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होई है वही जो राम रचि राखा



भारतीय सभ्यता संस्कृति-संस्कार-परम्पराएं इतने प्राचीन हैं कि सतयुग-त्रेता युग द्वापर युग एवं कलयुग में विभाजन किया हुआ है। देवलोक के देव इंद्र से नारद मुनि सहित तमाम ऋषिमुनियों के किस्से हम बचपन से सुनते आ रहे हैं। राम-कृष्ण की जीवन्त लीलाओं को देखते हुए हम बड़े हुए हैं। सत्यवादी राजा हरीशचन्द्र घात (महाशमशान) काशी (वाराणसी) में आज भी स्तिथ है और वहां कभी भी चित्ता की आग ठंडी नहीं होती है, 24सो घण्टों वहां शव दहन होता है। कृष्ण की मथुरा-वृन्दावन में ब्रज की होली देखने दुनिया भर से लोग आते है। कुरुक्षेत्र आज भी अपना इतिहास भुला नहीं सका है, महाभारत को क्या कभी भुलाया जा सकता है भले ही कितने ही आक्रान्ता लुटेरों ने भारत की सभ्यता संस्कृति को मिटाने की कुचेष्टाएँ की हों लेकिन वह सब आज भी जीवत है। आज भी सनातनी पूरे विशव में अपनी अलग पहचान रखते है। राम आदर्श हैं उनका जीवन प्रेरणा स्तोत्र है, उनकी जन्म सीली अयोध्या नगरी पर भले ही दूसरे देशों से आए लुटेरों ने कितने भी आक्रमण किए हों लेकिन बेशक कितने ही लोगों ने अपना धर्म बदल लिया हो, भले ही उन्होंने मंदिरों को लूटा-तोड़ा और वहां मस्जिद बना दी हों लेकिन इतिहास सदैव जीवित रहता है उसे नहीं मिटाया जा सकता है। अयोध्या में बाबर का क्या काम ? इस बात को भला कौन नहीं जानता, लेकिन इसके लिए भी माननीय उच्चतम न्यायलय के फैंसले को वर्षों इंतजार करना पड़ा यह क्या कम है। इससे ज्यादा सनातन की सहनशीलता का क्या उदाहरण हो सकता है, जबकि धर्म के आधार पर विभाजित हुए देश में विभाजन भी ईमानदारी के साथ नहीं किया जा सका, उसीका परिणाम है कि भारत में बाबर-औरंगजेब-तैमूर आदि सभी को जीवत रखा हुआ है और अपने अस्तित्व को जीवित रखने की लड़ाई लड़ने वालों को हर मामलें में वर्षों अदालती आदेशों की प्रतीक्षा करनी होती है। अदालती फैसलों के बावजूद भी उन्हें मनाना सरल नहीं होता है। वह सब अयोध्या मामले में हम देख चुके है।

राम मंदिर निर्माण पूरे जोर - शोर से हो रहा है यह भगवन राम की अयोध्या का पुनरस्थान कहा जाएगा। यहां से बाबर को हटा कर अलग जगह दी गई है जहां विशाल मस्जिद बनेगी अत: बाबर को मिटाया हो अपितु जीवित रखा है। यह कार्य सरल नहीं था लेकिन एक देविक शक्ति के रूप में तीन शक्तियों : मोदी, योगी व शाह का उदय हुआ है भारत में, जिन्होंने राम को मुक्त करवा कर उन्हें भव्य मंदिर में विधिवत प्राण प्रतिष्ठा किए जाने को साकार कर दिया, नहीं तो सुप्रीम फैसले के बावजूद भी ना जाने कितने विघन होने थे और फैसला बस एक विवादित फैसला ही बनकर रह सकता था। कृष्ण जन्म भूमि काशिवापी अनेक मामले अदालती फैसलों की प्रतीक्षा में सालों से लम्बित हैं लेकिन मोदी-योगी-शाह अमर तो नहीं हैं। ऐसी तमाम पोस्ट बड़े बुजुर्ग मियाओं से लेकर कई बच्चों की भी वायरल हो रही हैं जिसमे उन्हें स्पष्ट कहते सुना जा सकता है कि बना लो मंदिर लेकिन इनके बाद जब हमारी सरकार आएगी तब हम बताएंगे मंदिर को मस्जिद बना देंगे। बेफिक्री से निडर होकर ऐसी पोस्ट करने वाले इसी देश के हैं उन्हें यकीन है कि उनकी सरकार आएगी। वह जानते है कि अभी नहीं लेकिन शीग्र ही उनका समय आएगा ऐसा सोचने वालों का आधार गलत भी नहीं है क्यूँकि जिस अनुपात में जनसंख्या बढ रही है कुछ सैलून बाद उनकी संख्या इतनी हो जाएगी कि वह जिसे भी चाहेंगे देश की सत्ता तक पहुंचा सकेंगे, जनसंख्या बढ़ने के साथ-साथ बाहरी लोगों को भी भारत में बसा कर अपने वोट बढ़ाए जाने पर भी काम कर रहे हैं।

मोदी -योगी -शाह जैसा कोई और आ ही नहीं पाएगा और यदि इनकी तरह से किसी ने बनना भी चाहा तब रोकने के लिए उनके पास बहुत शक्तियां है। नूपुर मामले में 'सर तन से जुदा' जैसे उदाहरण हम देख ही चुके है। ऐसा प्रतीत होता है जैसे कि अच्छे दिन के अन्तराल के लिए आम चुनाव के बाद उम्मीद है कि ये देविक शक्तियां उनको सुपुर्द कार्यों को पूर्ण कर अपना दायित्व निर्वाह कर जिम्मेदारियों को आगे सुपुर्द कर जाएँ लेकिन समीकरण तो तेजी से बिगड़ते जा रहे हैं, जनसंख्या के संतुलन को बिगड़ने से रोकने के उपाय कहीं नजर आ रहे है। ईश्वर ने आज के दौर में जब इन दैविक शक्तियों को भेजा है तो भारत के भविष्य के प्रति उसकी झोली में अवश्य कुछ ना कुछ होगा।

-डॉ.ए.के.रस्तोगी

Trashing media reports, Zee affirms commitment to Sony merger



India's Zee Entertainment on January 09 said it was committed to its merger with Sony's local arm after media reports said the Japanese firm was planning to scrap the $10 billion deal.

Zee said reports of the deal falling through were "baseless and factually incorrect," and that it continues to work towards closing the deal, a Reuters report stated.

Sony plans to file a termination notice before the Jan. 20 deadline to close the deal over an impasse on whether Zee CEO Punit Goenka, who is facing a regulatory probe, will lead the merged company, Reuters reported.

Analysts say the deal is crucial to the companies' survival amid the looming merger of local heavyweight Reliance Industries and Walt Disney's Indian media and entertainment businesses.

The merger was also aimed at taking on streaming giants Netflix and Amazon.com.

Zee, which has been struggling with declining advertising revenue, saw its cash reserves fall to Rs. 2.48 billion in the six months ended September 30, from Rs. 5.88 billion in the year-ago period. Its net profit slumped 68 percent in the same period.

"It would be surprising if the merger collapses as both companies will find it incredibly difficult to operate as single entities in India, keeping in mind the ongoing merger proceedings between Reliance and Disney," said Vivekanand Subbaraman, research analyst at brokerage Ambit Capital.

Zee's four-year pact with Disney's Star for TV broadcasting rights of certain cricket events will also be in jeopardy if the deal collapses, considering Zee would have to pay $1.32 billion to $1.44 billion over the tenure of the deal, analysts at Emkay Global said.

"Such a large payment will not be justified on a standalone basis," they said.

The broadcaster missed an early January deadline to pay $200 million to Disney for TV rights to cricket matches, Bloomberg News reported. Zee and Disney did not immediately reply to requests for comment on the report.

The merger was delayed after India's markets regulator last year barred Goenka from directorships of any listed company over allegations that he was involved in diverting company funds, although a tribunal lifted the ban in October.

Sony and Zee were in talks and a resolution could still emerge, Bloomberg reported, the Reuters dispatch said.

FIH signs 4-year hockey media rights deal with Viacom18

The International Hockey Federation (FIH) has announced it has signed a major media rights agreement with Indian broadcaster Viacom18. This agreement runs for a four-year cycle (2023-2027) and includes all FIH events, except the FIH Nations Cup.

Thanks to this partnership, Indian hockey fans will be able to watch on Viacom18 channels the upcoming FIH Hockey Olympic qualifiers, the first ever FIH Hockey's World Cup, the FIH Hockey Pro league, the 2026 FIH Hockey World Cup and many more events, hockey's global governing body said in a media statement.

With India being such a historic powerhouse of global hockey, this agreement is a great asset to boost the popularity of the game in the country even further, FIH said.

Matches will be available on OTT platform JioCinema and Viacom18's linear channels Network Sports18.

"Hockey has been one of the most loved, followed and storied sports in India. The recent success of the Indian Men's and Women's National Team bodes well for the continuous growth of Hockey, and we are excited to bring unbridled access to millions of sports fans in India," said Viacom18 Sports Head of Strategy, Partnerships & Acquisitions, Hursh Shrivastava.

"The addition of world-class Hockey coverage reiterates our commitment to provide fans all-inclusive offerings of globally-acclaimed sports events," he added.

Commenting on the agreement, FIH President Tayyab Ikram said: "As we're enhancing our commercial and broadcast approach, this agreement with Viacom18 is a major step forward. It's a great support to be partnering with such a strong broadcaster in a country where hockey is so fundamentally and historically anchored, and where we continuously want to develop the game.

SET premieres exclusive linear broadcast of 'Shrimad Ramayan'

Sony Entertainment Television (SET) had kicked off the New Year by captivating Indian television audiences with the exclusive linear TV airing of 'Shrimad Ramayan.'

Delivered solely via cable TV and DTH platforms, this strategic move by the channel aims to rekindle the enduring charm of traditional television viewing.



The epic saga of 'Shrimad Ramayan' holds a profound resonance with millions, portraying fundamental relationships amidst inherent conflicts. Embodying timeless virtues like integrity, loyalty, courage, love, and resilience, the narrative of Lord Ram, hailed as the 'Ideal Man,' encapsulates invaluable life lessons.

According to the channel's statement, SET has ingeniously crafted compelling short videos to spot light these values and the essence of relationships, resonating with the hearts of viewers.

Going beyond the familiar storyline, 'Shrimad Ramayan' promises to unveil multiple untold narratives, offering a deeper understanding of the saga's timeless beauty and depth. By opting for an exclusive release on cable TV and DTH platforms, Sony Entertainment Television endeavors to rejuvenate family-oriented viewing experiences.



Commenting on this, Makarand Palekar, SPNI's Distribution Marketing and Sales Head, emphasizes the enduring significance of linear TV in today's media landscape, stating, "While streaming services gain popularity, linear TV remains resilient and relevant, adapting to evolving viewer habits, ensuring its continued presence."

Sony Entertainment Networks made an industry-defining move by discontinuing all Live TV channels on Sony LIV, focusing on differentiated content. Initiatives like the exclusive airing of 'Shrimad Ramayan' on linear TV aim to drive viewership and revenue for both linear and OTT platforms.

The network, known for innovative and popular shows such as 'Kavya – Ek Jazbaa, Ek Junoon,' 'Sapnon Ki Chhalaang,' 'Mere Dad ki Dulhan,' and 'Aangan,' continues to push boundaries with upcoming diverse shows like 'Mehndi Wala Ghar,' 'Kuch Reet Jagat Ki Aisi Hai,' and 'Nivedita Maajhi Tai.'

These shows not only captivate audiences but also offer advertisers distinct opportunities for targeted engagement and strategic product placements. Exclusive content like 'Shrimad Ramayan' signals a pivotal moment in television entertainment, poised to elevate viewership and reaffirm the enduring appeal of linear television.

As exclusive narratives and platform-specific airings continue to draw attention, the anticipation grows for a resurgence in the vitality of television entertainment, ensuring a rich and diverse content mix for viewers to relish.

Content controls for teens on Insta, FB apps to be upped

Meta

Meta Platforms on January 09 said that it would hide more content from teens on Instagram and Facebook, after regulators around the globe pressed the social media giant to protect children from harmful content on its apps.

All teens will now be placed into the most restrictive content control settings on the apps and additional search terms will be limited on Instagram, Meta said in a blogpost, according to a Reuters report.

The move will make it more difficult for teens to come across sensitive content such as suicide, self-harm and eating disorders when they use features like Search and Explore on Instagram, according to Meta.

The company said the measures, expected to roll out over the coming weeks, would help deliver a more "age-appropriate" experience.

Meta is under pressure both in the United States and Europe over allegations that its apps are addictive and have helped fuel a youth mental health crisis.

In Europe, the European Commission has sought information on how Meta protects children from illegal and harmful content.

Children have long been an appealing demographic for businesses, which hope to attract them as consumers at ages when they may be more impressionable and solidify brand loyalty.

For Meta, which has been in a fierce competition with TikTok for young users in the past few years, teens may help secure more advertisers, who hope children will keep buying their products as they grow up.

Sony continues to hold merger talks with Zee: Nikkei

The Sony Group continued to hold talks with Zee Entertainment Enterprises to merge their businesses in India, the Japan's Nikkei reported yesterday, citing people involved in the negotiations, after media reports earlier said the Japanese company was planning to scrap the $10 billion deal.

The talks will continue until a January 20 deadline to close the deal, a Reuters dispatch from Bengaluru stated quoting the Nikkei report.

Bloomberg News reported on Monday that Sony planned to file a termination notice before the deadline over an impasse on whether Zee CEO Punit Goenka, who is facing a regulatory probe, will lead the merged company.

Zee said reports of the deal falling through were "baseless and factually incorrect", and that it continued to work towards closing the deal.

Analysts say the deal is crucial to the companies' survival amid the looming merger of local heavyweight Reliance Industries and Walt Disney's Indian media and entertainment businesses.

Sony India did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

The merger, announced in 2021, was delayed after India's markets regulator last year barred Goenka from directorships of any listed company over allegations that he was involved in diverting company funds, although a tribunal lifted the ban in October.

Gadkari to spotlight India's global presence at Convergence show

The 31st Convergence India and 9th Smart Cities India Expo is set to illuminate India's technological prowess and urban evolution over three days. Backed by the Smart Cities Mission and key ministries, this event unveils the nation's strides in modernization.

Under the theme 'Innovation Driving Sustainability: Realise the Power of Tomorrow – Today,' the expo becomes a platform for global brands, 250 startups, and government-industry dialogues aligning with initiatives like 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and 'Smart Cities Mission.' According to Convergence India press release, Union Ministers Nitin Gadkari, Piyush Goyal, Anurag Singh Thakur and Gajendra Singh Shekhawat in their messages ahead of the event have lauded the expo's role in showcasing 'Brand India' and fostering economic opportunities amidst India's digital and economic renaissance.



Expecting 1,200 participants from 35 nations and 55,000 visitors, the expo spotlights innovation, hosts 50 conferences, and celebrates national Smart Cities achievements.

Excitel launches 'Southern OTT Pack' in key cities

Excitel, India's prominent home internet startup, has unveiled the 'Southern OTT Pack,' catering to entertainment enthusiasts in key southern cities like Bangalore, Hyderabad, Mangalore, Guntur, Vijayawada, etc.

Priced at just INR 599/month for a 12-month subscription, the plan offers speeds up to 400 Mbps, access to 17 premium OTT platforms, and a diverse selection of 300+ Live TV channels, including Aha, SunNXT, RAJ Digital TV, ETV, NammaFlix in collaboration with OTTplay.

This innovative plan marks India's first internet offering with content specifically curated for major southern cities and languages. Varun Pasricha, COO of Excitel, expressed excitement about ending the era of restrictive DTH subscriptions and costly add-ons, emphasizing the affordability and quality of the new OTT Pack.

The Southern OTT Pack integrates over 17 OTT platforms into the seamless OTTplay app, providing users with a hassle-free experience and access to a library of over 50,000+ titles and shows with a single sign-on. OTTplay's AI technology enhances user experience through personalized, cross-platform content recommendations based on preferences and viewing history. Excitel and OTTplay Premium have joined forces with the shared vision of revolutionizing home entertainment. Avinash Mudaliar, CEO and Co-founder of OTTplay sees this partnership as a significant moment for Indian entertainment, creating a personalized content universe.

Excitel also hinted at an upcoming initiative to introduce a comprehensive North Plan, expanding its services to include regional Northern Apps , further demonstrating its commitment to delivering diverse.

Pankaj Tripathi recounts RGV rejection, filmmaking anecdotes in 'Aap Ki Adalat'



In a candid session with Rajat Sharma on 'Aap Ki Adalat,' Pankaj Tripathi revealed director Ram Gopal Varma's rejection for a gangster role, citing it as a fortunate turn.

As per a press release, Tripathi shared insights into his interactions with Varma, highlighting the unique audition process and Varma's discerning eye for casting.

Tripathi's unorthodox approach to monitoring his performances post-shoot also came to light, where he trusts the director's vision instead. Additionally, he discussed altering dialogues and even climaxes in successful sequels like 'Fukrey' and 'Gangs of Wasseypur.'

His role in 'Super 30' took an unexpected turn with improvised dialogues reminiscent of a Bihar politician, showcasing his instinctive acting approach.

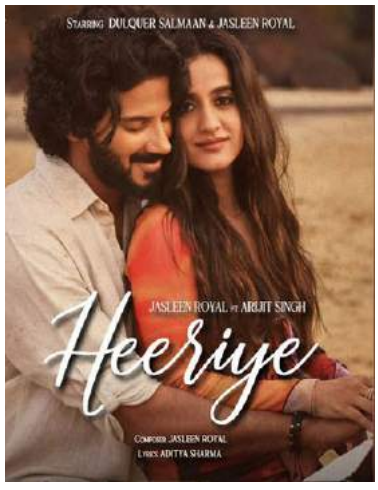
Tripathi's revelations shed light on the intriguing dynamics behind the scenes of his films, showcasing his adaptability and creative input in shaping memorable characters.

Tripathi's revelations offered a glimpse into the intricate workings of Bollywood and his unique approach to character portrayal. His anecdotes about Varma's casting methods and his ethos towards monitoring his performances showcased a refreshing perspective on the craft of acting. Furthermore, Tripathi's candidness extended to his role in the 'Super 30' movie, where he infused his character with real-life inspiration, adding depth and authenticity to the portrayal. The actor's willingness to innovate and bring authenticity to his roles has contributed to the success of multiple sequels like 'Stree,' 'Mirzapur,' 'Criminal Justice,' 'Fukrey,' and 'Gangs of Wasseypur,' where his performances have garnered immense acclaim.

Singer Jasleen says wait for Dulquer for music video was worth it

Singer-composer Jasleen Royal says she waited for a good "three months" to get actor Dulquer Salmaan's dates for the chartbuster song 'Heeriye', which was released in 2023.

Royal had first reached out to Salmaan, star of films such as 'Ustad Hotel', 'Bangalore Days', and 'Sita Ramam', for her 2020 single "Sang Rahiyo", but got a 'no' from him because of the then Covid-induced lockdown, a PTI report stated.



Though the singer had a hard time waiting, she said she won't mind doing it all over again for her "best co-star".

"When I was doing 'Heeriye', I was like 'Let me just ask him one more time'. It had been a few years. Let's see, 'Zyada se zyada kya bolenge? Nahin yaar, nahin kar sakte'. He said he loved the song, but didn't have the time and will only get dates after three months. I was like ok, let's wait.

"And then, we waited. Later, when we finally did the song, I was constantly sharing updates with him that we entered the charts and more. He's so sweet. He's the best co-star I have ever worked with," Royal told PTI in an interview.

'Heeriye', released last July, is composed by Royal who sang the single along with Arijit Singh. The song narrates a modern-day fairy tale, where Dulquer plays the role of a prince charming who ventures beyond the realm of dreams to be with the woman, played by Royal, who envisions him.

The 32-year-old multihyphenate recently released romantic song 'Dastoor', starring actors Babil Khan, Akansha Ranjan Kapoor, Jackie Shroff and Neena Gupta.

The new single features Royal and Khan as young lovers who part ways because of class divide only to reunite decades later. Gupta and Shroff, who recently co-starred in the Prime Video film 'Mast Mein Rehne Ka', playing the older versions of the leads.

Talking about the struggles of producing a star-studded project, Royal admitted that getting these videos up isn't easy especially when the budget is limited.

"It becomes tedious. On the set too, I end up doing five people's jobs because it is not very controlled and organised in a way... We have limited budgets... Sometimes it's the weather conditions," she explained.



DOT's Ayodhya war room deploys AI for event network

The telecom department is using artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) to help telecom operators provide a seamless connectivity experience during the inauguration of the Ram Temple at Ayodhya later this month.

According to Economic Times, Department of Telecommunications (DoT) is carrying out predictive analysis based on the number of people who will come for the consecration ceremony on January 22, to tell telcos how many more mobile sites are needed and which technology–2G, 4G or 5G–should be on offer.

Some 12,000 people are expected to be in the inner periphery of the temple–where the ceremony will take place–and multi-fold outside it. To ensure there is no drop in network connectivity for the visitors, telecom operators are making arrangements to support nearly twice the number.

"Based on the predictive analysis, we have found that around 90-91 mobile towers or cell on wheels (COW) need to be put up," the official said. "The telcos will be informed about how many 2G, 4G, and 5G towers are required and at which locations."

Since the towers are mobile, their positions will be changed according to the movement of the crowd.

'12th Fail' tops IMDb's Indian Cinema list with 9.2 rating

Actor Vikrant Massey-starrer biographical drama '12th Fail', directed by Vidhu Vinod Chopra had been rated the highest, with a rating of 9.2 out of 10 on IMDb, and secured the number one spot on IMDb's Top 250 films of Indian Cinema.



IMDb is an authoritative source for movie, TV, and celebrity content, designed to help fans explore the world of movies and shows and decide what to watch, IANS reported from Mumbai. In 2023, among all films from around the world that have received at least 20,000 user votes, '12th Fail' has been rated the highest. The list of highest-rated films of 2023 has 12th Fail at the top, followed by 'Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse' with a rating of 8.6. Other big films of the year follow suit with 'Oppenheimer' (8.4), 'Godzilla Minus One' (8.4), and the Kannada film Kaiva (8.2) rounding off the top 5.

Moreover, '12th Fail' had also made its place in the top 10 as Highest Rated Drama list of LetterBoxD 2023 year in Review.

Earlier, the movie has also been selected as the closing film for the Macau Asia-Europe Young Cinema Film Festival. Vidhu will attend the screening of '12th Fail' on January 11 in Macau, which is based on Anurag Pathak's best-selling novel about the real-life story of IPS officer Manoj Kumar Sharma. The movie is inspired by real-life stories and delves into the relentless struggles of millions of students attempting the UPSC entrance exam.

'Aarya' S3 Part 2 to premiere on Feb 9

The second part of 'Aarya' season three is set to start streaming on Disney+ Hotstar from February 9, the platform announced on January 08.

Titled "Aarya Antim Vaar", the remaining half of the crime drama will see Sushmita Sen's titular character head for the ultimate showdown as she navigates family and business matters.



The show is created and co-directed by Ram Madhvani and co-produced by Amita Madhvani, Ram Madhvani, Ram Madhvani Films and Endemol Shine India.

Ram Madhvani described 'Aarya' as a heartfelt journey that holds a special place in his career.

"In this part, Aarya is broken down to a point where she is almost reborn, and I believe every viewer will literally get chills witnessing her journey. Cinematographically, 'Aarya Antim Vaar' marks a new leaf for this genre. 'Aarya' stands as a high point in my directorial journey, a story that has challenged and enriched me," the director said in a statement.

Broadcasters raise channel bouquet prices due to higher content costs

Broadcasters Zee Entertainment Enterprises, Sony Pictures Networks India, and Viacom18 have raised TV channel bouquet prices to offset rising content expenses that will affect monthly TV bills for consumers.

Network18 and Viacom18's distribution arm IndiaCast has raised the price of their bouquets by 20-25 percent after adding big-ticket sports properties to their portfolio, Economic Times reported.



Zee hiked the price of its bouquets by over 9-10 percent, while Sony's bouquet prices have gone up by 10-11 percent. Disney Star is yet to unveil its new bouquet pricing.

While the broadcasters said the new pricing will come into effect on February 1, the regulation states that they can implement the new pricing 30 days after the publication of the reference interconnect offer (RIO).

England's cricket tour of India yet to find b'caster in UK

England's cricket tour of India yet to find b'caster in UK

England's tour of India is yet to find a UK broadcaster less than three weeks ahead of the Test series beginning, broadcastnow.co.uk has reported quoting The Guardian newspaper. A similar situation occurred before England's last tour of India, in 2021, which resulted in Channel 4 picking up the rights to the series for its first live cricket in 16 years. The Indian cricket board, the BCCI, also left releasing the fixtures for the recent Cricket World Cup until just 100 days before the tournament, causing issues for those wanting to travel and watch their teams, the report added. Sky Sports and TNT Sports are two possible pay-TV suitors. Sky broadcasts all of England's home series and some away matches, while TNT Sports shows the away Ashes series and matches in the West Indies and New Zealand. Meanwhile, the BBC has also shown live cricket in recent times, including domestic T20 series The Hundred as well as short-form England men's and women's matches.



Sid Malhotra says was dying to be part of Shetty's cop universe



Actor Sidharth Malhotraon Friday said he was eager to be a part of Rohit Shetty's cop universe and his wish came true with the OTT series 'Indian Police Force'.

The seven-part action series, which will debut on January 19 on streamer Prime Video, marks Shetty and Malhotra's foray into long-format storytelling.

It is the next chapter in the filmmaker's cinematic universe that started with 2011 movie 'Singham' and expanded with 'Singham Returns' (2014), 'Simmba' (2018) and 'Sooryavanshi' (2021).

At the show's trailer launch event in Mumbai, Malhotra, 38, said there is no one better than Shetty when it comes to presenting heroes in Hindi cinema.

"As an audience and as an actor, I've admired all his films. Even though he does comedy really well, when it comes to action and portraying the heroes in the most masculine, simple and effective way, I think Rohit Shetty has a great language in it. I was dying to be part of that cop universe," the actor said.

It was two years ago when the filmmaker discussed the idea for the show with Malhotra, he recalled.

"He said, 'I'm making something in the cop universe', and I said, 'great'. He said, 'It is for OTT'. When he showed his vision and I heard the story, everything just came through," he added.

Though 'Indian Police Force' is a series and will be available on OTT, Malhotra said it has all the elements of a feature film.

"It is nothing short of Hindi cinema entertainment that he brings to you. I've always loved playing real-life heroes on screen. So 'Indian Police Force', and Kabir Malik, my character is nothing short of that. I hope all our Hindi cinema lovers and everybody comes through to watch this show and celebrate our real life heroes," he added.

Also starring Shilpa Shetty and Vivek Oberoi, the show follows the officers of Delhi Police trying to catch the masterminds behind a series of bomb blasts.

Rohit Shetty has created the series and also co-directed it with Sushwanth Prakash. The show also features Shweta Tiwari, Nikitin Dheer, Rituraj Singh, Mukesh Rishi, Lalit Parimoo in pivotal roles.

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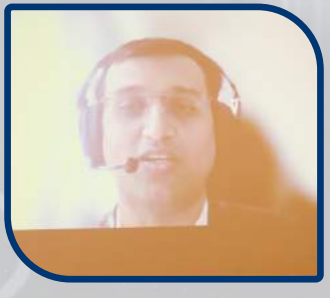

















Viacom18 to air India-Afghan T20I series across platforms

Viacom18 is set to broadcast the three-match T20I series between Afghanistan and India live and exclusively on JioCinema, Sports18-1 SD + HD, and Colors Cineplex from January 11-17.



This series marks Team India's inaugural T20I series of 2024 and serves as a prelude to the forthcoming T20 World Cup later in the year.

JioCinema aims to enhance the viewing experience by offering the series in multiple languages including English, Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali, Bhojpuri, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam. Colors Cineplex will present live action in Hindi, while viewers can choose between English, Tamil, Telugu, and Kannada on Sports18-1 SD + HD. Throughout the series, fans can expect insightful analysis from cricketing legends such as Suresh Raina, Zaheer Khan, Saba Karim, Parthiv Patel, Aakash Chopra, and Pragyan Chopra.

A promo released by Viacom18 depicts the two nations, Afghanistan and India, represented by their cricket kits in a friendly banter-filled exchange at a sports store. With the tagline 'dekh lenge' ('we will see'), the campaign adds a playful touch to the clash of 'the giant killers vs the giants',

Coverage for the matches is scheduled to commence at 6 pm on JioCinema, Sports18-1 SD + HD, and Colors Cineplex, promising an immersive cricketing experience for fans across platforms.

T-Series among top 4 bidders for UP's film city project

T-Series owner Super Cassettes Industries Private Limited is among four companies which have bidden to develop Uttar Pradesh government's ambitious Film City near Noida.

The other three bidders are Supersonic Technobuild Private Limited (Maddock Films, Cape of Good Films LLP & others), Bayview Projects LLP (backed by filmmaker Boney Kapoor), and 4 Lions Films Private Limited (backed by filmmaker KC Bokadia), PTI reported from Noida.

This is the third time that the bid for the development of the film city has been floated, after two previous attempts failed to attract investors.

A pet project of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the Film City is envisaged as an international project spanning over 1,000 acres (230 acres in first phase) of land along the Yamuna Expressway near Noida.

The Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA) has received four bids for the greenfield project, according to an official statement.

"The received bids will now undergo technical examination at the authority level. Subsequently, the financial bids will be opened as per the regulations," the statement said.

The YEIDA had issued the bid for the establishment of the International Film City project on September 30, 2023.

Netflix considers adding in-app purchases, ads to games

Streaming giant Netflix is reportedly planning to generate revenue from its gaming business by adding in-app purchases and advertisements. The company has had discussions in recent months about how to generate revenue from its games, IANS reported, citing people familiar with the discussions.

For two years, Netflix subscribers have been able to download tons of mobile games, all free with their subscription.

The company offers more than 75 mobile games, like Grand Theft Auto, Love Is Blind, Monument Valley, and Oxenfree.

According to the report, Netflix is planning to put a price tag on premium gaming titles and place ads on games.

Netflix has yet to comment on the report.

The company last year said it was not worried about ads and in-game payments. "We want to have a differentiated gaming experience and part of that is giving game creators the ability to think about building games purely from the perspective of player enjoyment and not having to worry about other forms of monetization, whether it be ads or in-game payment," Netflix co-CEO Greg Peters had said during the earnings call.



In August, Netflix rolled out its games across devices — TVs, computers, and mobile — and announced the first public tests of its cloud-streamed games.

Platforms generating traffic growth should share costs: COAI

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) has proposed that 4-5 large traffic-generating (LTG) platforms like OTTs responsible for the disproportionate traffic growth on telecom networks should bear the equitable share of costs, as the industry body argued that telcos shouldering the full burden is "neither sustainable nor prudent".

COAI noted that start-ups and MSMEs need not come under the 'fair share model', as their share of contribution to the overall traffic is small compared to LTG (large traffic generating) platforms, PTI reported from New Delhi.

Mooting various models and approaches to address the issue – which has become a flashpoint between OTTs and telcos, COAI said, "The best solution is for an equitable share of these costs to be borne by the 4-5 LTGs responsible for the disproportionate traffic growth".

Such a model would also safeguard the interests of startups and MSMEs, it said.

"...model 5 emerges best suited towards addressing this continuously rising infrastructure cost driven by accelerated data usage due to LTG traffic," the COAI paper pointed out.

Putting the entire burden on telecom service providers (TSPs) is neither sustainable nor prudent, the COAI said, batting for the model where 4-5 LTGs causing disproportionate traffic growth can shoulder a fair share of network costs.

"This is a feasible option and addresses all concerns of various parties – that is net neutrality, double dipping and others," COAI said in the white paper.

It analysed and formulated five models of resolution to the issue at hand, and said two of these models were workable solutions. "However, the final recommendation is for a model that keeps MSMEs and Startups out of the ambit of fair-share (as consistently maintained and intended by the TSPs), and shows that the burden on the TSPs due to the LTGs' growing traffic patterns, even without the smaller players, is substantial and needs to be addressed," SP Kochhar, Director General of COAI, said.

A worldwide debate is raging presently on whether the large traffic generating (LTG) platforms/applications – including over-the-top (OTT).

As Jio gains 31 lakh mobile users, VIL loses 20 lakh: TRAI

India's largest telecom operator Reliance Jio added 31.59 lakh mobile users while rival Bharti Airtel's subscriber gain came in at 3.52 lakh in October 2023, as per monthly subscriber data by TRAI. There was no relief for the troubled telco Vodafone Idea on the subscriber front, as it lost 20.44 lakh wireless subscribers in October.

With the addition of 31.59 lakh users, Jio's total wireless subscriber count climbed to 45.23 crore in October from 44.92 crore in September, PTI reported from New Delhi.

Sunil Mittal-led Airtel's wireless subscriber gain of 3.52 lakh pushed up the telco's user tally to 37.81 crore in October.

The subscriber losses of Vodafone Idea Ltd (VIL) dragged its wireless user base to 22.54 crore in October, according the data from Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).

Cash-strapped VIL has been battling fundraising woes and subscriber losses.

MeitY unveils AI-powered ERNET portal for education services

On January 04, 2024 Secretary S Krishnan of the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) launched ERNET India's cutting-edge web portal tailored for educational institutions.



This platform, developed using AI, ML, and open-source technology, offers domain registration, DNS, and value-added services like Website as a Service (WaaS) and Learning Management as a Service (LMaaS).

According to the PIB release, users have access to diverse templates for schools, colleges, and universities, enabling them to create personalized websites and Learning Management Systems effortlessly. With a single click, they can customize templates and publish their website and LMS.

Secretary S Krishnan inaugurated ERNET India's new conference hall, engaging with officers and staff during the event. ERNET India, a non-profit scientific society under MeitY, serves as the exclusive domain registrar for educational and research institutes using 'ac.in', 'edu.in', and 'res.in' domain names.

APAC video revenues to cross $165 bn by 2028; India amongst top 5 mkts

A new set of data released yesterday by Media Partners Asia (MPA) projects that total APAC video industry revenues will grow at a CAGR of 2.6 percent between 2023-28 to reach US$165 billion by 2028 or at a CAGR of 3.3 percent ex-China to US$95 billion.

The APAC online video sector is projected to grow at 6.7 percent CAGR to reach US$78.5 billion in value by 2028 or at 9.2 percent CAGR to US$46 bil. in APAC ex-China, the Singapore-headquartered MPA said.

Pointing out that though China remains the largest and most regulated video market, generating US$64 billion in revenue in 2023, the other top markets markets in 2023 were Japan (US$32 billion), India (US$13 billion), Korea (US$12 billion) and Australia (US$9.5 billion) followed by Taiwan and Indonesia, both at around US$3 billion.

The report, MPA said in a statement, provides a definitive guide to the adoption and monetization of free-to-air TV (free TV), pay-TV, SVOD, premium AVOD and UGC/Social Video advertising in 14 Asia Pacific markets.



Advertising contributed 51 percent to online video revenues in 2023 and its contribution is projected to grow to 54 percent by 2028 and to 63 percent in APAC ex-China (vs 58 percent in 2023).

The six largest revenue generating video industry markets by 2028 will be China, Japan, India, Korea, Australia andIndonesia, with all contributing an aggregate 90 percent to the Asia Pacific total.

The fastest growing markets over 2023-28 in terms of percentage CAGR will be Indonesia (7.3 percent), Philippines (6.2 percent), India (5.6 percent), Vietnam (4.6 percent) and Thailand (4.2 percent).

Commenting on the findings of the report, MPA Managing & Executive Director Vivek Couto said: "The Asia Pacific video industry continues to experience a secular shift from TV to online in terms of engagement and monetization. Improved connectivity, rising connected TV (CTV) penetration combined with the growth of local creator economies, investment in premium local content as well as the wide availability of premium sports streaming, will continue to drive dollars and eyeballs online.

"Clear beneficiaries in the digital video economy include global and local technology and media companies investing in product and content with consumers at the forefront of their strategies.

"According to MPA, 8 companies had an aggregate 65 percent share of the APAC online video revenue pie in 2023: Amazon Prime Video, ByteDance (including TikTok), Disney, Google-owned YouTube, iQIYI, Meta (video), Netflix and Tencent. Ex-China, certain local players are competing successfully and have scale potential, including Jio Cinema and Zee-Sony in India; Foxtel's Kayo and Nine's SVOD and BVOD platforms in Australia; TVer and U-Next in Japan; Tving in Korea; Vidio in Indonesia; and Viu across Southeast Asia."

2023 in Numbers

The APAC video industry grew by 5.5 percent in 2023 as total revenue reached approximately US$145 billion, according to MPA estimates. The 2023 performance was driven by a 13 percent growth in online video sector sales to US$57 billion, partially offset by less than 1 percent growth in the TV revenue pie to US$98 billion.

Excluding China, the APAC video industry grew by 3.2 percent in 2023 with revenue reaching US$81 billion, driven by a 13 percent increase in online video sales to US$30 billion while TV declined by 2 percent to US$51 billion.

Online SVOD grew 15 percent in 2023 to reach US$28 billion or 12 percent ex-China to US$12 billion while the AVOD pie grew 11 percent to US$29 billion or 13 percent ex-China to US$17 billion. UGC / social video continues to dominate the AVOD category with 80 percent share while premium AVOD had 20 percent share in 2023.

Pay TV subscription fees showed marginally below flat growth in APAC ex-China with revenue declines in important markets such as India and Japan while almost every market in Southeast Asia contracted.

Pay TV advertising grew in India but was decimated in Korea. Free TV advertising was down 2 percent in 2023 across APAC ex-China with significant declines in Australia, Indonesia and Korea.

Industry Forecasts MPA projections indicate that total APAC video industry revenues will grow at a CAGR of 2.6 percent between 2023-28 to top US$165 billion by 2028 or at a CAGR of 3.3 percent ex-China to top US$95 billion.

China will be increasingly mature and grow at 1.7 percent to reach US$70 billion by 2028, followed by Japan (US$35 billion), India (US$17 billion), Korea (US$14 billion), Australia (US$11 billion) and Indonesia (close to US$4 billion).

The APAC online video sector is projected to grow at 6.7 percent CAGR to reach US$78.5 billion in value by 2028 or 9.2 percent ex-China to reach US$46 billion by 2028.

TV industry revenues, including advertising and subscription, will marginally contract at -0.4 percent CAGR between 2023-28 to reach US$86.5 billion by 2028 or at -1 percent CAGR to US$49 billion ex-China.

Scaled TV markets that are expected to still grow but at a much smaller pace include India, Japan, Korea and Indonesia. There remain significant downside risks on TV advertising in Indonesia, India and Korea

Couto added that new investments made by strategics and private equity in the online video sector in China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea and Southeast Asia are helping local and regional companies compete.

"The online video sector is also starting to rationalize with price increases in the SVOD category along with disciplined content and marketing investment, the introduction of ad tiers, new strategies to drive monetization and the start of local market consolidation in Korea, Japan and India," he added.

Amidst the shift to online and the growth of CTV, traditional linear TV is under pressure with a number of territories not expected to see a meaningful return of TV ad dollars. Local broadcasters are capitalizing through premium AVOD and in certain cases, SVOD, most notably in Australia, India, Indonesia and Japan, Couto further explained.

Pocket FM India records 647% revenue surge, 56% decrease in losses in Fy23

Homegrown audio streaming platform Pocket FM on Thursday disclosed the financial performance of its India subsidiary for FY2023, reporting a 647 percent surge in revenue, reaching Rs 131 crore and a 56 percent decrease in loss (before tax), amounting to Rs 75.7 crore.

The company has experienced a 417 percent increase in microtransaction revenue (content monetisation) to Rs 82.8 crore. The advertising revenue soared by 1120 percent to Rs 12.17 crore, with the company at a pilot stage for its brand and ad solutions streams, IANS reported.

"Our commitment to staying financially healthy ensures a strong foundation for scaling up not just in India but also globally," Anurag Sharma, Chief Financial Officer, Pocket FM, said in a statement.

"With continuous investments into content and the writers' community, we look forward to elevating entertainment not just limited to listening experiences but replicating the experience across other formats through IP stronghold," he added.

Pocket FM's overall expenses increased by 9.32 percent to Rs 206.78 crore in FY23.

The advertising and marketing expenses were reduced by 45 percent to Rs 70.57 crore. In FY23, the company's content expenses more than doubled to Rs 21.29 crore.

Employee spending has witnessed an increase from Rs 30.7 crore in 2022 to Rs 73.3 crore in 2023 to align with the company's growth strategy.

The company's expense-to-revenue ratio has got better to 1.58 in FY23 from 10.78 in FY22, Pocket FM said.

BCCI initiates bidding process for WPL partnership rights

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) had opened the doors for potential partners, officially announcing the launch of the Request for Quotation (RFQ) phase to acquire partnership rights for the Women's Premier League.

Reputed organizations are invited to participate by submitting bids to secure official partnership rights, Economic Times reported.

The RFQ document, inclusive of comprehensive terms and conditions governing the tender process, outlines eligibility requirements, bid submission protocols, and associated rights and obligations.

Interested entities can obtain the RFQ by making a non-refundable payment of Rs.1,00,000, along with applicable Goods and Services Tax, with the purchasing window open until January 19, 2024. Confirmation of purchase requires interested parties to email payment details to rfq@bcci.tv, with access to the RFQ documents granted upon payment confirmation.

Notably, the purchase of the RFQ does not automatically guarantee eligibility to bid; fulfillment of stipulated criteria is imperative.

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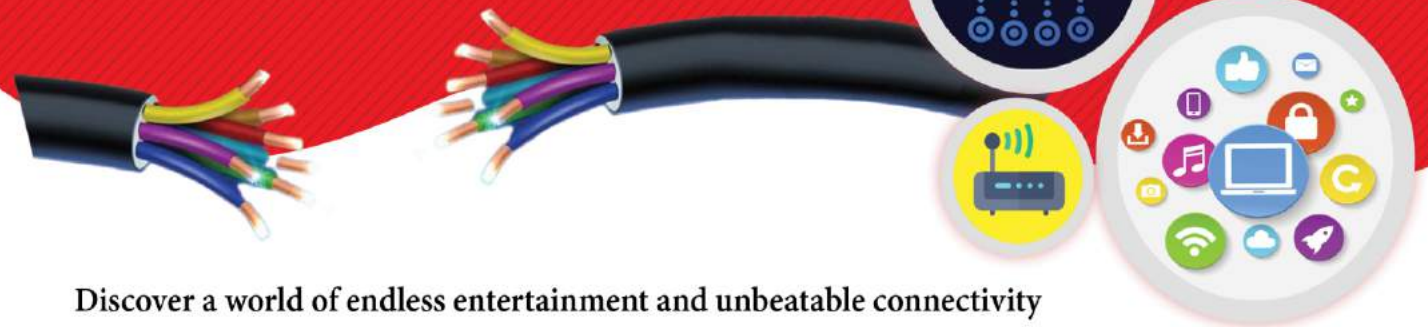
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GUEST COLUMN

Will new Broadcast Bill '23 tighten controls on communication media?



By:Ashok Mansukhani

Indian Media Scenario 2023

From a single-channel Doordarshan channel in **1982** to **900** TV channels in **2023**, Indian media has seen an enormous explosion of multi-language content, with **200** million TV homes. There are **1500** Multi-System Operators, **1,00,000** local Cable Operators, three private DTH Networks, and Prasar Bharati Free Dish.

There are over **50** OTT Streaming Networks. KPMG estimates **627** million OTT subscribers by the end of **2023.** Active mobile users numbered **01.10 Billion** in India in early 2023. There are over **119 million** active paid OTT subscriptions viewing streaming services, while the total number of OTT viewers exceeds **480 million.**

A recent PWC report states that Entertainment and Media (E&M) revenue in India witnessed a **15.9%** growth to **USD 46,207 million** in **2022** compared to **2021.**

The report states that *"increasingly cheaper data packages make the Internet accessible to a large population." Internet access in the country is expected to generate a revenue of* ***USD 29.1 Billion*** *around the same time.*

Powered by Over-the-top (OTT) platforms, the Gaming sector, Traditional TV, Internet, and Out-of-Home (OOH) advertising and the use of the metaverse, India's E&M Industry is expected to grow exponentially at a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of ***9.7%*** *in* ***2023-2027****, reaching* ***USD 73,560 million*** *in* ***2027*** *"* ***(PWC Global Entertainment & Media Outlook 2023–2027: India perspective July 2023)."***

COMMENT

Legacy TV Broadcasting and their traditional modes of delivery through ***Cable*** *and* ***DTH*** *are slowing down in India and are expected to grow by* ***3-4 %*** *with an average watch time of four hours daily.*

The strongest growth post-lockdown of ***2020-2023*** *has been in the* ***OTT Sector****. Estimates that it is expected to grow from* ***USD 16.02*** *billion in* ***2023*** *to* ***USD 36.97 billion*** *by* ***2028,*** *marking a CAGR of* ***18.20 percen****t in the forecast period, should have gladdened the hearts of Regulators.*

However, there is "alarm" that OTT, with over ***480 million*** *viewers, is growing "too fast" for the comfort of legacy media and certain quarters.*

This has led to demands for a "level playing field", which is accepted in the recent proposals in the new Broadcast Bill ***2023****, which proposes to "rein in"* ***Digital Media*** *by subjecting them to the same regulations as legacy media apart from revamping broadcast law.*

Regulatory Scenario

Supreme Court judgment in The Secretary, Ministry Of Information and Broadcasting vs Cricket Association Of Bengal February 9 1995- 1995 AIR 1236, 1995 SCC (2) 161

In a seminal judgment on the Broadcasting rights of private Broadcasters and the establishment of an Autonomous Broadcast Regulatory Authority, the Supreme Court held that:

The right to freedom of speech and expression under **Article 19(1)(a)** of the Constitution of India includes the right to impart and receive information through electronic media like television.

The Court emphasised that the award of Broadcasting rights should be based on the principle of public interest, ensuring diversity and plurality in the media landscape.

COMMENT

In an epochal judgment, the Supreme Court directed that the Central Government take immediate steps to create an ***Independent and Autonomous Broadcast Regulatory Authority*** *to regulate the airwaves representing all sectors and interests of society. As later events show, this has not become a reality in the past thirty years.*

Cable Network Regulation Act 1995 - 25.03.1995

The live Broadcasts of the Gulf War by CNN in 1991 led to a great demand for live satellite telecasts by Indian viewers. Cable Networks had an explosive but uncontrolled growth, especially in urban India.

In **1993**, the Rajasthan High Court, in the judgment of ***Shiv Cable TV System vs the State of Rajasthan dated 10.05.1993 AIR 1993 Raj 222,*** upheld that Cable TV falls within the realm of freedom of expression. However, it emphasised that this freedom is not absolute and can be subject to *reasonable restrictions* in the interest of *public order, morality, and decency.*

It noted that airwaves are public property, and the Government has the right to regulate them in the public interest. It acknowledged the lack of specific Rules and Regulations for licensing Cable Operators. It urged the Government to formulate clear guidelines and modalities for granting licenses promptly. This paved the way for developing a comprehensive regulatory framework for the Cable Industry.

In **1994**, the Government introduced a Cable Ordinance with **Cable Rules 1994**, which became an **Act** only in **1995**. The main intention was to regulate the '*haphazard mushrooming of Television Networks*.' The key features of the Cable Act were:

A registration process for Cable Operators was introduced to lay down "*responsibilities and obligations in respect of the quality of service both technically as well content-wise, use of materials protected under the copyright law, exhibition of uncertified films, and protection of subscribers from anti-national broadcasts from sources inimical to national interests".*

Content Regulation was introduced through the **Programme and Advertisement Code** in the Cable Act and Rules. The Act gave the Government the authority to regulate the content broadcast on Cable TV, ensuring that it adhered to the prescribed content guidelines and was suitable for all audiences.

The Programme Code had the following key features:

Prohibition on obscenity, defamation, and incitement: *No programme shall contain anything obscene, defamatory, false, or suggestive of innuendo and half-truths.*

Restriction on violence: *Violence should not be depicted in a manner that glorifies or justifies it.*

Protection of children: *Programmes should not contain anything that exploits children or harms their well-being.*

Salient Features of the Cable Act 1995

Promotion of local content: The **Act** encouraged the promotion of local content, boosting the domestic entertainment Industry.

Quality of Service: The **Act and Rules** for standardising the quality of Cable TV services were intended to ensure a basic quality threshold for Operators.

Addressing monopoly concerns: The Act and Rules sought to curb the development of Cable monopolies, promoting fair competition.

Conditional Access Systems -In 2003, the Cable Act was amended to ensure viewers could pay for only those channels they wished to see, and a new **Conditional Access System (CAS)** could be introduced. This was provided in **Section 4A of the Cable Act,** allowing viewers to *select and pay for channels of their* choice apart from enjoying a slate of *free-to-air* channels.



Three-tier self-regulation- In 2021, the Cable Rules were amended on June 17, 2021. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting established a three-tier *self-regulation and grievance redressal* procedure.

The new **Rules** enacted through the **Cable Television Networks (Amendment) Rules, 2021,** would force "*accountability and responsibility on the Broadcasters and their self-regulating bodies.*" It aligned Television's self-regulatory mechanism with OTT platforms and digital news publishers under the IT Regulations 2021.

A three-level redressal mechanism was introduced :

Self-regulation by the Broadcaster.

Self-regulating bodies of the Broadcasters.

An oversight mechanism by the Centre.

MSO Registration -**On September 28 2023**, the Government amended the **Cable Rules**, introducing a procedure for renewing MSOs' registration. It introduced an enabling provision in the Rules for the *sharing of infrastructure* by the Cable Operators with broadband service providers to promote internet penetration to the last mile.

Decriminalised Provisions- On October 5, 2023, the Government amended the Cable Rules to provide an *operational mechanism* for implementing *decriminalised provisions* of the **Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995.** The imprisonment provisions under **Section 16** were replaced with monetary penalties and other non-monetary measures like *advisory, warning, and censure*.



Draft Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill 2023

On **November 9, 2023,** the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting released a draft of **Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill 2023** for public comments. The bill intends to replace the **Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act of 1995,** which has regulated the content and distribution of Linear TV for nearly **30 years.**

In its explanatory notes, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting stated that

"With new technologies and platforms, various Broadcasting Services have emerged, such as Direct-to-Home (DTH) and Internet-based Services like IPTV and OTT platforms. Considering the above, the Government has recognised the need to streamline the Regulatory framework and provide a cohesive legal framework for the diverse Broadcasting Services.

A streamlined Regulatory framework will bring clarity, consistency, and flexibility to Regulations while strengthening consumer protection and promoting ease of business.

A vital objective of the new Bill is to ensure ease of business and enhance the Broadcasters and Distribution Platform Operators' adherence to the Programme Code and Advertisement Code.

It will create a level playing field, foster investment and innovation, adapt to emerging trends, safeguard consumer interests, simplify compliance, and encourage growth and competition. "

COMMENTS

The new Bill is far more comprehensive than earlier Bills, covers all forms of digital content, and is intended to handle all forms of future technology.

The legal framework is sought to be aligned with modern Broadcasting technologies and practices.

The Bill also provides more explicit regulatory guidelines and compliance mechanisms for Broadcasters and Operators.

A critical analysis of the draft Bill below discusses many issues of public concern that need resolution before the bill becomes law.

Critical Highlights of the Bill

The Bill comprises six Chapters, forty-eight Sections and three Schedules. Using the explanatory notes attached to the draft Bill, comments on critical provisions are given below:

1. **Chapter 1- Consolidation and Modernization of Broadcasting Regulation/ Contemporary Definitions and Future-Ready Provisions: (Sections 1 and 2)**

"The Bill is designed to cater to the needs of all service providers in the sector, ranging from traditional broadcasters to those utilising the latest technological advancements.

This inclusiveness allows the Act to effectively regulate and govern all types of broadcasters, irrespective of their operational methods or technologies."

COMMENTS

*After the Cable Act was enacted in **1995,** the media universe underwent significant technological developments like **Direct to Home, Headend in the Sky, OTT Channels,** and other forms of **Digital Media.***

*The lockdown of **2020** only accelerated cord-cutting to streaming platforms; millions began watching live and stored content through internet devices and mobiles.*

*The **Cable Act 1995** would have been abolished in a couple of years if the **Convergence Commission of India Act** had been passed in **2001,** which did not happen for well-known reasons.*

*Further, in no other country but India, Broadcasters were governed only by guidelines of **Downlinking and Uplinking Regulations** under **Allocation of Business Rules 1961**, which were sometimes challenged in courts and did not have the full force of law.*

*Modern media is now transnational, and content is provided and streamed from different locations, which has made the **Cable Act** obsolete.*

*A new **Broadcast Act** was necessary to draw foreign investment and deal with content licensing, copyright, and competition issues.*

The Bill introduces comprehensive definitions for contemporary broadcasting terms and incorporates provisions for emerging technologies.

COMMENT:

The Bill is a welcome regulatory move that brings diverse Broadcast content providers, distribution chains, and even future technological developments under a single ***Broadcasting Act.***

However, an in-depth analysis below reveals that the Bill can, in its present form, tighten executive control on the entire gamut of communication media by assuming power through rule-making power and the issue of guidelines and orders, which could go far beyond the legislation's core intent and purpose.



In its present shape, the Bill will be open to constitutional challenges on freedom of expression even though the response from the Industry is very muted for various reasons.

The Indian Broadcasting and Digital Federation President, Mr K. Madhavan, *told a business daily that the Bill is attempting to* ***"force fit"*** *video streaming services into a linear broadcasting framework, which could result in structural issues in regulation.*

Chapter 2- Regulatory Purview Enhanced (Section 3-18)

The Chapter is divided into four parts:

Part A covers Broadcasters and Satellite Broadcasting Networks. (Sections 4-14) Broadcasters need *approval* for transmitting

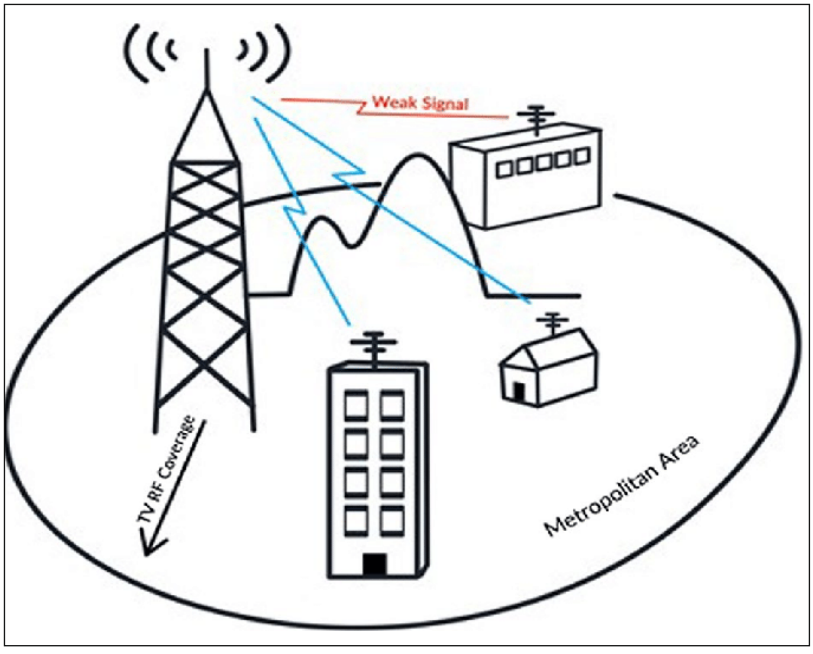


programmes, while Network Operators must *register* to operate.

The Broadcasters and Satellite Network Operators must fulfil specified obligations, maintain accurate subscriber data, etc. These regulations are intended to ensure compliance with standards, fairness, and the country's smooth functioning of Broadcasting Services.

Part B deals with Radio Broadcasting Networks. (Section 15) Individuals or organisations intending to operate a Radio Broadcasting Network must apply for a *letter of intent.* Permission may be granted subject to prescribed clearances and requirements.

Part C pertains to Internet Broadcasting Networks. (Section 16-17) Universal license holders can provide IPTV Services by *intimating* the Central Government. OTT (Over-the-Top) Broadcasting service providers meeting the prescribed threshold must inform the Central Government.



Part D relates to Terrestrial Broadcasting Networks. (Section 18) Persons intending to operate a Terrestrial Broadcasting Network must *apply* for permission. Permission may be granted subject to prescribed terms and conditions and clearances.

No person can provide Broadcasting Services or operate a Broadcasting Network without proper registration or intimation. However, entities like Government departments, political parties, and public authorities are not eligible for registration, except for authorised entities like Prasar Bharti or Parliament-operated channels.

Previous entities operating under an *authorisation* must transfer their operations to eligible entities by the Act. The Central Government may allow registration for *social objectives* with specific terms and conditions.

It also specifies that the Central Government has the authority to regulate Services *closely connected* to Broadcast Networks and Broadcasting Services. These Regulations encompass eligibility criteria, terms, conditions, and fees.

Broadcasters and Network Operators have specified obligations. They must transmit programmes in compliance with fixed terms and conditions, ensuring their Services adhere to the Programme and Advertisement codes.

The Broadcasting Services should not *interfere* with authorised Telecommunication systems and must meet specific interference standards.

Operators are also expected to *comply* with Government orders and directions, use equipment meeting Government standards, and provide information upon request.

Different Rules can be made for different types of Broadcasters and Network Operators, allowing for *tailored regulations* based on the nature of their operations.

There is a mandate for *compulsory transmission* of specific (Prasar Bharati) channels.

Guidelines for providing Platform Services may be issued for different Broadcasting Network Operators.

Provisions for the *suspension, cancellation and renewal* of registration are provided.

Applicants can *appeal registration-related decisions* to the Appellate Authority, ensuring a fair and transparent process.

COMMENTS

All types of Broadcasters and Distribution Networks are covered in this Chapter. While a level playing field Regulation is sought to be created, there are differences between Broadcasters who must 'apply' to Distribution Network Operators, who must 'register'; Internet Broadcasters with Universal Licence to 'intimate'; to radio Broadcasters, who must use a 'letter of intent'; to terrestrial Broadcasters who must 'apply'.

The rest of the chapter is couched in ***general terms*** *like "transmitting programmes in compliance with specified terms and conditions (nothing is spelt out and will be covered in Rules. Operators are to comply with government orders and directions (not set), the compulsory transmission of* ***Prasar Bharati*** *channels, and provisions for suspension/cancellation and renewal of registration with the right of appeal to Appellate Authority (not specified).*



This Chapter needs greater clarity than just specifying actions to be taken through Rules/Guidelines and Orders, as subordinate legislation cannot override the primary intent and purpose of the Act as upheld by the Supreme Court in many judgments. In the State of Bombay v. M/s. Bombay Municipal Corporation (1952) AIR 1952 SC 175, the Supreme Court held that subordinate legislation must be "in aid of and not in derogation of" the parent Act.

C Standards, Accessibility, and Access Control measures (Sections 19-23)

Section 19 states that any Programme or Advertisement broadcast through Television, Radio, or other Broadcasting Services must follow the Programme and Advertisement codes. These codes may *vary* depending on the type of Broadcasting Service.

Section 20: Individuals or organisations broadcasting news and current affairs content online, such as through websites, social media, or news portals, must follow the Programme Code and Advertisement Code mentioned in **Section 19.**

Section 21: The Government can provide guidelines to Broadcasters to classify their programmes into different categories based on content, theme, and target audience. These categories will have *relevant ratings and descriptors*. Broadcasters must prominently display the *programme classification* at the show's beginning, allowing viewers to make informed decisions.

Section 22: Broadcasting Network Operators will have to implement *Access Control Measures* for programs that are classified as appropriate for restricted viewing (e.g., adult content). These measures ensure that only the intended audience can access such content.

Section 23: The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting may issue *Accessibility Guidelines* to make Broadcasting Services more accessible to persons with disabilities. These Guidelines may include adding subtitles, audio descriptions for the blind, sign language translations, and using accessible applications.

Broadcasters may be required to make a certain percentage of their programmes accessible within a specified time frame. If there is a violation of the *Accessibility Guidelines*, penalties may be imposed on the Broadcaster or Broadcasting Network Operator.

• **COMMENTS**

This is one of the most controversial amendments to bring digital media under the control of the omnipresent Programming and Advertising Code applicable to legacy Broadcasters and Distribution Platform Operators under the Cable Act ***1995.***

The ***Delhi High Court*** *had upheld the Government's powers to enforce the Programme Code against erring Broadcasters in the case filed by* ***Viacom 18 vs UOI in LPA 374/2013,*** *banning the telecast of a programme on the channel* ***Comedy Central*** *for some days. It held that "the appellant, in the facts and circumstances aforesaid, has not conducted itself responsibly and has abused the faith reposed in it under the self-regulatory regime".*

An appeal by ***Viacom 18*** *in the Supreme Court is pending in* ***SLP(Civil) 32182/2014,*** *though the Supreme Court allowed the Channel to be telecast, excluding the offensive programmes in its interim order dated* ***28.11.2014.***

According to a recent ***Internet and Mobile Association of India*** *report, nearly* ***480 million OTT*** *users will be nationwide by the end of* ***2023.***

Currently, OTT platforms are governed by the ***Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021****, which shifted responsibility for content to the* ***intermediaries*** *and* ***digital publishers.***

Significant social media firms *have to appoint a chief compliance officer and have a* ***nodal contact person*** *who can be in touch with law enforcement agencies 24/7.* ***Social media platforms*** *will also have to name a* ***grievance officer*** *who will register the grievance within* ***24 hours*** *and dispose of it within* ***15 days.***

Removal of content: *If there are complaints against the dignity of users, particularly women – about exposed private parts of individuals or nudity or sexual acts or impersonation, etc. – social media platforms will be required to remove that within* ***24*** *hours after a complaint is made.*

There will be three levels of ***Regulation*** *for* ***news publishers — self-regulation****, a* ***self-regulatory body*** *headed by a retired judge or an eminent person, and* ***oversight*** *from the* ***Information and Broadcasting Ministry****, including codes of practices and a grievance committee.*

Litigation on IT Rules ***2021*** *on the* ***Digital Ethics Code*** *has been pending in various High Courts. All the cases have been transferred to the Supreme Court, which will hear the consolidated appeals in due course. Meanwhile, stay orders given by various courts against some parts of the Rules remain in effect.*

One controversial provision stipulates that all individuals or institutions broadcasting news and current affairs content online through websites, social media, or news portals will be covered by the ***Programme and Advertisement Code provisions.*** *This can have a chilling effect on online media unless the Government lets the self-regulatory triple structure sustain itself and steps in to regulate content affecting extreme cases like national security, etc.*

One of the possible avenues the Government can consider is to vary and relax the Programme Code for Digital and Streaming Content. This is to ensure that the vibrant digital media is neither homogenised nor chilled by harsh regulation.

A welcome new provision is ***accessibility guidelines*** *to enable content for persons with disabilities. As per the* ***2011*** *census, there were around* ***26 million*** *people with disabilities, which may rise by* ***2023*** *to* ***35*** *million. Hopefully, this will be a* ***voluntary provision*** *allowing Broadcasters and Content Providers to select content progressively for watching by disabled people.*

Regulatory Structure (Sections 24-29)

This chapter outlines the Regulatory structure for Broadcasting content. The aim is to ensure that Broadcasters and Broadcasting Network Operators comply with the Rules regarding content and address any complaints or grievances related to content violations that may arise.

(Section 24) Every Broadcaster or Broadcasting Network operator must establish a Content Evaluation Committee (CEC) with members from various social groups, including women, child welfare, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, minorities, and others, as specified.

The Government can define the **CEC's** size, quorum, and operational details. The Broadcaster must inform the Government and disclose **CEC** members' information on their website. Broadcasters can only air programmes certified by the **CEC**, except for specific programmes exempted by the Government.

The **CEC's** certificates must include prescribed details and be displayed as specified. These provisions will come into effect 180 days after the Act's enforcement.

COMMENTS

All Television Broadcasters like ***Disney Star and Zee*** *and Streaming platforms like* ***Netflix and Amazon Prime*** *have their content moderation standards, practices, and internal monitoring mechanisms.*

Now, the Government wants the Broadcasters/OTT Platforms/Others to set up a ***Content Evaluation Committee***

- *consisting of members from various social groups whose size and operational details will be decided by the Government.*

This is an unwarranted interference under ***Article 14/19*** *of the Constitution and needs to be reconsidered.*

(Section 25-29) There are three main components of the Regulatory structure defined in this chapter:

(Section 25)Self-Regulation by Broadcasters and Broadcasting Network Operators: Broadcasters and Network Operators must appoint a **Grievance Redressal Officer** to handle complaints about content violations.

They must also be members of a **self-regulatory organisation (SRO)** established for this purpose.

Additionally, they must set up *mechanisms* for filing and addressing complaints and make information about these processes easily accessible.

(Section 26) Self-Regulatory organisations: SROs are bodies formed by Broadcasters, Network Operators, or Associations. Once registered with the Government, these organisations are responsible for addressing *grievances* related to content violations that Broadcasters or Network Operators have not resolved within a specific time frame.

They also handle *appeals* filed by complainants against the decisions made by Broadcasters or Network Operators. SROs provide guidance and advisories to their members to ensure compliance with the Broadcasting Rules.

(Section 27-29) Broadcast Advisory Council: The Government will establish a **Broadcast Advisory Council,** consisting of independent experts and Government representatives, to oversee the implementation of the Regulations. The Council will receive *complaints* related to content violations and review them. Based on their examination, they make recommendations to the Government.



The Government then considers these recommendations and issues appropriate orders and directions. The **Council** can form *review panels* to assist with its functions as needed. These panels are assigned specific cases or appeals and provide their recommendations, which are considered recommendations of the **Broadcast Advisory Council.**

COMMENTS

In the case of ***Nilesh Navalkha vs UOI in(PIL (ST) No. 92252/2020),*** *the Bombay High Court, in its judgment dated* ***18/01/21,*** *was highly critical of the leeway given by the Government to news Broadcasters on self-regulation of Broadcast content. The Court found it highly ineffective and lacking transparency and accountability. Key observations were:*

Lack of transparency: *The Court found that the self-regulatory bodies lacked transparency in their proceedings, making it difficult to scrutinise their decisions.*

Inconsistent application of standards: *The Court observed that the self-regulatory bodies inconsistently applied their standards, leading to arbitrary and discriminatory decisions.*

Limited scope of Regulation: *The Court noted that the self-regulatory bodies had limited powers and could not effectively address severe violations of Broadcasting standards.*

Conflicts of interest: *The Court expressed concern about potential conflicts of interest within the self-regulatory bodies, as they were primarily composed of representatives from the Broadcasting Industry.*

An appeal filed by Broadcasters against the ***Bombay High Court*** *decision is pending a final hearing in the Supreme Court. In a preliminary hearing in* ***August 2023****, the Chief Justice asked the Broadcaster body to find ways to tighten self-regulation. Pointing out that self-regulation of television channels has proven "ineffective", the Supreme Court said it would issue guidelines to strengthen such self-regulation.*

Meanwhile, the Government has decided to bring a ***Broadcast Advisory Council*** *as the* ***Content Czar*** *consisting of independent experts and government representatives, all selected to oversee the implementation of the Regulations.*

This draft provision ignores the ***Bombay High Court****'s direction in the* ***Navalakha*** *case to establish an* ***independent mechanism*** *for reviewing the regulatory bodies' decisions, as the* ***Broadcast Council*** *in the proposed Bill merely replaces the* ***Inter-Ministerial Committee.***

The organised response of the powerful Broadcasters and influential Streaming Network Operators may, hopefully, persuade the Government to revisit this provision.

Chapter V: Inspection and Penalties (Sections 30-36)

This chapter deals with inspections and penalties for Broadcasting Networks and Services.

(Section 30-) The Central Government and its Authorised Officers can inspect these Networks and Services. Operators must provide the necessary equipment for interception or monitoring as directed.

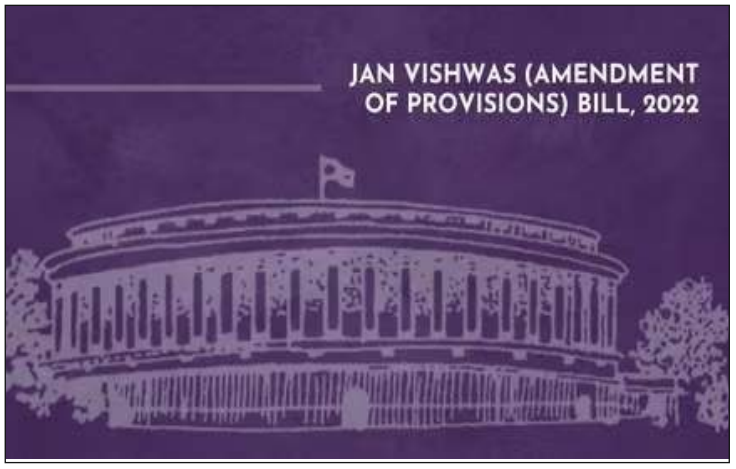
(Section 31-32) Seized equipment can be confiscated unless operators demonstrate compliance. Companies and the individuals responsible can be liable for infringements unless they prove a lack of knowledge or due diligence.

(Section 35) Penalties can be *advisory, censure, warning, and monetary penalties*. Non-compliance with the Program and Advertisement Codes can result in the removal of objectionable programmes, orders, apologies, off-air periods, or cancellation of registration.

There are provisions for imprisonment and fines for a few severe offences. The quantum of monetary penalty and fine is dependent on the financial capacity of the entity or individual.

COMMENTS

*As late as **October 2023,** the Government had eased penal provisions of the Cable Act 1995, which stated that "To make the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, **1995** more business-friendly and to boost the investor confidence in the sector, punishments specified under **Section 16** were re-examined and were decriminalised through the **Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provision) Act, 2023.***



*The new draft provisions seem to reintroduce penalties, a retrograde provision converse to the **Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provision) Act, 2023** and needs to be revisited.*

(Section 36) The Government can also ***prohibit programmes*** or ***operations*** for public interest or national security reasons.

COMMENTS

*Right from **1950** onwards, the Supreme Court has consistently upheld freedom of expression for media subject to reasonable restrictions specified in **Article 19 (2)**. The current takeover norms under **section 36** will be set only in the **Rules** and could be misused to "gag the media", which this writer argues cannot be the intention of the Government nor will be upheld by the court.*

*While temporary suspension of Internet rules exists and was recently utilised in **Manipur,***

it is inconceivable if this provision leads to blank screens for any extended time.

If this drastic provision is to stay in statute books, the rarest of the rare provisions that can be used in case of war or national emergency must be spelt out, and a judicial tribunal or the Courts must expeditiously decide its legal challenge.

Miscellaneous Provisions (Sections (37-48)

The various provisions covered under this chapter include:

(Section 37) Infrastructure Sharing: This section allows multiple Broadcasting Service providers to *share infrastructure* and *equipment* voluntarily. They need to apply to the Central Government with details of the *infrastructur*e proposed to be transferred and the roles and responsibilities of the entities involved. The Government will review and approve or reject the application based on specific criteria and conditions.

(Section 38) Right of way for Operators: This section defines the right of way for Broadcasting Networks. It outlines the procedures and conditions for facility providers to seek permission to establish promoting Networks on public and private properties.

Power of Central Government to Establish Common Ducts and Corridors: The Government may establish *common ducts* or corridors for Broadcasting Networks and provide *open access* to facility providers on prescribed terms.

Dispute Resolution: District Magistrates have exclusive powers to *resolve disputes* related to this section, and their decisions are *"final".*

COMMENTS

Right-of-way bureaucratic blocks have seriously constrained the cable industry's healthy growth, especially in cable dark areas. These new provisions will go a long way in helping the Cable Industry thrive. Establishing common ducts or corridors, especially in new buildings, will be very helpful for both Cable and internet supply.

*Though the latest census data goes back to **2011**, even so, it is commonly accepted that there are at least **310 million homes,** which means the Cable Industry can strive to reach out to the balance of **110 million** non-TV homes subject to meeting stiff competition from Free Dish DTH and conventional DTH platforms.*

(Section 39) Provisions for emerging and future Broadcasting technologies: This section empowers the Central Government to make the provisions of this Act applicable to Broadcasting Networks that use *new technologies and methods*. The Government can do so if these Networks meet specific criteria, are similar to existing Broadcasting Networks, and operate as *systematic business, professional, journalistic, or commercial activities.*

COMMENTS:

While this is merely an enabling section, it is not always possible for Regulation to keep up with the march of technology.

*A recent **Deloitte** study reveals that "in a short time, **Generative AI** has empowered legions of creators, disrupted Industry workflows, and sharply amplified challenges to intellectual property, trust, and ownership. **Ultimately, these tools could shape a fundamentally new media and entertainment world."***

*It is hoped that the **MIB** will keep itself updated with the latest Broadcast technologies and keep pace with effective Regulation.*

*Europe has just passed strict **AI regulations** that will take effect from **2024** to **2026**, affecting the unrestrained use of **AI** in media content.*

*India has just set up an **AI Mission**, which will set up a mechanism for ensuring **ethical use of AI**. It is hoped that issues of controlling unethical use of AI will not fall between inter-ministerial tussles.*

*One of the gross misuses of **AI** has been the **deep fakery** of celebrities worldwide, including India. How MIB plans to coordinate with **MIETY** on this and future vexing issues remains a question mark.*

(Section 40) Registration for Audience Measurement Services: This section states that individuals or organisations intending to provide **Audience Measurement Services** must apply for registration to the registering Authority. The Authority will consider eligibility criteria and conditions before granting registration. Applicants can appeal a refusal by the Registering Authority to the Appellate Authority.

COMMENTS

*At present, the audience ratings are provided by **BARC- Broadcast Audience Ratings Council**, a non-profit company. Established in 2010, **BARC** is an Industry-led body jointly owned by Broadcasters, advertisers, and advertising agencies. **BARC** collects data using a people meter system, which tracks the viewing habits of a panel of households across India. This data is used to generate **Television Rating Points (TRPs)**, which measure the popularity of television programs and channels.*

*It is unclear whether **BARC** will survive the new provisions of the **Broadcast Act 2023.** As it is an Industry-led body, it may be allowed to continue, but that remains to be seen. There is no element of self-regulation/independence in **Section 40,** which is unsuitable for a vibrant industry.*

(Section 41) Transitional provision: This section ensures a smooth transition for individuals or organisations already registered or granted permission under previous Broadcasting Regulations. They will be deemed registered, approved, or notified under this Act. However, they may need to provide a notification to self-certify compliance with the provisions of this Act within a prescribed period.

(Section 42) Application of other laws not barred: This section clarifies that the provisions of this Act are in addition to, and not in derogation of, other existing laws related to various areas such as *drugs, cosmetics, trademarks, cinematography, consumer protection, and Telecommunications.*

(Section 43) Power to make Rules: This section grants the Central Government the power to make Rules for the effective implementation of the provisions of this Act. The Rules can cover various matters, including registration, eligibility criteria, obligations, penalties, and other Broadcasting Services and Network details.

(Section 44) Power of the Central Government to issue Guidelines: This section authorises the Central Government to issue Guidelines to fulfil the objectives of this Act.

(Section 44) Existing Guidelines issued before this Act will be deemed valid, but any inconsistency with this Act will be void. Penalties specified in these Guidelines will apply.

(Section 45) Delegation of powers by the Central Government: This section allows the Central Government to delegate its powers and functions under this Act, except for rule-making powers and certain specified powers, to designated officers.

(Section 46) Rules to be laid before Parliament: This section mandates that all Rules made under this Act must be presented before both Houses of Parliament for 30 days. If both Houses agree to modify or reject the law, it will be adjusted accordingly or become void, but previously taken actions based on the rule will remain valid.

(Section 47) Power to remove difficulties: This section empowers the Central Government to make provisions through Orders published in the Official Gazette to overcome any challenges in implementing the provisions of this Act. These Orders need to be laid before both Houses of Parliament.

(Section 48) Savings and repeal: This section addresses the continuity of Rules and Notifications made under the previous **Cable Television Network (Regulation) Act, 1995.** Such Rules and Notifications will be deemed made under this Act unless they are inconsistent.

The **Cable Television Network (Regulation) Act, 1995,** will be repealed on a notified date. Actions taken under the repealed Act will be considered as if done under this Act, and pending proceedings will continue.

CONCLUSION:

*The new bill is based on the feedback on the proposed amendments to the **Cable Network Regulation Act** Draft Act of 2020. However, the scope of the Bill has been vastly expanded to rope in the very vibrant digital media into its regulatory confines. It will apply to new upcoming technologies like **AI** and **Virtual Reality.***

The new Bill is a determined effort on the part of the Government to maintain control over all forms of content, especially when self-regulatory mechanisms fail.

*Many provisions will provoke debate, but much hard work has gone into framing the Bill and looking at the present-day scenario, it would sail through Parliament like the **Telecom Bill** passed in three days.*

*However, there are serious constitutional concerns about freedom of expression, especially in the **digital media sphere**, which has over **400 million** active users in India on media platforms like **Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram. .** Music streaming services like **Spotify, Gaana, and Jio Saavn** are also gaining popularity,, with over **200 million** active users. At least **32%** consume news daily at least once or twice on **digital media.***

*There are approximately **73 million** cable subscribers, **71 million** DTH subscribers, and **45 million Free Dish** and **Terrestrial** viewers, totalling **189 million** homes. The total size of the **Indian Broadcast TV and Digital** content market makes it among the largest in the world.*

Millions of viewers are entitled to enjoy watching and consuming content without unnecessary executive constraint, as is the mandate of the Constitution and the Supreme Court.

It is hoped that the Broadcast Bill in its current shape will be completely revamped and that the Government does not resort to constant tinkering through the issue of Rules/Guidelines and Orders as there is abundant Supreme Court case law that they are subordinate legislation and cannot override the pith and substance of a legislative Act.

*In a recent judgment, the Supreme Court held that **"delegated legislation should not travel beyond the purview of the Parent Act. If it does, it is ultra vires and cannot be given any effect,"***

*It is hoped that sufficient time will be given for an informed industry and viewer debate. Currently, time is available till **January 14 2024**, to send responses.*

With a few months left to go for the General Elections when the term of the Lok Sabha ends, it is hoped that the Government will not push through the bill. In its present form and present a revamped bill in the new Parliament.



(Ashok Mansukhani, the author, is a media veteran having spent decades with the government and private sector media organizations, specializing in legal and policy matters. He retired from the Hinduja group having being part of the leadership team that built the group's media business. He also sits on the advisory board of the Indianbroadcastingworld.com. He practises law at the Bombay High Court specialising in Media and Corporate Law. The views expressed in the write-up are those of the author and Indianbroadcastingworld.com need not necessarily subscribe to them.)

ROLL ON

India Today Group elevates Kalli Purie to executive editor-in-chief

India Today Group had elevated Kalli Purie as the Executive Editor-in-Chief. This additional designation marks a pivotal moment for Purie, who had been a driving force as the Vice Chairperson of the esteemed media conglomerate since October 2017.



The announcement was made internally to the company's staff through an official communication from India Today Group.

"KP has been at the helm of both the business and editorial domains with remarkable success. In recognition of her multifaceted contributions, I am delighted to announce her expanded role," mentioned Purie in the internal communication.

Kalli Purie's ascension to the role of Executive Editor-in-Chief comes as a testament to her exceptional leadership and vision within the group.

Notably, Aroon Purie emphasized that this expanded responsibility for Kalli would seamlessly integrate into the group's operations without necessitating substantial operational changes.

Purie's deep understanding of media dynamics, coupled with her unwavering commitment to journalistic excellence is expected to further propel India Today Group's editorial endeavors to new heights.

Her proven track record and dedication make her a valuable asset in steering the group's editorial strategies in an ever-evolving media landscape.

The elevation of Kalli Purie to Executive Editor-in-Chief underscores India Today Group's commitment to continued innovation and leadership in the realm of media and journalism.

Vikas Sachdeva takes helm as EVP, head of International ad sales at ZEEL



ZEE Entertainment Enterprises Ltd welcomes Vikas Sachdeva as their new Executive Vice President and Head of International Ad Sales. Sachdeva brings a wealth of experience, having previously served as the Head of India International Ad Sales at Disney Star for over 9 years.

During his tenure at Disney Star, Sachdeva played a pivotal role in expanding the network's international business, spanning the UK, Middle East, APAC, and Sri Lanka, encompassing both mainstream and regional channels.

His career trajectory includes significant roles such as Group Head (Corporate Sales) at Radio City 91.1 FM and a tenure with The Times Group (BCCL), overseeing Retail and E-commerce categories in the Response department.

With an extensive 19-year background in the media industry, Sachdeva boasts expertise across diverse mediums including Print, Radio, Digital, and TV. His appointment signifies a strategic move by ZEE Entertainment Enterprises Ltd to fortify its global advertising endeavors under his seasoned leadership.

Sachin Paliwal bids farewell to Zee Media



Zee Media Corporation Limited has announced the departure of Sachin Paliwal, a seasoned media professional with over 15 years of invaluable experience.

Paliwal has been an integral part of the organization, contributing significantly to the growth and success of various channels, including Zee News, Zee Bharat, Zee UP/UK, Zee Rajasthan, Zee Kannada News and Zee 24 Taas. During his tenure at Zee Media, Paliwal played a pivotal role in executing crucial campaigns, most notably the rebranding of Zee News and the relaunch of the DNA show. His strategic vision and leadership have been instrumental in enhancing the brand presence and viewership of Zee Media channels. Prior to joining Zee Media, Paliwal held key positions in renowned media organizations, including TV Today Group (Aaj Tak), where he contributed significantly to the success of the network. As a founding member of BARC India, he played a crucial role in shaping the future of television measurement in the country.

Vodafone Idea's director of regulatory affairs P Balaji resigns

In a high-profile exit, Vodafone Idea's director, regulatory and corporate affairs officer, P Balaji had resigned, and he will be relieved on January 10.

Balaji was the key person who used to interact with officials in the government and was the company's largest shareholder. He is leaving amid the efforts of the company to raise critical funding.

"We wish to inform you that P Balaji, chief regulatory and corporate affairs officer of the company has resigned. Accordingly, he will cease to be a senior management personnel of the company w.e.f. close of business hours on January 10, 2024," Vodafone Idea (Vi) said in a regulatory filing. Balaji resigned yesterday and sought a waiver of the contractual notice period obligation, PTI reported.

"I appreciate the opportunity given to me by Vodafone Idea to serve for over 9 years and am proud of the work we have done together to help transform the company. However, at this point in my life, I am eager to pursue my personal and professional goals outside of VIL. Accordingly, I would like to resign from the services of the company with immediate effect," Balaji said in his resignation.

The company, which is struggling to raise funds, has denied any talks with Elon Musk-owned Starlink for a stake sale. The shares of the company had hit a 52-week high intraday Monday, gaining nearly 40% in two trading sessions after a media report emerged on the Starlink talks.

The company, for the past three years, has been struggling to raise funds that are needed to pay its large vendors like Indus Towers and the government, expand 4G coverage, and invest in 5G rollout to compete effectively with bigger rivals Reliance Jio and Bharti Airtel.

The loss-making company's cash and cash equivalents declined to Rs 119.6 crore at the end of September from Rs 250 crore three months earlier.



Chief executive Akshaya Moondra had earlier said that discussions with potential investors would close in the December quarter, followed by debt funding from banks. But ET reported that the equity fundraising had been delayed and might close in this January-March quarter.

While Vodafone Idea had earlier announced that it was looking to mobilize about Rs 20,000 crore from a mix of debt and equity.

Amazon appoints Jeremy Helfand as Head of Prime Video advertising

Jeremy Helfand, a seasoned executive with a background at Disney and Hulu, has been appointed as the Vice President and Head of Advertising for Amazon's Prime Video platform. Helfand, known for his innovative work in developing streaming-specific ad formats, disclosed his new role via a LinkedIn post.



According to The Variety, this move comes ahead of Amazon's anticipated launch of an ad-supported tier on Prime Video, set to become the default subscription level for users. The company's strategy involves offering an ad-supported plan as the standard option, while viewers seeking an ad-free experience will have the option to pay an additional fee annually.

During his tenure at Hulu and Disney, Helfand played a pivotal role in introducing tailored ad formats for streaming, such as "pause ads" that appear when a user pauses content. Amazon's move to bring in seasoned advertising professionals mirrors similar industry trends, with media giants like NBCUniversal and Netflix also securing veterans to bolster their streaming advertising efforts.

Shridhar Mishra appointed CRO for News18 Digital

Network18 had announced that Shridhar Mishra would be the Chief Revenue Officer for News18 (Digital).



Mishra joins the Network18 family from Zee Media Corporation Ltd, where he held the position of Chief Revenue Officer-Digital. His extensive experience also includes pivotal roles in sales leadership at Jagran New Media and the Asianet News Network.

According to a statement from the news network, in his new capacity, Mishra will spearhead all digital revenue initiatives for News18, driving robust growth strategies for both direct and indirect inventory sales. Operating from the news network's Noida/Gurgaon offices, Mishra will collaborate closely with the existing direct, indirect sales, and ad operation teams of News18 Digital. Beyond his professional pursuits, Mishra is recognized as a proficient table tennis player and harbours a passion for travel and meditation.

Aavishkar Media GROUP & IBW INDIAN BROADCASTING WORLD

Wishes You All

HAPPY REPUBLIC DAY



With Pride In Our Hearts And Valour In Our Minds,
Let's Celebrate
The Glorious Sprit Of Democracy!!

YEARLY REPORT 2023

January 2023



28th January

Anurag Thakur deplores boycott-films culture

2nd January

Prasar Bharati on digital mode; FreeDish has43 mn subs: Thakur



7th January

28 regional DD channels to be HD-capable; FreeDish targets 250 slots

2nd January

Adani group gains full control of NDTV; Roys, 4 others resign

3rd January

NBF launches Digital News Federation for online platforms



4th January

Legends of Aap Ki Adalat secures No.1 position with 97% viewership

5th January

AIDCF, KCCL move \Kerala HC against TRAI's 2022 tariff rules

12th January

Disney Star appoints Ajit Varghese as head of network advertising sales



25th January

5G IoT connections to surpass 100 mn globally by '26



26th January

Aaj Tak crosses 50 mn subscribers on YouTube



February 2023

8th February

DD channels' gross viewership 724 mn in '21: Anurag Thakur



17th February

Anurag Thakur inaugurates 24×7 DD Himachal channel



1st February

NxtDigital shareholders approve new name NDL Ventures Ltd.

2nd February

STPI DG Kumar urges cable ops to go in for innovations





6th February

FreeDish's regional foray on to up coverage: Ex-CEO Prasar Bharati Vempati

13th February

Alt Balaji is now Altt

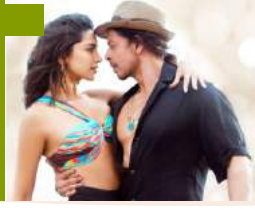


15th February

ZMCL elevates Abhay Ojha as CEO

22nd February

'Pathaan' makes history & Rs10+ bn in global earnings



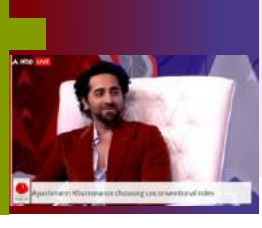
24th February

Punit Goenka challenges Zee insolvency proceedings



25th February

"OTT massive but it's not Bollywood's demise: Ayushmann Khurrana



YEARLY REPORT 2023

March 2023

25th March
MIB issues list of 57 OTT platforms operating in India



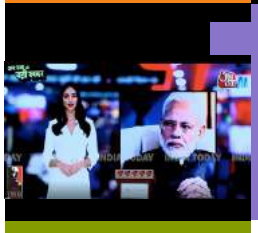
11th March
MIB issues advisory on foreign TV channels' uplink by teleport ops



3rd March
Tariff-related TV blackout sees channels' ratings being impacted

13th March
Sid Roy Kapur feels next decade belongs to Indian content





20th March
Aaj Tak announces first AI anchor at India Today Conclave 2023



23rd March
Reliance Jio 5G now available in 406 cities



22nd March
MX Player COO Nikhil Gandhi moves on

25th March
Cable ops' body ALCOA moves TDSAT against TRAI tariff rules

28th March
Jio onboards Wieden+Kennedy India for Jio True 5G

15th March
Netflix greenlights S3 of popular shows, including 'Delhi Crime'



April 2023

28th April
PM To inaugurate 91 FM Radio transmitters today



1st April
TRAI suggests incentives, govt. sops to boost b'cast sector hardware manufacturing

5th April
Kerala HC dismisses AIDCF plea against TRAI tariff order



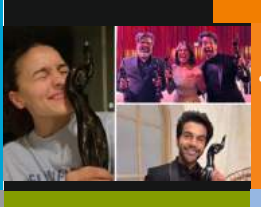
15th April
Govt. to invest $200 mn in AI, build improved E-Governance apps: Minister





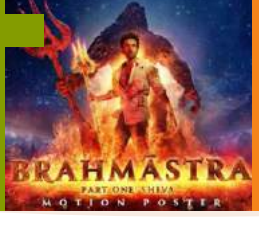
20th April
Cabinet approves the Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill 2023

26th April
TDSAT directs TRAI to file reply in cable ops' case on tariff issues



29th April
'Gangubai Kathiawadi', 'Badhaai Do' win big at 68th Filmfare Awards

5th April
Ayan Mukerji announces Brahmastra sequel timelines



10th April
JioCinema onboards 23 sponsors for IPL 2023



26th April
LinkedIn now has 100 mn members in India



YEARLY REPORT 2023

May 2023



31st May

India mandated tobacco warnings in OTT platforms' shows

5th May

All India Radio will knowned only as Akashvani

4th May

Content delivery level-playing field needed in OTT, DTH, cable: Trai chairman

13th May

Peeush Mahajan named president of AIDCF





6th May

Goafest 2023 starts on a futuristic note



24th May

Dish TV India proposes Manoj Dobhal as CEO-Designate

18th May

NDTV gets board approval to launch 9 new channels

10th May

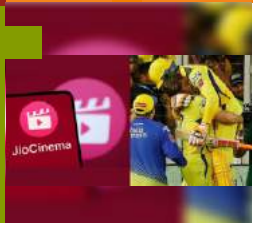
Work on in full swing for BSNL's 4G services

29th May

NBCUniversal, JioCinema enter into multi-year partnership

30th May

JioCinema clocks 3.2 crore viewers during IPL 2023 final



June 2023

19th June

OTT has bridged geographical barriers: Anurag Thakur



27th June

FreeDish invites MPEG-2 slots' bids; GECs reserve price high

3rd June

Netflix, Amazon, Disney, JioCinema mull legal challenge to anti-tobacco rules

7th June

Megha Tata elected as International Academy of Television Arts & Sciences member



28th June

NDTV shareholders approve appointments of new directors on board



29th June

Balaji Telefilms CEO Abhishek Kumar steps down



9th June

JioCinema takes Bigg Boss OTT to the next level

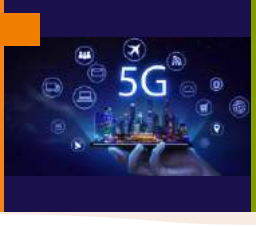
13th June

STB maker SmarDTV Global appoints Rajiv Khattar as consultant



29th June

Govt announces '5G & Beyond Hackathon 2023', invites applications



21st June

SRK congratulates KJo on his 25 years in cinema



YEARLY REPORT 2023

July 2023



14th July

Chandrayaan-3 satellite detaches from rocket, enters space

6th July

TRAI open house on satellite spectrum to be held on July 14



7th July

Regulation of OTT communication apps, DoT and TRAI begin consultation



6th July

DD to telecast India tour of WI in multiple languages





27th July

Telecom gear exports from India reach Rs 6,911 cr.



6th July

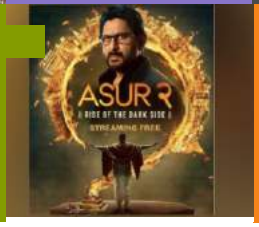
Rajat Sharma' world's most followed TV news personality on Twitter

1st July

NXTDIGITAL launches NXTPLAY with 3,00k hours of content

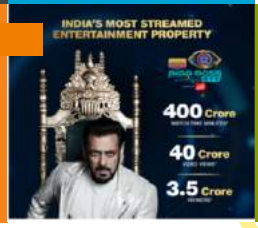
3rd July

After 'Asur2' success, Arshad Warsi feels OTT helps actors to flourish



7th July

JioCinema's Bigg Boss OTT Sets Streaming Records in India



13th July

Disney board extended Iger's contract as CEO through 2026



August 2023

12th August

MIB advisory to TV channels on sign language feature for I-Day telecast



10th August

Parliament okays PDP Bill safeguarding citizens' digital rights



7th August

DD National to air new series showcasing India's illustrious history



3rd August

IT Minister named 4 info mktng. firms selected by govt.



23rd August

Govt. assures Delhi HC on rules to check vulgarity on SM, OTT platforms

19th August

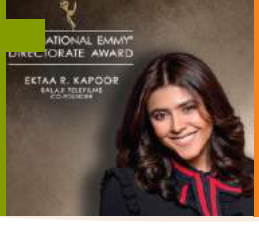
NDTV to launch a news channel on Aug 21

30th August

YuppTV buys Asia Cup digital rights from Disney Star; to telecast in 70+ nations

30th August

Ekta Kapoor to receive directorate award at 2023 International Emmys



24th August

Global OTT video market to reach 4.2 bn users by 2027



16th August

Jio unveiled nationwide 5G rollout on 26GHz mmWave spectrum



YEARLY REPORT 2023

September 2023

2nd September

MIB eases networth norms for India firms downlinking TV channels



12th September

AIDCF urged TRAI to bring DD FreeDish under cable TV rule

30th September

TRAI starts discussion on digital transformation via 5G

14th September

Zee News, AMG collaborate for Chetna Yatra 19th edition; flag-off Sept. 15



5th September

Prominent Cable TV figure Nisha Nagesh Chhabria passes away



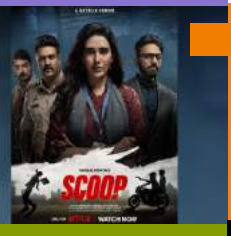
14th September

Apple unveiled iPhone15, new smartwatches, AirPods on September 12



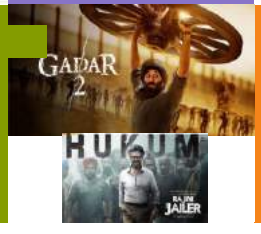
13th September

'Scoop', lead star Karishma nominated for global OTT awards



18th September

'Gadar2' 'Jailer', 'OMG2' top 3 August-released films: Ormax



20th September

'Money Heist' spin-off series 'Berlin' gets release date



30th September

Hombale Films to release 'KGF 3' in 2025



October 2023

11th October

Anurag Thakur unveils animated series 'Bharat Hain Hum'



13th October

Pubcaster Prasar Bharati floats tender for OTT platform

6th October

Govt notifies amendments to decriminalise Cable TV law

7th October

OTT platforms exempt from Govt permission, licensing: TDSAT



18th October

69th National Film Awards Allu Arjun, Alia Bhatt, and Kriti Sanon win Best Actor awards



16th October

GTPL Hathway records highest quarterly revenues from ops

27th October

Reliance unveils satellite-delivered b'band via JioSpaceFiber

4th October

SonyLIV forays into select markets in Africa, Caribbean

16th October

Karan Johar celebrates 25 years of 'Kuch Kuch Hota Hai'



16th October

Rohit Shetty introduces Deepika's cop universe character



YEARLY REPORT 2023

November 2023

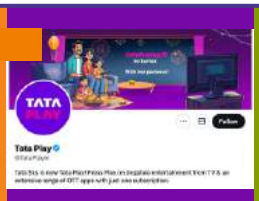
11th November

MIB's new digital ad policy to help govt. widen online outreach



16th November

Tata Play: B'cast policy should remove carriage fee; regulate OTT, FreeDish



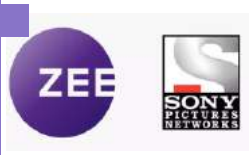
28th November

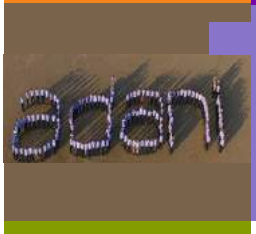
Under PM Modi, Minister Thakur Indian film Industry becoming bigger: Michael Douglas



01st November

NCLAT chief-headed bench to hear plea against Zee-Sony merger





03rd November

Adani expands media realm; takes control of Quintillion Business Media



18th November

Govt content review worries broadcasters, OTT



24th November

Over 300mn viewers for ICC WC India-Aus final: Disney Star

28th November

'Scoop', 'Sirf Ek Banda..', Bajpayee, Netflix big winners at OTT Awards



27th November

Shemaroo Entertainment surpasses 50 mn subscribers on YouTube



29th November

'Panchayat2' wins inaugural OTT Award at 54th IFFI



December 2023

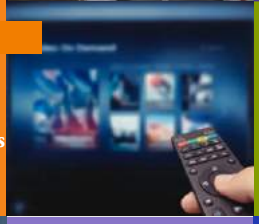
19th December

Can Telecoms Bill '23 be enacted into law before general elections?



02nd December

Parliamentary panel discusses GST burden on cable TV distributors



27th December

Prasar Bharati makes changes in DD FreeDish auction method



19th December

Dish TV India appoints Sunil Khanna, Ravi Bhushan to its board





22nd December

Sony's NP Singh among top global media influencers in Variety500



28th December

Jio, IIT-B to collaborate on 'Bharat GPT' for TV OS: Akash Ambani



21st December

Prakash Jha decries censorship, but bats for responsible content

15th December

SRK bags top spot in UK's 2023 South Asian celeb list



11th December

'Animal' grosses Rs. 660 cr globally amidst criticism for being too violent



7th December

DishTV app aggregator Watcho topped 3mn subscriptions in a year



Content - Cable TV - Technology- Internet Broadcasting ™

AVISHKAR

Dish Antenna Programme Guide Since 1993

1ST

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BROADCASTING MEDIA AND CATV INDUSTRY MAGAZINE

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GUEST COLUMN

Three Decades of Unfinished Communication Media Rules



While it is a truism that the march of technology outstrips regulation, India has been particularly tardy in framing technology-neutral regulations to ensure a level playing field for competing modes of communication media focusing on consumer needs.

By:Ashok Mansukhani

Key critical legislative and regulatory developments in the past three decades are discussed below:

A. Prasar Bharti Act 1990

The **Prasar Bharati Act** provided for establishing a Public Service Broadcasting Corporation, known as **Prasar Bharati,** and defined its composition,functions, and powers. The Act received the assent of the President of India on **12 September 1990** after being unanimously passed by Parliament. However, its implementation took place only on November 15, 1997.

The Act granted **All India Radio (Akashvani)** and **Doordarshan** "autonomy," previously under Government control. The objective was "independence" from Government control to Akashvani and Doordarshan to ensure the function reasonably, objectively, and creatively. The Act envisaged the formation of a **Broadcasting Council** to oversee the functioning of Prasar Bharati.

The Corporation's main objective was to safeguard the freedom of expression, ensure diverse viewpoints are presented, and make public broadcasting more competitive and appealing to a broader audience. It also intended to provide the balanced development of broadcasting on radio and television.

COMMENTS

With 21 TV channels, Doordarshan has a gross unique viewership of **685 million** viewers. All India Radio **(Akashvani)** has **420** radio stations with a listenership of 56 million on the AIR live streaming App. The **Free Dish** DTH platform of **Prasar Bharati** is prevalent in rural and now urban India, with an estimated **45 million** viewers and **167 channels** , including 7 7 a uctioned channels. These figures make **Prasar Bharati** one of the largest regional Broadcasters .

The autonomy of **Akashvani** and **Doordarshan** has been hobbled by their inability to generate sufficient finances, and using that gap, the **Ministry** of **Information and Broadcasting** maintains tight control of both organisations.

Over time, the Government accepted in the late **1990s** that the public broadcaster would not be able to provide the **plurality of content** required by viewers and opened up private broadcasting gradually from **2000** , which has thrived to day to become an **INR 943 Billion/ US$ 11.50 billion** business , reaching out to nearly **200 million** homes.



Court to set up an **independent and autonomous Broadcast Regulatory Authority** remains a mirage with no chance of actualisation.

- The judgment allowed the advent of private television broadcasting in India, which was, till then, the preserve of **Doordarshan.** It allowed private channels to acquire rights, and revenue generation for sports bodies increased, leading to better infrastructure, player payouts, and overall development of the sporting ecosystem, especially cricket.
- Additionally, the competition introduced by private channels drove plurality, innovation, and improved broadcast quality, benefiting viewers.

Cable Network Regulation Ordinance- 29.09.1994 & Cable Network Regulation Act 1995 – 25.03.1995

- *Parliament approved the passage of the **Cable Television Network Regulation Act** 1995 to regulate the 'haphazard mushrooming of Television Networks' . The content was sought to be regulated by introducing a Programme and Advertisement Code.*

Key features of the Cable Act are:

- ***Compulsory Registration** of all Cable Operators was mandated to ensure responsibilities and obligations in respect of the quality of service both technically as well as content -wise, use of materials protected under the copyright law, exhibition of uncertified films, and protection of subscribers from anti - national broadcasts from sources inimical to national interests".*



- ***Content Guidelines Cable operators (and Broadcasters)** must comply strictly with the **Programme and Advertisement Code.** This was aimed to "encourage the broadcast of programs that promote Indian culture, heritage, and values. This sought to counter the influence of foreign cultures and strengthen national identity".*
- ***The Advertisement Code** was created to "prevent misleading and deceptive advertisements: The Code ensured that advertisements were truthful and presented accurate information about the products or services being promoted ."*
- **Must Carry Provisions:** The Act provided for compulsory carriage of **Doordarshan** channels. (With Effect From **01.09.2000)**
- **Consumer Protection:** Consumer complaints must be addressed, and Cable Operators must follow service quality norms.
- **Penalties and Fines-** In the case of proven violations, penalties and fines could be levied, including imprisonment for criminal offences. (This provision has been amended from **12.10.2022** to allow for compliance and regulation through administrative means rather than registering criminal offences)

B. Supreme Court judgment in The Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting vs Cricket Association of Bengal dated 09.02.1995 -1995 AIR 1236/1995 SCC (2) 161.

- *The Supreme Court held: 'Airwaves or frequencies are public property . Their use had to be controlled and regulated by a public authority in the interests of the public and to prevent the invasion of their rights.*
- *The Government should immediately establish an independent, autonomous public authority representative of all sections and interests in society to control and regulate the use of the airwaves.*
- *The Broadcasting media should be under the control of the public as distinct from the Government. This is the command implicit in Article 19(1)(a)."*
- *"To ensure plurality of views and opinions and a fair and balanced presentation of news and public issues, the broadcast media should be placed under the control of the public, i.e., in the hands of statutory corporations or corporations, as the case may be."*

COMMENTS

- This epoch-making judgment cleared the way for autonomous broadcast regulation. Unfortunately, even **30 years** later, the mandate of Supreme

COMMENTS

- Though the **Cable Act** has been amended periodically , it has proved inadequate to regulate **Digital and Internet -based media** and other forms of distribution like Direct -to-Home, which is regulated by Guidelines issued under the Allocation of Business Rules 1961.
- Broadcasters , too, have escaped the rigours of formal regulation as they were being governed by **Downlinking** and **Uplinking Regulations** , which have proved inadequate to deal with **Content Code** Regulations . Actions taken by the **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting** through the **Inter - Ministerial Committee** to suspend programmes or channels were challenged in the **Delhi High Court with** favourable verdicts for broadcasters.



- Though the **Cable Act** was amended to give **TRAI** regulatory powers to fix **Tariffs** , prescribe **Interconnection agreements** , and promulgate **Quality of Service Regulations** in **2004**, **TRAI** could not ensure full implementation due to the inability to monitor and enforce its Regulations effectively , leading to myriad disputes in **TDSAT.**

C.Telecom Regulatory Authority of India- Independent Telecom Regulator 25.02.1997

- The **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997** (TRAI Act) was enacted on **28th March 1997** with the primary intention of:
- **Establishing an independent body** to regulate the telecommunication services sector in India.
- **Promoting and ensuring orderly growth of the telecommunication sector,** including fostering competition

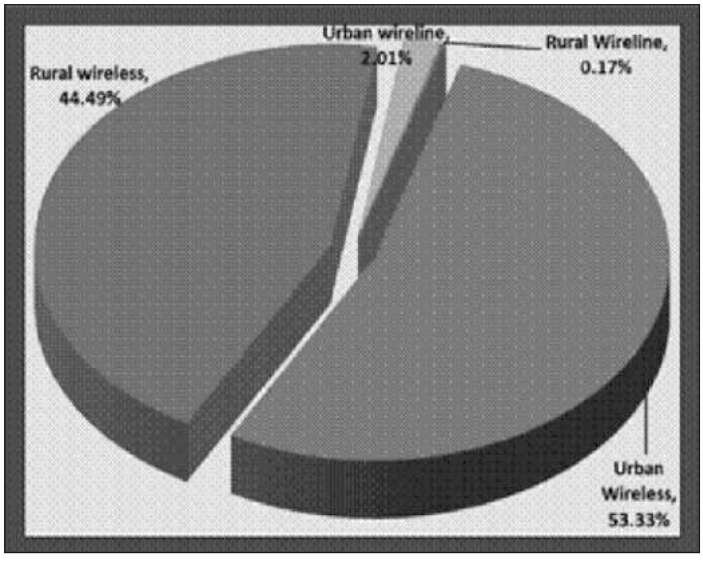


, encouraging technological advancements, and protecting consumer interests.

- **Regulating telecommunication services:** This encompasses Tariffs, Interconnection agreements, Quality of service (QoS) Regulations, and Dispute resolution mechanisms.
- **Protecting Consumer Interest: TRAI** is mandated to protect the interests of both consumers and service providers by ensuring fair competition, transparency, and affordability of services .
- **Adjudicating disputes:** The Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) was established on **March 21, 2000,** by amendment of the **TRAI Act** to handle disputes between service providers and consumers.

COMMENTS

- TRAI has played a seminal role in the orderly growth of the Telecom Sector, which today has **1.18 billion** wireless subscribers and **850 million** broadband subscribers.



It has a market capitalisation of **INR 5.3 trillion (USD 65.6 billion)**. Its contribution to **GDP** is estimated at ~ 8%.

- In the **26 years**, it has effectively managed the scarce spectrum resource through auctions and other mechanisms, ensuring fair access for all players and preventing monopolies. This facilitated the growth of mobile telephony and broadband services.
- **TRAI** established consumer protection regulations , including tariff transparency, portability, and dispute resolution mechanisms. This empowered consumers and improved their experience.
- **Promoting technological advancements: TRAI** encouraged technological innovations in the telecom sector by setting standards, facilitating trials, and promoting new technologies like **3G, 4G , and 5G .** This has helped India keep pace with global advancements.
- **TDSAT,** being a specialised forum, has helped resolve complex issues. Its judgments have set important precedents, though a backlog of cases is familiar to all Tribunals.

D. Broadcasting Bill 1997 -30.07.1997

- Following the directives of the Supreme Court in **February 1995**, the Government introduced the **Broadcast Bill 1997**. The explanatory note stated, *" Many satellite television channels are foreign entities, and their programmes are uplinked from outside the country without any regulation through the laws of our land. At the same time, Indian entrepreneurs and Indian companies are not permitted to own either Radio or Television stations at present.*
- *The **Public Service Broadcaster (Doordarshan)** alone will not be able to meet the needs and urges of the people in terms of the variety and plurality of programmes required in different regions by different sections of society in our vast country.*
- *The Bill aims to establish a **Broadcasting Authority** to facilitate and regulate **Broadcasting Services** in India so that they become competitive in terms of quality of services, cost of services and use of new technologies, apart from becoming a catalyst for social change, promotion of values of Indian culture and shaping of a modern vision."*

COMMENTS

- Though this was an attempt to regulate Broadcasting in terms of Supreme Court **1995** directives and create a level playing field for Foreign and Indian Broadcasters , the Bill was never enacted into law .
- It fell through due to opposition to efforts by the Government to rein in foreign channels by capping **foreign equity** to **49%**, a proposal to impose **cross-media restrictions** , and perceived threats by activists that the Bill would curb **freedom of expression**.

E. Fali Nariman Report on Convergent Regulation 25.08.2000

- In **May 2000**, the **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting** proposed to the **Fali Nariman Committee** set up by the **Group on Telecom and IT Convergence** to set up one Unified Regulatory Authority for licensing and other related issues for the Infotech, Broadcasting and Telecom sectors.
- However, the **Fali Nariman Report on Convergence 2000** feared that a Government-controlled Regulatory Body could lead to excessive state control over media. Instead, it suggested the formation of a single independent and autonomous super-regulator called the **Communication Commission of India**, which would issue unified licences in various categories.
- The report emphasised the importance of the flexibility of self- regulation content law with no political interference. The report aimed to " *promote the national objective of a robust infrastructure for an information-based society, and effort has to be made on the convergence of Telecommunication, including Data Communication and Broadcasting activities, since technological changes in these areas tend to overlap and converge increasingly.*

COMMENTS

- The Committee's revolutionary recommendation for an autonomous super - regulator and a technology-neutral regulation to encourage innovation . This led to the issue of **Unified Licenses** in **2003** in terms of the **National Telecom Policy 1999**, paving the way for converged services.
- The report advocated for a light -touch approach to content regulation, emphasising self -regulation by the industry while safeguarding national security and public interest. This approach has evolved to statutory recognition in the **Cable Act 1995** and the draft **Broadcast Regulation Bill 2023 .**
- Its objective to create a robust infrastructure for an information- based society was two decade s ahead o f its time. The report led to introducing the **Convergence Commission of India Bill 2001.**

F. Convergence Commission of India Bill August 2001

- The **Convergence Bill** was intended to set up a "*well -conceived structural mechanism to deal with the emerging scenario of convergence in the Telecom., IT and Broadcasting sectors as a super regulator.*
- *The Bill **would have repealed five existing Acts- Indian Telegraph Act-1885, the Cable TV Networks Regulation Act 1995, the Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act-1933, The Telegraph Wires (Unlawful Possession) Act 1950 and the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act 1997. (Note: The Telecommunication Bill 2023, passed by Parliament on 21 .12.2023, will lead to abolishing the three old Telegraph Acts. When finalised and passed, the Broadcast Regulation Bill 2023 will repeal the Cable Network Regulation Act 1995. The TRAI Act 1997 and TDSAT introduced by the amended TRAI Act in 2000 will continue.)***
- The CCI would have been charged with diverse responsibilities, such as developing the communication sector in a competitive environment and in consumer interest, making available communication services at an affordable cost to all, establishing a modern and effective communication infrastructure, encouraging the introduction of new technologies, promoting a level playing field for all operators etc.
- **Content regulation** and assignment of the spectrum were also to be given to CCI.
- An essential feature of the legislation was a flexible, technology- neutral, and Industry-friendly licensing regime, allowing service providers to offer various Services within each license category.a

- The legislation would also have set up a **Communications Appellate Tribunal** to hear appeals against the Regulatory or its Adjudicating Officers.

COMMENTS

- The Joint Parliamentary Committee thoroughly examined and approved the Bill despite fierce opposition by Broadcasters and Industry bodies.
- However, the vested interests of Broadcasters , telecom operators, incumbent ministries and regulators led to a revolutionary move being dropped and has never been debated again for the past 20 years.
- Efforts to revive it in the recent past failed for the same reason s it failed to be enacted into law in **2001**.
- In any case, with the introduction of the passage of the **Telecommunication Bill by Parliament on December 21 , 2023**, and the circulation of the draf**t Broadcast Regulation Bill** on **09.11.2023,** it is pretty clear that the **Convergence Commission of India Bill** has now been effectively killed off .

G. Trai As Broadcast Regulator -09.01.2004

- As the **Convergence Bill 2001** got caught in inter-ministerial rivalry and Industry opposition, the Government appointed TRAI as a **"Broadcast Regulator"** until the **Convergence Commission** of India or a separate **Broadcast Regulatory Authority** was formed.
- The Government of India nominated the **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)** as the Broadcast Regulator on **January 9 2004,** invoking the proviso to **Section 2 (1) (k) of the TRAI Act…**
- **The Press Information Bureau** press release on 09.01.2004 *stated that "TRAI will now be responsible for regulating all aspects of Broadcasting , including licensing, spectrum allocation, and content regulation."*
- *The decision to appoint TRAI as the Broadcast Regulator was made after careful consideration of all the options available.*
- *TRAI is an independent body with a proven record of regulating the Telecommunications sector. It is also well - equipped to handle the challenges of regulating the Broadcasting sector , which is becoming increasingly complex and competitive."*
- Broadcasters fiercely opposed the nomination of TRAI to be the broadcast regulator. Their consistent argument since 2004 has been that *TRAI is a carriage regulator and cannot regulate Broadcasters as content is "protected under **Article 14** and **Article 19 (1) (a)**" of the Constitution".*

They fought court cases thrice in 2005, 2017 and 2020 in the Delhi/Madras and Bombay High courts. Still, they lost every time, with the Supreme Court upholding the Delhi and Madras High Court decisions and the Broadcasters withdrawing their appeal in the Supreme Court in 2022 against the Bombay High Court decision in 2021.

COMMENTS

In the past **20** years, TRAI has done its best to maintain a level playing field between competing interests of **Broadcasters, Operators, Multi System Operators, DTH Networks** , and viewers.

It issued various **Tariff Orders /Interconnection Regulations** and **Quality of Service Regulations** in analogue and digital regimes to ensure fair pricing /standard contracts and quality service norms for service providers and consumers.

TRAI successfully piloted the **Digital Addressable System** between **2012** and **2020** despite many legal challenges from Broadcasters .

It has helped **DTH Networks** and **MSOs** grow after the introduction of NCF and the issue of the **New Tariff Order** in **2017** and later amendments.

Efforts to regulate **OTT** have failed due to inter -ministry quibbles and court orders.

In a recent Tribunal order (in an appeal filed by **AIDCF vs Disney Star (Broadcasting Petition No 217/2023)** , the TDSAT held on **23.10.2023** that *"prima facie , **OTT platform** is not a **TV channel** , nor is the respondent requiring any permission or a licence from the Central Government."*

H. Broadcasting Services Regulation Bill 2007- May 2007

- The **Broadcasting Services Regulation Bill 2007** was intended to *'provide for the establishing an independent , autonomous public authority to be known as the Broadcast Regulatory Authority of India to regulate and facilitate the development of Broadcasting Services in India to encourage Broadcasting Services to be responsive to the educational, developmental, social, cultural and other needs and aspirations of people and include in their programming public service messaging and content.*
- **The Bill** was to provide for:
- **Licensing:** No broadcasting service can operate without a license.
- **Cross-media Ownership:** Restrictions on cross-media ownership to prevent the creation of monopolies.
- **Foreign Investment:** Limits on foreign investment in Broadcasting companies.
- **Programme Code:** A stricter code for programme content, including restrictions on advertising and violence.
- **Compulsory Public Service Broadcasting:** Mandatory Broadcasting of public service content.

- **COMMENTS**
- In a sharp departure from the directions of the Supreme Court in the **CAB 1995** judgment, the **Fali Nariman Report of 2000** and the draft **Convergence Commission of India Bill 2001**, the **New Bill** made it clear that the Central Government intended to retain all key powers which should have transferred to **Broadcast Regulatory Authority of India** as per Supreme Court directive.
- Though there were significant deviations from the SC directives 1994 and the intent of the **Convergence Bill** 2001, even so, the **2007** Bill was a serious effort aimed at consolidated regulation of the Broadcast Media

Industry . Yet it failed to pass legislative muster. It took successive governments 16 years to develop a revised version of the **Broadcast Bill in 2023 .**

- **Sports Broadcasting Signals (Mandatory Sharing with Prasar Bharati Act) 2007**

This provided for:

- **Mandatory Sharing: Content rights owners and Broadcasters** must share live signals of sporting events of national importance with Prasar Bharati, the public broadcast.
- **Free-to-air Access: Prasar Bharati** must re-transmit the shared signals on its terrestrial and DTH network.
- **Sports Events of National Importance:** They will be defined by the Central Government.
- **Prior Notice**: Rights owners and Broadcasters must inform Prasar Bharati about upcoming events at least 45 days before the telecast.
- The Broadcasters filed writs alleging violation of their fundamental rights, but the Supreme Court upheld the Act with modifications in **Union of India vs BCCI: Civil Appeal No. (S) 10734-10735 of 2017 dated 22.08.2017** The Supreme Court held that ***"Under Section 3 of the Sports Act, 2007,*** *the live feed received by Prasar Bharati from content rights owners or holders is only for re-transmission of the said signals on its own terrestrial and DTH networks and not to Cable Operators to enable the Cable TV operators to reach such consumers who have already subscribed to a cable network."*

COMMENTS

- **Doordarshan** is still one of the world's largest terrestrial Broadcasters . Also, its **Free Dish** has raced to **45 million** viewers. With an obligation to share advertisement revenue with the rights holders, it is currently a win-win situation for Broadcasters to share significant sports events using the reach of **Doordarshan** and **Free Dish** , which viewers and advertisers would otherwise miss.

Headend In The Sky Guidelines 26.11.2009

- **Headend-in-the-Sky (HITS)** is a Broadcasting technology where TV channels are processed and uplinked from a satellite hub instead of terrestrial headends.
- This allows for the efficient distribution of TV content across a wide geographical area. This is especially useful in dark cable areas where fibre and cable networks are complex to launch as they are far-flung or hilly. The Guidelines were expanded in 2020 to allow for infrastructure sharing.

COMMENTS

- At present, there is only one active HITS operator –**NXTDIGITAL**, supplying **640 SD/HD** channels to approximately **2.5 million** subscribers. HITS has excellent potential in cable dark areas, but **Prasar Bharati Free Dish** is steadily occupying that space.
-

I. Downlinking Guidelines

- Broadcasters are regulated by **Downlinking and Uplinking Regulations** since 2000. These Regulations provide specific guidelines on technical parameters, including frequencies allotted and spectrum granted. In the past two decades, the Regulations have been consolidated twice as under:
-

A. 2011 Consolidated Guidelines for Broadcasters:

These Guidelines consolidated piecemeal guidelines issued from 2000 onwards into one set of directions.

Eligibility: Only companies registered under the Companies Act **1956** could apply for downlinking licenses.

Foreign Equity: Foreign equity in the applicant company was capped at **49%**.

News Channels: The net worth requirement for setting up a news channel was **Rs. 5 crores.**

B. 2022 Consolidated Guidelines for Broadcasters

Online Applications: The Guidelines introduced an online application system for all permissions.

Eligibility: Expanded to include LLPs registered under the Limited Liability Partnership Act, 2008.

Foreign Direct Investment: Streamlined FDI Regulations.

Net Worth: Increased net worth requirement for news channels to **Rs. 20 crores.**

Public Service Broadcasting: We introduced mandatory public service broadcasting for **30 minutes** daily on national importance and social relevance themes.

Teleports: Simplified process for setting up teleport and teleport hubs.

COMMENTS

From a single Doordarshan channel in the early **1990s** to **905 TV** channels today, the **Broadcasting Industry** is thriving and trying to overcome challenges from digital media and streaming platforms.

The consolidated **Downlinking and Uplinking Guidelines** have been welcomed mainly by Broadcasters but have been issued under the powers granted to the **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting** by the **Allocation of Business Rules 1961**, enabling the Ministry to formulate policies, guidelines, and Regulations for private Broadcasters and oversee compliance with these Regulations .

However, though there have been no serious legal challenges to the **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting's** powers under **Allocation of Business Rules 1961** , this perceived infirmity of regulating broadcasters through the issue of guidelines will be covered under the saving clauses of the new Broadcast Bill 2023.

J. Draft Amendments to Cable Act 15.01.2020

The draft amendments to the **Cable Act 1995** were released for public response. It proposed 28 amendments to the **Cable Act,** sought to eliminate obsolete sections, and provided contemporary definitions of critical clauses. The amendments were intended, among others, to:

Tighten programme content control and advertising norms on Broadcasters.

It mandated graded penaltiesfor violations by Broadcasters and DPOs.

It introduced contemporary definitions of Cable Operator/MSO/HITS/IPTV/Ground, Platform, DTH Satellite Operator, etc.

It revised the definition of Addressable Systems.

It gave modalities to grant the Right of Way to Operators.

COMMENTS

The legal framework was sought to be aligned with modern Broadcasting technologies and practices. The amendments were also intended to provide more explicit Regulatory guidelines and compliance mechanisms for Broadcasters and Network Operators.

Though some amendments to **Cable Rules** have been made since **2020** , the amendments to the Cable Act **1995** have been scrapped and incorporated in the draft **Broadcasting Bill 2023.**

The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021

Key Features of Content Moderation as per IT Rules, 2021:

The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethical Code) Rules, 2021, or IT Rules 2021, contained several provisions related to content moderation by online platforms/digital media like **YouTube, Facebook, Book, Instagram, etc.** Some key features:

Prohibited Content: Content that depicts child pornography, explicit sexual activity, or abuse of children.

Content threatening national security, unity, defence, relations with foreign countries, or public order.

Contents grossly offensive or harmful to public decency.

Moderation Mechanisms:

Platforms must appoint a **grievance officer** to handle user complaints about objectionable content.

Platforms must adopt **reasonable efforts** to identify and remove prohibited content.

Platforms must a**llow users to be heard** before taking down content.

Compliance Measures:

Platforms with more than 5 million users in India to comply with the **IT Rules, 2021.**

Non-compliance may lead to penalties, including **blocking access** to the platform in India.

Legal Challenges and Outcomes:

The **IT Rules 2021** have been challenged in various High courts on several grounds. Critics argued that terms like *"grossly offensive"* and **" harmful to public decency"** are vague and open to subjective interpretation, potentially leading to censorship of legitimate content. All challenges have been transferred to the Supreme Court. The stay orders issued by High Courts continue to be in effect.

NOTE 1. : Amendments notified on October 22, 2022.

- In further amendments, the government directed that intermediaries must ensure compliance with Rules and Regulations, privacy policy, and user agreement and make reasonable efforts to prevent users from creating, uploading, or sharing prohibited content. They must also respect the Constitutional rights of users.
- The Central Government will establish one or more **Grievance Appellate Committees** to hear appeals against the decisions of grievance officers.

NOTE 2: Further amendments were notified on April 6 2023

- **Fact Check Unit** The rules authorise a government-controlled **"fact- check unit"** empowered to flag online content related to the government as " fake or misleading ." Platforms must remove such content upon receiving a notice from the unit.
- **Definitions of harmful content:** Categories under **"harmful content "** have been further specified.

COMMENTS

- The **Information Technology Rules** were amended in **2021** to address public concerns around transparency, accountability, and user rights to digital media.
- They were intended to provide soft -touch facilitative regulation for digital platforms, ensuring viewer interest protection.
- However, over the next two years and despite High Courts staying some contentious provisions, the Government has tightened direct oversight of digital media, which has seen a veritable explosion of viewership post -lockdown while retaining the three-tier self – regulatory framework.

Trai Consultation on Regulating Converged Technologies 30.01.2023

- The Department of Telecommunications had issued a reference to TRAI dated **20.10 2021** seeking recommendations for the **Convergence of Carriage of Broadcasting and Telecommunication Services.**
- A revised reference from the **Department of Telecommunication** dated **20.10.2022** asked **TRAI** under **Section 11** of the **TRAI Act** to provide recommendations for:

(a) Amending the licensing regime to enable the convergence of carriage of **Broadcasting Services and Telecommunication Services** and

(b) Establishing a Unified Policy Framework and Spectrum Management regime for **Broadcasting and Telecommunication Services carriage.**

- In its reply on **04.10.2022** to the reference by TRAI, the **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting**, relying on its powers under **Allocation of Business Rules 1961,** stated that it was "in the process of amending the **Cable Television Network Regulation Act** "*to bring all different Broadcasting carriage channels under its ambit to holistically address all institutional regulatory and legal aspects of Broadcasting under a unified Act*"
- In the **Consultation Paper in January 2023**, TRAI queried whether "There is a need for a comprehensive/converged legal framework *(separate Comprehensive Code) to deal with the convergence of carriage of Broadcasting Services and Telecommunication Services . If yes, provide details of the suggested comprehensive code.*
- The **Indian Broadcasting and Digital Foundation** representing Broadcasters, in its response to the **Consultation Paper**, demanded that the regulatory framework for content (within the confines of **Article 19(2)** of the **Constitution of India)** be distinct and separate from the regulatory framework for carriage. "For clarity, the **Regulatory framework for carriage** should not result in impinging on rights guaranteed under Articles **19(1)(a)** and **19(1)(g)** of the Constitution of India."
- The **AIDCF** representing large MSOs demanded that *" OTT applications providing video services shall also be brought under the purview of **CTN Regulations , 1995** for enabling the proliferation of an equitable regulatory framework".*

COMMENT

- Unsurprisingly, due to the divergent stands of the two key ministries and the powerful Telecom lobby, the **TRAI** consultation on converged regulation has been placed in a deep freeze.
- As early as **09.11.2020**,the **Allocation of Business Rules 1961** was amended to enable MIB to regulate **Digital Online Media .**

- The **Draft Broadcast Bill** now brings the content of **OTT Regulation** and all forms of **Digital Media** within the regulatory control of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting .

L. Broadcast Services (Regulation) Bill 2023

- **Unified Broadcast Regulation-**
- The **Press Information Bureau**,in its media release dated **09.11.2023**, stated:
- ***The Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act of 1995*** *has been in effect for three decades, serving as the primary legislation overseeing content on linear broadcasting , including cable networks.*
- *However, the broadcasting landscape has undergone significant changes in the interim. Technological advancements have introduced new platforms such as **DTH, IPTV, OTT, and various integrated models.***
- *With the digitisation of the broadcasting sector, especially in cable TV, there is a growing need to streamline the regulatory framework. This involves ensuring ease of doing business and enhancing adherence to the **Programme Code and Advertisement Code** by the Broadcasters and Distribution Platform Operators .*
- *Recognising the need for a more cohesive approach, the fragmented regulatory framework must be replaced with a new, comprehensive law. The draft Bill provides a consolidated framework to regulate the broadcasting services in the country . The Bill streamlines regulatory processes and extends its purview to cover **Over-the-Top(OTT) content and Digital News** . It introduces contemporary definitions and provisions for emerging technologies .*

- *It seeks to provide for **Content Evaluation Committees** and a **Broadcast Advisory Council** for self -regulation , different Programme and Advertisement Codes for other Broadcasting (and) Network Operators,*
- *It (will introduce) accessibility measures for persons with disabilities,*
- *It provides for statutory penalties and equitable penalties .*

COMMENTS

- The **Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill, 2023** , is a reasoned response to the evolving technological landscape of the Broadcasting Industry .
- **Digital Media** is regulated through the **Digital Ethics Code** of the **Information Technology Rules 2021**. The Bill seeks to unify the existing Regulations applicable to the Broadcasting Industry under one legal framework.
- This consolidation is crucial for streamlining regulatory processes and ensuring regulatory consistency across different Broadcasting mediums, including **OTT platforms, digital media ,** and traditional broadcast networks .
- Suffice it to say that the Bill is very ambitious in regulating content in all possible forms, including legacy digital and future delivery forms like **Virtual Reality** and even the fast -developing **AI.**
- **A detailed analysis of the new Bill is provided in a companion article**

Telecommunications Bill, 2023

- The **Telecommunications Bill, 2023**,was passed by Parliament on **December 21, 2023**. It seeks to regulate activities related to telecommunication. It repeals the **Indian Telegraph Act of 1885, the Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act of 1933, and the Telegraph Wires (Unlawful Possession) Act of 1950.** It also amends **the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) Act, 1997.**

Key Highlights :

- **Prior authorisation (licences** abolished)from the Central Government will be required to

(i) provide telecommunication services,
(ii) establish, operate, maintain, or expand telecommunications networks, or
(iii) possess radio equipment.

- **OTT Excluded:** The Bill excludes **Over-the-Top (OTT)** platforms like WhatsApp and Signal from telecom authorisation but retains scope for future regulation as the definition of telecommunications is left42 open-ended. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) will continue regulating OTT until the **Digital India Bill**(intended to replace the **Information Technology Act 2000)** is tabled in the new Parliament in **2024.**
- **Spectrum Allocation:** The Bill Introduces administrative spectrum allocation for entities like defence, satellite services like **Broadcasters/DTH Networks and HITS Operators**, and auctions for others.
- **Powers of interception and search:** Messages or a class of messages between two or more persons may be intercepted, monitored, or blocked on specific grounds. Such actions must be necessary or expedient in the interest of public safety or public emergency.
- **Cybersecurity & Control of Telecom Networks:** The Bill empowers the Government to take control of networks in emergencies or for national security and to set up cybersecurity rules.43
- **Spam & Consumer Protection:** The Bill provides user consent for receiving specific messages, empowers users to report malware, and tackles spam calls.
- **Reduced Penalties & SIM Verification:** The Bill caps penalties on telecom operators and mandates biometric verification for SIM issuance to curb misuse.
- **Appointments to TRAI:** The Bill amends the **TRAI** Act to allow individuals with

(i) at least**30 years** of professional experience to serve as the **Chairperson** and
(ii) at least **25 years** of professional experience to serve as **Members**

COMMENTS

- The **Telecommunication Bill 2023** has been hailed by the industry as a very forward - looking bill. The apparent exclusion of **OTT platforms** and administrative grant of **Spectrum** in specified cases has been generally welcomed.
- However, civil rights experts and organisations have expressed alarm at the perceived and possible denial of freedom of expression on clauses relating to **interception, monitoring, and blocking of messages.**
- The Government's assumption of powers to take **control of networks** has caused deep concern in activists if the provision is indiscriminately used to quell **legitimate dissent**, which is the essence of freedom of expression under **Article 19 (1) (a)** of the Constitution.
- However, there are Supreme Court guidelines in the case of **Anuradha Bhasin** vs **UOI 2020 SCC Online SCC 25,** which held that suspension can only be temporary as per **Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Service Rules 2017).** Any order must adhere to the principle of **proportionality** and not extend beyond the necessary duration.

(Ashok Mansukhani, the author, is a media veteran having spent decades with the government and private sector media organizations, specializing in legal and policy matters. He retired from the Hinduja group having being part of the leadership team that built the group's media business. He also sits on the advisory board of the Indianbroadcastingworld.com. He practises law at the Bombay High Court specialising in Media and Corporate Law. The views expressed in the write-up are those of the author and Indianbroadcastingworld.com need not necessarily subscribe to them.)



'Kho Gaye Hum Kahan' racks up 6.3 mn view hours on Netflix

'Kho Gaye Hum Kahan', a coming-of-digital-age drama, has amassed 6.3 million view hours in the first week of its release on Netflix, the streamer said on January 04.

According to PTI, the movie — starring Ananya Panday, Adarsh Gourav, and Siddhant Chaturvedi — has also made it to the top 10 non-English films section on its platform.

It premiered on December 26.

Directed by first-time filmmaker Arjun Varain Singh, 'Kho Gaye Hum Kahan' revolves around three best friends as they navigate life while striving to balance their online identities with their true selves.

The film is produced by Excel Entertainment's Ritesh Sidhwani and Farhan Akhtar and Tiger Baby's Reema Kagti and Zoya Akhtar.

Describing the movie as his dream project, Singh said he wanted to tell a story that resonated with the generation he grew up with and it was extremely gratifying to see the audience's reception.

"As the first story that I have penned down along with Zoya and Reema, this film will always be a special part of my journey ahead. I would like to thank Netflix for giving me a platform through which I could share my generation's experience of living in the digital age with entertainment lovers around the world as well as Excel Entertainment and Tiger Baby for believing in me and my story," the director said in a statement.

Sidhwani and Farhan Akhtar said Singh has proved his mettle as a debutant director.

"The story is close to our hearts and we, along with Tiger Baby, wanted to give this generation a story to call their own. We thank the audience for giving 'Kho Gaye Hum Kahan' so much love and appreciation, it fills our hearts with pride and joy," they said in a joint statement.

Kagti and Zoya Akhtar expressed gratitude towards the audience who enjoyed the film.

"We are super proud of the cast and crew of 'Kho Gaye Hum Kahan', who put their all into this project, which has now become a global sensation. To all who watched the film, we thank you for giving us this positive response. Our film is streaming on Netflix, for all to cherish and bond over," the producers said.

"A film's true success is marked by its ability to move the viewers and we are humbled by the love coming our way for 'Kho Gaye Hum Kahan',

'Kho Gaye Hum Kahan' also stars Kalki Koechlin and Anya Singh with cameos by Malaika Arora, Farhan Akhtar, and Sapan Verma.

News9 mediaverse redefines news realm with 'Heralding 2024'



As the new year kicks off, TV9 Network's latest venture, News9 Mediaverse, is set to redefine news consumption with its ground-breaking series, 'Heralding 2024'.

This ambitious initiative spans three cutting-edge platforms: News9 Plus, a news OTT platform; News9 Live, India's foremost 24×7 digital streaming service and news9live.com, catering to avid readers.

Running from December 3, 2023, to March 31, 2024, 'Heralding 2024' promises an enthralling line-up of 12 exclusive series. These shows transcend traditional news boundaries, encompassing diverse topics under news exclusives, ideas, and engaging conversations, TV9 Network said in a press release yesterday.

News9 Mediaverse aims to redefine news and information, focusing not solely on headlines but delving deeper. 'Heralding 2024' aims to resonate with the audience by offering a forward-looking perspective on current affairs.

The series' core consists of four main categories: 'Probe' for intriguing investigations, 'Mandate 2024' exploring political frontiers, 'Global Lens' providing a comprehensive global viewpoint, 'In India's Interest' highlighting national issues, and 'In Your Interest' tailoring stories to connect on a personal level. Moreover, the 'Ideas and Conversations' section promotes diverse perspectives and stimulating discussions. 'Duologue with Barun Das'

Streamers in India pack 2024 calendar with returning, new shows



Streaming services Netflix, Prime Video, Disney+ Hotstar, SonyLIV and Zee5 are packing ample programming, including new as well as returning shows to keep audiences entertained throughout 2024.

Here are some of the most anticipated shows of the year, according to a list prepared by PTI.

Netflix

Killer Soup: The first new original series from the streamers stars versatile actors Manoj Bajpayee and Konkona Sensharma. Directed by Abhishek Chaubey of Udta Punjab and Sonchiriya fame, the comedy crime-drama will release on Netflix on January 11.

It follows Swathi Shetty (Konkana), an aspiring yet talentless home chef, who cooks up a bizarre plan to replace her husband, Prabhakar (Bajpayee), with her lover, Umesh (also played by Bajpayee).

Kapil Sharma's new comedy show: Comedian Kapil Sharma will join the streaming bandwagon in 2024 to bring a "fresh, new and an exciting comedy extravaganza' to his fans all over the world. In his new adventure, the comedian will be accompanied by his fellow members from The Kapil Sharma Show — Archana Puran Singh, Krushna Abhishek, Kiku Sharda and Rajiv Thakur.

Prime Video

Indian Police Force: Bollywood star Sidharth Malhotra and filmmaker Rohit Shetty will make their OTT debut with the seven-part show, set to be released on January 19. Also starring Vivek Oberoi and Shilpa Shetty, the series is billed as a homage to the "relentless commitment of Indian police officers". Indian Police Force is the next chapter of Shetty's cop universe that he started with 2011 movie Singham and expanded with Singham Returns (2014), Simmba (2018) and Sooryavanshi (2021).

Paatal Lok Season 2: The critically-acclaimed series is expected to return with its sophomore chapter in 2024. Jaideep Ahlawat is reprising his role of Hathiram Chaudhary in season two.

Written and created by Sudip Sharma, the first season of the Prime Video show featured Ahlawat as a washed-out Delhi Police officer who lands the case of a lifetime when four suspects are captured in the assassination attempt of a prime time journalist.

Disney+ Hotstar

Showtime: The new series hails from Karan Johar's Dharmatic Entertainment and is billed as an 'epic saga of legacy and ambition in the world of cinema'. It features an ensemble cast of Emraan hashmi, Mahima Makwana, Mouni Roy, Naseeruddin Shah, Rajeev Khandelwal and Shriya Saran.

Showtime is created by Sumit Roy and showrun Mihir Desai, who also serves as the director along with Archit Kumar.

|Karmma Calling: Raveena Tandon stars in the lead in this yet-another new title from Disney+ Hotstar. Based on the popular American series Revenge, the show is set in the world of glitz and glamour, filled with deceit and betrayal, and will feature Tandon as Indrani Kothari, the reigning queen of the Alibaug society.

Adapted and directed by Ruchi Narain of 'Guilty' fame, 'Karmma Calling' will debut on the streamer's platform on January 26.

SonyLIV

Maharani: The Huma Qureshi-led series will be back with its third season, which is expected to come out in 2024. Created by Subhash Kapoor, Maharani features Qureshi as Rani Bharti, a village woman who is handpicked by her husband and politician Bheema Bharti (Sohum Shah) to become the chief minister of Bihar.

The second season of the show, which premiered in August 2022, saw Rani learn the ropes of politics as she is accused of misgovernance and fight her greatest enemy, her husband.

Gullak: In 2024, SonyLIV is bringing back the fan-favourite show, produced by The Viral Fever (TVF) for its season four. Starring Jameel Khan, Geetanjali Kulkarni, Vaibhav Raj Gupta and Harsh Mayar, the show revolves around the Mishra family, comprising parents Santosh and Shanti Mishra, and their sons Annu and Aman.

The show is created by Shreyansh Pandey and directed by Palash Vaswani.

Zee5

Sunflower: Season two of Sunil Grover-led series will be the first release from the streaming service in 2024. Touted as a situational crime-comedy, the series revolves around a middle-class housing society in Mumbai called Sunflower which is filled with quirky characters.

Directed by Vikas Bahl, the first season of the show also starred Ranvir Shorey, Girish Kulkarni, Mukul Chadda, Shonali Nagrani, Sonal Jha and Ashish Vidyarthi.

Crime Beat: The show comes from critically-acclaimed filmmaker Sudhir Mishra. It is expected to premiere in 2024. The streamer had announced the project in May 2023 when it unveiled its content slate of over 100 titles.

Ministry of Communications widens certification scheme to cover 37 products

In a significant move to boost the ease of doing business and streamline certification processes, the Telecommunication Engineering Centre (TEC) of the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) had expanded the Simplified Certification Scheme (SCS) to include 37 additional products, effective January 1, 2024.

According to ANI, this expansion aims to reduce the time required for certification from eight weeks to just two weeks, fostering a more efficient business environment.

The newly included products cover a diverse range, including media gateways, IP security equipment, IP terminals, optical fiber or cable, transmission terminal equipment, and more.

With this expansion, the total number of products covered under the Simplified Certification Scheme has increased from twelve to forty-nine, providing a broader scope for businesses seeking certification, read the press release.

Starting January 1, only an administrative fee will be charged by the TEC for Essential Requirement (ER)-based applications submitted under the Mandatory Testing and Certification of Telecom Equipment (MTCTE) regime. This fee structure applies irrespective of the Global Conformity Assessment Scheme (GCS) and SCS category, simplifying the cost structure for applicants and promoting transparency in the certification process, read the press release. In a move welcomed by original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and applicants , the TEC had announced the complete waiver of the evaluation fee.

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This substantial reduction, amounting to more than 80 percent, serves as a significant relief for businesses, further reducing the overall application fee and lessening the compliance burden, read the press release.

The Ministry of Communications has currently notified sixty Telecom and networking products under the Mandatory Testing and Certification of Telecom Equipment (MTCTE) regime. This regulatory framework ensures the quality and compliance of telecom equipment, contributing to the reliability and safety of products in the telecommunications sector, read the press release.

The expansion of the Simplified Certification Scheme and the revised fee structure are expected to have positive implications for the industry, encouraging innovation, and facilitating faster time-to-market for certified products.

Naseeruddin Shah, Vijay Varma, Fatima Sana Shaikh to star in 'Ul Jalool Ishq'



Naseeruddin Shah, Vijay Varma, Fatima Sana Shaikh, and Sharib Hashmi are teaming up for celebrity designer Manish Malhotra's film production 'Ul Jalool Ishq'.

It will be directed by Vibhu Puri, known for 2015 film 'Hawaizaada'.

The upcoming film also marks the return of lyricist-music composer duo Gulzar and Vishal Bhardwaj, who will score the soundtrack of the movie.

Ul Jalool Ishq marks Malhotra's third production after 'Bun Tikki' and Train From Chhapraula under the banner Stage 5 Production, PTI reported.

Malhotra announced on Instagram on Tuesday.

"Bewakoofiyaan, Nadan galtiyan, badi bhool hai ishq, Sach Poochiye toh mere huzoor ul jalool hai ishq! I am so happy to announce our @stage5production 3rd film production.

"A beautiful film UL JALOOL ISHQ written and directed by @vibhupuri, shooting of the film starts 9th January with this supremely talented cast. Malhotra also gave a shout-out to Gulzar and Bhardwaj, who have collaborated on several films including 'Maqbool', 'Omkara', 'Haider' and 'Ishqiya'.

Malhotra announced the launch of his production house in September 2023.

The first project under Stage 5 Production is Tisca Chopra's Train From Chhapraula, starring Radhika Apte and Divyenndu. The second film Bun Tikki, directed by Faraz Arif Ansari, stars Shabana Azmi, Zeenat Aman, and Abhay Deol.

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Three animated 'Game of Thrones' series in development

Game of Thrones' author George R R Martin has shared with fans that he has three animated projects, set in the world of 'A Song of Ice & Fire', currently under various stages of development with HBO.

The 75-year-old writer, in his new blog post, shared his love for Netflix's animated series 'Blue Eye Samurai' and then pivoted to share updates on the new shows, PTI reported.



"As it happens, HBO and I have our own animated projects, set in the world of A SONG OF ICE & FIRE. None of them have been greenlit yet, but I think we are getting close to taking the next step with a couple of them," Martin shared, adding they began with four ideas for animated show but two of them currently stand shelved.

He, however, hoped that the projects will find a life as "nothing is ever dead for good in Hollywood". The storyline for the two spin off projects is still under wraps.

Talking about the third show in the development, Martin wrote, "Work on the other two animated projects continues apace, however... and meanwhile, we have moved NINE VOYAGES, our series about the legendary voyages of the Sea Snake, over from live action to animation. A move I support fully."

The writer said "budgetary constraints" would likely have made a live action version expensive as half of the show is set at sea.

"So we now have three animated projects underway...Will any of them make it to air? happen? No way to know. Nothing is certain in Hollywood.

"But if it does happen, with one or two or all three shows, I hope we can make them as good as gorgeous and gripping as BLUE EYE SAMURAI. We will for d*** sure try," the famous writer said.

Martin's books in the 'Game of Thrones' series became the basis for HBO's mega hit show that spanned for eight seasons and he is also the creative mind behind 'House of the Dragon', a show set 200 years before the events of 'Game of Thrones'. The second season of the 'House of Dragon' will premiere this summer.

Tech giants address security risks in Dec updates

During December 2023, major tech companies like Google, Microsoft, and Apple diligently tackled a slew of security vulnerabilities across their platforms.

Google took significant strides by patching nearly 100 security issues in Android, with a focus on critical flaws in the Framework. Among these, CVE-2023-40088 posed a risk of remote code execution, while CVE-2023-40078 was an elevation of privilege flaw, both addressed in the latest update.

Not to be outdone, Google also addressed CVE-2023-40094 in its WearOS platform, fixing another elevation of privilege bug. Meanwhile, Microsoft's December Patch encompassed over 30 vulnerabilities, with CVE-2023-36019 standing out due to its high-impact spoofing potential within the Power Platform Connector, IANS reported.

Apple's iOS 17.2 release in December not only introduced new features like the Journal app but also addressed a dozen security patches. Notably, CVE-2023-42890, a vulnerability in the WebKit browser engine, was among the issues resolved, preventing potential code execution by attackers. Moreover, Apple acknowledged a kernel flaw in the iPhone, acknowledging the possibility of apps breaking out of secure sandboxes, prompting vigilance from the tech giant. Overall, these comprehensive efforts by industry leaders underscore a commitment to enhancing user security in the evolving digital landscape.

Vodafone Idea denies talks with Starlink



Vodafone Idea is not in talks to tie up with billionaire Elon Musk's satellite internet unit Starlink, the Indian telecom operator said on Tuesday.

The clarification from Vodafone Idea came after its stock surged in the past two sessions on what business magazine BusinessWorld said were 'markets betting' that Musk was looking to buy a stake in the company to help Starlink enter India, Reuters reported.

On January 01, 2024 the Bombay Stock Exchange, where Vodafone Idea's stock is listed, asked the company for clarification, citing the BusinessWorld report.

"We would like to submit that the company is not in any such discussion with the named party. We are not aware of the basis of the said news item," Vodafone Idea said in a statement.

HFCL wins $1,127 cr BSNL network transformation deal

HFCL Ltd. (HFCL) on January 01, 2024 said it had secured a Rs 1,127 crore order from Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. (BSNL) aimed at transforming the optical transport network (OTN) infrastructure across the state-owned telco's pan-India network.

HFCL's comprehensive network upgrade will not only cater to the requirements of enterprise and FTTH/broadband services but also position BSNL for the future with the seamless launch of 4G services and the anticipation of 5G services in the coming years, PTI reported from Mumbai.

HFCL, in a release, said it has secured a Rs 1,127 crore order to transform BSNL's optical transport network.

"Leveraging its unparalleled expertise in integrating complex systems, HFCL has strategically partnered with the NOKIA Network to deploy state-of-the-art optical technology,".

This partnership underlines a commitment to deliver cutting-edge solutions that transcend industry standards and redefine the parameters of a technological excellence network.

Reliance Jio poised for satcom service approval

Reliance Jio is on the brink of securing essential approvals from the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) to launch its satellite-powered gigabit fibre services in the country.



These authorizations, crucial for deploying global satellite bandwidth capacity in India, are expected imminently after Jio's comprehensive submissions to the regulatory body, The Economic Times reported.

The process involves multiple ministries and security clearances, making the IN-SPACe authorization complex. While IN-SPACe's chairman, Pawan Goenka, refrained from commenting on specific companies, he confirmed a pipeline of pending authorizations, hinting at progress in various applications, including Jio's venture.

Last year, Jio Platforms partnered with Luxembourg-based SES to establish a joint venture, marking their entry into satellite broadband connectivity. This move places them among prominent contenders like Eutelsat OneWeb, Elon Musk's Starlink, Amazon, and the Tatas, all vying for space in this burgeoning sector.

Airtel services to acquire 97.1% stake in Beetel Teletech

Bharti Airtel Services, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Bharti Airtel, has agreed to the acquisition of 49.45 lakh shares or 97.1 percent stake in Beetel Teletech, another Bharti Group company, according to a filing.



Pegging the cost of acquisition at Rs 669 crore, the filing said this acquisition is a part of the company's strategy to enable indigenization initiatives within its ecosystem of telecom products in line with the Government's policy of 'Make n India' and add distribution and service capabilities (including system ntegration) largely for the enterprise business, PTI reported.

"...as a part of group restructuring, Bharti Airtel Services Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary company of Bharti Airtel Limited has agreed to the acquisition of 49,45,239 equity shares representing 97.1 percent stake in another Bharti Group company, Beetel Teletech Limited, which also has 49 percent stake in Joint Venture having two manufacturing facilities which produce telecom and networking products including those qualifying for Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme," the filing said adding that this is a cash transaction. Consequently, Beetel will become a subsidiary of the company.

The acquisition is a related party transaction in terms of the provisions of SEBI listing regulations. Bharti Group companies namely Bharti Enterprises (Holding) Private Limited, Bharti (RM) Holdings Private Limited, Bharti (RBM) Holdings Private Limited, and Bharti (LM) Enterprises Private Limited hold a 97.1 percent stake in Beetel. Beetel Teletech was incorporated on March 30, 1999.

On the strength of its in-house technical capabilities, relationship with global OEMs, and channel composing of a large number of channel partners, distributors, and retailers, it is engaged in designing and delivering technical solutions and services and distributing a wide range of products from IT peripherals, network, and enterprise solutions to fixed landlines and mobile accessories.

Akshay advocates enduring fitness, self-acceptance in PM's 'MKB'



One must focus on leading a fitter life and not a life with "filters" inspired by film stars, said actor Akshay Kumar on December 31 Prime Minister Narendra Modi's monthly radio programme Mann Ki Baat. The actor was one of the many personalities from different walks of life who shared their tips on fitness in the 108th episode of the broadcast, the last for the year 2023.

Akshay, 56, thanked the prime minister for giving him a platform in Mann Ki Baat to share his thoughts with the citizens.

"You all know I'm passionate about fitness, but I'm even more passionate about staying fit the natural way. What I like more than fancy gyms is swimming, playing badminton, climbing stairs, exercising with 'mudgar', eating good healthy food…

"Change your lifestyle on the advice of doctors and not by looking at some film star's body. Actors are often not what they appear on screen. Many types of filters and special effects are used and after seeing them, we start using shortcuts to change our body," the actor said.

Akshay also cautioned the listeners about taking shortcuts in their fitness journey.

"Nowadays, many people take steroids and go for these six packs and eight packs. Friends, with such shortcuts the body swells from the outside but remains hollow from the inside. Remember that shortcuts can cut your life short. You need long-lasting fitness, not shortcuts…

"Like, I believe pure ghee, if eaten in the right quantity, is beneficial for us. But I see many boys and girls do not eat ghee because they fear they might become fat. It is very important for us to know what is good and what is bad for our fitness," he added.

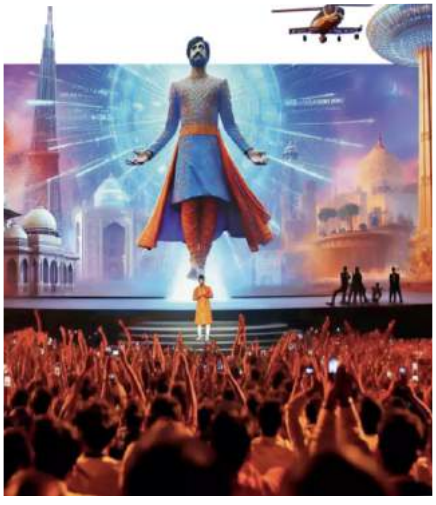
The actor likened fitness to "devotion".

"It shouldn't be like instant coffee or two-minute noodles. In this new year, promise yourself no chemicals, no shortcuts, exercise, yoga, good food, sleeping on time, some meditation, and most importantly, happily accept how you look. After today, don't live a filter life, live a fitter life," Akshay said.

Sharing the audio of Akshay's remarks during Mann Ki Baat, Prime Minister Modi said in a post on X, "I fully agree with @akshaykumar when he says that there are no shortcuts when it comes to remaining fit. He also stresses eating well and eating purely to stay fit."

During the broadcast of Mann Ki Baat, Isha Foundation founder Sadhguru, Indian Women's Cricket Team Captain Harmanpreet Kaur, and chess legend Vishwanathan Anand also shared their fitness tips.

Innovative storytelling methods expected for India's narrative in 2024



As the curtains rise on 2024, India's media and entertainment scene promises an extraordinary chapter. With a surge in digital media consumption, the country stands as the second-largest market globally, following China.

The proliferation of smart TVs and affordable internet-enabled devices has empowered fans with an unprecedented array of choices to consume captivating narratives. Streaming platforms, led by Netflix, are spearheading a cultural exchange that transcends borders, exemplified by the fusion of global tunes like "Bella Ciao" from Money Heist with traditional dhol beats at local gatherings, Economic Times reported.

This era marks a pinnacle in entertainment, with streaming poised to become the omnipresent medium for storytelling. The remarkable wins of RRR and The Elephant Whisperers at the Oscars, along with Vir Das' triumph at the International Emmy Awards, underscore the industry's global impact.

Looking ahead, 2024 is envisioned to emphasize programming that embraces authenticity and diversity. India, a treasure trove of stories, will be celebrated across genres by esteemed creators such as Sanjay Leela Bhansali, Yash Raj Films, Neeraj Pandey, Imtiaz Ali, Abhishek Chaubey, Kanika Dhillon, and Kapil Sharma on Netflix.

This inclusive approach aims to serve a variety of tastes and moods, echoing the essence of a classic thali, catering to both Indian and global audiences. With an unwavering commitment to showcasing the richness of India's storytelling, the stage is set for 2024 to be a transformative year in the entertainment realm.



Lionsgate Studios to launch as separately traded public company

Lionsgate had announced that its studio business, comprising TV studio, Motion Picture Group segments and one of the world's most valuable film and television libraries, will be combined with Screaming Eagle Acquisition Corp to launch Lionsgate Studios Corp.

Screaming Eagle is a publicly-traded company (in the United States) formed to merge with existing businesses.

The deal, according to a media statement issued from California by the company, positions the standalone Lionsgate Studios as a platform-agnostic, pure play content company with a deep portfolio of franchise properties including 'The Hunger Games', 'John Wick', 'The Twilight Saga' and 'Ghosts, a robust film and television production and distribution business, a leading talent management and production company, and a world-class film and television library.

As a result of the transaction, 87.3 percent of the total shares of Lionsgate Studios are expected to continue to be held by Lionsgate, while Screaming Eagle public shareholders and founders and common equity financing investors are expected to own an aggregate of approximately 12.7 percent of the combined company.

The transaction values Lionsgate Studios at an enterprise value of approximately $4.6 billion. Lionsgate Studios does not include the STARZ platform, which will continue to be wholly owned by Lionsgate.

In addition to establishing Lionsgate Studios as a standalone publicly-traded entity, the transaction is expected to deliver approximately $350 million of gross proceeds to Lionsgate, including $175 million in PIPE financing already committed by leading mutual funds and other investors, Lionsgate said in the statement.

Common shares of Lionsgate Studios will trade separately from Lionsgate's Class A (LGF.A) and Class B (LGF.B) common shares as a single class of stock. The transaction is subject to certain closing conditions, including regulatory approvals and approval from the shareholders and public warrant holders of Screaming Eagle, and is expected to close in the spring of 2024.

"This transaction creates one of the world's largest publicly-traded pure play content platforms with the ability to deliver significant incremental value to all of our stakeholders," said Lionsgate CEO Jon Feltheimer and Vice Chair Michael Burns in a joint statement. "We are thrilled to be part of establishing Lionsgate Studios as one of the only pure play content companies in the public markets, which is well positioned to unlock value for both existing and new shareholders," said Screaming Eagle CEO Eli Baker.



'Salaar' nearing Rs. 3bn as 'Dunki' crosses Rs. 157 cr globally

Even as Shah Rukh Khan's third film of 2023 had easily crossed Rs. 300 crore collection mark globally in its first three days, Prabhas-starrer 'Salaar: Part 1-Ceasefire' is way ahead and is nearing Rs. 300 crore (Rs. 3 billion) crore globally in two days of its release, data released on December 24 indicated.

'Salaar: Part 1 – Ceasefire' is directed by Prashanth Neel of 'KGF' films fame and produced by Hombale Films. It also stars Prithviraj Sukumaran. The makers shared the latest box office collection (gross) on the official X page of Salaar.

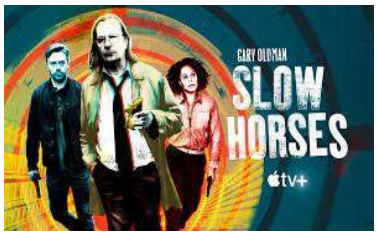
"The Hunting Season Begins... #SalaarCeaseFire dominates the global-box office, crossing Rs 295.7 crores (GBOC) (worldwide) in 2 Days," the post read, according to a PTI reported on December 24..

The first part of the epic action saga raised Rs 178.7 crore registering the record for the best opening day figures for any Indian title in 2023, according to Hombale Films.

Set in the fictional city of Khansaar, 'Salaar: Part 1' revolves around two friends Deva (Prabhas) and Vardha (Prithviraj). The film was released in theatres on December 22 in Telugu, Kannada, Tamil, Malayalam and Hindi.

The opening day figure of the film also surpassed Shah Rukh Khan's two blockbuster movies of 2023 — 'Pathaan' and 'Jawan', which had earned Rs 106 crore and Rs 129.6 crore in worldwide gross on their opening days, respectively and the Ranbir Kapoor-starrer 'Animal'that amassed Rs 116 crore on the first day.

Apple TV+ okays Gary Oldman-helmed 'Slow Horses' S5



Oscar-winner Gary Oldman espionage series 'Slow Horses' has been renewed for a fifth season, streamer Apple TV+ had announced.

Oldman will return as the irascible spy Jackson Lamb in the darkly comedic series, based on the 'Slough House' novels by author Mick Herron. It is adapted for television by Will Smith, PTI reported from Los Angeles. The show follows a dysfunctional team of British intelligence agents who, for various career-ending reasons, have been put out to pasture in Slough House – earning them the nickname Slow Horses.

It also features Kristin Scott Thomas as Diana Taverner, Jack Lowden as River Cartwright and Christopher Chung as Roddy Ho. The fifth season of the series will be adapted from the fifth book in Herron's series, 'London Rules', Apple TV+ said in a press release. "Everyone is suspicious when resident tech nerd Roddy Ho has a glamorous new girlfriend, but when a series of increasingly bizarre events occur across the city, it falls to the Slow Horses to work out how everything is connected. After all, Lamb knows that in the world of espionage, 'London Rules' should always apply," the official logline read.



Amazon miniTV to premiere 'Dehati Ladke' S2

Amazon miniTV is gearing up to launch the second season of its popular coming-of-age web series, Dehati Ladke, starting January 12.

The show, known for its mix of nostalgic moments, romance, drama, and entertainment, received acclaim for its first season.

Continuing the journey from the initial season, the second edition will delve deeper into the life of Rajat as he navigates the challenges of city life, exploring themes of friendship, love, and pursuing dreams.

Featuring Shine Pandey, Raghav Sharma, Tanish Neeraj, Saamya Jainn, Aasif Khan, and Kusha Kapila in key roles, 'Dehati Ladke' S2 will be available for free exclusively on Amazon miniTV.

The trailer provides a glimpse into the roller-coaster ride filled with love, jealousy, aspirations, and rage. While the first season depicted a strong bond between Rajat, his friends, and his love interest Prerna, Season 2 will test Rajat's resilience as he faces heartbreaking losses, including his parents and mentors Prashant and Chaya.

'Dehati Ladke' S2 will be available for streaming exclusively for free on Amazon miniTV

Universal Studios surpasses Disney in 2023 box office showdown



Universal Pictures has ranked as the highest-grossing studio at the 2023 box office after the release of The Super Mario Bros. Movie, Oppenheimer and M3GAN. According to reports, Universal's 24 films collected $4.907 billion in worldwide ticket sales. Universal's victory is notable because it marks the first time since 2015 that Disney was not the global box office leader.

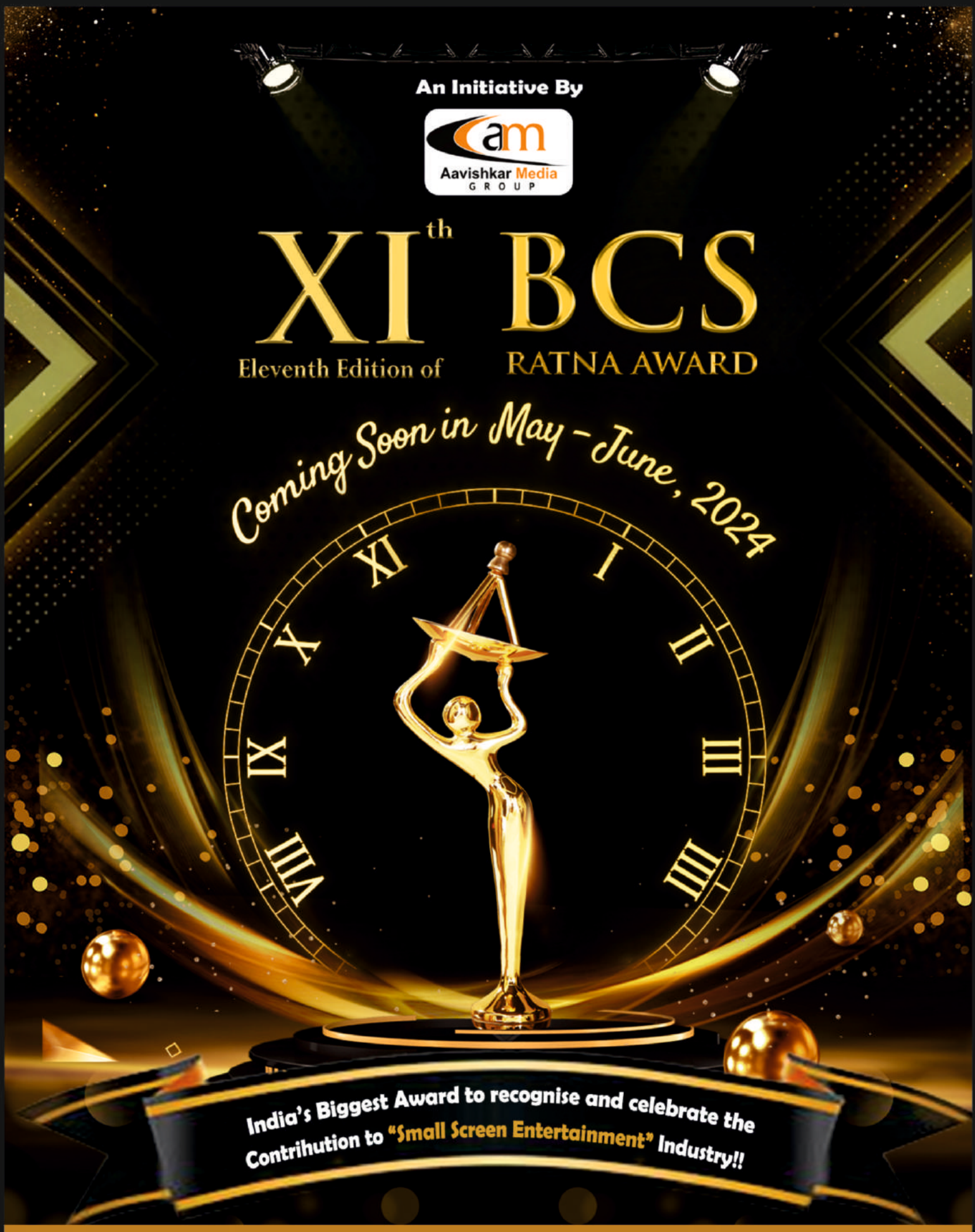
Universal was followed by Disney in terms of market share as its 17 new films, Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3, Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny, and The Little Mermaid, ranked at $4.827 billion globally. The studio partially attributed the $80 million difference to the fact that Disney released seven fewer movies than Universal in 2023. According to IANS, it also highlighted that Disney had the most titles of any studio in the top 10 this year. This included four of the highest-grossing global releases and three of the biggest domestic releases.

However, for the first time in a very long time, Disney did not have one of the top three movies.

The top three spots belong to Warner Bros.' Barbie with $1.4 billion Universal's The Super Mario Bros. Movie ranking at $1.3 billion and Oppenheimer with $950 million. This is the first time since

2014 that none of Disney's movies have crossed the $1 billion benchmark.

Disney indeed remains a box office powerhouse, but the reality is that most of the studio's 2023.



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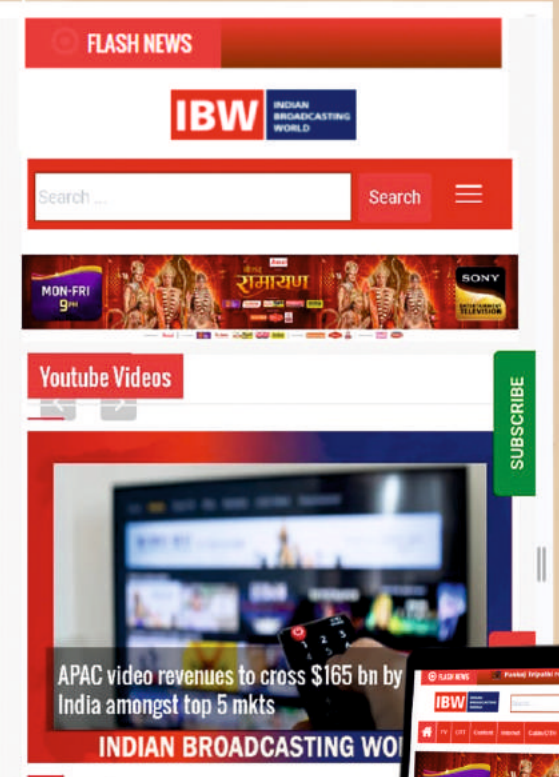
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