GLEX 2025 will be held 7th-9th May 2025. The third developmental flight of SSLV is successful. The SSLV -D3 placed EOS-08 precisely into the orbit. ISRO completes its RLV technology demonstrations through LEX trio. For this historical and milestone launch ISRO chairman Dr Somanath was Live on Instagram. ISRO has on 5th December 2024 launched PSLV-C59/PROBA-3 mission successfully. The Indian space Research organiza-

tion -ISRO launched Europe's twin Probe-3 spacecraft on Thursday. The Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle [PSLV-C59] in a picture-perfect launch began its journey to space a day after the launch was postponed. ISRO's PSLV-XL lifts off with Europe's Probe-3 mission to space. The launch vehicle is on its way to space to deploy Probe-3 in an elliptical orbit around Earth. The mission will be completed in 1122 seconds. This moment is inspiring and wonderful to all lovers of space exploration. The new satellite has been launched at Sriharikota Andhra Pradesh's Satish Dhawan Space Centre. As per the ESA's request, the launch of PSLV -C59/PROBA-3 had been rescheduled on 5th December 2024 and thus it has been launched on this date. ISRO PSLV-XL Probe-3 mission launched. Satellite injection complete. Proba-3 separates and deployed into elliptical orbit formation flying in space. ISRO mission director said that Proba-3 mission fully accomplished. ISRO PSLV-XL lifts off with Europe's Proba-3 mission to space. ISRO is strengthening global collaboration. On December 4, 2024, ISRO & ESA signed a technical implementing Plan to provide ground tracking support for the Gaganyaan Mission. A major step for seamless orbital operations. The Proba-3 mission by the European space Agency -ESA and India's Aditya

L1 mission differ significantly in their objectives and operational designs. Proba-3 focuses on technology demonstration through two satellites, the Occulter and the Coronagraph, which work in precise formation to create artificial solar eclipses for extended observations of the sun's corona. This mission emphasizes formation flying technology and aims to stimulate solar eclipses, allowing for up to six hours of continuous observation. In contrast Aditya 1 is a single spacecraft positioned at the Sun-Earth Lagrange Point 1-L1, approximately 1.5 million kilometers from Earth. It aims for comprehensive solar research, including studying solar winds, magnetic fields, and coronal mass ejections, thereby providing insights into space weather dynamics affecting Earth. The Proba-3 twin satellite will offer a novel view of the sun's surrounding atmosphere, or corona. A million times fainter-but larger in expanse than the sun itself-the enigmatic corona is the source of space weather and the solar wind. The team from the ESA had been in India to integrate the spacecraft with the PSLV-XL rocket. In brief we can say that the present PROBA-3 with PSLV-C59 is another feat in the space achievements of ISRO.

(The author is a columnist, social and KP activist)

Rise of adventure sports in Kashmir

■ MOHAMMAD HANIEF

Kashmir is becoming a popular destination for adventure tourism due to its natural beauty, diverse topography, and climate as the valley's snow-capped mountains and valleys offering perfect settings for trekking, skiing, and white-water rafting. Efforts are being made to promote lesser-known destinations within Kashmir, encouraging travellers to explore offbeat paths and discover hidden gems.

In addition to the remarkable increase in tourist arrivals, Jammu and Kashmir is witnessing several other exciting developments in its tourism sector. New roads, improved connectivity, and upgraded facilities are being developed to ensure that tourists can easily and comfortably explore the region's natural beauty.

Kashmir offers the tourists to choose from a plethora of adventurous sporting events of trekking, mountain climbing, mountain biking, river rafting, horse polo, golf, para-gliding, fishing, skiing, hunting, backpacking, kayaking, bicycling, canoe trips, snow skiing, cross-country skiing, heli-skiing, ski-mountaineering, water skiing, camping, rock climbing, hiking, snowboarding and trans-Himalayan jeep safaris.

Kashmir is marked by four seasons and all seasons are permissible to take up any adventure

activity in Jammu and Kashmir. With this huge potential for adventure tourism, Kashmir is one of the

most sought after tourist destinations of India for both domestic as well as foreign tourists and adventure seekers all through the year.

The foothills of Jammu, the magnificent mountains of Ladakh, and the lakes and valleys of Kashmir that soar high into the skies offer a number of activities for people of all age groups. In fact, every region offers a number of adventure activities depending on the geographical structure and climatic conditions. The spirit of adventure and desire to explore leads us to scale mountains and dive deep in the oceans.

The lakes and rivers of Jammu and Kashmir are mostly fed by melting glaciers. At high altitudes, these waterways are fast paced. A few of them make their way through the rocky landscapes of Zaskar and Ladakh, perfect for white water rafting. The river Indus and river Zaskar are the major rivers that are used for wild water rafting, parasailing, and swimming.

Pahalgam is one of those locations, where facilities for angling, canoeing and kayaking are provided. The most popular activity in the lakes of Jammu and Kashmir is trout fishing.

The mystical lands of Zaskar and Ladakh, are the best places for mountaineering and several other sports. The snowy slopes and rocky mountains are perfect locations for skiing and trekking. The steep hills of the Himalaya and Karakoram range are equipped with all the facilities relating to these sports.

Gulmarg is a world famous hill station for skiing. The route of Sonmarg to Pahalgam is covered



with dense alpine, ideal for trying out Alpine Skiing. Apart from this, sports like cross country skiing, snowboarding and ice skating have unlimited possibilities in the entire Kashmir valley.

In Ladakh and forested hills of Jammu, one can enjoy Bungee Jumps, Mountain Cycling, Jeep Safaris and Cave Exploration. Apart from all such adventures, Gulmarg has one of the world's highest green golf courses.

Sports like Paragliding, Hot Air Ballooning, Air Surfing and Sky Diving are becoming increasingly popular with the youth. Zaskar, Sanasar and few other parts of Jammu are hot spots for hot air ballooning. One can find several training camps that are set up for Paragliding.

These adventure activities can be

endorsed in any season. Jammu and Kashmir, the paradise on earth, is not only about natural beauty and romantic weather, but the best adventure sports.

Exploring new and innovative arenas and activities in adventure sports would not only throw gates of opportunities wide open, but would provide an ample opportunity to tourism players to explore innovative ways to grab domestic and foreign footfall, facilitate adventure sports organizers, professionals and lovers to pool in their efforts to explore more possibilities and potentialities. This would encourage more adventure sports activities, promote adventure tourism, bring in more areas on tourism world map, generate more income and livelihood, enhance skill management, earn more profits and ensure well-being.

The existing infrastructure offers just a baseline support; real push will emerge from strong public-private partnerships. Huge challenges on account of planning, connectivity, infrastructure, marketing, promotional strategies, trained human resources and other skills cannot be underestimated. All these gaps could be timely and thoroughly addressed to sustain adventure sports activities on eco-friendly and sustainable lines.

Given the trends emerging in both the tourism and sports sectors, it is not surprising that significant growth is also occurring in travel for sports related purposes. Sports tourism attractions are destinations that provide tourists with things to see and do related to sport. Attractions can be natural (parks, mountains, wildlife) or manmade (museums, stadiums, stores).

General characteristics represented in this core area of sports tourism include visits to state-of-the-art sports facilities and/or unique sports facilities that generally house sporting events such as stadiums, arenas and domes; sports museums and hall/walls of fame dedicated to sports heritage and honoring sports heroes and leaders; hiking trails developed for exploring nature and so on.

Sports tourism resorts are well planned and integrated resort complexes with sports or health as their primary focus and marketing strategy. In many situations, these vacation centers offer high-quality facilities and services to sport tourists.

One of the popular activity, especially in winter, is skiing in Kashmir.

However, this sport doesn't remain restricted to only winters. It is an adventure that can be enjoyed all around the year. The lofty summits and the shimmering snow provide tourists with the ideal setting to enjoy a winter delight like skiing. Gulmarg is the perfect place for such sport and relishes the game with your heart's content. Equipment necessary for skiing like skis, sticks, boots, goggles, and gloves is all available in the local Gulmarg ski shops.

Apart from Gulmarg, one can also enjoy skiing in Pahalgam. Adventurers here can enjoy the winter sun and snow. Tourists can take part in various skiing activities like snowboarding, hockey skiing, and ice skiing. The crystal clear snow-capped hills and the tranquility of Kashmir calls tourists to visit and explore this abode of snow and ice.

The soothing mountain zephyrs blowing over the mossy green valleys and the soaring snow-covered cliffs reflecting on the blue waters of the lakes are flawless instances of the natural union that make Kashmir one among the breathtaking escaping places in the Himalayan region. One can visit Kashmir for a leisure getaway and indulge in adventure sports. The region has emerged into a hub of adventure sports.

More adventure sports opportunities would mean secure and sustainable livelihoods for those directly or indirectly related with sports and tourism sector. Establishing a sustainable adventure sports portfolio for the Valley also means investing in building infrastructure and developing skill sets.