

CANNES 2026

The Croisette comes alive with global stars and auteur cinema



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

The global celebration of cinema is officially underway as the Cannes Film Festival opens in dazzling fashion on the French Riviera, once again transforming the coastal city into the epicentre of world cinema. Over the next 12 days, Cannes will host an intense lineup of screenings, premieres, and red-carpet moments that bring together some of the biggest names in international filmmaking.

Running from May 12 to May 23, this year's edition continues to emphasise auteur-driven storytelling and international cinema, with a comparatively smaller presence of mainstream Hollywood productions. A total of 22 films are in competition for the coveted Palme d'Or, to be awarded on May 23. The selection reflects a wide cinematic spectrum, blending established



John Lennon

PHOTOS: COLLECTED

part of this year's edition. Filmmaker Peter Jackson, best known for *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, will receive an Honorary Palme d'Or during the opening ceremony in recognition of his contribution to global cinema. Meanwhile, Oscar-winning actress and filmmaker Barbra Streisand will be honoured during the closing ceremony, celebrating her six-decade-long impact across film and music.

Among the most anticipated appearances is that of acclaimed Russian independent director Andrey Zvyagintsev, whose presence carries both artistic and personal significance. The Oscar-nominated filmmaker behind *Leviathan* and *Loveless* survived a severe battle with Covid-19 that left him hospitalised for months. He later left Russia following the country's 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

Zvyagintsev returns with *Minotaur*, his first film since 2017, which delves into the sensitive and politically charged reality of Russia's bourgeois class confronting military conscription at the onset of the Ukraine war.

In another notable addition to the programme, director Steven Soderbergh will present his documentary *John Lennon: The Last Interview*, built around audio recordings of the Beatles legend conducted hours before his death. The film reconstructs the interview using archival material alongside AI-generated imagery, a creative choice that has already sparked debate.

As ever, Cannes is also set to dominate global pop culture beyond the screen. The next two weeks will see a steady stream of A-list arrivals and headline-making red-carpet appearances.

Among them, Scarlett Johansson and Adam Driver will promote *Paper Tiger*, directed by James Gray. Rami Malek will appear for *The Man I Love*, directed by Ira Sachs.

Other major names expected on the Croisette include Javier Bardem, Renate Reinsve, Kristen Stewart, and Woody Harrelson, all part of films premiering at the festival.

Further star power is anticipated with appearances from Julianne Moore and Cate Blanchett, ensuring that Cannes 2026 remains as much a fashion and celebrity spectacle as it is a celebration of cinema.

Monchosharothi Aaur Rahman on life support

Veteran theatre personality and cultural activist Aaur Rahman, widely known as Monchosharothi, remains critically ill. According to family sources, the Ekushey Padak and Swadhinata Padak awardee has been on life support for the past 10 days following a fall that led to multiple organ complications.

His daughter, Sharmistha Rahman, confirmed the matter to The Daily Star. She said, "Doctors are not very hopeful at this moment. All we can do now is wait for a miracle from the Almighty. A few days ago, during these 10 days, he showed slight improvement. However, his condition worsened again, and since Sunday, he has been back on ventilation. I request everyone to pray for him."

Aaur Rahman is regarded as one of the pioneers of Bangladesh's group theatre movement. He served as the founding general secretary of Nagorik Natya Sampradaya and played a significant role in shaping the country's modern stage drama culture over several decades.

For his immense contribution to theatre and culture, he was awarded the prestigious Ekushey Padak in 2001. In 2021, he received the country's highest civilian honour, the Swadhinata Padak.

Throughout his illustrious career, Aaur Rahman directed and adapted numerous notable productions, including *Roktokorobi*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Shajahan*, and *Galileo*. He also served as secretary general of the Bangladesh Centre of the International Theatre Institute and was a former chairman of the Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation.



Paper Tiger

La Vénus Électrique

auteurs with emerging voices from across the globe.

This year's Competition jury is chaired by South Korean filmmaker Park Chan-wook, known for his visually striking and psychologically complex cinema. He is joined by an international lineup of jurors including Demi Moore, Chloé Zhao, Ruth Negga, and Stellan Skarsgård.

Together, they bring diverse cinematic sensibilities to a competition defined by bold storytelling, formal experimentation, and strong directorial voices.

The festival officially opened with a ceremony hosted by French actress Eye Haidara, marking the start of the 2026 edition. The opening film, *La Vénus Électrique* (*The Electric Kiss*) by Pierre

Salvadori, premiered at the Grand Théâtre Lumière. Set in the 1920s, the romantic comedy follows a grieving painter who rediscovers his passion for life, with performances by Pio Marmai, Anaïs Demoustier, and Gilles Lellouche. The film will also be released in French cinemas on the same day as its Cannes debut.

Honourary tributes also form a major



‘Ali’ bags another international accolade

Bangladeshi filmmaker Adnan AlRajeev has earned another international honour for his short film *Ali*, which received a Special Mention for Best Short Fiction at the South Asian Film Festival of Montréal.

The award adds to the film's growing international recognition following its Special Mention in the Short Film Competition at the 78th edition of the Cannes Film Festival last year. Earlier this year, *Ali* also won the Diversity Award at Filmfest Bremen and later received another Special Mention at the Kyiv International Short Film Festival.

Set in a coastal town where women are forbidden from singing publicly, the film follows a boy with a striking female voice who secretly dreams of joining a singing competition. The lead role is played by Al Amin.

‘Recognition always feels special’

Babita talks motherhood and life beyond cinema

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

This year has brought a special joy for the veteran actress Babita. She was honoured with the prestigious Ekushey Padak earlier this year. Recently, on Mother's Day, she received another lifetime honour, the Maa Padak 2026, from an organisation. In July, she is also set to receive a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Anandamela Award to be held in the United States.

"I have devoted an entire lifetime to acting," Babita shared. "It feels wonderful to receive recognition. Ultimately, the Almighty is the one who grants honour."

Speaking about the Mother's Day recognition, she added, "I feel deeply honoured to receive this award on Mother's Day. My love and respect go out to all mothers. I pray for every mother's wellbeing and happiness."



PHOTO: SHAHREAR KABIR HEEMEL

During the conversation, Babita also opened up about her personal life and her close bond with her only son, Anik, who lives in Canada.

"Every year, I spend several months with him, and this year will be no different," she said warmly. "I always cherish the beautiful time we spend together. This time, Anik has planned to celebrate my birthday in California, which makes me very happy."

She further revealed that she will be in the United States during her birthday celebrations, where she is also expected to receive another recognition for her lifelong contribution to cinema.

"My son already knows about the honour," she said. "That is why he has planned something special for my birthday in California."

For Babita, birthdays are best celebrated surrounded by family. "I love spending my birthday with my son," she

said. "I hope the coming birthday will be even more beautiful and memorable."

Looking back on her decades-long career, the actress grew reflective while speaking about many of her contemporaries who are no longer alive.

"When I first entered the film industry, many of the people I worked with were alive," she said. "Today, many gifted actors and directors are no longer with us. At this stage of life, I remember them often and pray for them from the bottom of my heart."

Concluding the conversation, the iconic actress spoke simply yet profoundly about her wishes for the future.

"At this point in life, my greatest wish is to remain healthy and live peacefully," she said. "I also pray for everyone's good health and wellbeing."

WHAT'S THE HAPS?



‘Parabola’

Brought to the stage by Batighar, *Parabola* returns for its 14th show with Muktanceel's adaptation of Dario Fo's writing. Blending political satire with sharp theatrical absurdity, the production moves through power, paranoia and survival with an ensemble cast.

Date: Today | May 12, 2026

Time: 7:15 pm onwards

Venue: Experimental Theatre Hall, BSA