



People attend the opening ceremony of the Busan International Film Festival at Busan Cinema Center in Busan.

Busan film festival opens with stars, new talent

Established Asian stars as well as budding actors and actresses walked the red carpet yesterday at the start of this year's Busan International Film Festival. But the director of the festival's opening film, Bhutanese monk Khyentse Norbu, ditched the red carpet for something much less glamorous: a cave. While most filmmakers would jump at a chance to appear at Asia's largest film festival as their work opened the event, Norbu remained in Bhutan for a Buddhist

retreat in a cave on a remote mountain.

Norbu's third feature movie, "Vara: A Blessing," a drama depicting religion, art and forbidden love in an Indian village through a classical South Indian dance, took the opening spot - a position usually reserved for a Chinese or Korean movie. "I'm speechless ... I'm so honored," Norbu told reporters in Busan in a video message. He thanked the festival for "so much support and encouragement to obscure, special films and spe-



Chinese actor Aaron Kwok and South Korean actress Kang Soo-yeon pose before hosting the opening ceremony.



South Korean actors Yang Dong Yeun and Lee Tae Im arrive for the opening ceremony.



Producers and actors of Busan International Film Festival's opening movie 'Vara: A Blessing,' from left, Indian actress Shahana Goswami, American producer David Urrutia, Indian actor Devesh Ranjan, American producer Nanette Nelms and Indian executive producer Suresh Jindal pose for photographers at a press conference at Busan Cinema Center in Busan, south of Seoul, South Korea yesterday. — AP photos

cial filmmakers that are not necessarily known and established."

The choice of a non-Chinese and non-Korean movie for the opening underlined the festival's effort to emphasize lesser-known works in the region. The festival's director, Lee Yong-kwan, who selected the opening movie, said this year's event would demonstrate the potential of Asian movies. The Busan festival is known for discovering new talent and highlighting movies on the fringe of the global film industry. Among the guests at this year's festival are Academy Award nominee Ken Watanabe, Irish director Jim Sheridan, Japanese heartthrob Joe Odagiri and Taipei-based director Tsai Ming-liang. Hong Kong actor Aaron Kwok and South Korean actress Kang Soo-yeon hosted the opening night event.

The festival, held in South Korea's second-largest city, is younger than its rivals in Tokyo and Hong Kong. But it has grown to become one of the most important events in the industry, with new talents and independent moviemakers

showcasing their works and finding investors, and global movie industry officials discovering new Asian films. Works from Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan and Singapore are among the 301 movies to be presented during the 10-day fair.

"Nagima," a Kazakh director's drama about young orphans, was selected among the six Gala Presentation works, comprising mostly Korean movies. The selection of movies from 70 countries includes 95 world premieres and the usual large selection of works by independent South Korean movie makers, but fans of established film directors are not to be disappointed. South Korean director Bong Joon-ho will present the English-language film "Snowpiercer" before its US release, while Kim Jee-woon will visit the festival for the world premiere of "The X." Director Kim Ki-duk is set to return to Busan with another controversial work, "Moebius." — AP