

South Korea's *Parasite* makes Oscar history with Best Picture

It became the first non-English feature film to win both Best Picture and International Feature, while also taking home Best Director and best Original Screenplay awards

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Just days before the Oscars, South Korean filmmaker Bong Joon-ho had referred to the Oscars as "very local" awards. It seems to have done the trick. Or, perhaps, it was Mr. Bong's other famous quote – "once you overcome the one-inch tall barrier of subtitles, you will be introduced to so many more amazing films" – that made the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences look beyond the home turf, and English language, to write history. Mr. Bong's searing look at class divides – *Parasite* – became the first non-English feature film to win the Best Film Oscar at the 92nd Academy awards. Ten foreign language films are said to have been nominated previously for Best Picture but none of them could make it to the final post. These include Ingmar Bergman's *Cries and Whispers* in 1973 and Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* in 2000.

Rare feat

Not just that, *Parasite* is also a rare film to have won both International Feature and Best Picture awards. Last year, Alfonso Cuarón's *Roma* took the best international film and best director award but was overtaken by *Green Book* in the best film category. In 2013 Michael Haneke's *Amour* took the foreign language Oscar but not for the best film. In 1999 Roberto Benigni's *Life Is Beautiful* got best foreign film and best actor awards but the best film eluded it.

The firsts for *Parasite* didn't stop at that. It is the first South Korean film to get nominated and to have won the International Film Oscar. Lee Chang-dong's *Burning* couldn't make it to the list of



Top honours: (Clockwise from top left) Bong Joon-ho poses with the Oscars for *Parasite* in Los Angeles; Renee Zellweger (Best Actress), Joaquin Phoenix (Best Actor), Laura Dern (Best Supporting Actress) and Brad Pitt (Best Supporting Actor). • REUTERS

final nominees last year. *Parasite* is also the first Asian film to have grabbed the Best Screenplay award, shared by Mr. Bong with Han Jin-won.

Giving Mr. Bong company in making history was the New Zealand filmmaker Taika Waititi, who became the first Maori to enter the privileged Oscar club with Adapted Screenplay award for his Nazi satire *Jojo Rabbit*. He dedicated the award to the indigenous children all over the world.

Crazy passion for cinema

Mr. Bong grew up in the 1990s when there was crazy passion for cinema in Korea. "We would give everything up for cinema. 1990s was the most cinephile decade in Korean history, the time when we devoured films like cra-

zy," he had said in an interview to *The Hindu* on the eve of winning the Palme D'Or at Cannes Film Festival last year. No wonder his Oscar acceptance speech for Best Director was a warm and generous ode to fellow filmmakers, starting off with Martin Scorsese: "When I was young and starting in cinema there was a saying that I carved deep into my heart which is, 'The most personal is the most creative.' That quote was from our great Martin Scorsese... When I was in school, I studied Martin Scorsese's films. Just to be nominated was a huge honour, I never thought I would win."

He then went on to thank Quentin Tarantino for getting him a place in the sun: "When people in the U.S.

were not familiar with my films, Quentin [Tarantino] always put my films on his list." And then rounded it off by acknowledging Todd Phillips and Sam Mendes. "If the Academy allows, I would like to get a Texas chainsaw, split the award into five and share it with all of you," he said.

The acting Oscars went as expected. Joaquin Phoenix won Best Actor for playing a failing clown who finds fame through violence in the dark comic-book tale *Joker*.

Renee Zellweger was named Best Actress for her performance as an ageing Judy Garland in the musical biopic *Judy*.

Mr. Tarantino's sentimental ode to Tinseltown, *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*, brought the first acting Oscar for Brad Pitt, who played a

supporting role as a laid-back stunt man.

Laura Dern took the Supporting Actress Oscar, her first Academy Award, for playing a ruthless divorce lawyer in *Marriage Story*.

First World War film *1917*, from Universal Pictures, had been seen as the film to beat but won just three of its 10 nominations. They came for its stunning "one-shot" feel Cinematography, for Visual Effects and for Sound Mixing.

Toy Story 4 took home the Oscar for best animated film – the third golden statuette for the innovative Pixar franchise about a collection of toys, the value of friendship and accepting change.

Hildur Guðnadóttir won the Best Original Score for *Joker*. (With Reuters inputs)

Obamas' film wins best documentary

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LOS ANGELES

American Factory, a documentary produced by Barack and Michelle Obama for Netflix about a manufacturing plant in the U.S. Midwest reopened by a Chinese billionaire, won the Oscar for best documentary on Sunday.

The film charts a Midwest rust belt community's journey from optimism at the giant plant's reopening – bringing back vital jobs – toward creeping anger and disillusionment as the Chinese management imposes its strict, exhausting demands on workers and sacks those who do not comply.

"Our film is from Ohio

and China," director Julia Reichert said while accepting her golden statuette. "But it really could be from anywhere that people put on a uniform, punch a clock, trying to make their families have a better life."

"Working people have it harder and harder these days, and we believe that things will get better when workers of the world unite," she said.

Co-directed by Reichert and Steven Bognar, the film is a look at how both American and Chinese workers, from blue-collar to management, had their lives transformed by global economic forces that caught the eyes of none other than the Obamas.

Bong Joon-ho: filmmaker on a wild ride

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SEOUL

South Korean filmmaker Bong Joon-ho has been on quite a wild ride this awards season. That trip reached its climax on Sunday when he secured his country's first-ever Oscars for *Parasite*.

Mr. Bong – who is known for his dark and genre-hopping thrillers – already had a series of critical and commercial hits behind him before *Parasite* and is one of South Korea's best-known faces.

Mr. Bong grew up in an elite artistic family in Seoul – his maternal grandfather was a renowned novelist while his late father and all of his siblings are university professors in fields including fashion and fine art.

He studied sociology at the South's prestigious Yonsei University and reportedly took part in street protests while enrolled there during the country's pro-democracy movement in the 1980s.

His *Memories of Murder* – a 2003 feature film based on real-life serial killings that rattled the nation in the 1980s – was seen as a metaphor for a repressive society under military rule.

His 2013 feature film *Snowpiercer* depicted a dystopian future, in which the last humans on Earth – who survived a failed attempt to stop global warming – travel endlessly on a train separated according to class, and the lower class revolts.

Afghans celebrate 'Skateistan' victory

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KABUL

Afghans took to social media Monday to celebrate a rare piece of good news for the war-torn country, after a film about girls skateboarding took home an Oscar for best documentary short at the Academy Awards.

"Learning to Skateboard in a Warzone (If You're a Girl)" tracks international charity Skateistan's bid to teach young Afghan girls how to skateboard in the ultraconservative country, where few women are

encouraged to participate in sport.

The film follows a group of young girls enrolled at the nonprofit, who gain confidence and courage as they learn to skate on ramps and quarter pipes in Kabul amid frequent militant attacks and suicide bombings.

The film's director Carol Dysinger also highlighted the plight of Afghan women during her victory speech.

"This movie is my love letter to the brave girls of that country," Ms. Dysinger said.

IN BRIEF



Solar Orbiter mission to reveal Sun's secrets

A new probe built by NASA and the European Space Agency set off on a blazing hot journey to the sun on Sunday to take the first close-up look at the star's polar regions, a mission expected to yield insight into how solar radiant energy affects Earth. The Solar Orbiter spacecraft lifted off from Cape Canaveral and is on a 10-year voyage. REUTERS



Italian opera star Mirella Freni dies at 84

One of the great stars of Italian opera Mirella Freni died on Sunday at the age of 84 following prolonged illness. Born in 1935 in the northern town of Modena, Ms. Freni was a childhood friend of tenor Luciano Pavarotti and also his partner on stage. In a career that spanned five decades, she shone in opera and was famed for roles as Mimi in Puccini's *La Bohème* and Desdemona in Verdi's *Otello*. AFP



Excess smartphone use linked to mental distress

Using smartphone for long hours every day may do you more harm than you can probably think of. Researchers have found that spending a lot of time with the device and on social media may lead to mental distress and suicidality among adolescents, says finding published in CMAJ. IANS

India moves to include elephant, bustard in global conservation list

The proposal will be debated at the 13th Conference of Parties in Gandhinagar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India will be moving to include the Asian Elephant and the Great Indian Bustard in the list of species that merit heightened conservation measures. The list will be debated at the 13th Conference of Parties (COP) of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), an environment treaty under the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Gujarat convention

The COP is scheduled to be organised from February 17 to 22 in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. There are 130 parties to the convention and India has been a member since 1983.

"We expect the COP to clear the inclusion of the Great Indian Bustard and the elephant as it has been vetted by technical experts and reflects the consensus of several countries. The elephant



Jumbo cause: An elephant herd searching for food in a forest near Panbari village, on the outskirts of Guwahati. • AP/FILE

faces risks particularly in neighbouring Bangladesh and Nepal," Soumitra Dasgupta, a senior official in the Union Environment Ministry told *The Hindu*.

India is home to several migratory species of wildlife, including the snow leopard, Amur falcons, bar-headed geese, black-necked cranes, marine turtles, dugongs and hump-backed whales.

Having the elephant and the Great Indian Bustard in

the list – more formally known as Appendix I – would coax countries neighbouring India, where wild animals such as tigers and elephant foray into, to direct more resources and attention to protecting them. There are now 173 species in the Appendix I.

The Union Environment Ministry reports India as having 29,964 elephants according to the Project Elephant Census in 2017. The pachyderm merits the highest level of protection, or Schedule 1, under the Wildlife Protection Act.

India to lead

Representatives from across the world, and conservationists and international NGOs

working in wildlife conservation, are expected to attend the COP, which will also see Prime Minister Narendra Modi address the gathering via video conference.

The previous record was held by a Norwegian Air flight, which flew between the two cities with a flight time of five hours and 13 minutes.

The recent average flight time between New York and London is 6 hours and 13 minutes. The wind and air currents were ideal for the flight.

The rise and fall of the cities of Delhi will be told through its art at a new museum being set up by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) at Qila Rai Pithora, considered to be the first of the seven historical cities.

An ASI official said while the theme of the museum was yet to be finalised, a request for proposal (RFP) had been floated last week inviting ideas on the basic theme of "cities of Delhi".

The RFP floated on February 7 asked for applications to set up a "museum/interpretation centre celebrating the art of Delhi, ancient and contemporary".

Applicants were asked to send in their bids by February 17 for conceptualising, designing, layout and execution of the museum. "Just a half a mile from the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Qutub Minar, in the Mehrauli area of Delhi, the exhibition should present itself as

Flight crosses Atlantic in less than 5 hours

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON

For the first time in years, a commercial passenger plane has flown across the Atlantic in less than five hours.

A British Airways flight landed early on Sunday morning at Heathrow Airport in London after leaving John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York in just four hours and 56 minutes.

That set a new speed record for subsonic – or slower than the speed of sound – commercial aircraft to fly between the two cities, according to FlightRadar24, which tracks global flights.

The previous record was held by a Norwegian Air flight, which flew between the two cities with a flight time of five hours and 13 minutes.

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Museum on Delhi's art history at Qila Rai Pithora

Virtual reality lab, exhibition planned

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI

The rise and fall of the cities of Delhi will be told through its art at a new museum being set up by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) at Qila Rai Pithora, considered to be the first of the seven historical cities.

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an Ode to the Art of Delhi," the RFP read.

The document added that Delhi had seen several cities rise and fall over millennia. Over the years, artists have depicted Delhi's history and imagined its future, it said.

The plan includes a curated exhibition in a refurbished building of Qila Rai Pithora, which dates back to the 11th century, and would include paintings, sculptures, prints, photographs, maps, posters, books and installations. A virtual reality lab may also be included.

"The aim of the exhibition is to inform and educate the public while providing them a critical understanding of the Capital city's art history connecting it with its political and social history," the document read.

Apart from Qila Rai Pithora, the other historical cities of Delhi are Siri Fort, Tughlaqabad, Jahanpanah, Ferozabad, Purana Qila and Shahjahanabad.

J.R.D. Tata, the 'maverick' of Indian aviation, gets a digital licence

In what might be a befitting tribute, the digitisation process of flying licences is being undertaken by Tata Consultancy Services

ADITYA ANAND
MUMBAI

In was on February 10, 1929 that India got its first pilot in Jehangir R.D. Tata, who qualified with number 1 on his flying licence, giving birth to Indian aviation.

India has come a long way since then, with digitisation process of flying licences underway, being the latest among initiatives to be undertaken by Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). In what might be a befitting tribute to the legend, the digitisation process, which kicked off in December 2019 is being

undertaken by Tata Consultancy Services (TCS).

'Aviators certificate'

Dated February 10, 1929, J.R.D.'s licence, then called an 'aviators certificate', was issued by The Aero Club of India and Burma, an associate of the Royal Aero Club of Great Britain, which was authorised to issue licences by the British Empire's Federation Aeronautique Internationale. The Aero Club of India and Burma was recognised by Federation Aeronautique Internationale as a sporting authority.



The flying licence of J.R.D. Tata. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The certificate in itself was a beginning of Indian aviation, as many aviation historians have noted over time.

Though not the first to

register, J.R.D. was the first Indian to pass out with 'No. 1' endorsed on his flying licence. Purushottam Meghji Kabali is by various aviator accounts considered to be

the first Indian pilot.

Born on July 29, 1904, in Paris, J.R.D. launched India's first airmail service in 1932, when he flew into Mumbai in a De Havilland Puss Moth from Karachi's Drigh Road Aerodrome to the Juhu Airstrip via Ahmedabad on the basis of this flying licence. This later became the country's national carrier, Air India.

Capt. Russi Bunsha, executive trustee, J. R. D. Tata Memorial Trust recalled that that planned flight was delayed by a month to October 15, 1932, as Juhu mud flats, where it would

land was witness to heavy rainfall.

"In first year, Tata Air Mail made a profit of ₹60,000, while rose to ₹6 lakh by 1937," Capt. Bunsha said referring to available records.

Arun Kumar, the current director general of the DGCA the aviation regulator was now issuing Commercial Pilots License online after verification of the log-book of the concerned flying training school, while Airline Transport Pilot's License will go online in May. "As we say, we have miles to go before we sleep," Mr. Kumar said.

'Half-a-million insect species face extinction'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

Half of the one million animal and plant species on Earth facing extinction are insects, and their disappearance could be catastrophic for humankind, scientists have said in a "warning to humanity".

"The current insect extinction crisis is deeply worrying," said Pedro Cardoso, a biologist at the Finnish Museum of Natural History and lead author of a review study published in *Conservation Biology*.

"Yet, what we know is only the tip of the iceberg," he said.