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20th Chetna Yatra
5th Sept - 20th Oct, 2024



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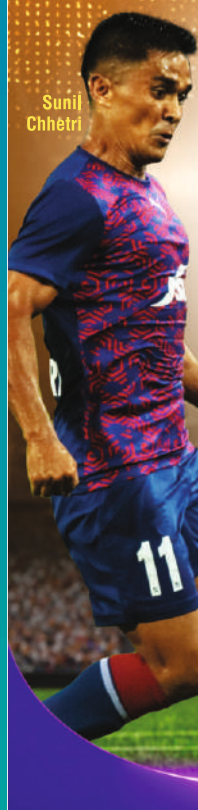
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3 T20Is ODIs

SONY SPORTS NETWORK

STARTS | 27TH JULY

SONY SPORTS TEN 2 ENGLISH
SONY SPORTS TEN 3* HINDI

SONY SPORTS TEN 1 ENGLISH
SONY SPORTS TEN 3 HINDI
SONY SPORTS TEN 4 TAMIL | TELUGU
SONY SPORTS TEN 5 ENGLISH

*BROADCAST ON SONY SPORTS TEN 3 WILL BE AVAILABLE FROM QUARTER FINAL ONWARDS.

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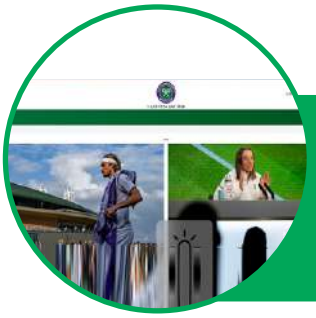
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24 तो पार हो गया लेकिन 29.....

चौबीस की चुनावीजंग निबट गई है, 10वीं लोक सभा का गठन भी हो गया, तीसरी बार मोदी जी ही देश के प्रधानमंत्री बन गए है, फिर से देश में मोदी सरकार का नारा बुलन्द हो गया है, लेकिन इस बार भा.ज.पा. बहुमत से चूक गई है, जबकि सहयोगी दलों की बैसाखियों पर अबकी बार यह एन.डी.ए. सरकार खड़ी है, वहीं धुरविरोधी कांग्रेस पार्टी पहले के मुकाबले में दुगुनी सीटों पर जीत दर्ज कर विपक्ष में सबसे बड़ी पार्टी बन गई है जबकि तीसरे नम्बर पर अखिलेश पार्टी पहुंच गई है, यह सच वाकई चौकाने वाला है और इससे भी बड़ा सच अयोध्या से भा.ज.पा. प्रत्याशी का हार जाना और वाराणसी से मोदी जी का मुश्किल से जीतना भी है। अमेठी से स्मृति रानी का कांग्रेसी चाकर से हारना कम शर्मनाक नहीं है, बल्कि भा.ज.पा. के लिए यह एक बहुत बड़ी चेतावनी है।

विकास भी वहां बौना हो जाता है हर सुविधाओं का लाभ बटोरना उनका अधिकार राम मंदिर से अधिक उनका लक्ष्य मोदी को हराने पर फोकस हो तो चिंता की जानी चाहिए। उत्तर प्रदेश में अमन चैन से ज्यादा जिन्हे माफिया भय के साये में जीने की आदत हो उन्हें अतीक-अंसारी-दुबे से मुक्त वातावरणी भला क्यों भाएगा। इतना सरल नहीं इस पूरी फिलॉसफी को समझना वो तो अभी तक ये ही नहीं समझ सके कि उनका जनेऊ-माथे का तिलक-चौटी (शिखा) कहां और कैसे खो गई, उन्हें क्या लेना वेदों से, भागवत गीता से, रामचरित मानस से, रामायण से या फिर जवानों से, आदि थे वह थप्पड़ खाते जवानों और पत्थर फेंकते उन्मादियों से। मतदान की तारीं - मौज-मस्तीं लिए छुट्टियां भर हो जिनके लिए जिन्हे धुप गर्मी लगती हो वोट डालने में वो क्या सबक लेंगे लम्बी लाइनों में कतारबद्ध खड़े एक तरफ वोट डालने वालों से।

बाल-बाल बच गया **EVM** वर्ना तैयारी तो उन्होंने पूरी कर ली थी इस बार बस किसी तरह से पार हो गया और आखिर बन ही गई सरकार लेकिन 2029 में क्या होगा, क्या बदलेगा व्यवहार, जबकि 12-13 साल के बच्चे जो हैं आज वह हो जाएँगे 18 पार। यूपी ही निकल गया तो क्या फिर केरल लगाएगा पार बहुत कीमती है 24 की सरकार जिसे पार करने होंगे अनेकानेक उपचार। कई रद्द तो नए भी बनाने होंगे संविधान में दो चार, आवशयक हो तो मध्याविधी के लिए भी रहें तैयार। मीडिया पर है जिम्मेदारी बहुत रोज-रोज होंगे सब दो-चार, आरोप-प्रत्यारोपों की सुनामी में कही बह ना जाए गठबंधन की बयार। भा.ज.पा. संघ की परीक्षा में दाव ना मार जाए वो पैजार, होशियार-बरदार-बहुत भारी है भविष्य इस बार।

-डॉ.ए.के.रस्तोगी

Guest Column: Will DD FreeDish go encrypted?

By Rajiv Khattar



Despite a public broadcaster's noble and laudable goals, maybe it's not always feasible to give such a service free run; especially when it commercially competes with similar private sector services and still remains outside the stringent regulatory regimen laid out for others.

So, when TRAI, in its 'Recommendations on Listing of Television Channels in Electronic Program Guide and Upgradation of DD FreeDish Platform to an Addressable System' suggested to the government that FreeDish boxes should be made addressable and the signals of the TV channels riding on it be encrypted, India's broadcast and telecom regulator acknowledged one important fact: a free and unencrypted service, carrying some private sector TV channels also, negatively impacts other distribution platform operators (DPOs) and the general growth of the pay TV segment as a non-level playing field is created in the absence of any rules for FreeDish.

Though there have been earlier demands from the DPOs (both cable and DTH sectors) to streamline the functioning of Doordrashan FreeDish, it has continued to be free to air carrying unencrypted signals of TV channels, both its own and those belonging to private media companies.

The problem gets compounded when FreeDish emerges as the single biggest distribution platform in the country — a rough industry estimate says it has a subscriber base of over 40 million; some like Prasar Bharati's former CEO Shashi S. Vempati feel the number could be in excess of 50 million — and a big revenue earner also for the pubcaster (in excess of Rs. 1,100 crore), riding on the lucrative auctioning of limited shelf-space to private TV channels who bid high to get a spot on FreeDish with an aim to increase eyeballs and their respective advertising revenue.



The spirit of FreeDish was to take pubcaster Doordarshan's TV channels, educational channels and other governmental information channels to areas where terrestrial broadcast was difficult or non-existent. However, as FreeDish's rural penetration increased, it became an attractive proposition for private broadcaster to reach the Bharat market at virtually no extra programming cost . The news channels specifically saw this as another route to increase their reach.

Yes, auctioning of MPEG2 & 4 slots on FreeDish (after accommodating DD and educational channels) benefitted the public broadcaster whose revenue from auctions of slots jumped year on year — a slot that cost Rs 25 lakh in 2007, for example, today can fetch in the excess of Rs10 crore. But subsequent challenges that such a practise has unfolded over the years has started to impact the private sector DPOs financially.

It is not that discussion on signals' encryption is something new. It has been happening for quite some time now. In 2016, for example, a tender was floated by Doordarshan for installation of an encryption system for FreeDish that aimed to enlist potential set top box manufacturers to market and provide services to consumers. Few STB manufacturers were selected also. However, the whole plan was quietly shelved without assigning a reason. This apart, few years back, Indian CAS (conditional access system) or iCAS was developed under the aegis of the Ministry of Electronics and IT (Meity) at a cost of around Rs 25 crore. That too never saw the light of the day.

Doordarshan has been in denial that it is a platform having commercial interests and competes with the private sector in some areas.

The pubcaster still insists it is just that — doing public service. Still, on the other hand, it has a KU-band DTH service, enters into commercial agreements with private broadcasters, gives them a ride on its platform without taking cognisance of the fact that rules get contravened.

By transmitting TV channels, which are otherwise pay and encrypted, FreeDish carries them in a unencrypted fashion on a FTA platform, thereby creating a non-level playing field via-a-vis other platforms. In a way, raising money from auctioning of slots could also be interpreted as DD charging a carriage fee. Thus, such commercial activity puts FreeDish in the category of commercial platforms and, in all fairness, regulations and tariff orders meant for other DPOs should also apply to it. TRAI has appropriately quoted a TDSAT judgement where it was made amply clear that DD FreeDish was a service platform.

That's why the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India has also recommended that even as FreeDish gets tech upgrades, private sector TV channels who hop on it as FTAs will have to go free on other platforms too.

Private broadcasters, who want to ride the FreeDish bandwagon lured by its massive reach, need to realise the fact that as the DD's free DTH platform gets bigger, the pay market will shrink and subscriber revenues will go down, impacting their profitability. It is akin to shooting oneself in the foot.

Though DD has been using the plank that FreeDish also helps in India's soft diplomacy, such justifications do not much ice now as FreeDish's Ku band signals do not spill over much in neighbouring countries and its penetration would be very limited, if not absent totally.

The process of making its systems addressable and encrypted involves several steps and to achieve them by April 2025, as suggested to the government, looks a herculean task, but a beginning has to be made to achieve the desired goals.

FreeDish can have a simpler approach, which this author has been propagating for some time: it can begin by first encrypting the MPEG4 TV channels on its platform. This way the consumers who have the boxes will continue to get the 94 channels.

Then, over the next six months, FreeDish can encrypt the private channels on its platform, bringing parity and uniformity amongst all DPOs. This will mean that consumers will continue to watch a limited number of channels, while the upgraded and technologically-relevant STBs are slowly seeded in the market for wider penetration. This approach, in the long term, would be good for FreeDish as then it can create more opportunities to cash in on advertising revenues and platform services, thereby generating more money. Addressable boxes and signal encryption will also mean piracy of TV signals can be controlled, while real data on FreeDish's reach and subscriber base could also be collated. At the moment, such data is pure speculation.

The big question is: will FreeDish bite the encryption bullet and will Prasar Bharti (Doordarshan's parent) agree to the industry demands, having been nudged by TRAI? There could be revenue loss in the short term, but it will go a long way towards creating a level playing field.

(Rajiv Khattar, the author, is a media industry veteran and a consultant, specializing in tech and satellite matters. His last assignment was as the South Asia head for a global satellite company, ABS. Before that, he spent almost two decades with the Zee group in various leadership positions in Siti Cable [now Siti Networks] and Dish TV. In between, for a short while he also did a stint at Reliance Industries' media unit. The views expressed are those of the author and Indianbroadcastingworld.com is not responsible for them, nor necessarily subscribes to them.)

Sony secures deal with GTPL, DEN, Hathway

In a significant development for the broadcasting industry, Sony has successfully secured distribution deals with leading Multi-System Operators (MSOs) GTPL, DEN and Hathway. This agreement marks a pivotal moment for LCOs and their consumers, ensuring uninterrupted access to Sony's extensive content library, the broadcaster said.

The negotiations, which required considerable effort from both parties, have concluded favorably. The collaborative spirit exhibited by the broadcaster and MSOs sets a promising precedent for future industry relations. Emphasizing the importance of consumer satisfaction, this deal ensures that viewers remain unaffected by any adverse decisions from stakeholders.

Expressing gratitude for the collective patience and support, a representative from Sony's distribution team acknowledged the role of DEN, Hathway, GTPL executives, LCOs and consumers during this challenging period.

"SPNI values its strong, collaborative relationships with MSO partners across India. We are pleased to announce that, following constructive negotiations, our channels have been successfully restored on several platforms. We expect to extend this restoration to all remaining platforms soon" according to a media statement by Sony.

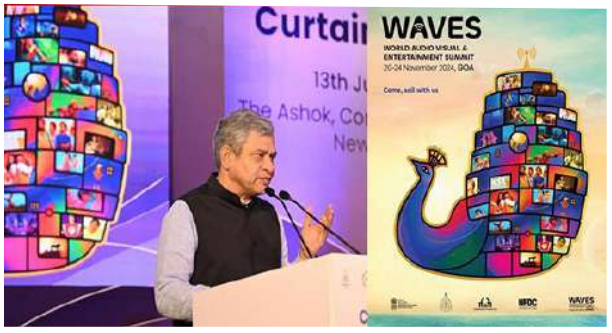
Aavishkar Media Group congratulates the Sony distribution team, executives of DEN, Hathway, GTPL, LCOs and consumers for their patience and resilience.

MIB's WAVE aims new benchmarks in creativity, innovation, influence

Minister of Information and Broadcasting Ashwani Vaishnaw, while announcing the World Audio Visual and Entertainment (WAVE) Summit, said the government will focus on creating employment in the media and entertainment sector and augment the talent pipeline.

This, he explained, will be executed via both structural and procedural efforts.

"The media and entertainment (M&E) world is undergoing a structural change and had seen immense technology infusion. This has, on one hand, opened many opportunities, but on the other, also caused concerns among few participants who have not been able to keep up with the change, the Minister stressed in his address in New Delhi on July 13.



According to an official statement put out by the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (MIB), Vaishnaw said that the role of public policy, in line with the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was to "enable harnessing of the best out of this structural change".

He added that the government is committed to supporting the entire ecosystem of media and entertainment in coping with this change.

The WAVE curtain raiser was a star-studded event with the actual conference to be held concurrently with the International Film Festival of India in Goa from November 20 to 24.

The Minister said that the government focus is on creating employment in the media and entertainment sector and augment the talent pipeline. These efforts will ensure creation of an ecosystem that encourages high quality content, creation and protection of IP rights in the country and makes the world recognize India as a natural choice for establishing their content creation centers.

He added that this endeavour will require close coordinated efforts between the M&E industry, the financial sector and the world of technology. This necessitates well thought policy initiatives and the minister expressed hope that in the months ahead the government and the industry will combine their efforts towards that goal.

The Minister further said that WAVES and IFFI will form different parts of the same spectrum and that WAVES Summit represents the input, while the International Film Festival of India is the output. He added that the convergence of input and output will establish Goa as a major hub for creativity and talent.

The Minister, along with other dignitaries, launched the website of WAVES 2024 and unveiled the brochure of the summit.

MIB Secretary Sanjay Jaju said that the event aims at creating a world class M&E summit: "The aim of the initiative is to bolster India's soft power as India grows economically. The Summit is expected to set new benchmarks in creativity, innovation and influence."

The Secretary informed about the opportunities that the summit will capitalize on and said that content production and innovation, animation, VFX, and gaming and finally music and IP creation will form its pivots.

WAVES aims to be a premier forum, fostering dialogue, trade collaboration and innovation within the evolving M&E industry landscape. The Summit will convene industry leaders, stakeholders, and innovators to explore opportunities, tackle challenges, attract trade to India, and shape the sector's future.

India's Best Dancer returns with Season 4

Sony Entertainment Television is set to captivate audiences once again with the return of its beloved dance reality show, 'India's Best Dancer,' now in its fourth season. Premiering on July 13, the show will air every Saturday and Sunday at 8:00 pm, promising a thrilling showcase of dance talent and innovation.

The latest season welcomes Bollywood's dancing diva, Karisma Kapoor, who joins the esteemed judges panel alongside veteran choreographers Terence Lewis and Geeta Kapur. Their combined expertise and charisma are sure to elevate the show's excitement and appeal.

In addition to the new judges, Jay Bhanushali returns as the host, joined by ex-contestant Aniket Chauhan, who will bring a unique perspective to the role. Together, they will guide viewers through the dynamic and emotional journey of the contestants.



Karisma Kapoor expressed her enthusiasm for the upcoming season, saying, "As a judge this season, I am thrilled to witness the evolution of dance styles and the boundless creativity of our contestants. This platform not only celebrates talent but also fosters a spirit of innovation and perseverance among participants. I am eager to embark on this journey alongside Terence and Geeta, where we aim to inspire, empower, and elevate each dancer's performance to new heights."

Terence Lewis shared his excitement about returning to the show: "As we embark on another exhilarating journey with India's Best Dancer Season 4, I am thrilled to return to the judges' panel.



Sony YAY! Expands Regional Reach with Odia-Dubbed Kids Programs

Sony YAY! becomes the first kids' channel to offer its most popular kids programs Shin chan, Oggy and the Cockroaches and Honey Bunny in Odiya language. This initiative is to cater to the growing viewership from young audiences in Odisha. With over 1000 hours of unique content and a weekly reach of over 15 million, Sony YAY! will offer content in seven regional languages – Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Bangla, Kannada, and Odia. This launch allows children in Odisha to enjoy three iconic shows – The leading chase comedy Oggy and the Cockroaches, the longest-running pet comedy Honey Bunny, and the latest, biggest addition to their eclectic lineup, the iconic show – Shin chan.

Leena Lele Dutta, Business Head of Sony YAY! said, "Within the enchanting world of animation, toons aren't just characters; they're companions, confidants, and cherished playmates in the imaginative landscapes of childhood. When toons engage in dialogue that resonates with the innocence and wonder in young audiences, they transcend mere entertainment to become treasured friends, speaking a language that resonates deeply with young hearts, further endearing themselves to their audience."



Makarand Palekar, Head of Distribution, Sales & Marketing at SPNI, underscored, "By 2025, 60% of TV consumption is projected to be regional content, according to FICCI-EY projections. Our strategic expansion into the Odisha market fortifies our ability to cater to the unique preferences of Odia-speaking audiences. The launch of our Odia feed cements our presence in this dynamic market."

The Odia-dubbed shows will be part of a General Entertainment Channel (GEC) bundle, offering families high-quality entertainment at an affordable price, reinforcing SPNI's commitment to its audience across diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Meghalaya govt. launches OTT platform 'Hello Meghalaya'



Meghalaya government has launched its very own OTT (Over-the-Top) platform named 'Hello Meghalaya' on Friday. This initiative marks Meghalaya as the first state in India to introduce an OTT platform that focuses on monetizing the creative passions of its youth, while also fostering economic growth.

The launch of 'Hello Meghalaya' underscores the state government's commitment to harnessing the power of digital media to promote local culture and language. The platform is designed to cater to the state's substantial youth demographic, providing them with a productive outlet for their creativity and talents, PTI reported from Guwahati

Speaking at the launch event, Chief Minister Conrad Sangma highlighted the importance of such initiatives in the digital age. "Hello Meghalaya is not just an OTT platform; it is a medium through which we aim to preserve our cultural heritage and promote our local languages. This platform will empower our youth by providing them with opportunities to showcase their talents and earn a livelihood through their creative endeavors."

'Hello Meghalaya' will feature a diverse range of content, including films, web series, music videos, documentaries, and educational content, all primarily in the local languages of Meghalaya. The platform aims to:

Promote Local Culture and Language: By offering content in local languages such as Khasi, Garo, and Jaintia, the platform seeks to preserve and promote Meghalaya's rich cultural heritage.

Monetize Youth Creativity: The platform provides a unique opportunity for the youth to monetize their creative passions, whether in filmmaking, music, or other forms of digital content creation.

Facilitate Economic Growth: By engaging the youth in productive activities, 'Hello Meghalaya' aims to contribute to the state's economic growth. The platform will generate employment opportunities and stimulate the local creative economy.

GTPL secures govt. approval to offer HITS services

In accordance with Regulation 30 of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, GTPL Hathway Ltd. has officially announced that it has received permission from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to provide Headend-In-The-Sky (HITS) Services. This development marks a significant advancement for the company in the digital broadcasting sector.

The approval from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, received today, grants GTPL the authority to offer HITS Services, subject to fulfilling the provisions stipulated in the HITS guidelines.

This strategic approval underscores GTPL's compliance with regulatory frameworks and its commitment to expanding its service portfolio.

HITS is a satellite-based digital headend service that enables multi-channel TV distribution. With this approval, GTPL aims to enhance its capabilities in delivering high-quality broadcasting services across a wider audience base.

Commenting on the development, the company stated, "We are pleased to announce the receipt of approval from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting for our HITS Services. This approval positions us strategically to cater to the growing demand for digital broadcasting solutions in India. We remain committed to adhering to the regulatory requirements and delivering innovative services to our customers."

NDTV tops YouTube news channels with 20.9% viewership share



NDTV has firmly established itself as the leading news channel on YouTube, achieving a dominant 20.9 percent share of views from June 29, 2024, to July 5, 2024, according to YouTube API data. This performance puts NDTV significantly ahead of its closest competitor by more than 1.3 million views.

The channel's success highlights NDTV's ability to harness digital platforms effectively, delivering timely and high-quality news content that resonates with a global audience. This achievement underscores NDTV's expertise in leveraging technology to engage viewers, reflecting its commitment to providing accessible and impactful information.

In an era where YouTube has become a pivotal platform for news consumption, NDTV's leadership in the digital space demonstrates its dedication to innovation and viewer connection. This milestone reaffirms NDTV's status as a frontrunner in the media industry, continually setting new benchmarks for digital news delivery.

DTH firms lose over 3 million subscribers in Fy24



In the fiscal year ending March 2024, India's four private direct-to-home (DTH) operators lost a significant 3.28 million active subscribers, the Economic Times reported, quoting the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India's (TRAI) Performance Indicator Report released last week.

Despite the allure of major sporting events like the Indian Premier League (IPL) and the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023, the DTH subscriber base declined due to free streaming of these events by JioCinema and Disney+ Hotstar, coupled with price hikes by broadcasters, The Economic Times reported added.

The Indian DTH industry, comprising four private operators and one government-owned operator, has been grappling with stiff competition from Prasar Bharati-owned DD FreeDish and over-the-top (OTT) platforms like Netflix and Prime Video. These platforms are attracting both the upper and lower segments of pay DTH customers, respectively.

The active pay DTH base dropped 5 percent from 65.25 million in FY23 to 61.97 million in FY24. In the last quarter alone, the active pay DTH subscriber base decreased by 2.4 percent, or 1.55 million, to 61.97 million, compared to 63.52 million in Q3 FY24.

The decline in the DTH subscriber base highlights the shifting landscape of content consumption in India, with consumers increasingly opting for free and flexible streaming options over traditional pay TV services, the report added.

Zee Entertainment secures shareholder approval to raise up to Rs 2,000cr via securities issue

Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd. (ZEEL) had received the green light from its shareholders to raise up to Rs 2,000 crore through the issuance of securities, the company announced in a filing to the stock exchanges on Monday. The resolution saw significant support, with 78.83 percent of the votes cast in favor and 21.16 percent against, IANS reported.

The announcement came after market hours, with ZEEL's stock closing at Rs 160.34 on the NSE on Monday, marking a 3.11 percent increase from Friday's closing price of Rs 155.50.

Despite the recent uptick, ZEEL shares have struggled over the past year, experiencing a decline of over 30 percent. The year-to-date correction has been even steeper at 44%. This decline has been largely attributed to the fallout from the failed merger deal with Sony Group.

In January, Sony Group withdrew from its agreement to merge its India operations with Zee, ending a two-year-old plan aimed at creating a $10 billion media giant. Sony's decision to terminate the merger, citing Zee's failure to meet merger agreement conditions, included a demand for $90 million in break-up fees. Zee denied any breach of the pact announced in December 2021.

The company has also faced leadership turbulence, with the termination of Zee Media Corporation Ltd. (ZMCL) CEO Abhay Ojha in May. The reasons for his termination were not disclosed, adding to the company's challenges.

The approved Rs 2,000 crore fundraising via securities issuance is seen as a strategic move to bolster the company's financial position amid these challenges. Zee Entertainment plans to utilize the funds to strengthen its balance sheet, support ongoing projects, and explore new growth opportunities.

Market analysts are closely watching how Zee will leverage the new capital. The company's ability to regain investor confidence and stabilize its stock price will be crucial in the coming months. The successful implementation of this fundraising initiative could signal a positive turn for the embattled media giant.

A spokesperson for Zee Entertainment expressed optimism about the approval, stating, "The shareholder nod to raise Rs 2,000 crore is a pivotal step in our strategic plan to navigate current challenges and fuel our future growth. We are committed to creating long-term value for our shareholders and stakeholders."

The recent shareholder approval and subsequent stock price rise indicate a cautiously optimistic investor sentiment. However, the company's performance in the aftermath of the failed merger and leadership changes will be critical in determining its trajectory.

As Zee Entertainment embarks on this new chapter, the industry will be watching closely to see how the company maneuvers through its current hurdles and capitalizes on new opportunities in the rapidly evolving media landscape.

SC stays Karnataka HC order banning broadcast of Kannada news channel

Observing that the case seemed to be driven by "sheer political vendetta", the Supreme Court on Friday stayed a Karnataka High Court order that restricted the broadcast of Kannada news channel Power TV. A bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra observed that the case against the news channel prima facie aimed to stop the channel from airing allegations of sex scandals involving political figures in the state.

While issuing notice to the Centre and others on the plea filed by M/s Power Smart Media Pvt Ltd, the bench also stayed the order of the high court till Monday and put it for hearing next day, PTI reported.

Noting that the court will protect the freedom of speech and expression, the bench said the channel was entitled to continue with its broadcast which should not have been stopped.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, said that the case pertained to unauthorisedly giving licence by the original licensee to other person.

The Centre can certainly proceed with the consequential process after the issuance of show cause notice, the bench said.

"The more we hear you, the more we are convinced that it is political vendetta, let me be very honest. That is why we are inclined to protect the freedom of speech and expression," it said.

The bench said the channel wanted to broadcast some allegations regarding the sex scandal in the state.



"The idea was to completely blank out his voice, this court is duty-bound to allow him. This is sheer political vendetta and nothing else. Therefore this court will be failing in its duty if we do not protect (the channel)," it said.

The channel allegedly broadcast news related to recent sex scandal allegations involving JD(S) leaders Prajwal Revanna and others.

Chrome DM celebrates 16 years of excellence in media, brand insights

Chrome DM, a trailblazer in media distribution audits, marked its 16th anniversary. Founded in 2008, Chrome DM has evolved from a small distribution audit company into a comprehensive industry leader, pioneering several segments and expanding its services to meet the evolving needs of the media and entertainment sector.

Starting with a modest team of five in just 10 towns, Chrome DM has grown into a robust organization with over 650 professionals spanning over 3,300 towns and 5.9 lakh villages across India. From its inception with 100 panel homes in 2009, the company expanded to an impressive 34,000 by 2019. The number of touchpoints surged from 400 to 3.6 lakh active respondents and over 100,000 active SDKs across digital platforms, reflecting its extensive reach and influence, the company said in a press release.

Chrome DM now boasts four distinct verticals:

Traditional Media: Services like Chrome Track 2.0, Subscriber Establishment Survey (SES), and Distribution Potential Index (DPi) make Chrome DM a trusted partner for the broadcast industry.

New Media: With the advent of OTT platforms, Chrome DM launched Chrome OTT (COTT), offering monitoring and analysis services for OTT content and measuring digital consumption via Chrome Digital Track.

Brand Audits: This division focuses on retail audits, mystery shopping programs, and other services that provide critical market performance and consumer engagement insights to brands.

Media Research: Providing industry insights, this division helps brands understand market trends and consumer behavior, enabling informed decision-making.



Pankaj Krishna, Founder & CEO of Chrome DM, reflects on the company's journey, "Reaching this milestone of 16 years is a testament to our team's relentless commitment to innovation and excellence. From humble beginnings as a distribution audit company, Chrome DM evolved into a multifaceted organization with a strong presence across traditional media, new media, brand audits, and media research. I am immensely proud of our journey and grateful to our dedicated team, trusted clients, and valued partners. Together, we have built a legacy of trust and success, and I am excited about the future as we continue to set new benchmarks in the industry."

From one broadcasting client, Chrome DM now boasts active relationships with over 400 linear channels, major OTT platforms, production houses, international clients, state governments, and consumer brands. Its innovative approach and commitment to excellence have led to the establishment of four private limited companies under its umbrella, facilitating global partnerships and expanding its influence beyond national borders.

As Chrome DM celebrates this milestone, it extends heartfelt gratitude to its colleagues, friends, clients, partners, and fellow countrymen for their trust and support. Their partnership has been instrumental in Chrome DM's journey, and the company looks forward to achieving even greater heights together.

Tata Play Binge launches PaaS solution for Bangladesh's Akash Digital TV

Tata Play Binge, utilizing its advanced Cloud technology, has launched a Platform as a Service (PaaS) solution for Akash Digital TV, the Direct To Home (DTH) service by BEXIMCO Communications Limited in Bangladesh. This innovative solution simplifies content access by offering multiple OTT channels on a single screen through a unified app and subscription.



The first launch under this arrangement, named Akash Go, enables subscribers in Bangladesh to access content on their mobile devices. The app provides live TV channels and Video on Demand, featuring personalized recommendations based on viewing history, Mint reported.

Akash Go aggregates a mix of local and global premium content and is available for DTH subscribers of Akash Digital TV on both iOS and Android mobile phones. This new offering aims to streamline content access for viewers while enabling OTT aggregators worldwide to focus on building content partnerships and acquiring subscribers.

Talking about this collaboration, Harit Nagpal, Managing Director & CEO of Tata Play, said, "In the truest sense of Make-in-India and Show the World, by providing Tata Play Binge PaaS to global OTT aggregators, we are pioneering a tech-first industry move from India where international content delivery companies will benefit from our tried and tested technology to create localised offerings for their consumers at low cost and within a short time frame. Our collaboration with Akash Digital TV is a pivotal moment in this journey."

TRAI removes NCF ceiling; ups DPO bouquet discounts; suggests tech upgrades to FreeDish

Amongst a slew of recommendations to the government, telecom and broadcast regulator TRAI yesterday issued a new set of tariff regulations, which removed earlier ceiling on network capacity fees and allows DPOs to offer bouquet discount up to 45 percent, while separately suggesting major tech upgrades to pubcaster Doordarshan's FreeDish platform, including that boxes should be made addressable and signals should be encrypted.

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, which had moved into a swanky office area covering several floors of the South Delhi-located World Trade Centre, also recommended that a pay channel.

available at no subscription fee on the DTH platform of the public service broadcaster (FreeDish) has to be declared FTA by the broadcaster for all addressable distribution platforms so as to have a level-playing field.

The TRAI recommendations were part of amendments in the Telecommunication (Broadcasting and Cable) Services (Eighth) (Addressable Systems) Tariff (Fourth Amendment) Order, 2024 (1 of 2024), Telecommunication (Broadcasting and Cable) Services Interconnection (Addressable Systems) (Sixth Amendment) Regulations, 2024 (4 of 2024), the Telecommunication (Broadcasting and Cable) Services Standards of Quality of Service and Consumer Protection (Addressable Systems) (Fourth Amendment) Regulations, 2024 (3 of 2024).

"These amendments, except for few clauses, shall come into force after 90 days from the date of its publication in the official gazette," TRAI said in a statement.

It added that the amendments are aimed to facilitate growth of the broadcasting sector by reducing regulatory mandates and compliance requirements, provide flexibility to the service providers to adopt a market driven approach while safeguarding the interest of the consumers and

promoting ease of doing business by simplifying regulatory provisions.

Some of the highlights of the TRAI recommendations include the following:

Tariff Order

Ceilings of Rs 130 for 200 channels and Rs 160 on more than 200 channels have been removed on Network Capacity Fee (NCF) and is kept under forbearance to make it market driven as well as equitable. Service providers may now charge different NCF based on number of channels, different regions, different customer classes or any combination thereof. To ensure transparency, all such charges have to be mandatorily published by the service providers and communicated to the consumers besides reporting to the TRAI.

DPOs or distribution platform operators have now been permitted to offer discounts up to 45 percent while forming their bouquets to enable flexibility and to offer attractive deals to the consumers. Earlier this discount was permitted only up to 15 percent.

iii. DPOs have been mandated to declare tariffs of their platform services.

Interconnection Regulations

Acknowledging the proliferation of HD television sets and to encourage transmission of high-definition content, distinction between HD and SD channels has been removed for the purpose of carriage fee.

Carriage fee regime simplified and made technology neutral by prescribing only single ceiling for carriage fee, thereby providing the DPOs with the option to charge a lesser carriage fee as deemed appropriate.

iii. The above measures are expected to not only simplify the offerings of the service providers to the consumers but also promote the availability of high-quality channels, TRAI stressed.

QoS Regulations

Charges for services like installation and activation, visiting, relocation and temporary suspension which were prescribed earlier under regulation have now been kept under forbearance. DPOs



have to publish the charges of their services for clarity and transparency to consumers.

Relaxation of certain regulatory compliances for small DPOs.

iii. Duration/Term/Validity of all prepaid subscriptions to be specified in number of days only for greater clarity to the consumers.

While giving permission to each channel, TRAI has suggested MIB seek information from broadcasters about primary language of each channel and sub-genre of every non-news channel as per Interconnection Regulation 2017 and display the same on Broadcast Seva portal of MIB to enable DPOs to place the channel at appropriate place in the EPG for easy navigation by the consumers, in accordance with the present regulation.

Upgradation of FreeDish Platform

In order to ensure quality of viewing experience, prevent unauthorized re-transmission of television channels to combat piracy and maintain the record of subscribers, Prasar Bharati to take steps to convert DD Free Dish platform from a non-addressable system to an addressable system and make a beginning by encrypting the signals of private satellite television channels at FreeDish headend before uplinking. Subsequently, all other channels of DD Free Dish may also be transmitted in encrypted form.

Public service broadcaster will be provided with the requisite exemptions of TRAI

Regulations, once such notification is issued by MIB.

iii. Prasar Bharati may utilize indigenous technologies for Conditional Access System (CAS), Subscriber Management System (SMS) and interoperable Set Top Boxes (STBs).

Prasar Bharati should adopt interoperable STBs for FreeDish to act as catalyst for transitioning the entire ecosystem from operator-based STBs to interoperable STBs to empower consumers' choice. This will eliminate the need for changing STBs every time the service provider is changed.

A roadmap for transition of DD Free Dish from non-addressable to addressable platform along with authorizing manufacturers and distributors by Prasar Bharati for sales and aftersales service of STBs has been suggested to MIB.

MIB may direct private DPOs to adopt and implement interoperable STBs.

Finally, pointing out that though it has attempted to cover all areas discussed in open houses on issues relating to broadcast and cable services, TRAI said, "However, during the consultation process for these amendments, certain other issues were also raised by various stakeholders, which need to undergo a detailed consultation process for the consideration of TRAI. These issues and suggestions have been noted and TRAI will come out with a comprehensive consultation paper shortly to address the relevant issues."

UTT and Viacom18 extend partnership to elevate India's Table Tennis

Ultimate Table Tennis (UTT) has renewed its partnership with Viacom18 to bring the upcoming season's world-class table tennis action to Indian audiences. Scheduled to be held in Chennai from August 22 to September 7, UTT 2024 will be streamed for free on JioCinema and broadcast on the Sports18 Network.

Marking the second year of collaboration between UTT and Viacom18, this deal follows a successful previous season. The franchise-based league, now in its fifth season, promises 17 days of high-energy matches, broadcast in English and Hindi, to cater to table tennis and sports enthusiasts nationwide



Launched in 2017 and promoted by Niraj Bajaj and Vita Dani under the auspices of the Table Tennis Federation of India, UTT has rapidly gained recognition as a premier global sports property in table tennis. The league has significantly contributed to the growth of Indian table tennis, as highlighted by India's historic qualification for the Paris 2024 Olympics.

Speaking on the partnership, UTT co-promoters Niraj Bajaj and Vita Dani stated, "Our collaboration with Viacom18 underscores our mutual commitment to expanding table tennis in India. Viacom18's mandate for the Paris 2024 Olympics will showcase our top Indian paddlers on the global stage. Transitioning to UTT 2024 post-Olympics will be seamless, with Viacom18's extensive reach ensuring the excitement of UTT 2024 resonates nationwide."

Last season, the league attracted a combined viewership of over 33 million across 18 days on JioCinema and the Sports18 Network. This year, UTT expands its footprint by featuring eight teams for the first time, with the addition of Ahmedabad SG Pipers and Jaipur Patriots. The other participating teams include PBG Bengaluru Smashers, Dabang Delhi TTC, U Mumba TT, Goa Challengers, Puneri Paltan Table Tennis, and Chennai Lions.

UTT enhances Viacom18's already diverse sporting portfolio, which includes global events such as the upcoming Olympic Games Paris 2024, Diamond League, select BWF events, BCCI Cricket, TATA IPL, TATA WPL, SA20, Major League Cricket (MLC), and the NBA.

"We are thrilled to continue our partnership with Ultimate Table Tennis. The league has captivated audiences with high-quality competition and stellar performances by Indian and international star paddlers," said Viacom18 Sports Head of Strategy, Acquisitions, & Partnerships, Hursh Shrivastava. "We are particularly excited to feature top Indian paddlers like Sharath Kamal, Harmeet Desai, Manav Thakkar, Manika Batra, and Sreeja Akula, who will be returning from the Olympics to compete in UTT 2024."

UTT 2024 will see 48 premier paddlers in action, including top Indian players such as Achanta Sharath Kamal, Manika Batra, Sathiyan Gnanasekaran, and Sreeja Akula, alongside 16 global stars like World No. 9 Bernadette Szocs, World No. 16 Nina Mittelham, and Nigeria's ace player Quadri Aruna. The Player Draft is set to take place in Mumbai on July 10.

GTPL Hathway Q1 revenue rises 4% to Rs.8,506 mn

GTPL Hathway Limited, a leading digital cable TV and broadband provider, yesterday announced its financial results for the quarter ending June 30, stating its Q1 revenue stood at Rs.8,506 million, which is a growth of 4 percent Q-o-Q and 9 percent Y-o-Y

It further stated that subscription revenue increased by 7 percent Y-o-Y, while EBITDA for Q1 FY25 stood at Rs.1,205 million. Q1 FY25 PAT stood at Rs.143 million, an increase of 12 percent Q-o-Q.

In a statement, GTPL Hathway said some of the highlights of the Q1 were as follows:

- Active digital cable TV subscribers stood at 9.60 million as of June 30, an increase by 100K Q-o-Q and 550K Y-o-Y.
- Paying subscribers stood at 8.90 million; increasing by 100K Q-o-Q and 600K Y-o-Y.
- Subscription revenue increased by 7 percent Y-o-Y to Rs. 3,193 million
- Broadband subscribers increased by 10K Q-o-Q and 70K Y-o-Y, thus the total standing at 1030K.
- Homepass as on June 30 stood at 5.90 million, which saw an addition of 500K Y-o-Y. Of the 5.90 million, 75 percent were available for FTTX conversion.
- Average revenue per user (ARPU) for broadband stood at Rs.460 per month per subscriber for the year.
- Average data consumption per user per month stood at 350GB, an increase of 13 percent Y-o-Y.

Commenting on the results, GTPL Hathway MD Anirudhsinh Jadeja said, "I am pleased to announce that the company has reported a consistent performance for the quarter driven by focus on operational efficiency and rising subscriber traction in the cable TV segment, aided by sporting events such as IPL and Cricket World Cup.

"The recent round of price hikes announced by all major telcos make the prospect of private wireline broadband at home even more appealing, thus making our offering in the broadband segment even more competitive."

Amazon miniTV expands content with International shows



Amazon miniTV, Amazon's free video streaming service, is set to captivate audiences with an eclectic roster of international shows this July. Offering a blend of soapy dramas, heart-pounding romances, and laugh-out-loud comedies, the new slate promises to transport viewers to different corners of the world, showcasing diverse cultures, emotions, and adventures.

The new lineup, available in the original language as well as dubbed in Hindi, Tamil, and Telugu under the miniTV Imported section, features globally celebrated titles such as Gen Z, Almost Famous, My Deskmate, Girlfriend, and Still 17.

Gen Z delves into the secrets of traditional Chinese medicine while exploring the complexities of life, family, and health.

Almost Famous offers a backstage pass into the high-stakes music industry, showcasing the passion and grit of aspiring artists amidst a budding love story.

My Deskmate takes viewers back to the innocence and camaraderie of school days, highlighting the romance between an idol and his fangirl.

Girlfriend explores the quirky love life of a woman hired to pretend she has a crush on a CEO, only for it to become her reality.

Still 17 presents a tale of rediscovery and resilience, focusing on a woman who awakens from a coma, emotionally stuck in her teenage years, and navigating adulthood with a newfound perspective.

Amogh Dusad, Head of Content at Amazon miniTV, expressed excitement about the new lineup: "We are thrilled to unveil the July slate of international shows on Amazon miniTV, underscoring our commitment to meeting the growing demand for global content in local languages for free. Shows of Korean, Mandarin, and Turkish origins have struck a chord with Indian audiences for their unique storytelling and cultural richness. By presenting these international shows in Original, Hindi, Tamil, and Telugu, we aim to provide an immersive and inclusive viewing experience that transcends cultural boundaries and connects with viewers on a personal level."

The international shows will be available for free on Amazon miniTV within Amazon's shopping app, on Prime Video, Fire TV, and Smart TVs. The app can also be downloaded from the Play Store.

Skydance, Paramount agree on new merger plan

Skydance Media and Paramount Global agreed to merge, the companies announced late on July 07 scripting a new chapter for one of Hollywood's oldest studios.

The companies agreed to a two-step process in which Skydance and its deal partners will acquire National Amusements, which holds the Redstone family's controlling stake in Paramount, for $2.4 billion in cash.

Skydance will subsequently merge with Paramount, offering $4.5 billion in cash or stock to shareholders and providing an additional $1.5 billion for Paramount's balance sheet, a Reuters report stated.

David Ellison, the 41-year-old tech scion who founded Skydance, will become chairman and chief executive of the new Paramount. Jeff Shell, former chief executive of NBCUniversal, will be its new president.



The goal of the deal is to position the "new Paramount" as a "tech hybrid, to be able to transition to meet the demands and needs of the evolving marketplace," Ellison told financial analysts yesterday.

The deal represents the end of an era for Shari Redstone, whose father and late patriarch, Sumner Redstone, transformed the family's chain of drive-in movie theaters into a media empire that included Paramount Pictures, the CBS broadcast network and cable television networks Comedy Central, Nickelodeon and MTV.

"Given the changes in the industry, we want to fortify Paramount for the future, while ensuring that content remains king," Redstone, chair of Paramount and National Amusements, said in a statement, citing a phrase her father coined.

Paramount's 2025 revenue will reach $32.6 billion on a pro forma basis and 2027 revenue is expected to rise by 2 percent to $33.5 billion, according to the slides.

Ellison, son of Oracle co-founder Larry Ellison, stands to inherit a media company that has a mountain of challenges, as it navigates an entertainment business upended by the streaming video revolution.

Paramount has shed nearly $17 billion in value since late 2019, as its traditional television business has eroded faster than its Paramount+ streaming service could turn a profit.

There has been tension in the executive suites. Its chief executive, Bob Bakish, was ousted in April after clashing with Redstone over the Skydance deal. He was replaced by a trio of executives who occupy the "office of the C.E.O", a group that has proposed making $500 million in cuts, selling off certain assets, and exploring a possible joint venture partner for Paramount+.

Ellison pledged to bring "best-in-class" technology and modern infrastructure to Paramount+ and the free streaming service, Pluto TV, even as it enhanced Paramount's traditional television networks.

The Paramount-Skydance deal came together after months of talks that appeared to have derailed when Redstone abruptly called off negotiations on June 11.

Skydance sweetened the Redstone family's payout for the sale of National Amusements to $1.75 billion, said one of the sources familiar with the deal terms. It also enhanced legal protections from possible shareholder lawsuits, clearing the way for a new agreement, the source said, according to the Reuters report.

Under the terms of the agreement, Ellison's Skydance will merge with Paramount in an all-stock transaction that values Skydance at $4.75 billion, creating a company with an enterprise value of $28 billion.

Meanwhile, in India, Paramount had scaled down its holding last year in Viacom18, a joint venture amongst the Reliance Industries, Paramount and Bodhi Tree, an investment firm led by James Mordoch and former Disney Asia head Uday Shankar.

Dulquer Salmaan's 'Lucky Bhaskar' set to release on Sept. 7



Actor Dulquer Salmaan has announced the release date for his highly anticipated film 'Lucky Bhaskar,' which is scheduled to hit theaters on September 7, coinciding with the festive occasion of Ganesh Chaturthi.

The 40-year-old actor shared the exciting news on his 'X' handle, accompanied by a striking poster revealing the release date as "7.9.24 in cinemas worldwide," PTI reported.

The announcement highlighted the film's multilingual release, with 'Lucky Bhaskar' set to be available in Telugu, Malayalam, Tamil, and Hindi. This broad release aims to reach a wide audience across different linguistic regions, ensuring fans from various parts of the country can enjoy the film in their preferred language.

Salmaan's caption on the poster read, "This Vinayaka Chaturthi, Get ready to experience #LuckyBaskhar's unforgettable journey on the Big Screens! Worldwide Grand Release on 7th SEPT in Telugu, Malayalam, Tamil & Hindi Languages. #LuckyBaskharOnSept7th."

India TV chairman Rajat Sharma elected president of NBD

Rajat Sharma, Chairman of India TV, has been elected as the President of the News Broadcasters & Digital Association (NBDA).



The decision was unanimously made during a board meeting held today, marking Sharma's ascent to lead the largest organization representing news broadcasters and digital media in the country.

Addressing the media after his election, Rajat Sharma acknowledged the formidable challenges facing the news industry today. He emphasized the critical role of NBDA in advocating for the interests of journalism amid increasing pressures and ensuring an environment conducive to free and fair news reporting. Sharma underscored the importance of journalistic integrity and the need for news broadcasters to operate without fear or bias.

NBDA, comprising nearly all major news networks in India, plays a crucial role in setting industry standards and addressing collective concerns of its members. With Rajat Sharma at its helm, the association is poised to navigate the evolving media landscape and uphold the principles of responsible journalism.

Star Sports partners with GT20 Canada to broadcast live action in India

Fans in India will be able to catch all the high-voltage action from the upcoming GT20 Canada exclusively on Star Sports.

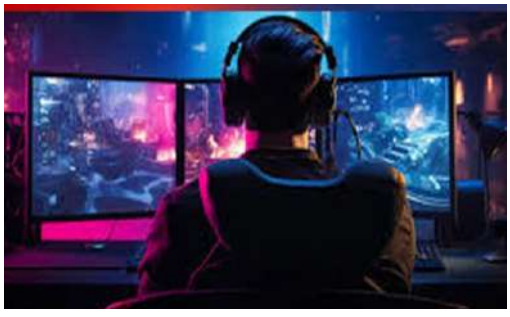
The fourth season of North America's marquee T20 league kicks off on July 25 with a thrilling clash between the Vancouver Knights and the Toronto Nationals, featuring Pakistan heavyweights Babar Azam and Shaheen Shah Afridi in the season opener.

Star Sports' commitment to cutting-edge broadcasting and creative ingenuity ensures captivating perspectives and immersive encounters, establishing itself as the ultimate destination for thrilling cricket action. By extending its partnership with GT20 Canada, Star Sports fortifies its already formidable cricket lineup, affirming its position as a leader in sports broadcasting.

The league phase of the tournament will run from July 25 to August 6, with each of the six franchises playing seven matches. The playoff stage will begin on August 9, with the final scheduled for August 11. Tickets for the matches are available on the GT20 Canada website.

Grant Thornton Bharat, E-Gaming Federation proposes measures to secure India's gaming industry

In a landmark development for India's burgeoning gaming sector, industry leaders Grant Thornton Bharat and the E-Gaming Federation (EGF) have jointly unveiled a whitepaper titled 'Guardians of Safe Play: Ethical Gaming for Vibrant Bharat'. This collaborative effort addresses critical needs such as verification, protection, certification, and support within the industry.



The whitepaper, released by esteemed figures including Prof. (Dr) G.S. Bajpai from National Law University, Delhi, and Shri Priyank Kanoongo from the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, advocates for a robust Code of Conduct (CoC). This CoC aims to establish clear standards of ethical behavior across the gaming ecosystem, ensuring accountability and transparency.

Highlighting the importance of third-party certification, the report emphasizes self-regulation to mitigate risks like cyber threats and financial uncertainties. It calls for proactive player protection measures and educational initiatives to foster a safer gaming environment. Stakeholders are urged to collaborate with regulators and policymakers to implement effective regulatory mechanisms safeguarding players from cyber threats and fraudulent practices.

Shalabh Saxena, Partner at Grant Thornton Bharat, emphasized, "The report underscores responsible play and consumer protection, promoting fairness, transparency, and mental well-being. A robust Code of Conduct will uphold ethical standards, ensuring integrity and trust within the gaming community. Together, we aim to create a digital ecosystem that prioritizes inclusivity and high ethical standards for players of all ages."

The whitepaper also delves into the regulatory landscape governing real money gaming (RMG), distinguishing between games of skill and chance. It discusses key legislative frameworks like the Public Gambling Act and the Information Technology guidelines, stressing the need for modernized laws to address sector-specific challenges effectively.

Govt. notifies additional provisions in Telecom Act 2023

The Indian government has announced the notification of additional sections of the Telecommunications Act 2023, focusing on the optimal utilisation of spectrum and the appointment criteria for the telecom regulator's leadership.

The newly notified sections—6-8, 48, and 59(b)—come into effect immediately. These sections build on the provisions of the Act that became effective on June 26, which included sections 1, 2, 10 to 30, 42 to 44, 46, 47, 50 to 58, 61, and 62. The remaining provisions are expected to be notified within the next 180 days, The Economic Times reported.



A key highlight of the latest notification is the emphasis on increasing efficiency in spectrum utilisation through various methods, including secondary assignment, sharing, trading, leasing, and surrender of spectrum. The Ministry of Communications stated on Friday, "One major aspect that is being covered in the latest notification is the focus of the Central Government on increasing efficiency in spectrum utilization and various modes of achieving the same like secondary assignment, sharing/trading etc."

The Telecommunications Act 2023 provides a comprehensive legal framework aimed at ensuring the efficient use of scarce spectrum resources. It supports the flexible, liberalised, and technologically neutral use of spectrum and empowers the Central Government to establish enforcement and monitoring mechanisms to this end.

Additionally, the Act prohibits the use of telecommunications-blocking equipment unless permitted by the Central Government. Section 59(b) specifically amends Section 4 of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) Act 1997, outlining the criteria for appointing the Chairperson and members of TRAI.

Reliance takes Google partnership to TVs with Jio TV OS

Reliance Industries is venturing into the smart TV market with the development of India's first homegrown smart TV operating system, Jio TV OS. This strategic move signifies a notable step towards self-reliance in India's tech sector.

According to a report by the Economic Times, Jio TV OS, built on Google's Android platform, aims to compete with established players such as Samsung's Tizen OS and LG's webOS. Reliance is targeting domestic TV manufacturers, particularly smaller brands, to drive the adoption of this new smart TV platform.

A company executive revealed that Jio TV OS will be an open-source platform, allowing developers to create optimized apps for smart TVs and other connected devices. This approach is expected to foster a vibrant app ecosystem for the platform.

Moreover, Jio TV OS will not have licensing fees, making it an attractive option for smaller manufacturers. This strategy could significantly increase competition in the Indian smart TV market. "No licensing fees for the Jio TV OS will help make it popular," the executive told ET.

The report suggests that large multinational corporations like Samsung and LG are unlikely to adopt Jio TV OS since they already have their own smart TV operating systems. Consequently, Reliance plans to enter agreements with homegrown and smaller brands to boost adoption.

Reliance is also reportedly planning to leverage Jio TV OS to promote its services, such as JioCinema, which could help generate ad revenue. There are plans to potentially bundle the platform with Jio broadband subscriptions, enhancing its market reach.

In addition to developing the Jio TV OS platform, Reliance may also manufacture Jio-branded smart TVs running the OS. The company plans to partner with other Indian TV makers to achieve a wider market reach. These TVs are expected to target the entry-level segment.

This initiative comes amidst a decline in overall smart TV shipments in India. However, the market for larger screen sizes (55 inches and above) is experiencing growth, which Reliance aims to capitalize on with its new offerings.

With Jio TV OS, Reliance is set to make a significant impact on the Indian smart TV market, promoting self-reliance and fostering increased competition among domestic TV manufacturers.

MSO empanelment with Central Bureau of Comms starts

The Indian government has started the 15-day process of empanelment of MSOs with the Central Bureau of Communications (CBC), a unit of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

"It has been decided to open the online window for empanelment of Multi-Service Operators (MSOs) from 3 July 2024 to 18 July 2024. The link to online application will be available on CBC website (https://cbcindia.gov.in/cbc/vendor-login)," a government advisory stated.

In order to be empanelled with the CBC, the MSOs need to submit the following documents:

Copy of the license issued by the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting to the MSO.

A copy of registration issued by the MIB for platform channels.

Self-certified copy of State-wise subscriber numbers as submitted to The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India.

List of platform channels provided as per the monthly performance monitoring report submitted to TRAI for the last six months.

The programme schedule —fixed point chart of the previous six months of bouquet of channels under MSO — for which empanelment is sought.

Auditors report and audited standalone financial statement of the MSO business of the registered licensee company, duly signed by the company auditor, including revenue details, profit and loss account, balance sheet, any accrued advertising revenue, apart from any other payments, including GST, for the current and previous financial year.

#A cancelled cheque with company name printed on it with the IFSC details for National Electronic Fund Transfer (NEFT)/ Electronic Clearing Service. Alternatively, these details may be furnished on the company letterhead, duly signed by the authorized signatory.

IBDF moves NCLAT against Google's app service fees

The Indian Broadcasting & Digital Foundation (IBDF), representing television broadcasters and OTT platforms, has approached the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) seeking relief from an interim order by the Competition Commission of India (CCI). The CCI had previously denied a request to restrain Google from imposing service fees on app developers.

In March, the CCI refused to grant interim relief to the IBDF and other applicants regarding Google's app payment policies, pending a final verdict. The IBDF's counsel has now urged the NCLAT to halt Google's collection of fees on transactions for apps listed on the Google Play Store, including paid app downloads and in-app purchases.

The council questioned the necessity of charging fees under the Google Play Store Billing System (GPBS) for app transactions, noting that Google already collects a one-time $25 fee from every developer for onboarding their apps onto its Play Store. Furthermore, Google imposes transaction fees ranging from 11 percent to 26 percent, even if app developers use an alternative payment system to GPBS.

In response to competition concerns, Google introduced the 'User Choice Billing' mechanism in September 2022. This system offers app developers an alternative payment processing option after the competition regulator highlighted that the GPBS was the sole payment processing system available to app developers.

The IBDF's move reflects ongoing tensions between app developers and major platforms over payment processing policies and fee structures. The outcome of this appeal could have significant implications for the digital economy and app marketplace in India.

Meta, Vodafone partner to enhance video network efficiency



Instagram-owner Meta had worked with Vodafone to free up capacity on 11 of its European mobile networks by optimizing the delivery of short-form video without noticeably compromising the viewing experience.

Demand for video on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube is driving relentless growth in data usage on mobile networks, Reuters reported.

Global traffic grew 25 percent in the 12 months to the first quarter of 2024, according to Ericsson's 2024 Mobility Report, and video accounted for 73 percent of all mobile traffic by the end of 2023.

Telecom operators including Vodafone have complained that they have to shoulder the cost of upgrading networks while the Big Tech companies that benefit get a free ride. An EU push to make Big Tech contribute to 5G investment stalled last year, and there is no chance it will be revived before the end of the year if it is at all.

‘Mirzapur S3’ announces ‘#NationalBingeWatchDay’ campaign

Prime Video’s fan-favorite franchise, ‘Mirzapur’, returns with its third installment after a four-year hiatus, and the excitement among fans is palpable. Not just Mirzapur loyalists, but even the corporate universe has eagerly anticipated the series’ premiere on Prime Video.

Ahead of the show’s launch, individuals and corporates actively joined the chatter, leaving no stone unturned to catapult the premiere day into a historic and unforgettable event. Fans are flooding social media platforms with raging enthusiasm, using the hashtag ‘#NationalBingeWatchDay’.



Prime Video recently launched a petition to mark the release day of ‘Mirzapur’ S3 as National Binge Watch Day. This unique campaign aimed to show gratitude and boost anticipation among fans eagerly awaiting the new season on the streaming service.

As the trend gained momentum, corporates too joined in the excitement, sharing their favorite matches. Renowned brands like Google India, Rapido app, Zepto, WOO Heal, AJIO, Redmi India, Swiggy Instamart, Bombay Sweet Shop, WOW Skin Science, Cantabil, and Cars24, among many others, are hopping on the trend and sharing their version of #NationalBingeWatchDay.

The launch of ‘Mirzapur’ S3 is set to be celebrated with interesting collaborations involving influencers, meme pages, and celebrities, all coming together to highlight their favorite #NationalBingeWatchDay and add to the excitement surrounding the series’ release.

Created and produced by Excel Media and Entertainment, ‘Mirzapur’ S3 is directed by Gurmmeet Singh and Anand Iyer.

This season boasts a stellar ensemble cast, including Pankaj Tripathi, Ali Fazal, Shweta Tripathi Sharma, Rasika Dugal, Vijay Varma, Isha Talwar, Anjumm Shharma, Priyanshu Painyuli, Harshita Shekhar Gaur, Rajesh Tailang, Sheeba Chadha, Meghna Malik, and Manu Rishi Chadha.

The ten-episode series is streaming now exclusively on Prime Video in India and across 240 countries and territories worldwide.

Republic Media Network hosts inaugural session of RBETA’24

Republic Media Network kicked off the Republic Business Emerging Technology Awards 2024 on July 05 with a grand introductory session held at Westin Gurgaon. The event celebrated pioneers in technology, bringing together industry leaders, visionaries, and innovators to honor their outstanding contributions to technology and business.

The event commenced with a ceremonial lamp lighting and trophy unveiling by Arnab Goswami, Chairman & Editor-in-chief of Republic Media Network, alongside esteemed guests including Tapan Sharma, COO of Republic Digital Business; Ritesh Agarwal, Founder & CEO of OYO Rooms; Amiya Swarup, Partner & Director at EY India; Shireesh Joshi, Chief Business Officer at ONDC; and Eswara Rao Nandam, Founding President of Polymatech.

Welcome Address by Arnab Goswami, Emphasizing the role of technological advancements in shaping business futures, Goswami stated, “We are celebrating technology, we are celebrating digital, and we are celebrating the use of technology.”

Fireside Chat with Ritesh Agarwal, Discussions on the evolving landscape of technology entrepreneurship.

Keynote by Shireesh Joshi, highlighted ONDC’s transformative impact on Indian business, focusing on democratizing digital commerce.



Four panels explored future technologies, including Gaming, Automobile Industry, Ed-Tech, and AI & Robotics, featuring prominent speakers and moderators.

The event culminated in the presentation of awards across various categories, recognizing excellence in innovation and technology:

Automobile: Greencore Electronics Pvt. Ltd.

Fintech: One 97 Communications Ltd.

Martech: Laqshya Media Limited

Education & Skill Development: Eduramp Learning Services Pvt. Ltd., Vidyakul Learning Pvt. Ltd.

Healthcare: Solh Wellness Pvt. Ltd. (Jury Recognition), Turtle Shell Technologies Pvt. Ltd.

Travel & Tourism: Who VR

Home & Lifestyle: Schutzen Care Private Limited

Social Services & CSR: Ayanworks Technology Solutions Private Limited

Tech Innovator: Polymatech Electronics Pvt. Ltd. (Republic Recognition)

AI & Robotics: Prutech Solutions Private Limited, Tardid Technologies Private Limited, FWDA (Jury Recognition)

Tech Disruptor 2024: ONDC (Republic Recognition)

The Republic Business Emerging Technology Awards 2024 received support from sponsors including EY as Process Advisor, MGID as Ad-Tech Partner, Supreme as Furniture Partner, JK Tyres as Tyre Partner, Namma Homeopathy as Homeopathy Partner, Polymatech as New Tech Partner, and Catch Salts & Spices as Special Partner.

The event underscored India’s strides in technology and innovation, setting a benchmark for excellence and leadership in the business and technology sectors.

Guest Column: The interoperability puzzle

By Rajiv Khattar

Public broadcaster Prasar Bharati, which manages Doordarshan and Akashvani, is faced with a Hamletian choice after broadcast regulator TRAI's recent recommendations on FreeDish: to have interoperability or not?

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)'s recommendations on July 8, 2024 relating to Doordarshan FreeDish, amongst other issues, has once again given rise to the debate on the need for (or lack of it) interoperable set-top boxes. Still, interoperability is a favourite subject of the regulator as it has consistently stood by the requirement of STBs being interoperable.

Interestingly, the last comprehensive recommendations made by TRAI in 2020 are yet to be accepted by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting even as the regulator has proposed another set of detailed rules.

In its latest recommendations a few days back, TRAI, while pointing out that Prasar Bharati may utilize indigenous technologies for CAS) and subscriber management for FreeDish, added that use of interoperable boxes would be beneficial for all.

"Prasar Bharati should adopt interoperable STBs for DD FreeDish to act as catalyst for transitioning the entire ecosystem from operator-based STBs to interoperable STBs to empower consumers' choice. This will eliminate the need for changing STBs every time the service provider is changed. A roadmap for transition of DD FreeDish from non-addressable to addressable platform along with authorizing manufacturers and distributors by Prasar Bharati for sales and aftersales service of STBs, has been suggested to MIB," TRAI stated, adding the government could also direct private DPOs to adopt and implement interoperable boxes.

The DTH licensing conditions and BIS specification mandated interoperability, though it has been overlooked and remains a mirage. The licensor, the regulator and the operators never showed keenness to implement this part of the licensing guidelines, though it has cost the nation nearly $400 million every year as boxes are changed and upgraded.

Not only such a churning adds to Planet Earth's rising environmental problems in the form of e-waste, what's galling is this could have been easily avoided if the industry seriously adopted and implemented the 'interoperable' clause, thus saving themselves too many costs.

It was a surprise that MIB cherry picked from the TRAI 2020 recommendations on interoperability and nudged BIS to mandate standards for digital tuners to be included in television sets from April 2025 — at least for all those sets that are manufactured in India.

What was the reason for pushing for inbuilt tuners in TV sets? Simple. So that consumers can watch DD FreeDish without a STB. I had earlier also said that this was an unfair advantage being granted to FreeDish. But, surprisingly, no DPO at that time raised concerns on the issue, though inbuilt tuners would help FreeDish eat into the subscriber base of the pay operators. I had raised the concerns in an earlier column too.

Now, let's talk of international experiences and trends. Europe has been on interoperable devices for decades and more than 600 million conditional access modules (CAMs) are in use. The trend is now moving to USB CI+2.0 CAM, which was recommended by TRAI way back in 2020.



While discussions were being held within the government on the formulation of the standards for TV satellite tuners, I had highlighted to people involved that TRAI recommendations may be accepted on the same, mandating USB CI+2.0 for TV sets.

The implementation of the USB CI+2.0 in television sets with digital tuners will pave the way for the industry where it will save huge costs in terms of provisioning and servicing of the STBs.

Not to mention the savings (approximately $ 200 million) that can accrue from stopping import of kits from China for assembly here as STBs, which are then designated as Made in India.

It will be interesting to see if DD FreeDish takes a step forward towards being addressable and the government relooks the interoperability issue in the light of TRAI's latest recommendations.

(Rajiv Khattar, the author, is a media industry veteran and a consultant, specializing in tech and satellite matters. His last assignment was as the South Asia head for a global satellite company, ABS. Before that, he spent almost two decades with the Zee group in various leadership positions in Siti Cable [now Siti Networks] and Dish TV. In between, for a short while he also did a stint at Reliance Industries' media unit. The views expressed are those of the author and Indianbroadcastingworld.com is not responsible for them, nor necessarily subscribes to them.)

Tasva unveils team India's ceremonial dress for Paris Olympics 2024

Tasva, the men's Indian wear brand by Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail Ltd., alongside celebrated designer Tarun Tahiliani, revealed the official ceremonial dress for Team India at the Paris Olympics 2024. The event was graced by the Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports, Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya, and the President of the Indian Olympic Association, Dr. PT Usha.

According to a Tasva's press release, the ceremonial attire, meticulously designed by Tarun Tahiliani, draws inspiration from India's rich cultural heritage and patriotic spirit. Embracing the iconic tricolour palette of saffron, green, and white, the attire aims to represent India's vibrant and dynamic culture on the global stage.



"We're incredibly honoured to dress Team India," said Tarun Tahiliani, Chief Design Officer of Tasva. "We worked closely with the Indian Olympic Association to create attire that tells a story about India. The garments are designed to be visually captivating while also ensuring comfort and practicality. As our athletes make their grand entrance on a barge along the Seine for the opening ceremony, the airy, lightweight attire is perfectly suited for the summer warmth of Paris in July."

For the opening ceremony, male athletes will don a kurta bundi set, while female athletes will wear an elegant saree featuring ikat-inspired digitally printed panels in saffron and green. The sarees will have blue buttonholes representing the Ashoka Chakra, set against an ivory base symbolizing peace and unity. Both outfits will be paired with modern trainers adorned with traditional Benares brocade, blending tradition with contemporary fashion.

"The kurta bundi set is crafted from lightweight moss cotton, ensuring breathability and comfort," added Tahiliani. "The saree, a symbol of grace and cultural identity, is reimagined in viscose crepe for a natural drape and breathability, ensuring our athletes feel both elegant and comfortable."

Sharath Kamal, the Olympic Men's Table Tennis team leader and flag bearer of Team India at the Paris Olympics, expressed his pride in wearing the ceremonial dress. "Putting on this ceremonial dress was a powerful experience. When I looked at myself in the mirror, I felt an overwhelming sense of pride and connection to our heritage. The lightweight fabric just makes it ideal for the occasion."

Ashish Mukul, Brand Head of Tasva, echoed this sentiment: "The official ceremonial dress not only captures the essence of Indian style, it stands as a symbol of national pride and achievement, crafted specifically for those who have earned the honour of representing India on the global stage."

Tasva's ceremonial dress for Team India not only celebrates the country's rich cultural heritage but also showcases its modern, dynamic spirit to the world. As the athletes step onto the global stage, they do so in attire that is a true reflection of the essence of India — timeless, vibrant, and ever-evolving.

This partnership between Tasva and the Indian Olympic Association marks a significant milestone, bringing Indian traditional wear to one of the most prestigious global events, the Paris Olympics 2024.

Firstpost hits 5mn subscribers on YouTube

Firstpost has reached a significant milestone by hitting 5 million subscribers on YouTube within just 16 months. This achievement has established Firstpost as the fastest-growing Indian news platform on YouTube.

The platform's strategic pivot to video content in January 2023 has driven this exceptional growth. Firstpost's comprehensive coverage of major global events such as the Iran-Israel conflict, the Ukraine-Russia war, the US Presidential elections, and India's growth story has positioned it as the leading news platform for global news in India, the news platform said in a press release.

Speaking on this milestone, Palki Sharma, Managing Editor of Firstpost, said, "Firstpost's stupendous growth is a testament to the unwavering dedication of our exceptional team and the unwavering support of our global audience. It's heartening to see this commitment to substantive news in an otherwise cluttered and tough market. As we celebrate our milestones, I extend my deepest gratitude to every team member and every viewer who has been part of this incredible journey."



Firstpost's diverse array of shows caters to a wide audience. The flagship show, 'Vantage,' provides a comprehensive view of major news events, encouraging viewers to analyze global occurrences from various angles. 'Fast and Factual' delivers quick, concise news updates from around the world, ensuring that viewers stay informed without investing significant time. 'First Sports,' a groundbreaking sports show, offers extensive coverage of sporting events, highlighting the stories and personalities that shape the global sports landscape. 'Between the Lines' delves into deeper aspects of news stories, revealing nuanced details often overlooked in mainstream reporting. 'Flashback' simplifies complex historical events, presenting them in an accessible and engaging manner.

ROLL ON

Karan Abhishek Singh joins ZMCL as CEO

Karan Abhishek Singh has joined Zee Media Corporation Limited (ZMCL) as its new Chief Executive Officer, effective immediately, Indianbroadcastingworld.com has confirmed.

Singh brings a wealth of experience in media and corporate leadership to Zee Media. His appointment is expected to drive the company's strategic initiatives and strengthen its position in the competitive media landscape.



Before that, Singh was the CEO of Network18's Hindi News (TV+Digital), he resigned from his position at Network18 in February of this year. He initially joined Network18 in 2019 as the CEO of the Languages division, where he oversaw seven channels and the digital operations of the Hindi cluster.

Before his tenure at Network18, Singh spent over five years at Star India (now Disney Star). Joining as Sales Director – North in October 2013 and rising through the ranks to EVP & Head, Ad Sales (Agency Partnerships) by July 2018.

Before his tenure at Star India, he was Vice President of sales (Head, Premium & New Products) at Pepsico India for more than two years from June 2011 to September 2013.

During his career spanning more than two decades, which began in 2001 at GE Money (then GE Countrywide), he has held roles at respected companies such as Nokia India, Godrej Sara Lee Limited (India), Godrej Sara Lee Ltd., and Hindustan Lever Limited.

Singh's vision and expertise are anticipated to play a crucial role in enhancing Zee Media's growth trajectory, focusing on delivering high-quality content and engaging with audiences across diverse platforms.

Aavishkar Media Group congratulates Karan Abhishek Singh on his new role at Zee Media Corporation Limited.

Varun Kohli appointed COO of Times Network's news biz

Times Network had announced the appointment of Varun Kohli as the Chief Operating Officer (COO) for its news broadcasting business and he'd report directly to the Managing Director's Office while collaborating closely with N Subramanian, Executive Director and Group CEO, Non-Publishing Business, Times Group.

According to the network, Varun Kohli is a seasoned media professional with nearly three decades of leadership experience. Renowned as the "Turnaround Man" for his ability to transform media brands into profitable ventures, Varun brings extensive expertise in P&L and operations management of broadcasting business to Times Network.

His illustrious career includes launching and revitalizing several successful media brands. Known for his people-centric management style, Varun excels in maximizing the potential of his teams.



Beyond media, Varun has played significant roles in sports management, notably launching and organizing successful seasons of the Pro Wrestling League and Big Bout Boxing League for iTV Network. His diverse background spans legacy brands, challenger brands and start-ups, reflecting a solution-based approach and strategic acumen.

Varun has held senior leadership roles in prestigious organizations such as iTV Network, Network 18, HT Media Ltd, and Amar Ujala Prakashan and most recently served as Director & CEO of Bharat Express.

Vineet Jain, Managing Director of Times Group, expressed his enthusiasm about Varun's appointment and said, "We are happy to announce the appointment of Varun to the leadership team at Times Network as Chief Operating Officer of the News Broadcasting Business. With his deep experience in the News Broadcasting Business, we expect Varun to bring in innovative approaches to revenue management and news business operations and propel Times Network to the next level of growth. We at Times Group welcome Varun to the team and wish him all the best in his new role."

Avinash Pandey quits ABP Network

ABP Network had announced that CEO Avinash Pandey will be parting ways with the group after nearly two decades of a long and fruitful association. Pandey, who joined ABP Network in 2005, has held numerous key positions within the organization, significantly contributing to its growth and success. He was appointed CEO in January 2019. According to the network, ABP Network expanded into new verticals and markets within the broadcast and digital spheres. His strategic vision led to the network's growth in regional and digital content, catering to a diverse and demanding audience across India.



Chief Editor & Director of ABP Network, Atideb Sarkar, thanked Pandey for his immense contributions, stating, "I would like to thank Avinash for his immense contributions to ABP Network. During his two decades in the company, it has grown manifold in reach, revenue and impact. His leadership in the past five years has seen us at the forefront of digital broadcasting while extending our reach from Jammu to Kanyakumari. He played a key role in our award-winning centenary campaign. On a personal note, he has been a pleasure to work with, a joyful fellow traveller in my professional journey, and a friend. Thank you, Avinash, for all that you have brought to the ABP family. We wish you success and happiness in your future endeavours."

Reflecting on his tenure, Pandey expressed gratitude towards the Sarkar family and said, "I wish to thank the Sarkar Family and Mr. Atideb Sarkar, Chief Editor & Director, in particular, for having reposed such faith in me, that I could play a meaningful part in ABP Network's exhilarating journey of excellence in digital and broadcast. I have found a good friend for life in him. I could achieve all this in 20 years because of an excellent team that surrounded me. I was lucky to meet and work with them and have developed a bonding that's going to last life-long." Mr. Pandey added that the ABP Network would always hold a special place in his heart. He added: "One leaves ABP but ABP never leaves an individual."

During his time as CEO, Pandey led ABP Network to new heights, overseeing four TV channels and digital platforms in eight languages, reaching an audience of over 500 million. He also founded ABP Studios, which has produced award-winning films and TV series. Pandey currently serves as the President of the International Advertising Association (India Chapter).

ABP Network extends its gratitude to Pandey for his remarkable service and wishes him success in his future endeavors.

Adil Zainulbhai reappointed Network18 chairman; Rahul Joshi as MD

Former McKinsey India head Adil Zainulbhai has been reappointed as chairman of billionaire Mukesh Ambani's listed media company Network18, while veteran journalist Rahul Joshi has been given another three-year term as managing director.



Zainulbhai, currently, is an independent director on the board of Network18. He is also the chairman of the company. His second five-year term ends on July 6, a PTI report stated.

With effect from July 7, he has been "appointed an additional director (non-executive, non-independent director)", Network18 said in a stock exchange filing, adding, "Further, he is also designated as Chairman of the Company."

Meanwhile, according to the stock exchange filing, the Board of Directors of Network18, at its meeting held June 4, took on record the invaluable guidance and contribution made by Zainulbhai in the growth of the company and its businesses during the last 10 years.

Renuka Ramnath, the filings stated, has been approved as an Additional Director (Independent Director) of the Company with effect from July 4, 2024 for a period of one year, subject to approval of the shareholders.

The Board noted the resignation of Bhama Krishnamurthy as an Independent Director of the Company with immediate effect, acknowledging the contribution made by her.

JioCinema announces additions to technology leadership team

Viacom18 today announced significant additions to its technology leadership team, aimed at scaling up its OTT platform JioCinema into one of the country's foremost digital content destinations.

These strategic appointments are set to enhance tech expertise, agility, and speed to market as the company continues to rapidly scale its operations and deliver world-class digital experiences, the platform said in press release.



Bharath Ram joins as Chief Product Officer & Ad Tech Platform Lead, Bharath Ram brings extensive experience from Flipkart, where he led product and engineering functions for key charters including user growth, retention, new product innovation, and new categories. Prior to Flipkart, Bharath worked with Instagram, focusing on ad revenue, ad auction systems, ad personalization, user experience with ads, and advertiser experience. Bharath also worked at Amazon Prime Video, leading personalization and other key areas. He holds an M.S. in Computer Engineering from Ohio State University and an MBA from Ross School of Business, University of Michigan. Bharath will report to Kiran Mani, CEO – Digital, Viacom18.

Whereas, Vijay Sheshadri joins as Chief Technical Advisor with over 25 years of industry experience, Vijay Sheshadri has a strong background in enterprise security, e-commerce, and large-scale distributed systems. He was an Engineering Fellow at Swiggy and has held key roles at Amazon and Symantec, where he built several enterprise security solutions and cloud infrastructure services. Vijay was the lead architect for Symantec's Reputation-based Security technology, which won the Wall Street Journal Technology Innovation Award in 2010.

Shoury Bhardwaj joins as Engineering Leader for App Experience, Search, Recommendations, Data & App Backend Platforms he also comes from Flipkart

ABP Network elevates Mohit Roy Sharma to senior executive editor

ABP Network has announced the promotion of Mohit Roy Sharma to the position of Senior executive editor. In his new role, Sharma will continue to lead the network's communications and outreach, and curate events and intellectual properties (IPs). He was previously serving as executive editor, overseeing the outreach function at ABP Network.

In a LinkedIn post, Sharma expressed his gratitude, "My humble contributions at the ABP Network have been recognized. I've been elevated to the position of Senior Executive Editor. I shall continue to lead communications, outreach, and curate events/IPs for the network. I am grateful for the recognition."



Sharma's primary responsibilities will include, overseeing internal and external communications to ensure consistent messaging across all platforms. Building and managing relationships with opinion makers in business, sports, and policymaking. Leading the creation and execution of events and intellectual properties to enhance the network's outreach and engagement.

Sharma joined ABP Network in September 2021. His strategic vision and leadership have been instrumental in enhancing the network's communications and outreach efforts.

Before ABP Network, Sharma served as Vice President, Corporate Communications, from August 2020 to September 2021. He led the overall communications strategy, ensuring cohesive and effective messaging across all touchpoints and stakeholders.

Sahil Chopra promoted to AVP at Viacom18 Media

Viacom18 Media Private Limited has announced the promotion of Sahil Chopra to the position of Associate Vice President. Chopra, who previously served as Senior Director of Brand and Sports Marketing at JioCinema, will now take on a broader leadership role within the company.



In his previous role at JioCinema, Chopra was instrumental in shaping the creative strategies for major sports and entertainment events, including the TATA IPL, BCCI domestic series, Olympics, and WPL. His innovative approach and strategic vision significantly elevated the brand's presence in the competitive market.

Sharing his excitement on LinkedIn, Chopra posted, "I'm happy to share that I'm starting a new position as Associate Vice President at Viacom18 Media Private Limited!"

His journey with Viacom18 began in May 2015 when he joined as Manager Marketing – Youth & English Entertainment. Over the years, he made notable contributions to popular brands such as MTV, Colors Infinity, Vh1, and Comedy Central.

Before his tenure at Viacom18, Chopra worked with The Times of India, where he started as an Assistant Brand Manager in May 2011 and was promoted to Brand Manager by May 2013. His career commenced as a Management Trainee at HERO HONDA Motors, where he gained valuable industry experience.

Parul Kamra named VP, National Sales Director for ABP News, ABP Asmita

Parul Kamra, previously Associate Vice President and National Sales Director at ABP Network, had been promoted to Vice President and National Sales Director for ABP News and ABP Asmita.



In a LinkedIn post, Kamra expressed her excitement and gratitude, "I am thrilled to share that I have been elevated to the position of Vice President & National Sales Director of ABP News and ABP Asmita. This new role brings immense excitement and responsibility, and I am eager to continue driving growth and innovation for our brands. I am grateful for this incredible opportunity and look forward to working with our talented team to achieve new milestones. Let's continue to make great strides together."

Kamra's journey with ABP Network began in August 2007, when she joined as an Assistant Manager. Over the years, she has held various significant roles including Manager, Major Account Ad Sales, Senior Account Director, and Regional Director – North, before becoming Associate Vice President & National Sales Director. Her contributions have been pivotal in driving the network's sales strategy and growth.

Before her tenure at ABP Network, Kamra was associated with TV Today for nearly a year as a Senior Executive from May 2006 to August 2007, and previously as an Executive from November 2003 to May 2006. She began her professional career in November 2001 as an Executive at E-Serve International Limited (Citigroup).

Kamra's promotion reflects her dedication, expertise, and the significant impact she has had on the network. Her leadership is expected to further enhance the sales and market presence of ABP News and ABP Asmita, leading the brands to new heights of success.

MRSI elects new managing committee with Nitin Kamat as President

The Market Research Society of India (MRSI), India's leading industry-led market research body, has announced the formation of its new Managing Committee for the tenure of 2024-2027. Nitin Kamat, Chief Growth & Partnerships Officer at TAM Media Research Pvt. Ltd., has been elected as the new President, succeeding Paru Minocha, Managing Director, South Asia, Insights Division at Kantar.

Nitin Kamat, who previously served as the treasurer for MRSI's Managing Committee (2022-2024) and was a part of the MRSI's ISEC Committee, expressed his honor and commitment to leading the organization. He emphasized the importance of engaging new minds and maintaining high standards while implementing innovative ideas and initiatives. Kamat also highlighted a new focus on building trust, in addition to the existing pillars of Profile, Pride, and Network.



The new Managing Committee, announced at MRSI's 36th Annual General Meeting in Mumbai, also includes:

Vice-Presidents: Puneet Avasthi and Shuvadip Banerjee

Secretary: Anila Vinayak

Treasurer: Parijat Chakraborty

MRSI's Managing Committee represents a diverse group of companies across research agencies, research users, and service providers in the market research industry. The committee is dedicated to promoting, protecting, improving, and propagating the highest quality standards in all branches of market research, aiming to establish India as a dominant force in the global market research industry.

Outgoing President Paru Minocha congratulated the new committee and reflected on the significant initiatives undertaken during her tenure, including the launch of the Socio-economic Classification System 'ISEC' and the Market Sizing report of FY 2022-23. She expressed confidence in the new leadership's ability to continue driving the organization's vision forward.

The former Managing Committee's strategic focus on building Profile, Pride, and Network has seen successful implementation and widespread adoption of the ISEC system by major industry stakeholders such as The Indian Society of Advertisers (ISA), ITC, HUL, Marico, Dabur India, and leading research and media agencies. MRSI also indicated positive growth in the market research sector, with a formal announcement of The Indian Research & Insights Industry 2024 Update scheduled for September 2024.

Kamat's presidency promises to strengthen global connections, deepen government relations, and drive initiatives for active participation from regional players, ensuring the continued advancement and influence of India's market research industry.

Prime Video announces content line-up for Prime Day 2024

Prime Video, India's beloved entertainment platform, has unveiled an exciting array of 14 highly anticipated Indian and international series and movies in 5 languages for Prime members. This thrilling lineup is part of the lead-up to Prime Day 2024, which will be celebrated on July 20 and 21.

According to a press release, the content line-up will showcase:

'Mirzapur' Season 3: Premiering on July 5, this mega Indian Original series returns with intensified battles for the throne of 'Mirzapur'.

'The Boys' Season 4: This global blockbuster series, available with subtitles and dubs in multiple Indian languages, has fresh episodes dropping every Friday until July 18.

'Federer: Twelve Final Days': A documentary following Roger Federer's last twelve days of his professional career, premiered on June 20.

'Civil War': A dystopian thriller that premiered on June 28.

'PT Sir': A social drama in Tamil, available since June 21.

'Naach Ga Ghuma': A critically acclaimed Marathi film, also available from June 21.

'Gam Gam Ganesha': A Telugu heist comedy, premiered on June 20.

'My Lady Jane': An English historical Original series that premiered on June 27.

'Sharmajee Ki Beti': A Hindi comedy-drama, premiered on June 28.

'Inga Naan Thaan Kingu': A Tamil action-comedy entertainer, also available since June 28.

'Satyabhama': A Telugu film available since June 28.

'Garudan': A Tamil action thriller set to premiere on July 3.

'Space Cadet': An English romcom premiering on July 4.

'My Spy: The Eternal City': An English spy comedy premiering on July 18.

In addition to the new series and movies, Prime Video has launched Crunchyroll on Prime Video Channels, offering favorite



anime content via an add-on subscription for INR 79 per month. Prime members can also enjoy up to 50 percent discounts on subscriptions to other popular streaming services like MGM+, Lionsgate Play, discovery+, Sony Pictures Stream, hoichoi, ManoramaMAX, Mubi, and VROTT.

Prime Day, returning on July 20 and 21, offers big savings, great deals, and new launches from leading brands. Prime members can save 10 percent using ICICI Bank Credit/Debit cards, SBI Credit Cards, and EMI transactions on these cards. Amazon Prime membership provides benefits like free and fast delivery, unlimited access to award-winning movies and TV shows, ad-free music, e-books, and gaming content.

Threads hits 175 million users on first anniversary

Meta's alternative to X (formerly Twitter), Threads, has reached a significant milestone by hitting 175 million monthly users on its first anniversary.

The announcement was made by Meta CEO and Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg on Wednesday via Threads, celebrating the platform's rapid growth since its unexpected launch, AFP reported.

Threads was introduced to app stores on July 5 of last year as a spin-off of Instagram. It aimed to rival X after the latter faced backlash from users and advertisers following Elon Musk's acquisition in 2022.

The app was launched swiftly in response to Musk's announcement of limiting posts on X for non-subscribers, which was among several controversial moves by the Tesla CEO. Seizing the opportunity, Zuckerberg promoted Threads through Instagram, leading to over 100 million downloads within a week across 100 countries. The EU had to wait until December due to regulatory concerns.

Threads became the fastest downloaded app ever, surpassing the record previously held by AI sensation ChatGPT. Although initial excitement dwindled, Threads saw steady growth, boosted by the Instagram crossover and users dissatisfied with Musk's X.



Adam Mosseri, Threads chief, expressed hopes for the platform to become more independent from Instagram and plans to open it to advertisers in the near future.

Mosseri emphasized that becoming larger than Musk's X "will take some time, but I will consider it a failure if we don't get there," he told Platformer.

Threads has faced criticism for Meta's decision to minimize news and political content, aiming for a more friendly atmosphere but risking reduced engagement.

"A year after launch, we know what Threads isn't, but we don't know what it is," stated Emarketer principal analyst Jasmine Enberg. "The lack of a unique identity is one of its biggest hurdles to achieving real staying power," she added.

SET unveils new promo for 'Aapka Apna Zakir'

Sony Entertainment Television (SET) has released an exciting new promotional clip for its highly anticipated upcoming show, 'Aapka Apna Zakir,' on its official Instagram account this past Saturday.



The promotional clip, which has been creating a buzz on social media, promises a show that will deliver guaranteed happiness and entertainment, appealing to viewers across all age groups—from children to grandparents.

The promo teases the audience with the tagline, "Zakir dene aa raha hain Khushiyon ki guarantee, manoranjan ka wada, aur sabka dil jeet lega from bacha to dada," translating to "Zakir is coming to guarantee happiness, promise entertainment, and win everyone's heart from the young to the old."

The tagline further hints at the show's imminent release, 'Aapka Apna Zakir'. Jald hi. Sirf #SonyEntertainmentTelevision par," indicating that it will air soon exclusively on Sony Entertainment Television.

Senior journalist Arun Nautiyal passes away

Arun Nautiyal, a distinguished senior journalist with a career spanning nearly three decades, passed away from a sudden heart attack on Sunday night. He was associated with ABP Network for over 20 years and had recently joined Zee News, where he served as Output Head at 'Zee Media'.



Reports indicate that Nautiyal's health deteriorated unexpectedly, leading to his admission to Fortis Hospital, where he was subsequently declared deceased.

His last rites are scheduled to take place in Haridwar.

Tragically, at the time of the incident, Nautiyal's daughter was en route to Australia, and his wife had gone to the airport to see her off. Upon her return, she learned of the heartbreaking news. As of now, his daughter remains unaware of the incident.

Throughout his illustrious career, Arun Nautiyal made significant contributions to journalism, including stints at prominent media outlets such as ABP Network and 'Aaj Tak'.

Esports World Cup expands reach with WBD

Esports World Cup Foundation had nnounced a comprehensive partnership with Warner Bros. Discovery (WBD) to amplify the coverage of its innovative multi-genre esports competition.

This collaboration aims to leverage WBD's extensive global network to bring the excitement of the Esports World Cup to new audiences across Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

The partnership will utilize the expertise of Warner Bros. Discovery's prominent brands, Eurosport and CNN, to ensure extensive coverage of the Esports World Cup. This multi-platform approach will feature esports shows, new social media formats, and a dedicated section on the Eurosport website, ensuring that every major story from the eight-week event is thoroughly covered, the WBD said in a press release.



Mike Rich, Head of Warner Bros. Discovery Sports & Lifestyle International Brand Partnerships, emphasized the synergy between esports and WBD's goals: "Esports World Cup is a competition where sport meets entertainment, aligning perfectly with Warner Bros. Discovery's ambition for our streaming services to become the premier sports and entertainment destination for consumers. With the popularity of esports continuing to grow, this partnership provides a unique opportunity to reach new audiences and celebrate its fandom."

Ralf Reichert, CEO of the Esports World Cup Foundation, expressed enthusiasm about the collaboration: "We are thrilled to partner with Warner Bros. to bring the excitement and drama of the Esports World Cup to a broader global audience. This partnership allows us to leverage their extensive network and expertise across Eurosport, CNN, and other platforms to create amazing content and reach new fans. We're confident this collaboration will elevate the visibility of the Esports World Cup and reignite passion for competitive gaming worldwide."

The Esports World Cup, debuting in the summer of 2024, will be held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. It features a cross-game structure, bringing together the world's top esports teams and athletes to compete for the largest-ever prize pool. Starting on July 3, the eight-week event will see the best esports clubs competing in 22 competitions across 21 top games, culminating in the crowning of the first World Cup Club Champion. The prize pool exceeds $60 million.

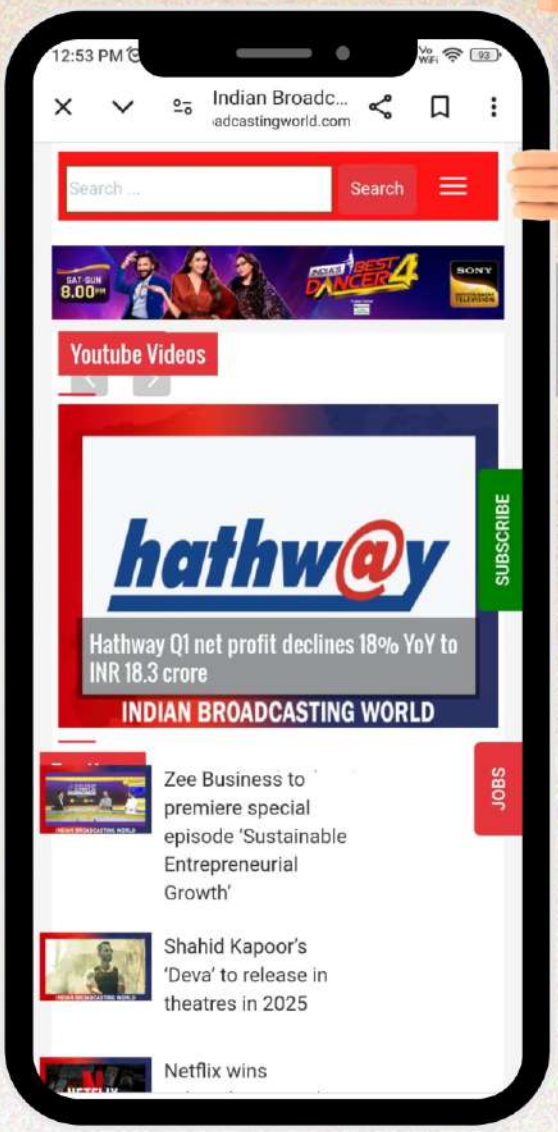
Max and discovery+ will offer live streaming of selected sessions from the Esports World Cup. Max is available across France, the Nordics, Iberia, Central, and Eastern Europe, while HBO Max serves Belgium and the Netherlands. discovery+ caters to Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom. These platforms will be the exclusive destinations for live streaming every moment of the Olympic Games Paris 2024.

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X defamatory Content on Rajat Sharma Delhi HC order



Social Media platform X has removed posts made by Indian National Congress leaders Ragini Nayak, Jairam Ramesh, and Pawan Khera that contained defamatory content about renowned journalist Rajat Sharma. This action follows a directive from the Delhi High Court, underscoring the judiciary's commitment to safeguarding individual reputations.

The Delhi High Court's order mandated the immediate removal of the defamatory posts, recognizing the potential harm to Sharma's personal and professional reputation. In compliance, X swiftly acted to ensure the content was taken down.

This move highlights the seriousness with which the court addresses defamation cases, reflecting a broader commitment to upholding individuals' rights in the digital age. The court's intervention and the platform's compliance demonstrate a robust response to the misuse of social media for defamatory purposes.

The Indian National Congress leaders involved have not yet commented on the court's order or the removal of their posts. This case serves as a reminder of the legal obligations social media platforms face in monitoring and managing content, particularly when it comes to defamatory material.

Netflix tops 'Must Keep TV' brand 2024 survey in US

Netflix has once again topped the 'Must Keep' list in 2024 for the fifth year in a row, solidifying its presence as the leading 'Must Keep' TV brand in the US, according to the 17th annual 'Must Keep TV' Report from Solutions Research Group (SRG).

The 2024 research is based on 1,400 interviews across the US with consumers aged 12 and older and conducted in May 2024.

ABC, Prime Video, CBS and FOX follow Netflix are the top five leading brands. ABC remarkably hangs on to its #2 position since 2020, just behind Netflix. Hulu, NBC, Disney+, ESPN and Peacock round out this year's top 10 list, SRG said in a statement.

ESPN is in the #9 position overall and the only cable channel in the Top 10; Peacock is a new entrant in this year's Top 10, elbowing out Max which dropped to the #12 spot this year.

Last year, the leading FAST streaming brands Tubi and Pluto entered the rankings at #28 and #35; this year Tubi is ranked #14 (up 14 spots) and Pluto is ranked #20 (up 15 spots)—reflecting the level of increase in popularity not seen for any brand in some years.

This said, there are some other brands showing positive momentum in 2024 as well and these include Nickelodeon (back in the top 20), Comedy Central (#21, up three spots from 2022), National Geographic (#25 up from #31), Apple TV+ (#26, its highest position in four years), MTV and ION.

Brands losing steam this year include Max (dropped out of Top 10 to #12 position), History (out of the top 20 for the first time in the last ten years), CW (#23, lowest rank in ten years), Discovery (#24, lowest rank in ten years), HGTV (out of the top 20) and TLC (lowest rank since 2018).

Top 10 brands among Men 18-49 in 2024 were stable vs. 2023 except for minor rank changes. Rounding the top 10 were Prime Video, CBS, Disney Plus, NBC and Max. Peacock and Paramount+ were just outside the Top 10, coming in at #11 and #12, respectively as they did in 2023. Tubi skyrocketed in rankings from #40 to #13 coming in just after Paramount+ and Pluto also jumped, from #48 to #25.

Airtel denies data breach of 375 mn users



Bharti Airtel has denied claims of a massive data breach, which alleged that the data of 375 million Indian users was up for sale on the dark web, saying that "this is nothing short of a desperate attempt to tarnish Airtel's reputation by vested interests."

According to IANS, the details of 375 million Airtel users, including their phone number, email, address, date of birth, father's name, and Aadhaar number were allegedly available for sale on the dark web.

"There has been an ongoing report alleging that Airtel customer data has been compromised. We have done a thorough investigation and can confirm that there has been no breach whatsoever from Airtel systems," an Airtel spokesperson told IANS on Friday.

As per Dark Web Informer on X, a threat actor identified as 'xenZen' was claiming to sell data of Airtel users on a community called BreachForums.

The price set by the threat actor to sell the information was $50,000.

Wimbledon, Star Sports tie up for Hindi commentary to up reach

With an eye on expanding reach and engagement in India, which anyway has shown dramatic rise over the past few years, the All England Lawn Tennis Club, organisers of the Wimbledon tennis tournament, has tied up with Star Sports Network for Hindi commentary — a unique first.

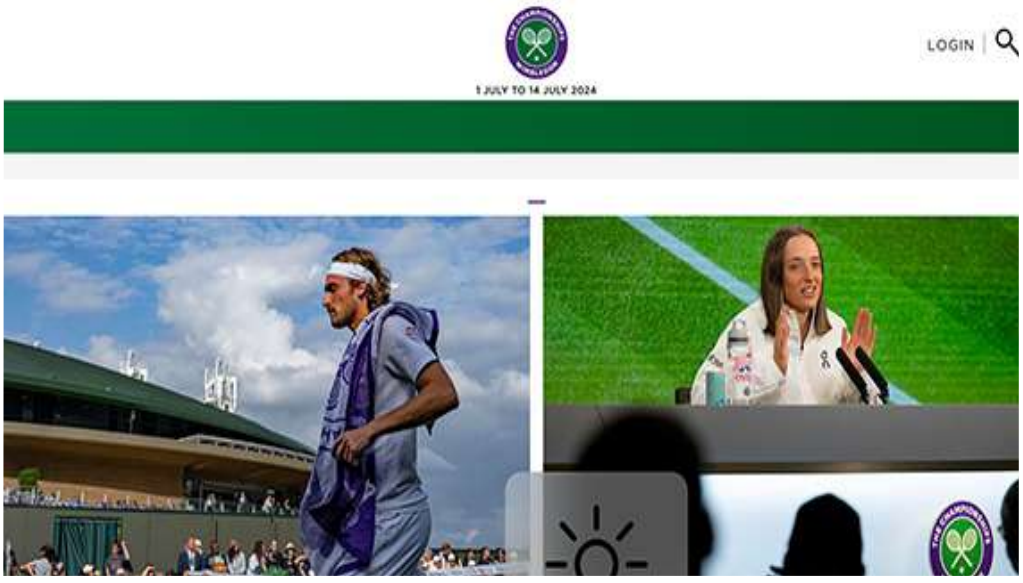
Acknowledging the growing popularity, the All England Club has identified India as a key growth market among its ongoing commitment to bring the unique atmosphere and excitement of Wimbledon to a global audience.

As part of this, the All England Club has announced an agreement with Star Sports Network, which will see The Championships broadcast with Hindi commentary for the first time, ensuring the coverage is even more accessible and engaging for audiences across India, Wimbledon organisers said in a media statement.

This initiative will be further supported by localised social media content and an array of influencers to generate excitement and drive a deeper connection with Indian fans, it said.

Year-on-year viewing figures in India, according to the statement, increased +96 percent in 2023 compared with 2022 and entries into this year's Wimbledon Public Ballot from fans in India rose +74 percent compared to last year.

To support these efforts, the British Embassy in New Delhi will host a special screening event on July 13 with up to 100 invited guests, including embassy dignitaries, influencers, athletes, and All England Club representatives, to watch the ladies' singles final.



Usama Al-Qassab, Marketing & Commercial Director at the All England Club, commented: "India is one of our key growth markets and we are committed to taking The Championships to fans across the nation. Home to several legendary players, interest in tennis has grown tremendously in the past few years demonstrated by viewership figures, ballot entries and the growth of our social media platforms in India.

"We believe this is just the beginning of our close engagement with Indian fans, and we know that by bringing the Wimbledon experience directly to Indian fans, we will foster and grow their interest in The Championships and tennis even further."

Former Wimbledon Champion Leander Paes commented: "Wimbledon, often hailed as the 'Mecca of Tennis,' represents the pinnacle of the sport. It is truly heartening to witness The Championships' expanding influence in India – a country where its presence was once confined to select regions.

"The commendable efforts and initiatives of the All England Club are pivotal in popularising tennis across the nation, reaching even the most remote areas. The introduction of Hindi commentary will encourage more people to watch and enjoy Wimbledon. We have several young talents taking up the sport and I only see this growth as the beginning."

Indian tennis player Ankita Raina added: "Growing up as a child, I remember waiting eagerly for Wimbledon to start. For every sports enthusiast, Wimbledon offers an unparalleled experience. It is truly remarkable to witness the All England Club's dedication to engaging with Indian fans and enhancing the accessibility of the event. Their initiatives exemplify a commitment to inclusivity, and I am confident that this will inspire countless young Indians to pursue and participate in the sport."

The Championships, Wimbledon, is the oldest of the four tennis Grand Slams and the only one played on grass. Managed by The All England Lawn Tennis Club and staged on the AELTC Grounds, Wimbledon has evolved from its origins as a private members' croquet club in 1868, to one of the world's biggest annual sporting events and one of the most well-respected brands in sport.



Hari Om India's first mythological OTT platform launches at Rs 36 per year

India's first-ever OTT platform dedicated to mythological and religious content, Hari Om, has officially launched. Priced at an affordable Rs 36 per year, Hari Om aims to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity, offering a premier destination for Indian heritage and religious content.

Hari Om debuts with over 20 mythological shows, including untold epic stories like 'Shri Tirupati Balaji', 'Chaya Grah Rahu Ketu', 'Maa Lakshmi', 'Mata Saraswati', and 'Jai Jagannath'. These productions feature high-budget sets designed to transport viewers back to the golden age, with renowned actors such as Sharad Malhotra, Rati Pandey, Yuktii Kapoor, Mrunal Jain, and Vishal Karwal leading the cast.

The platform caters to a wide audience with both long and short format 'U' rated series, appealing to senior citizens, children, and young adults. Additionally, Hari Om features bhajans in video and audio formats, curated animated content on mythology, and podcast versions of the same content. Users can also enjoy live aartis from major temples, book prasad, stay updated with temple news, make donations, and explore many other exciting features.

The launch includes two original series:

'Shri Tirupati Balaji': Starring Vishal Karwal, this series revolves around the religious story of Shri Hari Vishnu's incarnation as Shrinivasan at Tirumala Hills.

'Chaya Grah Rahu Ketu': Featuring Mrunal Jain, this show tells the tale of the Asura Swarnbhanu, who becomes immortal by drinking Amrit and is subsequently punished by Lord Vishnu.

Commenting on the launch of the platform, Nivedita Basu, Senior Vice President Group, stated, "We take great pride in launching India's first mythological platform. This platform is special to us as it showcases our rich culture to the world. We aim to transport viewers to the golden age, experiencing religion and mythology in its purest forms. This platform will explore untold religious stories and delve into the detailed narratives of mythological characters whose stories have never been fully explored."

Hari Om is set to become a one-stop destination for mythological content enthusiasts, blending entertainment, education, and cultural knowledge. The app is available on the Play Store, App Store, Google TV, Samsung TV, Apple TV, LG TV, and Fire TV.

BIG FM revives 'BIG Antakshari' S2 with Annu Kapoor



BIG FM, a leading radio network, has announced the much-anticipated return of 'BIG Antakshari' with Annu Kapoor. This season, presented by Bank of Baroda, promises to bring back the charm of the iconic musical game show with a fresh twist, airing across 52 stations of the BIG FM network on Thursdays and Fridays from 8-9 pm.

The second season of 'BIG Antakshari' will feature three vibrant teams, Bank of Baroda Deewane, Bank of Baroda Parwaane, and Bank of Baroda Mastaane. These teams, selected through rigorous audition rounds across major Indian cities, will compete in a series of electrifying musical rounds each week.

The competition will include the Akshar Round, the Dhun Round and the Visual Round, engaging listeners with entertaining Bollywood trivia and offering Mega Prizes to participants, the radio network said in a press release.

Host Annu Kapoor, renowned for his engaging and charismatic hosting style, expressed his enthusiasm for the new season, stating, "The second season of BIG Antakshari promises to be an unforgettable journey filled with fun and entertainment. My long-standing association with BIG FM has allowed me to witness the evolution of audio content over the years, and I am thrilled to be part of this iconic show once again."

Sunil Kumaran, COO of BIG FM, highlighted the significance of the show's transition from television to radio, marking a milestone in the audio industry and said, "BIG Antakshari continues to take BIG FM's rich legacy of iconic shows forward. With Annu Kapoor's signature hosting style, this season is poised to cement a special place in listeners' hearts. Integrating anecdotes, games, and trivia with the traditional game format makes this season relatable for audiences across ages. We're beyond excited for BIG Antakshari Season 2 and cannot wait to revel in the love from our listeners once again."

Cloud TV partners with India Today Group, Saregama, Fancode, Ultra Jhakaas

Cloud TV has announced strategic partnerships with India Today Group, Saregama, Fancode Sports App, and Ultra Jhakaas Marathi OTT App. These collaborations will enrich Cloud TV's extensive content library, providing millions of users with free streaming news and music channels, as well as on-demand sports and entertainment content.

Cloud TV, a homegrown TV OS tailored to the unique preferences of the Indian audience, aims to simplify content discovery and make streaming affordable. With these new partnerships, users with Smart TVs running Cloud TV OS can now stream popular news channels such as Aaj Tak, India Today, and Good News Today, along with entertaining music channels like Saregama Music, Saregama Telugu, and Saregama Hum Bhojpuri. Additionally, the entire content library of the Ultra Jhakaas Marathi OTT app will be available for streaming.

Sports enthusiasts will benefit significantly, accessing live matches, reviews, and live scores across various sports including cricket, Formula 1, football, hockey, and golf through the Fancode sports app.

Abhijeet Rajpurohit, COO and Co-Founder of Cloud TV, expressed his excitement about the partnerships. He stated, "At Cloud TV, our objective has always been to provide the best content for our users and expand the range of content offerings. With this new partnership, our users will be able to stream these free popular channels and on-demand OTT apps on their Smart TVs, eliminating the need for expensive cable or other subscriptions."



To further elevate the user experience, Cloud TV has rolled out a new software update, Cloud TV 3.0. This latest version introduces enhanced features, including unique immersive UIs and a voice assistant with regional language support. Additionally, the mobile remote app, which simplifies content search, navigation, and interaction, is rapidly becoming the preferred choice for users, gradually replacing traditional TV remotes.

These updates enable Smart TV players to cater to their audiences more effectively and deliver superior digital entertainment to affordable households across India. With Cloud TV's intuitive interface and user-friendly features, viewers can easily navigate through different channels, browse program schedules, and tailor their viewing experience according to their preferences.

Star Sports secures rights for Esports World Cup 2024

Star Sports Network, in collaboration with the Esports World Cup Foundation (EWCF), has announced the acquisition of broadcasting rights for the highly anticipated Esports World Cup (EWC) 2024.

This ground-breaking event, taking place in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia from July 3 to August 25, will unite the global gaming community in a premier competition featuring a unique multi-game format.



Over eight weeks, the EWC will showcase the world's top esports clubs competing across 21 of the most popular game titles, marking it as the largest multi-game esports tournament ever. As the official broadcaster, Star Sports will provide comprehensive coverage of the tournament, complete with in-depth commentary in both English and Hindi.

Star Sports will stream the Esports World Cup on its YouTube channel and broadcast it on linear TV via Star Sports First and Star Sports 2, ensuring wide accessibility for esports enthusiasts. This initiative follows the network's successful broadcast of the BGMI Masters in 2022, which drew millions of viewers and highlighted the immense popularity of esports in India.

The EWC will feature a prize pool exceeding $60 million (INR 500 crore), making it the largest in esports history. The tournament will introduce a cross-game competition format, awarding prizes for individual game titles and overall club performances.Mike Rich, Head of Warner Bros. Discovery, Sports & Lifestyle International Brand Partnerships, emphasized the alignment of esports with Warner Bros. Discovery's ambition to become a premier destination for sports and entertainment. "Esports World Cup is a competition where sport meets entertainment, and partnering with the EWC allows us to reach new audiences and celebrate its fandom," he added.

India-SA T20 WC final clocks 5.3 cr. peak concurrent viewership

The T20 World Cup final match, which ended India's 13-year wait to lift an ICC trophy, witnessed a peak viewership of 5.3 crore (53 million) on the OTT streaming platform Disney+ Hotstar on Saturday, but fell short of the record audience posted in the last year's ODI final match in November.

According to a PTI report from New Delhi, the peak viewership in the final match between India and Australia in the 50-overs format on November 20, 2023 was 5.9 crore (59 million), despite the host nation ending on the losing side.

This 5.9 crore still holds the record for peak concurrency for live streaming of any cricket match, according to industry experts. The peak concurrency in the knockout match played between India and Australia in the T20 Cricket World Cup on June 24 was 3.9 crore.

Disney Star had exclusive broadcast and media rights for both linear and digital platforms.

Saturday's final match was also telecast live by Disney Star on the Star Sports network but viewership numbers will be released only a week later by television audience measurement body Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) India.

Karan Taurani SVP of Elara Capital said the final match played on Saturday may not have achieved that number but the interesting fact is that 4 to 4.5 crore viewers were watching the match constantly because of the nail-biting



finish.

There was a longer time frame of having 4 to 4.5 crore viewers, which was not there in the India-Australia final match played last year, he added. Moreover, even in the post-match ceremony, the viewership number sustained between a range of 2.5 to 3 crore viewers, which was interesting.

OTTplay expands regional audience with Chaupal

OTTplay, a leading OTT content aggregation platform, announced a strategic partnership with Chaupal, further enriching its diverse content library. This collaboration marks a significant milestone in OTTplay's mission to provide high-quality, diverse entertainment options to its users.



Chaupal is renowned for its extensive library of regional content, including Punjabi, Bhojpuri and Haryanvi. Through this partnership, OTTplay subscribers will now have access to a rich variety of movies, TV shows, and exclusive originals from Chaupal, enhancing their viewing experience with unique and culturally resonant stories.

Sandeep Bansal, Founder and Managing Director of Chaupal OTT, expressed his excitement: "We are delighted to join hands with OTTplay, a platform that shares our commitment to delivering high-quality and diverse entertainment. At Chaupal, we believe in the power of regional stories to connect with audiences on a profound level. This collaboration will help us reach new heights, resonating with viewers who appreciate authentic and culturally significant storytelling."

Avinash Mudaliar, CEO and Co-founder of OTTplay echoed Bansal's sentiments, "We are excited to welcome Chaupal Punjabi to the OTTplay family. This collaboration aligns with our vision to provide a comprehensive and diverse entertainment experience. Chaupal's unique content offering will significantly enrich our platform, providing our users with an unparalleled viewing experience that celebrates regional diversity. With the rising demand for regional content and storytelling, we are optimistic that this partnership will deliver quality content across regions."

The addition of Chaupal to OTTplay's growing roster of top-tier entertainment providers reaffirms OTTplay's commitment to offering diverse and high-quality content to its ever-expanding audience base. This partnership promises to bring a rich variety of culturally significant stories to OTTplay subscribers, further enhancing their entertainment experience.



Jio to raise mobile services rates 12-27%; limits free 5G access

The country's top telecom operator Jio will increase mobile services rates by 12-27 per cent from July 3 and at the same time restrict the access of unlimited free 5G services for customers, according to a company statement.

The hike comes immediately after the spectrum auction as per the anticipation of sector experts. Industry experts believe that Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea may also increase their mobile services rates soon.

"The introduction of new plans is a step in the direction of furthering industry innovation and driving sustainable growth through investments in 5G and AI technology," Reliance Jio Infocomm Chairman Akash M Ambani said in the statement.



The company had raised mobile services rates across almost all plans.

Price of the lowest recharge is being raised to Rs 19, about 27 per cent higher than Rs 15 for 1 GB data add-on-pack.

The 75 GB postpaid data plan will now cost Rs 449 as against Rs 399. Jio has also raised the price of the popular Rs 666 unlimited plan with 84-day validity by about 20 per cent to Rs 799.

Prices of the annual recharge plans will be increased by 20-21 per cent from Rs 1,559 to Rs 1,899 and from Rs 2,999 to Rs 3,599. The hike across the medium range mobile service plans will be 19-21 per cent.

"Unlimited 5G data will be available on all 2GB per day and above plans... The new plans will be made effective on July 3, 2024 and can be opted from all existing touchpoints and channels," the statement said.

As of now, subscribers availing plans priced above Rs 239 are able to access unlimited free 5G service and the rest of the customers have to top up their plan with a Rs 61 voucher for availing unlimited 5G service.

Earlier, Jio had raised mobile service rates in December 2021 along with Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea.

Besides hike in mobile services rates, Jio introduced two apps — Jio Safe and JioTranslate — which it provides absolutely free to its customers for a period of one year.

Priced at Rs 199 per month, JioSafe – Quantum-secure communication app can be used for calling, messaging, file transfer etc. AI-enabled JioTranslate is a multilingual communication app for translating voice call, voice message, text and image.

'Kalki 2898 AD' mints Rs 191cr globally on day one

Nag Ashwin's 3D spectacle 'Kalki 2898 AD' registered a record opening at the global box office, earning Rs 191.5 crore gross on day one of its release, the makers said yesterday.

Touted as a marriage of Hindu epic Mahabharata and science fiction, the big-budget film is produced by Vyjayanthi Movies and was released on Thursday in six languages: Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, Hindi and English.

It features a star cast led by Prabhas, Deepika Padukone, Amitabh Bachchan and Kamal Haasan, along with Disha Patani, Saswata Chatterjee and Shobhana.

Vyjayanthi Movies shared the opening day figure of the movie on its official X page through a poster which stated that 'Kalki 2898 AD' earned Rs 191.5 crore in gross box office collection (GBOC), a PTI report from New Delhi stated.

The film's day one earnings is the third highest opening day collection for any Indian film. It is behind SS Rajamouli's 'RRR' (Rs 223 crore) and 'Baahubali 2' (Rs 217 crore), which also featured Prabhas in the lead role.

Previously titled 'Project K', it is arguably the most expensive feature film in Indian cinema history at a reported Rs 600 crore.

Large crowds were seen outside theatres in several cities, including Hyderabad and Mumbai. And the initial reviews were also favourable.

Meanwhile, another PTI report from Chennai stated that actor Kamal Haasan went ga-gag over the film, though he has a small role only in it.

"When it comes to stories like 'Kalki 2898 AD' I think only countries like Greece and China can come anywhere close to India. The other cultures do not have access to such rich stories," said actor-director-producer Kamal Haasan on June 28.

The actor was interacting with reporters after watching the film in Chennai.According to Haasan: "We have been seeing many signifiers that Indian cinema is moving towards global entertainment, and 'Kalki...' is one among them. Nag Ashwin carefully handled the subject of mythology without any religious bias. Across the world, only Japan, China, and Greek civilizations can come close to the Indian heritage of storytelling. Ashwin has chosen stories from that and has executed it with a lot of patience by bringing everyone together."



His praise for Bachchan too was fulsome. "I don't know if I should call him a veteran or a fresh actor. He has done the film that well," Haasan exulted.

MIB proposes 5-year registration for LCOs; to make pan-India access easy

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has proposed a five-year registration for local cable operators (LCOs) instead of one year as the present norm is. But it has also hinted at raising the registration fee from Rs. 500 annually.

The government is also looking to streamline the functioning of the LCO community by assigning a unique ID to each LCO that registers with it as part of creating a National Register of cable ops and which will allow it pan-India access.

At present, a LCO can register itself with the local post office by paying an annual fee of Rs. 500.

These and other issues were discussed yesterday at a stakeholders meet of MSOs and LCOs that MIB had organised in New Delhi.

Chaired by MIB joint secretary Sanjiv Shankar and attended by his colleagues and officials from the Department of Telecoms, the meeting discussed various matters, including whether the total number of LCOs in the country is approximately 85,000 (as per data available with regulator TRAI) or over 300,000 (as claimed by the industry).

On the proposed fee for a five-year registration process, according to some people who attended the meeting, the government initially proposed Rs. 10,000, saying that TRAI a few years back had recommended raising the registration fee.



However, there was a push back from the LCOs on raising of the fee with some suggesting that all fees should be waived as the LCOs are financially stretched anyway.

While some 40,000 LCO have already registered themselves with the MIB, officials said a new portal for such activities will be commissioned by August. At present, Broadcast Seva portal, which caters to such industry-related matters, has seen humongous traffic in recent time owing to another rule related to ads, resulting in it crashing at least once.

While TRAI and experts have stressed that cable networks should be utilised to increase broadband penetration in rural areas, no major push had been given in this direction till now.

At yesterday's meeting DoT officials expressed their hope LCOs and MSOs would assist them in tapping broadband-virgin areas, apart from places where broadband is sparsely available, and proposed incentives for the industry, including helping people become virtual network operators or VNOs.

VNOs are entities who operate in a unique space, providing telecommunication services without the need to own the underlying network infrastructure. The government backed multi-million dollar BharatNet rural telecom project can be helpful in this.

The MIB is yet to take a final call on issues discussed in the meeting.

The MIB meeting was attended, by AIDCF secretary-general Manoj Changnani and AIADAS's President & Aavishkar Group's founder, Dr. A.K. Rastogi, Yatin Gupta- GTPL, Narendra Bagdi – ALCOA, and amongst other operators and associations from Maharashtra, Kolkata, Uttar Pradesh.

Netflix to premiere 'Tribhuvan Mishra: CA Topper' July 18

Netflix had announced the premiere of 'Tribhuvan Mishra: CA Topper,' a new desi gangster series starring Manav Kaul and Tillotama Shome, is set to debut on July 18.

Produced by musician Ram Sampath and showrun by Puneet Krishna, who also serves as a writer, the series promises a thrilling blend of comedy, chaos and crime, PTI reported from Mumbai.

'Tribhuvan Mishra: CA Topper' follows an ordinary man's wild journey through a world of comedic mishaps, goons, and unexpected side gigs, eventually becoming the target of a dangerous gang of 'halwaais'.

The series also features Shweta Basu Prasad, Sumit Gulati, Naresh Gosain, Naina Sareen, Faisal Malik and Ashok Pathak. Directed by Amrit Raj with Krishna as co-director, the show offers a rich narrative exploring themes of ethics, survival, and unintended consequences.

"Our amazing ensemble cast brought all the characters to life, adding so much depth and authenticity," said Krishna, "And with Netflix's audience in 190 countries, it's awesome to think our mix of humour and desi drama will reach so many people worldwide. It's going to be a fun ride for everyone watching."

Sampath, the producer and music composer for the series, teamed up with Anurag Saikia for the background score, while Anuj Samtani handled cinematography.



ICC: cricket hit a six in US; 2024 digital engagement up 370%

Cricket as a game hit a six in the USA with incredible T20 World Cup engagement in a country, which is known more for baseball, rugby and NBA, cricket's global governing body ICC has said.

With record attendance, website and app hits, ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 has witnessed an unprecedented increase in interest across platforms.

The USA leg of the Men's T20 World Cup saw riveting cricketing action, including the home team's stunning upset win in Dallas and an incredible India vs Pakistan nail-biter in New York.



And the cricketing fever managed to reach the fans in the USA, who turned out in extraordinary numbers for the action-packed first round of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup. In the USA alone, 190,000 fans attended matches that captivated the country and set the stage for cricket's continued growth in North America, the International Cricket Council said in a media statement.

Chris Tetley, ICC Head of Events, was delighted at the unprecedented levels of interest the game witnessed in the USA, hitting the headlines of top media outlets and setting a firm base for cricket's future rise.

"We are absolutely delighted with how the ICC Men's T20 World Cup has gone in the USA and the unprecedented level of interest in cricket in the country," Tetley said.

"The extraordinary levels of media coverage in the USA was also great to see from Good Morning America to the front page of the New York Times, the event was covered by all mainstream media in the USA which bodes well for our long term strategy in the USA.

"With the USA being a priority area of the global growth strategy, we couldn't be happier with how the World Cup has been received on our first step into the biggest sports market in the world and we will look to build on this over the next four years towards the Olympic Games in Los Angeles in 2028 and beyond," he added.

Of the three venues in the USA, Grand Prairie in Texas saw enthusiastic support with an attendance of over 22,000 across the four matches; the highlight being the Nepal fans who turned out in big numbers. The USA fans also had a lot to cheer as they saw their side secure a historic win against Pakistan.

The Nassau County International Cricket Stadium in New York, the largest venue in the World Cup, lived up to its billing by hosting the largest crowd in USA history for international cricket when it saw arch-rivals India and Pakistan face off on June 9. A recorded 34,028 people turned up to see the Men in Blue overcome Pakistan by six runs in a low-scoring thriller. It closed its run with a true celebration of cricket between India and co-hosts, the USA (31,722).

In total, almost 165,000 people attended the T20 World Cup games in New York.

The US leg of the event concluded in Broward County, Florida where Pakistan played against Ireland in front of over 4,000 enthusiastic fans, many of whom had endured several days of unprecedented rainfall, and the resulting three washouts.

The ICC digital platforms witnessed historic figures in the region, with 2.7 million USA-based users recorded visiting the ICC website and app. This was a 370 percent rise from the number recorded for the entire ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2022. Of those viewers 52 percent are new fans coming to the ICC platforms.

The fan zones on Roblox were also a massive hit, with the ICC mascots Blaze and Tonk being joined by young fans on more than 10 million occasions.

'The Buckingham Murders' to release Sept.13

Director Hansal Mehta's highly anticipated film, 'The Buckingham Murders', starring Kareena Kapoor Khan, is set to release on September 13, the makers announced yesterday.

The film marks Kareena's foray into production, co-produced alongside Ektaa Kapoor and Shobha Kapoor under the banners of Balaji Telefilms and TBM Films, PTI reported.

Kareena, who was last seen in the film 'Crew' alongside Tabu and Kriti Sanon, is making her debut as a producer with this murder mystery. The collaboration with Ektaa Kapoor and Shobha Kapoor highlights the combined efforts to bring this intriguing story to the big screen. The announcement was accompanied by the release of the film's poster on Instagram, generating significant excitement among fans and the film industry. The poster features a captivating glimpse into the dark and suspenseful world of 'The Buckingham Murders' setting the tone for the much-awaited release.



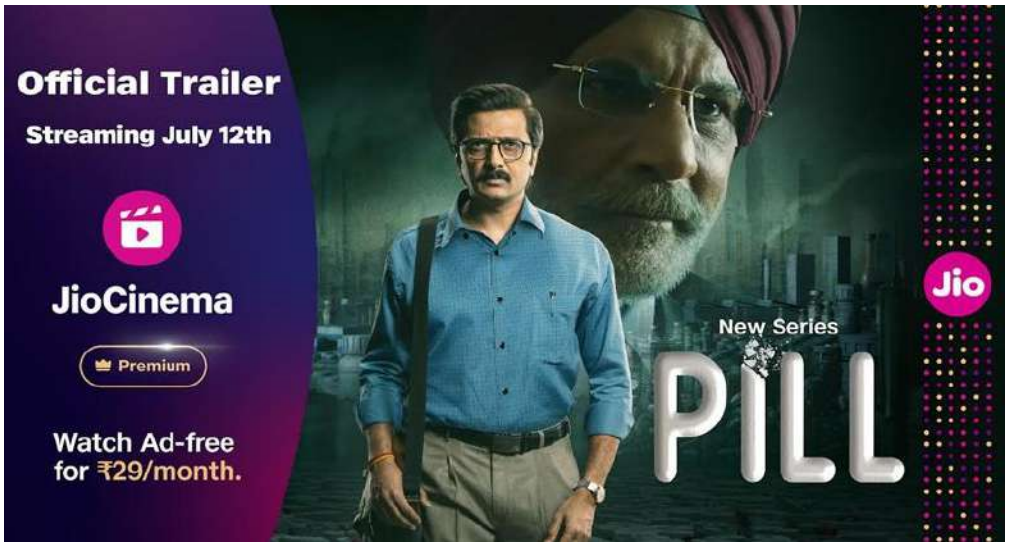
JioCinema Premium unveils trailer for 'PILL'

JioCinema Premium has unveiled the gripping trailer for its upcoming human drama series, "PILL," set to premiere on July 12.

The series, starring Riteish Deshmukh, aims to expose the dark underbelly of the pharmaceutical industry. Produced by Ronnie Screwvala's RSVP Movies and created by Raj Kumar Gupta, 'PILL' also features actor Pavan Malhotra in a pivotal role.

The trailer introduces Prakash Chauhan, played by Riteish Deshmukh, who delves into the deep-seated corruption within the Indian pharmaceutical world.

The series explores the journey of a pill from its creation to its impact on individuals, highlighting the roles of pharma industrialists, corrupt doctors, medical representatives, compromised drug regulators, politicians, journalists, and whistleblowers. As Prakash takes on the manipulative CEO of a pharma company, portrayed by Pavan Malhotra, he uncovers the powerful nexus that prioritizes profits over patient well-being.



Commenting on his debut series, Riteish Deshmukh said, "It's exciting to venture into the world of digital streaming. When you're entrusted with a compelling story like 'PILL,' there's a huge responsibility to do justice to it. It's intriguing to learn about the complexities behind something as seemingly simple as a pill that impacts our daily lives and well-being. Being a part of this journey has been incredibly enlightening. Working alongside visionaries like Raj Kumar Gupta and Ronnie Screwvala, who have poured their hearts into this project, is a true honour. Prakash Chauhan is a character of both simplicity and strength, and I am confident that his fight against the corrupt pharma players will resonate with the audience."

Ronnie Screwvala shared, "We've worked hard to bring an original and thought-provoking concept and story like 'PILL' that explores untold landscapes and asks crucial questions. With 'PILL,' we aim to entertain as well as increase awareness amongst people. Riteish brings his unparalleled acting prowess to the series, making his digital debut even more exciting. And as always, it is a pleasure working with Raj who has helmed this one with his thrilling expertise. Lastly, the show's release on JioCinema allows us the widest audience reach and together we look forward to bringing this powerful series to screens far and wide."

Raj Kumar Gupta commented, "Celluloid has always been my medium of expression as I've made films across genres to bring different stories to my audiences. And now, I am looking forward to experimenting with the long format on OTT. A story like 'PILL' needed to be told through a longer format and I am glad to be collaborating with JioCinema to tell this story. It has been a great experience working with Riteish, Ronnie, and the entire team on this one. We all are looking forward to bringing this story to audiences."

'PILL' promises an earnest fight against the corrupt pharmaceutical industry, premiering exclusively on JioCinema Premium on July 12. Watch the trailer now on JioCinema's platform and get ready for a thrilling exploration of the hidden facets of the pharma world.

'Chamak' second part to stream on SonyLIV from Aug 16

Musical thriller series 'Chamak' will return on streaming service SonyLIV with its second part on August 16.

The show, which comes from creator-director Rohit Jugraj Chauhan, had landed on the streamer's platform with its first part in December 2023.



The second part, titled 'Chamak: The Conclusion', will see Paramvir Singh Cheema's Kaala embarking on a powerful quest for vengeance, after becoming aware of the truth behind his father's demise, SonyLIV said in a press release, according to a PTI report from Mumbai.

"Determined to reclaim his late father's legacy, Kaala faces escalating tensions and an intensified clash that raises the stakes higher than ever before," the plotline read.

The first season of the show followed Kaala as a young aspiring rapper who comes back to Punjab from Canada and unravels the death of Taara Singh – the legendary singer who was shot dead in the midst of a packed performance.

'Chamak' also features Manoj Pahwa, Mohit Malik, Isha Talwar, Mukesh Chhabra, Prince Kanwaljit Singh, Suvinder (Vicky) Pal and Akasa Singh. Gippy Garewal makes a special appearance in the series.

The show is produced by Geetanjali Mehelwa Chauhan, Rohit Jugraj Chauhan and Sumeet Dubey.

NBDA makes self regulation changes to include digital news

The News Broadcasters & Digital Association (NBDA) has announced significant amendments to its regulations, aiming to adapt to the rapidly evolving media landscape.

The association, representing the collective voice of news, current affairs, and digital broadcasters in India, has expanded its purview to include digital news publishers. This development comes with the introduction of several new definitions and the enhancement of the self-regulatory framework overseen by the News Broadcasting & Digital Standards Authority (NBDSA), said in a press release.

The NBDA, which includes leading news channels commanding over 80 percent of India's news television viewership, recognized the need to update the News Broadcasting & Digital Standards Regulations (Regulations) to reflect the changes in media consumption and production. This review was facilitated with invaluable guidance from Justice (Retd) A. K. Sikri, Chairperson of NBDSA, Justice (Retd) R. V. Raveendran, former Chairperson of NBDSA, and Senior Advocate Arvind P. Datar.

As the most significant changes is the inclusion of digital news media within the NBDA's membership. This shift acknowledges the growing influence and importance of digital platforms in the news ecosystem. New definitions introduced in the regulations include:

Digital News Media: Digitized news content transmitted over the internet or computer networks.

Digital News Platforms: Platforms facilitating the transmission of digitized news content, including social networking sites and social media.



OTT Platforms: Platforms enabling the transmission of various content types over the internet or computer networks on demand.

Digital Publisher: Entities such as news portals, news aggregators, and news agencies engaged in publishing news and current affairs content on digital platforms.

The NBDA has broadened the range of penalties for violations of the Code of Conduct, implementing a graded system to address infractions more effectively:

First Violation: Warnings, admonishment, censure, disapproval, regret, apology, and/or a fine of up to Rs. 2 lakhs.

Second Violation: Similar measures as the first violation, with a fine of up to Rs. 5 lakhs.

Third Violation: Warnings, censure, disapproval, and fines up to 1% of the annual turnover of the channel, not exceeding Rs. 25 lakhs. Additionally, suspension of programs or anchors and recommendations for license suspension may be directed.

The Authority also retains the power to direct the immediate removal or editing of content found in violation of the Code of Conduct from all digital platforms.

The regulations now empower the NBDSA to initiate suo motu proceedings in cases requiring immediate remedial action or when public interest is at stake. This includes the authority to issue notices and take action on matters arising from the Code of Conduct without waiting for a formal complaint.

In emergencies involving severe or repetitive violations, the NBDSA can convene urgent meetings within 24 hours to issue interim directions, including the immediate removal of offending content. Broadcasters or digital publishers can seek redressal if they provide a suitable explanation.

The NBDA's revisions underscore its commitment to maintaining high standards in news broadcasting and digital journalism. The expanded scope and stringent measures aim to ensure accountability and uphold the integrity of news dissemination in an era where digital platforms play a pivotal role.

Justice (Retd) A. K. Sikri, Chairperson of NBDSA, commented on the amendments: "These changes reflect our ongoing commitment to adapt and uphold the highest standards in journalism. By including digital news media and enhancing our regulatory framework, we are better equipped to address the challenges and opportunities of today's media environment."

The NBDA continues to evolve, ensuring its regulations and practices meet the needs of a dynamic media landscape. With these amendments, the association reaffirms its dedication to fostering ethical journalism and protecting the interests of viewers across traditional and digital platforms.

In spectrum auction, Airtel top buyer; govt mops up Rs. 11k+ cr.

India's latest spectrum auction concluded with the sale of 141.4 MHz of radio waves, fetching Rs 11,340.78 crore. Bharti Airtel led the pack, securing spectrum valued at Rs 6,856.76 crore.

Reliance Jio acquired airwaves worth Rs 973.62 crore, while Vodafone Idea Ltd (VIL) secured spectrum totalling approximately Rs 3,510.4 crore, based on an official statement, a PTI report from New Delhi stated.



Bharti Airtel said it had acquired 97 MHz spectrum, spending a total of Rs 6,857 crore in the spectrum auctions that concluded yesterday morning after seven rounds spanning just over a day.

According to PTI, Bharti Airtel has purchased spectrum in key circles by winning back spectrum that was expiring in the current year.

Additionally, it has purchased spectrum to boost its mid-band spectrum holding across select circles. Following the 2024 spectrum auctions, Airtel will continue to enjoy the largest mid-band spectrum pool in the country.

Airtel continues to judiciously acquire the right amount of spectrum to deliver the best possible experience to our customers. In this auction, we have bolstered our sub-giga hertz and mid-band holdings, which will significantly improve our coverage, especially indoor," said Gopal Vittal, MD and CEO, Bharti Airtel in a statement.

The purchase is in line with the company's stated strategy to build a large pool of mid-band holdings to deliver seamless 4G and 5G services across the country, it said.

A wholly-owned subsidiary of Airtel, Bharti Hexacomm, has acquired 15 MHz of spectrum with an outlay of Rs 1,001 crore, the company said.

Meanwhile, a Reuters report on the matter stated that this year's auction was expected to be limited in scale compared

Star Sports becomes official broadcasting partner for World Championship of Legends

The World Championship of Legends (WCL), featuring iconic cricket players from around the globe, has announced its official broadcasting partners for various regions worldwide. This partnership ensures that cricket enthusiasts across different continents can experience the tournament live: in India through Star Sports; in North America via Willow by Cricbuzz; in the MENA region on Cricbuzz; in Sub-Saharan Africa through SuperSport; in the United Kingdom on TNT Sports; and in Australia through Fox Sports.

The WCL, approved by the England & Wales Cricket Board (ECB) and presented by India's Second Largest Travel Company EaseMyTrip, will take place from July 3 to July 13 at Edgbaston and Northamptonshire County Cricket Club in the UK. It brings together legendary players for an unforgettable series of matches.

Harshit Tomar, owner of the World Championship of Legends, stated, "We are excited to provide fans with the chance to see cricket legends in action once again. With our global broadcasting partners, we can reach a wide audience and celebrate the spirit of cricket worldwide. Partnering with Star Sports will bring WCL to a broad audience in Asia, ensuring top-notch coverage of this historic event."

The WCL will feature teams from India, Australia, West Indies, England, Pakistan, and South Africa. The tournament includes cricket legends such as:

India Champions: Yuvraj Singh, Harbhajan Singh, Suresh Raina ;Australia Champions: Brett Lee, Aaron Finch, Shaun Marsh, Ben Cutting; West Indies Champions: Chris Gayle, Daren Sammy, Dwayne Smith; England Champions: Kevin Pietersen, Ian Bell, Ravi Bopara, Samit Patel; Pakistan Champions: Shahid Afridi, Shoaib Malik, Younis Khan; South Africa Champions: Jacques Kallis, JP Duminy, Dale Steyn; Fans in Asia can watch all the live action on Star Sports channels and Fancode. The WCL promises to be a thrilling celebration of cricket, with legendary players coming together to showcase their skills and entertain fans across the globe.

Times of India relaunches TOIFA Awards with OTT edition

The Times of India has re-launched the Times of India Film Awards (TOIFA) with its inaugural OTT edition, the media house said at a presas conference in Mumbai yesterday.



The announcement was made in the presence of Sivakumar Sundaram, CEO (Publishing) & ED of Bennett, Coleman & Company Ltd. (BCCL), along with the advisory council member and producer Siddharth Roy Kapur (founder of Roy Kapur Films), and Shibashish Sarkar (President of the Producers Guild of India), a PTI report from Mumbai stated.

"We are delighted to launch the TOIFA – Hindi OTT edition. Through a rigorous voting process in partnership with the Producers Guild of India, we will celebrate outstanding talent from across 28 different award categories on OTT," Sundaram said during the conference.

MIB warns b'casters on transfer of core TV ops



The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) has issued a stern warning to broadcasters, emphasizing that transferring the core operations of TV channels to third parties, including group entities, without prior permission is a direct violation of policy guidelines. Such actions will lead to the cancellation of the broadcaster's licence.

As the licensing authority for TV channels, MIB cited Clause 26(2) of the 'Guidelines for Uplinking and Downlinking of Satellite Television Channels in India, 2022,' which explicitly prohibits permission holders from contracting out core operations such as content generation, content transfer, and content uplinking to third parties, The Economic Times.

In an advisory issued on June 25, the ministry instructed all permitted broadcasters to adhere strictly to these guidelines, ensuring that the operations and core functions of their channels are managed exclusively by the permission holders.

"Therefore, it is hereby clarified that the letting of the channels to any third party, including the group entities, without the prior permission of the ministry is not allowed as per the existing policy guidelines," the MIB advisory stated.

Mobile tariff hike to boost telcos' profits by ?20,000 cr: Exprts



The latest round of 15-20 percent mobile tariff hikes for prepaid and postpaid plans by telecom service providers (TSPs) can result in additional operating profits of around Rs 20,000 crore for the industry once these hikes are fully absorbed, industry experts said on June 28.

Bharti Airtel and Reliance Jio are likely to witness a significant average revenue per user (ARPU) benefit after the tariff hike. Vodafone Idea is yet to implement the mobile tariff hike, IANS reported.

"This will result in increased profit generation, thereby providing headroom for the industry to undertake deleveraging as well as fund capex for the technology upgrade as well as network expansion," said Ankit Jain, Vice President and Sector Head of Corporate Ratings, ICRA.

ICRA expects the industry revenues to grow by 12-14 percent in FY25, which given the operating leverage, is likely to translate into healthy expansion in operating profits by 14-16 percent.

The telecom industry is likely to report revenues of Rs 3.2-3.3 lakh crore with operating profits of Rs 1.6-1.7 lakh crore in FY25.

"The improvement in operating profits coupled with the muted participation in the latest spectrum auctions and expected moderation in the capex intensity, the debt levels are expected to moderate to around Rs 6.2-6.3 lakh crore as of March 31, 2025, with the expectation of further decline going forward," said ICRA.

According to a note by Morgan Stanley, it expects other players to follow and announce price increases soon for 4G subscribers.

Bharti Airtel to implement tariff hike from July 3



Telecom major Bharti Airtel, on on June 28, announced a steep hike in mobile tariffs, with effect from July 3, IANS reported from New Delhi.

In the unlimited voice plans, the company raised mobile tariffs from Rs 179 to Rs 199, from Rs 455 to Rs 599, and from Rs 1,799 to Rs 1,999 plan. For post-paid plans, the Rs 399 tariff plan will now be Rs 449; the Rs 499 plan will be Rs 549; the Rs 599 plan will cost Rs 699 and the Rs 999 plan will now come for Rs 1199, effective from July 3.

In a statement, Bharti Airtel said that it has maintained that the mobile average revenue per user (ARPU) needs to be above Rs 300 to enable a financially healthy business model for Telcos in India. "We believe that this level of ARPU will enable the substantial investments required in network technology and spectrum and offer a modest return on capital," said Bharti Airtel.

Bharti Airtel's shares went up in early morning trade by around 1 percent at Rs 1,491.

Earlier, Reliance Jio also announced a 12-27 percent hike in mobile tariffs.

ABPLIVE unveils premium subscription service

ABPLIVE, a leading digital news platform, had launched ABPLIVE Premium, a subscription service designed to offer exclusive benefits and in-depth content to its readers. This groundbreaking service follows a successful membership drive, amassing nearly 1 million registered users in record time. ABPLIVE Premium subscribers will enjoy uninterrupted access to premium content, exclusive features, and more. To mark the launch, an introductory annual subscription is available at a special price of INR 315, reflecting an 85 percent discount from the regular price of INR 2099. While the ABPLIVE website will maintain its usual navigation, users will need to log in and subscribe to access premium content. Non-subscribers can read three premium articles for free before encountering the paywall, the news channel said in a press release.

Commenting on the launch, Avinash Pandey, CEO of ABP Network, said, "ABPLIVE Premium is the natural evolution of our success, allowing us to provide an even more enriching content experience for our audience. It is designed to cater to a discerning audience that values quality and depth in their news consumption. Whether you're interested in a deeper understanding of complex political issues, nuanced takes on business and technology trends, or insightful cultural commentary, ABPLIVE Premium offers a richer, more rewarding news experience. Our commitment is to empower our subscribers to stay informed and ahead of the curve."

Initially, ABPLIVE Premium will be available in English and Hindi. Subscribers will have access to a range of premium content, including insightful analysis, in-depth pieces by subject matter experts, and exclusive columns by renowned names.

The ABPLIVE Premium user experience will be further enhanced with upcoming features, including access to premium games through the GamesLIVE platform, ensuring subscribers can relax with quality gaming while staying informed. Additionally, subscribers will receive special alerts for exclusive coverage events, keeping them ahead of important news developments. A dedicated live stream channel is planned for paid users during prominent events like the ABP Network Ideas of India Summit or Auto LIVE Awards, providing an exclusive view of these marquee events.

Moreover, ABPLIVE is introducing a YouTube channel featuring exclusive reports, coverages, special programming, and classic content across languages. Subscribers will need a separate subscription for ABPLIVE Premium YT.ABPLIVE Premium underscores ABPLIVE's commitment to delivering exceptional journalism and catering to the evolving needs of its audience. With this launch, ABPLIVE is set to redefine how users engage with news and insights.

Satellite launch mkt. demand inadequate: ISRO chief Somnath

ISRO Chairman S Somanath yesterday said there is not enough internal demand for the satellite launch market in India but it can be created through more work on the application of satellite technology.

Addressing the India Space Congress 2024 in New Delhi, he said big companies are willing to enter the space sector but they are concerned about the timeline for breaking even and securing orders, a PTI report stated.



"When I talk to many of those industries who are willing to come and set up facilities, they are all very ready to do it. But they are asking when they are going to break even and where the orders are so that they can safely invest in this. I think this is a big question.

"It is the bigger challenge of convincing investors to come in a big way in big state projects," the leading space scientist said.

At a press conference on the sidelines of the Space Congress, he said, "We need to create more internal demand. That implies internal demand is not enough. All of us are working towards that. The demand will come from the user side, from the communication segment, which, of course, includes big satellite builders."

"We would like to find orbital slots and frequencies, which can be given to industry to build satellites and launchers. This is the first step towards creating internal demand. InSpace has already announced a funding plan to create a new earth observation constellation. That's again another step towards creating internal demand," he added.

Somanath also said although the cost of accessing space has decreased significantly globally, largely due to SpaceX, India's rocket costs have not seen similar reductions.

Reducing costs could boost small satellite launches and attract new participants in the space sector, he said.

Somanath mentioned that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for Amrit Kaal includes extending human space activity beyond the Gaganyaan mission, with the goal of landing on the moon by 2040.

However, he said India's current rockets are not sufficient for round trips to the moon. Developing rockets with higher payload capacity is essential for both bringing back samples and future human missions, the ISRO chairman said.

Somanath told reporters that GSAT-20 is set to launch in mid-August onboard Falcon 9 and it has received clearance to be moved to the United States for the launch.

NBF lauds Delhi HC order on AP news channels

The News Broadcasters Federation had applauded the Monday's Delhi High Court order directing about 15 multi-system operators to restore the transmission of TV9 Telugu, Saakshi TV, 10TV, and NTV news channel, among others, which had been taken off-air from June 6 in Andhra Pradesh.

This landmark ruling addresses the unilateral and illegal blackout of these channels, reinforcing the essential principles of freedom of speech and expression, fundamental to our democratic society.



According to press release, the blackout, which coincided with the day of election results, raised significant concerns about press freedom. Reports suggested that political pressure was exerted on cable operators to remove these channels due to a shift in political leadership in Andhra Pradesh. With Andhra Pradesh being the largest market for television consumers in India, the blackout impacted over 62 lakh set-top boxes, denying millions their right to information.

The Delhi High Court's intervention emphasizes the need for an open and transparent media environment, crucial for the health of democracy. The court's order mandates the immediate restoration of the affected news channels, ensuring that the people of Andhra Pradesh can once again access a broad range of news and viewpoints.

During the court proceedings, TV9 argued that the disconnection was illegal and violated the interconnection agreement with distribution companies, as per the regulations of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).

NBF supports the High Court's decision and urges all relevant authorities to comply with the directive promptly. This ruling is expected to set a precedent for upholding press freedom and protecting journalists' rights across India.

"We commend the Delhi High Court for its steadfast commitment to safeguarding constitutional rights and promoting a free and independent media," stated the NBF. "This decision is a victory for democracy and a reminder of the vital role that judicial oversight plays in preserving our fundamental freedoms."

The News Broadcasters Federation remains dedicated to advocating for the rights of journalists and the free flow of information. NBF calls on the government and regulatory bodies to take proactive measures to prevent such blackouts in the future and to ensure that media channels can operate without undue interference.

Vi Movies & TV app enhances entertainment offering with ZEE5

Vi, India's leading telecom operator, has bolstered its Vi Movies & TV app by announcing a new collaboration with ZEE5, further enriching its content aggregation platform. This partnership expands Vi Movies & TV's comprehensive lineup to include 17 OTT apps under a single subscription, priced at ?248 per month.

The Vi Movies & TV app, introduced earlier this year, aims to streamline entertainment consumption by offering access to popular OTT platforms such as Disney+ Hotstar, Sony LIV, and now ZEE5. This consolidated approach not only reduces costs significantly but also eliminates the inconvenience of managing multiple subscriptions separately.

Avneesh Khosla, Chief Marketing Officer, Vodafone Idea, expressed, "At Vi, we are committed to meeting the evolving needs of our customers by offering affordable and convenient entertainment solutions. The Vi Movies & TV app provides access to a diverse range of content, including movies, shows, live TV channels, and regional content, all through a single plan."

He further added, "With the addition of ZEE5, we are confident that Vi Movies & TV will resonate with consumers seeking value-for-money entertainment options. Our goal is to enhance the overall viewing experience and continue expanding our content offerings through strategic partnerships."



Vi Movies & TV app subscribers can now enjoy a wide array of content, from blockbuster movies like Do Aur Do Pyaar and Veer Sawarkar on ZEE5 to live sports on Fancode, along with regional content platforms like Klikk (Bengali), Chaupal (Punjabi), and Manorama Max (Malayalam).

The app supports seamless streaming across multiple devices including mobiles, tablets, smart TVs, and desktops, ensuring flexibility and convenience for users to enjoy their favorite shows anytime, anywhere. Additionally, Vi Movies & TV offers the flexibility of watching two simultaneous streams across all integrated OTT platforms.

Vi has also introduced two new subscription plans:

Vi Movies & TV Plus: Priced at ?248 per month, this plan includes unlimited access to 17 OTT apps, 350 live TV channels, and additional benefits such as 6GB extra data for prepaid users.

Vi Movies & TV Lite: Tailored for prepaid users at ?154 per month, offering access to 16 OTT apps with an extensive content library on a single mobile device, along with 2GB additional data.

MIB schedules LCOs' meet to discuss National Register's creation

The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (MIB) had called a stakeholders' meeting on June 27 to discuss various issues relating to MSOs and cable operators, including the important matter of the National Register of LCOs.

Other issues that have been listed for discussion include ways to increase penetration of broadband in rural areas and how LCOs can play an important role.

According to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) data, at the end of April 2024, India boasted of 928.41million subscribers, registering a monthly growth rate of 0.47 percent — a trajectory that seems to be flattened in recent times.

Several experts, including regulator TRAI, have opined at various times in recent times that efforts to up the broadband penetration in rural areas should include delivery of the service by cable operators and MSOs, apart from other advanced tech like broadband-via-satellite.



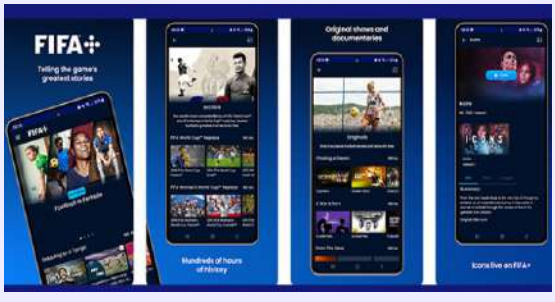
According to industry sources, the meeting to be held at MIB later this week will also take up logistics of transfer of LCO registrations from post offices to the designated government website, the Broadcast Seva portal, which is used for a number of matters by stakeholders to share information with MIB.

On a suggestion from TRAI, the MIB earlier this year had decided to create a National Register of cable operators and had asked for relevant data over the past few months from the service providers so the new process could be started.

The MIB on February 8 had issued a directive to LCOs to furnish by requisite details — like subscriber base, area of operations, etc. — through the Broadcast Seva Portal. This initiative, the government said, was aimed at assigning a National Registration Number to each LCO and compiling a National Register.

FIFA aims to raise $2 bn for its free streaming service

FIFA is seeking to raise as much as $2 billion for the expansion of FIFA+, the free streaming service launched by football's global governing body to offer live coverage of matches, according to people with knowledge of the matter. FIFA is working with UBS Group AG to raise $1 billion to $2 billion to expand the service, said the people who asked not to be named as information is private. A formal fundraising process is expected to kick off in July, targeting mostly financial investors from the US and the Middle East, the people said, a Bloomberg report on June 27 stated.



Deliberations are at an early stage, and details such as timing and fundraising size could change, according to the people. The investment would be for a minority stake in FIFA+, the people added, who asked not to be named discussing confidential information. Representatives for UBS and FIFA declined to comment, Bloomberg added.

The organizers of both golf and domestic football leagues have been spinning off media rights in order to raise capital, with investors receiving future advertising and broadcasting revenue.

FIFA+ was launched in April 2022 as a free, ad-supported streaming service that planned to stream 40,000 live games a year, with at least a quarter coming from women's matches.

Tata Play's loss widens three-fold as DTH takes a hit

Tata Play, India's largest direct-to-home (DTH) TV operator, reported a significant financial setback for the fiscal year 2024, with losses ballooning over three-fold due to increased competitive pressures in its core DTH business. According to the company's regulatory filings, Tata Play posted a net loss of ?354 crore for the fiscal year ended March 31, compared to ?105 crore the previous year. Revenue from operations dropped by more than 4 percent to ?4,304 crore, while expenses rose by 1.47 percent to ?4,761 crore.



The DTH segment, which has been the cornerstone of Tata Play's business, reported a net loss of ?247 crore in FY24, a stark contrast to the net profit of ?20 crore in FY23. Revenue from the DTH segment fell 7.45 percent to ?3,983 crore, The Economic Times reported.

Despite these challenges, Tata Play's broadband business showed signs of improvement. The net loss in this segment narrowed by 13 percent to ?108 crore, while revenue surged 27 percent to ?329 crore.

Auction of spectrum, crucial to 5g services,

Spectrum worth over Rs 96,000 crore will be on the block as auctions across eight bands will begin today, with telecom operators Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea vying for radio waves crucial for 5G mobile services.

The last spectrum auction was held in August 2022, which, for the first time, included radio waves for 5G services. The government will auction eight spectrum bands for mobile phone services at a base price of about Rs 96,317 crore, a PTI report from New Delhi stated yesterday.

All the available spectrum in the 800 MHz, 900 MHz, 1,800 MHz, 2,100 MHz, 2,300 MHz, 2,500 MHz, 3,300 MHz, and 26 GHz bands are part of the 10th auction.

"We welcome the government move to auction radio frequencies across the 800 MHz, 900 MHz, 1,800 MHz, 2,100 MHz, 2,300 MHz, 2,500 MHz, 3,300 MHz and 26 GHz bands. However, spectrum in 600 MHz and 1400 MHz should also be auctioned at an early date, as these bands are very important for the mobile industry," ITU-APT Foundation of India President Bharat Bhatia said.

Reliance Jio has deposited the highest earnest money of Rs 3,000 crore for the spectrum auction, which provides the company with the potential to bid for maximum radio waves.

According to pre-qualified bidder details released by the Department of Telecommunications, Bharti Airtel has submitted the earnest money deposit (EMD) of Rs 1,050 crore and Vodafone Idea (VIL) of Rs 300 crore.

According to telecom expert Parag Kar, Reliance Jio can bid for 37.36 per cent of the total spectrum value based on EMD, Bharti 13.07 per cent and Vodafone Idea 3.73 per cent.



As per Kar's analysis, Jio may be keen on bidding for 800 Mhz band only, which may lead to an estimated cash flow of Rs 18,000 crore.

The spectrum auction is likely to see muted action, and the bidding is likely to be selective for specific bands.

The 3300 Mhz band may attract the interest of Reliance Jio and Bharti Airtel as it is one of the key bands for providing 5G services with low capital expenditure. Radiowave chunks ranging from 20 Mhz to -100 Mhz are being put for auction in the 3300 Mhz band.

Sony secures rights for India tour of Zimbabwe 2024

Sony Sports Network has announced that it had secured the exclusive television and digital broadcast rights for the much-anticipated India tour of Zimbabwe.

This exciting five-match T20I series will take place in Harare from July 6 to July 14, 2024, bringing a fresh wave of cricket fever to fans across both nations.

A young and dynamic Indian squad is set to showcase their talent against Zimbabwe, promising a thrilling display of cricket. The series will be broadcast live in four languages—English, Hindi, Tamil, and Telugu—on Sony Sports Ten 3 (Hindi) SD & HD, Sony Sports Ten 4 (Tamil/Telugu), and Sony Sports Ten 5 SD and HD.



Rajesh Kaul, Chief Revenue Officer – Distribution & International Business and Head – Sports Business at Sony Pictures Networks India, expressed his excitement: "We are extremely delighted to announce the broadcast of India tour of Zimbabwe, which adds value to our existing portfolio of cricket properties. Viewers can expect to witness an exciting series as the Indian cricket team gears up to showcase their skill and sheer quality against Zimbabwe."

The addition of this tour further strengthens Sony Sports Network's impressive lineup of cricket properties, which already includes partnerships with New Zealand Cricket, the England Cricket Board, and Sri Lanka Cricket.

The upcoming series is noteworthy as it marks India's return to Zimbabwe for a T20I series since 2016, where India secured a 2-1 victory. More recently, in 2022, India played a three-match ODI series in Zimbabwe, winning all three matches, with Shubman Gill earning the Player of the Series accolade.

Tavengwa Mukuhlani, Chairman of Zimbabwe Cricket, shared his anticipation: "We are looking forward to hosting the Indian cricket team in Harare for an exciting T20I series. We are aware of the massive fan following for cricket in India and are glad to see Sony Sports Network broadcasting this series to cater to their audience."

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