

Lifestyle

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Pedestrians walk past a mural of actress Marilyn Monroe, on the eve of the opening of the 72nd Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southeastern France. — AFP

Cannes pressed to drop Delon award over claims French star hit women

The Cannes film festival opens Tuesday amid a row over its decision to honor the veteran French star Alain Delon who has been accused of being violent towards women. Women and Hollywood, one of the US lobby groups at the head of the #MeToo movement in the film industry, said the decision to give him an honorary Palme d'Or "sucked". Last year the festival vowed that there "must be zero tolerance with sexual harassment or abuse of any kind" amid red carpet protests led by Cate Blanchett of more than 80 Hollywood stars and women directors.

An online petition calling for the Delon prize

Melissa Silverstein tweeted that she was appalled that Cannes was honoring Delon given that he "has publicly admitted to slapping women and he has claimed that being gay is against nature."

Eight broken ribs

"He has aligned himself with the racist and anti-Semitic National Front," she added, which was founded by his life-long friend Jean-Marie Le Pen, which has been renamed as the National Rally by his daughter Marine, who now leads the far-right party.

Delon admitted hitting women in November

But Cannes director Thierry Fremaux came to Delon's defense Monday, saying they were honoring his career not his views which the festival did not condone. "Alain Delon is allowed to think what he likes," he told AFP. "I think it's important to take a step back. What he's said sporadically here and there—we generalize and blend it all together." It's complicated to judge someone through today's lens, and judge things that were said and that happened years ago," Fremaux said, adding: "We're not giving him the Nobel Peace Prize."

Kechiche denies sex assault

A petition calling for the honorary Cannes prize to be withheld clocked up nearly 18,000 signatures on the Care2 website. The festival unveiled a huge poster of a youthful Delon which will be draped above the red carpet on Sunday when he receives the honor. It pictures the actor in his breakthrough 1960 film, "Purple Noon", where he played a devastatingly handsome serial killer.

Festival director Fremaux refused to be drawn on the case of Kechiche—who won the Palme d'Or in 2013 with the lesbian love story "Blue Is the Warmest Color". A judicial source told AFP they are still investigating a complaint by a 29-year-old actress made against him in October—although they have yet to interview the director. The woman said she woke to find him fondling her after a dinner party in Paris in June. His lawyers said he "categorically denies the veracity of these accusations".

Kechiche, whose four-hour-long new film, "Mektoub, My Love: Intermezzo", is one of 21 movies vying for the Palme d'Or, was accused of harassing his crew on the gruelling shoot of "Blue Is the Warmest Color". Its two female stars Lea Seydoux and Adele Exarchopoulos complained about Kechiche's behaviour. However, Seydoux later said that she was proud of the movie and "I really like him as a director. The way he treats us? So what!"

A host of music as well as screen legends are due in Cannes for the 12-day festival including Bono, Iggy Pop, Selena Gomez and Elton John, who organizers hinted may play before the premiere of his biopic "Rocketman". Sylvester Stallone will also make an appearance to promote his latest "Rambo" movie.—AFP



In this file photo French actor Alain Delon gestures as he arrives to attend a state dinner for the Chinese president at the Elysee Palace in Paris, as part of a state visit. — AFP

to be stopped branded the 83-year-old actor a "racist, homophobic misogynist". The row came as the world's biggest film festival opens with one of the starriest line-ups in years. A host of Hollywood big names from Brad Pitt, Leonardo DiCaprio and Bill Murray to Julianne Moore and Elle Fanning are due on the Croisette.

The controversy broke after a new movie by Franco-Tunisian director Abdellatif Kechiche was selected to compete for the top prize despite police investigating him for an alleged sexual assault on a young actress. Kechiche denies the claim. Women and Hollywood founder

when he was questioned on French television about claims of domestic violence from his estranged son Alain-Fabien Delon.

"If a slap is macho, then I am macho," he said, adding that women had hit him and that he had never "broken" a woman. His son said the star of such screen classics as "The Leopard", "The Swimming Pool" and "Le Samourai" had beaten his mother, breaking eight of her ribs and her nose twice. Another son, Anthony Delon, took to Instagram earlier this month to confirm that he was locked in a cage with dogs by his father as a child "to toughen me up".

S Korean court to rule on arresting K-pop star Seungri

South Korean pop star Seungri went to court yesterday for a hearing over whether he should be arrested on charges including prostitution in a snowballing sex scandal. The 28-year-old singer from popular boy band BIGBANG and his business partner are accused of arranging sex services for potential investors and rich clients at a nightclub owned by the pair. Dressed in a sharp black suit, Seungri—real name Lee Seung-hyun—quickly walked past a mob of reporters at the Seoul Central District Court, tight-lipped as he brushed off questions.

Hours later a somber-looking Seungri stepped out of the building, his hands cuffed and covered with a cloth, to be taken to a nearby detention centre to await the court decision, expected yesterday night. Police investigations have shown that Seungri and his partner procured a dozen prostitutes for a group of Japanese investors in 2015 at their upmarket Burning Sun nightclub, according to Yonhap news agency.

The pair also allegedly embezzled around 530 million won (US\$450,000) from the business and face charges of violating sanitary codes at Burning Sun, where drug peddling was allegedly commonplace and women are said to have been regularly raped. Seungri—who announced his retirement from showbusiness in March as the scandal ballooned—has denied the charges.

Other stars have been embroiled in the allegations, which have cast a shadow over the K-pop industry after investigations into Seungri revealed an online chatroom where a handful of male celebrities shared illegally filmed sex videos. Singer-songwriter Jung Joon-young, who ran the chatroom, was arrested in March after admitting to filming himself having sex and sharing the footage without his partners' consent. A member of boy band FT Island was arrested earlier this month while another figure has announced his retirement from the entertainment industry amid an ongoing probe.—AFP



Former BIGBANG boy band member Seungri, center, real name Lee Seung-hyun, is taken into custody as he leaves the High Court in Seoul. — AFP