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CONTENT

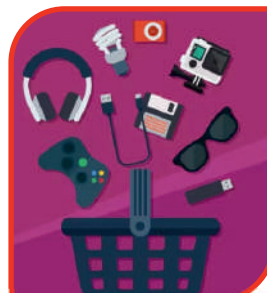
2025. December. Vol 33. Issue 12



सम्पादकीय Pg-05



Roll on Pg-27-29



Gizmos & Gadgets Pg-56-57

Paramount ups the stakes with \$108bn hostile WBD bid

DD Free Dish to offer free MPEG-4 slots to regional channels

GTPL Hathway unveils 'GTPL Infinity', new satellite-based HITS platform

WAVES Film Bazaar ends with high-value biz leads, MoUs

India showcases global co-production strength at IFFI roundtable

TV9 Network unveils AI² Awards to spotlight AI-driven storytelling

NDTV strengthens its digital lead as network records unmatched growth

At 'Sahitya Aaj Tak 2025' opening Kalli Purie dwells on literature, life's bonds

Star Plus unveils 'Gita Mahotsav: Tulsi Ki Sang' featuring Smriti Irani

Arijit Singh tops Spotify India Wrapped 2025 for 7th straight year



07



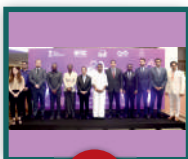
11



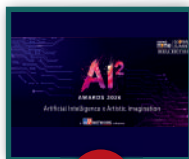
15



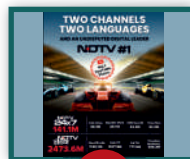
19



23



30



33



40



45



53

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दो अक्टूबर की वो ऐतिहासिक रात - दो भारत के लाल, जयन्ती और दशहरा



अ जीब सा जरूर लग रहा होगा आपको लेकिन जो बीस वर्षों में नहीं हुआ इसी 21 वी यात्रा में हुआ , उसे ऐतिहासिक ही कहा जाएगा क्योंकि दशहरा - दो अक्टूबर पहली बार नहीं हर वर्ष यात्रा के दरमियान आता ही है , लेकिन इस बार का दशहरा अलग था क्योंकि दशहरा के दिन ही गांधी जी व लाल बहादुर शास्त्री जी का जयन्ती दिन भी था और था राष्ट्रीय स्वयं सेवक संघ (आरएसएस) का शताब्दी दिवस, जी हों 1925 दशहरा स्थापित दिवस था तो 2025 दशहरा संघ का सौ वा वर्ष यानिकी शताब्दी वर्ष दिवस है , फिर हमारी यात्रा उडुपी छेत्र में कर्नाटक के भटकल मालपे बीच एरिया में थी जहाँ हर्षोल्लास के साथ यहाँ दशहरात्सव होता है, अनेक सुंदर झांकियाँ गाजे बाजे ढोल नताशे महिलायें -पुरुष, लड़के -लड़कियाँ, बच्चे - बच्चियाँ, गजब का वातावरण था, हजारों भक्तों का भावविभोर नजारा ,आकर्षक भावविहल किए था ! उनकी स्मृतियों को कैमरे में कैद किया ,खूब आनंद लिया लेकिन जब ठहरने के लिए होटल ढूँढना शुरू किया तो मैंगलोर के एक होटल में बुकिंग हो गई ,पैसा जमा कर बेफिक्री ज्यादा देर तक ना टिक सकी , होटल में कोई गुंजाइश नहीं है तो एनी सिंगल रूम.फिर बुकिंग क्यों ली पैसा भी दे दिया । अब क्या करें , टाइम भी 11 हो रहा है कहाँ जाएँगे ? होटल और बुकिंग कम्पनी से बातें करते करते सिर्फ समय पास हुआ, रिजल्ट निल बटा सन्नाटा ही रहा ,दूसरी कंपनी ने अन्य होटल बुक किया लेकिन उस होटल ने भी हाथ खड़े कर दिए, जबकि व्यक्तिगत रूप से राह में जितने भी अच्छे से दिखने वाले होटल मिलते गए वहाँ ट्राय मारते रहे लेकिन परिणाम वही बड़ा सा जीरो । अब दिल्ली में अनुराग और रास्ते में हम रात के लिए चिंतित होते रहे , कोशिशों पर कोशिश करते रहे लेकिन कोई रूम नहीं मिल सका, बस समय बहुत तेजी से आगे बढ़ता गया । इसी बीच मैंगलोर में मित्र ऑपरेटर एएम एस ओ कीनी भाई से भी मदद माँगी गई लेकिन उसने भी हाइवे पर ही कोई होटल ले लेने की सलाह दे दी मैंगलोर फुल है कहकर !

इस दरमियान हमने एक काम समझदारी का कर लिया कि 12 बजने से जस्ट पहले ही एक बंद रेस्तराँ में खाने के लिए जो भी उपलब्ध हो सकता है परोसने के लिए रेस्तराँ वाले को मना लिया , वरना खाली पेट ना भजन गोपाला वाली बात हो जाती !

फिर से होटल, गैस्ट हाउस , लॉज, धर्मशाला, क्लब ,टूरिस्टहोम, टूरिज्म कैम्प ,जो भी फारेस्ट रेस्ट हाउस,प्रेस क्लब ,यूथ हॉस्टल ,5 स्टार होटल्स सबको तलाश लिया लेकिन रात के मुसाफिरों को कोई ठिकान ना मिला, आखिरी उम्मीद लेकर मैंगलोर सर्किट हाउस पहुँचे,वहाँ भी निराशा ही मिली, तब तक आधी रात बीत चुकी थी , सबसे बड़ी बात कि हम ही अकेले नहीं थे बल्कि हमारे जैसे कई वहाँ रात का ठिकाना ढूँढने वाले होटल दर होटल घूम रहे थे , आखिरकार समय की घड़ी तेजी से आगे बढ़ती जा रही थी बस एक ही राहत थी कि भूख नहीं लग रही थी पेट हमने भर लिए थे , दिल्ली वाले बहुत चिंता में थे कि अब क्या होगा ।

सर्किट हाउस वाले ने अपनी बाला टालने के लिए सुझाव दिया कि साथ ही में पुलिस स्टेशन है आप वहाँ चले जायें उनके सम्पर्क सबसे होते हैं वो शायद आपका बंदोबस्त कहीं ना कहीं करवा दें ! आइडिया उनका बुरा नहीं था लेकिन हम देख सकते थे कि वो अपनी बला टाल रहे हैं ।

एक साहब जो एक होटल रिसेप्शन पर बैठे थे उन्होंने ऊपर छत पर खुले असमान तले बैड बिछवा देने की ऑफर दी लेकिन वाशरूम के लिए नीचे फर्स्ट फ्लोर पर आना होगा ! आदि आदि रात की यादों को समाये हमने गाड़ी में ही यह रात गुजार लेने का निर्णय लिया और गाड़ी को सर्किट हाउस में एक साइड लगा कर लाल बहादुर शास्त्री जी की याद में विजयदशमी के अवसर पर गांधी राह में दो अक्टूबर को विशेष अतिरिक्त यादगार मान दशहरा की थकावट के लिए पूरी रात चार यात्रियों सहित गाड़ी में गुजार कर नया इतिहास कायम किया ! दिल्ली तो परेशान थी ही लेकिन मैंगलोर के किनी भाई को क्या हुआ, क्यों उन्होंने कोई खैर ख़बर नहीं ली ? ये समझ से परे है क्योंकि उनके साथ मेरे कई वर्षों के बड़े मधुर प्रिय सम्बंध रहे हैं , बहुत नेक अच्छे इन्शान हैं,हर वर्ष उनके साथ अवश्य भेंट वार्ता होती रही है , “मेरी कहानी मेरी जुबानी “ के लिए उनका पूरा इन्वि्यू भी मैंने लिया है , उन्हें रात की ताजा अपडेट कर दी गई थी, फिर आखिर क्या हुआ जो उन्होंने कुशलक्षेम जानने की भी जरूरत नहीं समझी । अब रात तो आखिर गुजर ही गई एक नए अंदाज में,एक नए अनुभव के साथ,एक नया इतिहास रचते हुवे ड्यु..! सुबह की इंतजार नहीं की, सूर्योदय से पूर्व ही यात्रा को मैंगलोर से आगे बढ़ाया क्योंकि आज जैसी ही स्थिति यहाँ कल परसों भी रहनी है, क्योंकि सिर्फ दशहरा ही नहीं बल्कि लॉग विकैण्ड है , स्कूलों व कोर्ट की भी छुट्टियाँ हैं , सब छुट्टियों का पूरा आनंद लेने के लिए निकले हुवे हैं, कल कुछ बदलने वाला नहीं है ! कर्नाटक का ये हाल देख हम केरल के लिए चल पड़े और कन्नूर होते हुवे माही (पोंडिचेरी) के रास्ते सीधे कालपेट्टा-वायनाड -सुलतान बतरी से गुंडलपेट पहुँच रात्रिविश्राम किया ! हालाँकि छुट्टियों की भीड़ यहाँ भी कम नहीं थी होटलों की हालत वैसे ही थी, एक होटल में बात की तो उन्होंने एक नान एसी रूम 71 में दिया है

जानकर दुख जरूर हुआ, फिर भी यहाँ हमारा ऑपरेटर शिव कुमार हमारे लिए बहुत मददगार साबित हुआ, उनके सहयोग से ठहरने खाने का ठीक बंदोबस्त हो गया । गुंडलपेट में उस कड़वी रात की तकलीफों को पूर्णतया अच्छे अनुभवों का लेप लगा बिल्कुल चंगा फिट कर ताजगी भर दी, क्योंकि यहाँ बांदीपुर टाइगर रिजर्व पार्क है जहाँ टाइगर हाथी सभी मिले मन तृप्त हो गया ड्युड्यु!! वो किस्सा अलग के लिए रख देते हैं, अभी बात बस एक रात की कहानी तो लम्बी है अभी सुबह बाकी है

बहुत कुछ बाकी है लेकिन आज इतने से ही काम चला लेते हैं ।

कॉमेंट्स अच्छे लगते हैं ।

AK Rastogi



BROADCASTING



Standing firm, TRAI rejects DoT views on satcom spectrum fee

Telecom regulator TRAI on Dec 08 rejected the Department of Telecom (DoT)'s view, suggesting a 5 per cent annual spectrum fee to be charged from satcom (satellite communications) players instead of 4 per cent, and let go of a Rs 500 fee per connection in urban areas.

According to a PTI report from New Delhi on Dec 08, the Department of Telecom sought some changes in the recommendation of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) on satellite communications spectrum allocation methodology and charges for companies such as Elon Musk-led Starlink, Bharti Group-backed Eutelsat OneWeb, and Jio SES that are in fray to start their services in the country. The DoT had asked Trai to reconsider its recommendation to levy a 4 per cent annual spectrum charge, and instead consider the idea of levying a 5 per cent annual spectrum charge with a provision of 1 percent discount if 5 percent customers of the company enrolled in a year are from tough terrains in border and remote hilly area, and let go Rs 500 per customer charge if they meet the target.

"...the Authority reiterates its recommendations...However, the Government may adopt any additional schemes to take advantage of FSS (fixed satellite services) for faster and economical expansion of broadband services in identified hard-

to-connect areas, including but not limited to hills, border areas and islands, particularly addressing affordability of user terminals," TRAI said.

TRAI has said that if DoT's views are adopted to encourage satellite connections in border and tough terrains, then a lot of people in rural areas will be left behind in accessing satellite connectivity.

"The Authority does not concur with the DoT's proposal to charge the spectrum at the rate of 5 percent of AGR with conditional discounts for providing connectivity to hard-to-connect areas such as border/ hills/ islands," TRAI said.

The regulator said, given the relatively higher purchasing power of subscribers in urban areas compared to rural areas and hence the high demand and consumption of data in these regions, it is possible that non-geostationary orbit (NGSO)-based FSS providers may focus more on urban areas and potentially undermine the goal of bridging the digital divide in rural and remote areas.

"To address this, imposing a per subscriber charge of Rs 500 per annum in urban areas, while exempting rural and remote areas, may provide an incentive for operators to expand their services into rural and remote areas, and if required, this per subscriber charge may be reviewed in future," TRAI said.



Govt panel moots AI firms pay for content used in training models

In Indian government panel has proposed requiring AI companies to pay content creators a share of revenue for using their work to train models, a setback for companies such as OpenAI and Google that back free access to publicly available data.

The step comes as governments worldwide are fast developing regulations to resolve AI-related copyright disputes, as AI companies say they are making fair use of material generated by content owners. AI firms should be able to access Indian content for training but should pay

royalties to a central body representing copyright holders, the panel, set up in April, said in a report published yesterday, a Reuters report from New Delhi stated.

India's plan marks a sharp divergence from jurisdictions like the United States, where AI giants say training models on publicly available data constitutes "fair use" for which they should not be charged.

AI firms such as OpenAI and Google Gemini, which count India among their top user markets, did not respond to requests for comment. Industry and the

public have 30 days to challenge the Indian plan, which faces review by government officials.

OpenAI is locked in a court battle triggered by accusations from Indian news agency ANI over use of copyrighted content. The company has repeatedly denied wrongdoing and said its use of online content amounted to fair use.

While Japan gives AI firms broad exemptions for use of such content, the European Union has stricter rules that allow content owners to opt out of such use.

The Indian panel called the opt-out

model ineffective, saying it unfairly forced creators to track down their own work in massive AI datasets. Instead, if their work is used by AI platforms, they can claim funds from the centralised royalty pool.

Nasscom, an influential tech industry body that counts Google and Microsoft among its members, has formally dissented, telling the panel in comments that the mandatory fee amounts to a “tax or levy on innovation”.

The Motion Picture Association, which represents Netflix and Paramount, previously told the panel there should be no change in the copyright law, with efforts focused on licensing instead.

Meanwhile, a government statement said the panel’s working paper, now open to public consultation, can be accessed.



Paramount ups the stakes with \$108bn hostile WBD bid

Paramount Skydance’s 11th-hour, hostile \$108.4 billion bid for Warner Bros Discovery was rooted in what it considered a lack of responsiveness from Warner Bros to its ardent overtures late last week, a securities filing on Dec 08 showed.

According to a Reuters report, Paramount offered a blow-by-blow account of Paramount CEO David Ellison’s communication over months with his counterpart David Zaslav at Warner Bros in the lengthy filing, which led to Paramount bidding for Warner Bros in September. That bid was rebuffed, as were the next two that Paramount said offered improved terms.

Finally, Zaslav called Ellison on December 3 to relay concerns from Warner Bros’ board about Paramount’s bid. Later that same day, Warner Bros’ legal advisers told Paramount’s counsel that the board viewed the absence of a full backstop from Ellison’s family as a negative, despite the involvement of deep-pocketed sovereign wealth funds. They also flagged potential scrutiny from U.S. regulators.

On December 4, following a Paramount Skydance board meeting where it agreed to improve a previous offer, Ellison texted Zaslav according to the regulatory filing. “I heard you on all your concerns and believe we have addressed them in our new proposal. Please give me a call back,” Ellison told Zaslav in the text.

By mid-morning that day, Paramount sweetened its bid. But having received no response from Zaslav to his text, Ellison tried again at around 4 p.m. EST, adding a personal appeal: “It would be the honor of a lifetime to be your partner.”

Paramount’s bankers and Ellison told Warner Bros and Zaslav that their new \$30 per share offer – or \$108.4 billion

– was “not best and final,” signaling they could go higher.

But Ellison’s phone never rang. By 11 p.m. that night, media reports swirled that Warner Bros had entered exclusive talks with Netflix to sell its TV and film studios as well as the streaming business that houses HBO Max. By Friday, Netflix and Warner Bros announced a deal.

On Monday, Paramount took its offer directly to Warner Bros shareholders, heating up a bidding war whose outcome will reshape the media industry.

Asked to comment on the Paramount securities filing, Warner Bros Discovery said: “The board and the company have for months run a completely fair and transparent process with each of the bidders, and the bids speak for themselves.”

At stake in the race are some of Hollywood’s crown jewels including the Warner Bros studio, DC Comics and HBO. A deal will help Netflix extend its lead in the streaming wars, while Paramount would gain the scale in streaming to compete better with the streaming giant as well as cable assets such as CNN.

Bypassing a Warner Bros board that it says has “never engaged meaningfully,” Paramount is betting it can persuade investors that its all-cash offer tops Netflix’s \$82.7 billion enterprise bid.

Paramount’s Ellison is the son of the world’s second-richest man, Oracle co-founder Larry Ellison, who is also an ally of President Donald Trump. David Ellison has touted a quicker path to regulatory approval to investors. His Skydance Media bought Paramount Global in August, overcoming regulatory hurdles.

For its bid for Warner Bros, Paramount dropped Chinese tech firm Tencent from the investor group and secured a waiver on all governance rights from the remaining outside investors, a structure it said puts the deal outside



the jurisdiction of the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States.

Its offer is backstopped by the Ellison family and includes financing from Affinity Partners, an investment firm run by Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law, and several Middle Eastern government-run investment funds.

Warner Bros said it would review Paramount's offer, but was not yet modifying its recommendation with respect to Netflix. Netflix co-CEO Ted Sarandos said Paramount's hostile bid for Warner Bros was "entirely expected," but added that he was confident of closing the deal.

The alleged breakdown in communications between Paramount and Warner Bros Discovery marked a sharp reversal from earlier, according to Paramount's filing. The Ellisons had dined with Zaslav on November 24, discussing the benefits of a deal and potential co-CEO and co-

chairman roles for Zaslav in the combined company.

But the warmth was short-lived. Paramount alleged delays by Warner Bros in signing a "clean team" agreement needed to review sensitive data, prompting its legal counsel to warn WBD's advisers that Paramount "would be disadvantaged" without access.

Paramount also cited in its filing a CNBC interview of Warner Bros Chairman Emeritus John Malone last month where he "lamented how Paramount 'interrupted' the Warner Bros separation and discussed the merits of Netflix as a bidder."

Paramount's tender offer will be open for 20 business days and can be extended. Warner Bros has 10 days to respond. "We're here to fight for value for our shareholders and for WBD shareholders," David Ellison said on Monday.

Trump wades into Netflix-WBD deal that MPA analyses as complex

Even as US president Donald Trump waded into the Netflix, Warner Bros. Discovery deal, dampening market sentiments a bit, Singapore-based media, telecom and technology consultancy firm Media Partners Asia (MPA) dubbed the proposed marriage of two media giants as complex and challenging.

Netflix's \$72 billion Warner Bros deal has led to several price target cuts by Wall Street analysts as US President Donald Trump warned of market-share concerns, underscoring the tough scrutiny that the acquisition is likely to face, a Reuters report stated on Dec 08

The deal that combines the world's largest streaming service with HBO Max and a major Hollywood studio has also drawn criticism from bipartisan lawmakers and unions on concerns it could lead to job cuts and higher prices for consumers, Reuters emphasised.

Trump warned on Sunday (Nov. 7) while speaking at the Kennedy Center (in the US) that the combined group's enlarged market share "could be a problem" and that he will be involved in the decision.

White House economic adviser Kevin Hassett told CNBC yesterday that the US Justice Department would examine the deal's impact for "quite a while."

Netflix has agreed to a \$5.8 billion termination fee if it cannot obtain

regulatory approval, in a sign of confidence of a greenlight. To ease concerns of market concentration, it is likely to argue that the market for online video also includes YouTube and TikTok — two of the most popular platforms with hundreds of millions of users.. Hollywood unions have voiced concerns about increased market concentration, reduced film output and the potential for higher consumer costs. Rival bidder Paramount Skydance has said the deal process was biased, raising chances of a higher bid or a hostile takeover. The political dynamics may be further complicated by Warner Bros Discovery's rejection of Paramount Skydance, a studio with Trump connections, in favour of Netflix, analysts said.

MPA Says Deal Complex & Challenging: Meanwhile, Singapore-based consultancy firm Media Partners Asia, which specialises in media, telecom, sports and entertainment industries in the Asia-Pacific region said the Netflix-WBD deal is complex and challenging. "Our detailed analysis reveals a more complex, defensive, and financially engineered transaction with opportunity



and challenge," MPA said in a LinkedIn post, enumerating yesterday some of the highlights.

The MPA has identified the following issues in its analysis of the details:

The HBO Anomaly: Contrary to the "streaming-only" narrative, Netflix acquires the HBO linear pay TV channel, securing high-margin carriage fees as a cash bridge along with licensing and theatrical.

The Content Lock: Strict covenants forbid WBD from licensing away crown jewel IP during the regulatory limbo, ensuring Netflix inherits the library unencumbered.

The Tax Poison Pill: A two-year restriction on the spun-off linear networks effectively sidelines further consolidation with players like Paramount until 2028.

Asia Pacific: The deal creates a US\$6.6 billion revenue (2025 ARR) giant in APAC, likely forcing a rapid reshuffling of

alliances as local partners brace for a post-2027 licensing cliff.	entertainment spot globally.	regulatory timeline creates challenges potentially until 2027.
A New Global #1: The combined entity hits US\$70 billion pro forma ARR, eclipsing YouTube (incl. gross ads and net subs) and Disney (ex-Parks, CP & Experiences) to claim the top	The Super-Studio: Netflix secures a deep IP moat and a major US production engine.	Sacrifices: Servicing the US\$59 billion debt likely forces a pullback on live sports bidding and other forward-looking opportunities, leaving an opening for Amazon and Disney.
	Culture Clash & Limbo: Merging Freedom & Responsibility with legacy Hollywood risks a talent drain, while the 18+ month	

Is JioStar getting out of India cricket deal with ICC?

The International Cricket Council is staring at a fresh crisis ahead of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, with Reliance-controlled Reliance Industries-backed JioStar formally informing the global body that it cannot continue servicing the remaining two years of its four-year India media-rights agreement, according to an Economic Times report.



The development has put the governing body on a sticky wicket, coming at a crucial phase when preparations for the marquee tournament are gathering pace.

People familiar with the matter said the broadcaster has cited heavy financial losses as the primary reason for its decision to exit the deal midway.

The move raises immediate concerns for the ICC, which had banked heavily on the India rights cycle as a major revenue driver.

Netflix to acquire WBD for total enterprise value of \$82.7bn

Netflix and Warner Bros. Discovery (WBD) have announced a definitive agreement under which Netflix will acquire Warner Bros., along with its film and television studios, HBO and HBO Max, following the planned separation of WBD's Global Networks division, Discovery Global. According to a joint announcement, the cash-and-stock deal values the transaction at an enterprise value of \$82.7 billion and an equity value of \$72 billion, pricing each WBD share at \$27.75. The acquisition is expected to close after Discovery Global becomes a separately listed company in Q3 2026. The combination brings together some of the world's most influential storytelling powerhouses, uniting Netflix's global streaming dominance with the century-long legacy of Warner Bros., whose library includes iconic titles such as 'The Big Bang Theory', 'The Sopranos', 'Game of Thrones', 'Casablanca', 'Harry Potter' and the DC Universe. These will join Netflix's hit franchises including 'Stranger Things', 'Money Heist',

'Wednesday' and 'Bridgerton', setting the stage for what industry observers say could become the world's most robust entertainment ecosystem. Entertainment center Netflix co-CEO Ted Sarandos said the merger aligns with the company's long-held mission "to entertain the world," noting that combining Warner Bros.' classics with Netflix's global



cultural hits would "help define the next century of storytelling." His fellow co-CEO Greg Peters added that the acquisition significantly strengthens the company's production capabilities and global footprint, giving members "more options and more worlds to discover." WBD President and CEO David Zaslav called the announcement a union of "two of the greatest storytelling companies in the world," emphasizing that Warner Bros.' legacy would reach an even broader audience under the combined banner.

The companies expect the merger to expand value for subscribers by offering a larger and more diverse content library, enhance Netflix's production capacity in the U.S., and create more opportunities for creators to work across beloved intellectual properties. Netflix anticipates \$2–3 billion in cost savings by the third year of the merger and expects the deal to become accretive to GAAP earnings per share by year two.

Under the agreed terms, each WBD shareholder will receive \$23.25 in cash and \$4.50 in Netflix stock per WBD share, with a collar mechanism to account for fluctuations in Netflix's stock price prior to closing. The deal has been unanimously approved by both boards but remains subject to regulatory approvals, shareholder clearance and the completion of WBD's corporate separation.

Financial advisors on the deal include Moelis & Company for Netflix and Allen & Company, J.P. Morgan and Evercore for WBD, with leading international law firms handling the legal advisory. If closed as planned within 12–18 months, the acquisition would cement Netflix's position as the world's most influential content company, marking a landmark shift in the global entertainment landscape.

Prime Video's Nikhil Madhok calls for homegrown superhero in Indian streaming

At the CII Big Picture Summit 2025, Prime Video India's Director and Head of Originals, Nikhil Madhok, said that the next milestone for the country's streaming ecosystem could be an original, homegrown Indian superhero rooted in local culture and mythology. In a wide-ranging PowerTalk session, Madhok discussed the evolving shape of India's OTT landscape, Prime Video's creative priorities, and what makes a pitch stand out in an increasingly competitive market.

The discussion, part of CII's flagship annual gathering for the Media & Entertainment sector, unfolded as a PTI report noted strong industry interest in the platform's content strategy. In conversation with senior journalist Suhani Singh, Madhok traced Prime Video's growth story and the tectonic shifts that have shaped India's streaming audience over the last few years.

Reflecting on the service's rapid expansion, Madhok said Prime Video is currently witnessing "the maximum amount of growth" since its entry into India. He pointed out that in the past year alone, nearly 25 percent of viewers on the platform were entirely new users. Over the next 12 to

18 months, he added, Prime Video will greenlight or launch the highest number of films, series, unscripted shows, and regional titles since its inception. With more than 100 Originals in different stages of development, negotiation, or production, the service is also deepening its experiments with genre and storytelling formats.

Speaking about genre evolution on streaming, Madhok acknowledged that crime thrillers dominated the early years because they were easier to structure for binge-watching. Today, he said, creators are more confident in exploring layered narratives driven by emotional depth and rooted themes. Viewers, too, have shown a growing appetite for such stories. "You may forget a show or plot, but you won't forget how that show or story made you feel," he noted, citing titles such as 'Panchayat', 'Gram Chikitsalay' and 'Dupahiya'. He also highlighted the strong emergence of women-led narratives —

more than 80 percent of Prime Video's originals currently in the pipeline have women leading key creative roles, with 60 percent of writers' rooms featuring women.

Madhok also offered a rare inside view of Prime Video's greenlighting framework. The service receives nearly 500 to 600 pitches every month, but only a few progress because of volume and strategic needs. What stands out, he said, is a creator's conviction, clarity of intent, and the depth of world-building. Shows like 'Khauf' and 'Dupahiya' emerged from first-time showrunners whose pitch documents were strongly developed and creatively assured. Conversely, he cautioned that pitches shaped only to fit a perceived "brief" rarely resonate. "We are not looking to cast big names, we're looking to cast great talent," Madhok added, pointing to successes like

'Mirzapur' and 'Khauf', where relatively newer faces rose to prominence through performance.

He also spoke about the challenges of growing and sustaining successful franchises. While creating a hit tentpole is difficult, maintaining and expanding it is far more demanding, he said. With shows such as 'The Family Man', 'Paatal Lok', 'Panchayat', and 'Mirzapur', Prime Video has seen new seasons outperform earlier ones. 'The Family Man Season 3' set major viewership

records in 2025, becoming the service's most-watched series of the year. Over 60% of Prime Video's fiction slate has returned for additional seasons or has future instalments under development.

Madhok underlined that the platform will continue to nurture independent voices, citing acclaimed films like 'Stolen', 'In Transit', and 'Girls Will Be Girls', which reflect the service's broader commitment to creators beyond mainstream marquee names.

As he looked ahead at untapped opportunities, Madhok said one major gap remains unexplored. "We haven't told a great story of a true-blue Indian superhero," he said. With India's rich culture and mythology, he believes the streaming ecosystem is perfectly poised to create a character who is authentically Indian and capable of becoming the next major pop-cultural phenomenon.



Prasar Bharati has announced a major new initiative aimed at boosting regional language representation on DD Free Dish, unveiling a pilot scheme that will offer free MPEG-4 slots to selected regional channels till 31 March 2026.

The announcement was issued through an official press release by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting on November 28, 2025.

According to the release, the scheme specifically invites popular regional language channels—licensed and permitted by the Ministry—to apply for vacant slots on the newly upgraded MPEG-4 streams. The move forms part of Prasar Bharati's ongoing effort to improve outreach in underrepresented and unrepresented regions across the country, with a strong emphasis on promoting Schedule 8 languages (excluding Hindi and Urdu).

The broadcaster stated that channels in Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Bangla, Assamese and Odia will receive top priority under the scheme, especially where these languages are currently absent or minimally represented on DD Free Dish. Regional news channels will also be preferred over non-news channels, acknowledging the role of news in improving access, awareness and public service communication.

In a significant step, the selected regional channels will be allotted slots completely free of cost during the pilot period. This temporary arrangement will remain valid only till March 31, 2026, giving channels a unique opportunity to reach millions of households without any carriage fee.

DD Free Dish currently carries a vast and diverse bouquet of 482 television channels—including 320 DD co-branded educational channels such as PM eVidya and Swayam Prabha—along with 48 radio channels. Its lineup spans genres ranging from general entertainment and news to devotional content, movies and sports. With no monthly or annual subscription fee, DD Free Dish continues to be India's largest free-to-air DTH platform, reaching nearly 65 million households, according to Chrome Data, and serving remote, rural, border and marginalised communities.

By expanding regional language presence on the platform, Prasar Bharati aims to further strengthen its mandate of public service broadcasting—ensuring equitable access to information, education and entertainment for all sections of society.



DD Free Dish to offer free MPEG-4 slots to regional channels

Indian govt mulls moving broadcasting out of TRAI's control

The Centre or the Indian federal government is weighing a revamp of media regulation framework. According to a Storyboard18.com report today, the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting is pushing to remove broadcasting from the purview of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India.

Incidentally, the broadcasting sector was brought under the TRAI in 2004 ahead of general elections by the then government, which was led by the BJP and AB Vajpayee was the Prime Minister.

The reported cited unnamed senior government and industry officials saying the discussions have reached the

highest levels, and a formal proposal has already been initiated by the ministry to make MIB the sole regulator for the broadcasting sector.

According to the Storyboard18 report, the proposal has begun gaining traction, especially as broadcasters have long argued

that TRAI's telecom-oriented regulatory approach has led to policy friction and operational disruptions.

Officials familiar with the matter indicated that if approved, the restructuring could be implemented by mid-2026 — a timeline that many in the industry believe will finally bring clarity after years of regulatory tug-of-war.



सूचना एवं
प्रसारण मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
INFORMATION AND
BROADCASTING



Telecom Regulatory
Authority of India

Tensions between the broadcasting sector and TRAI have escalated sharply in recent months, particularly after the regulator issued show-cause notices to more than 250 broadcasters over alleged violations of the 10+2 ad-cap rule.

Telcos seek personal data rules' harmonisation, exemptions

Telecom operators expect the government to review and harmonise sector-specific regulations with the DPDP (Digital Personal Data Protection) framework to reduce ambiguity, facilitate smooth transition, and avoid duplication of processes, industry body COAI said.

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), whose members include Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea, amongst others, has sought practical exemption for minors aged 16-18 years for SIM acquisition under DPDP Rules, as establishing verifiable consent for users below 18 years of age presents practical challenges and does not adequately reflect India's diverse household structures, a PTI report.

The industry body said at the time of public consultation on DPDP Rules, it had highlighted areas like parameters for a security compliance framework, age verification methodology for verifiable consent in case of minors, and DPIA obligations for Significant Data Fiduciary (SDF), among others, where additional

clarity was required, but most of these concerns remain unaddressed.

"COAI had recommended adherence to the well-established legal principle that specific laws prevail over general laws.

A review and harmonisation of sector-specific regulations with the DPDP framework, along with clear interpretative guidance, would help minimise ambiguity and facilitate a smooth transition for all stakeholders," the industry body said.

It has expressed concern about mandatory notification for data breaches and suggested adopting a proportionate reporting model, as followed in Japan and several EU jurisdictions.

COAI said given the multiplicity of incident-reporting obligations under the IT Act, CERT-In directions, DoT guidelines and now the DPDP framework, harmonised timelines and aligned procedures are required to help avoid unnecessary duplication to ensure cohesive compliance across regulatory regimes.



"CERT-In and the Data Protection Board may consider adopting a unified breach-reporting timeline, with a single trigger and a harmonised reporting window applicable across all digital and telecom entities," the industry body said.

COAI has proposed that DPIA (Data Protection Impact Assessment) requirements under the rule can be risk-based rather than annual and prescriptive.

DPDP Rules mandate a significant data fiduciary to undertake a Data Protection Impact Assessment — an audit, to ensure effective compliance with the DPDP Act once every 12 months.

The government notified the DPDP Rules on November 14, which will become completely operational after 18 months. The rules aim to give citizens control over their data, allow them to check for misuse and protect their privacy in the online space.

Jio total subs 48.47cr, Airtel's 39.36 cr, Vi's 20.07cr: TRAI data

Reliance Jio added 19.97 lakh mobile subscribers in October this year — its highest gains among operators in India — as the telco increased user count to 48.47 crore, according to data released by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).

According to a PTI report from New Delhi yesterday, which quoted from the TRAI dataset, Bharti Airtel's wireless users grew by 12.52 lakh, bolstering the mobile subscriber tally of the Sunil Mittal-led telecom firm to 39.36 crore in October from 39.24 crore in September.

Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd onboarded 2.69 lakh mobile users during October 2025. The subscriber base of the state-owned telecom corporation rose to 9.25 crore at the end of October. Vodafone Idea lost 20.83 lakh wireless subscribers; its mobile user base dipped to 20.07 crore in October (from 20.28 crore in September).

Jio cemented its position with wireless subscriber gains at

19.97 lakh, and its mobile user base swelled to 48.47 crore in October from 48.27 crore in September.

Overall, India's total telephone subscriber base rose to 123.1 crore as of October (118.4 crore wireless and 4.6 crore wireline).

As per the information received from operators for October 2025, the total number of broadband subscribers increased to

99.98 crore at the end of October 2025 (from 99.56 crore at the end of September 2025), a growth rate of 0.42 per cent.

"The number of wireline subscribers increased...to 46.75 million at the end of October 2025. The net increase in the wireline

subscriber base was 0.14 million with a monthly growth rate of 0.30 per cent," TRAI said.

During the month, the number of wireless (mobile+fixed wireless access) subscribers increased to 118.4 crore, a growth of 0.19 per cent over September.



TV Today board panel okays FM radio biz sale to Abhijit Realtors

T.V. Today Network Ltd has taken a significant step toward exiting its FM radio operations, with the company's Special Committee of Directors approving a proposal to sell its radio business to Abhijit Realtors and Infraventures Private Limited.

The decision was finalised at a committee meeting held on 25 November 2025 and disclosed in a regulatory filing submitted under Regulation 30 of SEBI's Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements.

According to the BSE exchange note, the proposed deal covers the complete sale and transfer of T.V. Today's FM radio broadcasting operations including its stations in Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata, all operating under the 104.8 FM frequency.

The business will be sold as a going concern through Vibgyor Broadcasting Private Limited, the company's wholly owned subsidiary. The transaction remains subject to mutually agreed contractual terms and mandatory approvals from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and other regulatory bodies.

The FM radio division, which contributed Rs.14.16 crore to the company's revenue in FY 2024–25, accounted for 1.41 percent of its total turnover. Despite its presence across three major metros, the segment posted a net loss of Rs.10.54 crore during the year, strengthening the company's rationale to exit the business and focus more sharply on its core operations.

Under the commercial terms outlined in the filing, Abhijit Realtors will pay a total consideration of Rs.10 crore plus applicable taxes. Of this, Rs.5 crore will be paid at the time of signing the memorandum of understanding, while the remaining Rs.5 crore will be due within three months of the signing date. The sale is expected to be completed on or



before 31 May 2026, with provision for an extension should both parties mutually agree.

Abhijit Realtors, incorporated in 2007, operates across real estate, radio and entertainment verticals. The company is not part of T.V. Today's promoter group. Entertainment center

While the sale to the buyer is not classified as a related-party transaction, the internal transfer of the radio business to Vibgyor Broadcasting Private Limited does fall under that category. T.V. Today has clarified that the transfer will be carried out on an arm's-length basis, fully compliant with SEBI norms.

The company emphasised that the proposed transaction aligns with its strategic decision to sharpen focus on high-priority business segments and streamline operations. It also confirmed that the deal will have no impact on its shareholding pattern.

With the signing of the MOU, T.V. Today Network has formally begun the process of exiting the FM radio space, marking a notable shift in its portfolio strategy.

SC asks MIB to draft rules to pre-screen social media uploads

The Supreme Court has asked the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to prepare a draft mechanism for screening user-generated content before it is uploaded on social media, noting its potential to trigger unrest even before authorities can act, a Times of India report stated today.

The directive came during a hearing where the bench highlighted the speed at which harmful content spreads and the current statutory vacuum in regulating such posts.

According to the court, the concern is not about curbing free speech but introducing a reasonable, preventive framework. The bench of CJI Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi observed that while the right to freedom of speech is vital, it is a regulated right and cannot remain unchecked in a digital environment where objectionable or misleading content can go viral within minutes.

While associations representing broadcasters and OTT platforms argued that their self-regulatory codes were adequate, the bench questioned their efficacy, pointing out that such content continued to appear online.

The ToI report added court has given the I&B Ministry four weeks to draft and publicise the proposed guidelines, inviting objections and suggestions from the public.



Prasar Bharati publishes test report on D2M & mobile interference

Prasar Bharati has published the official test and measurement report examining concerns around interference and mobile device heating during the operation of Direct-to-Mobile (D2M) broadcast technologies in the 470–582 MHz band.

The report aims to clarify issues raised by industry stakeholders about whether D2M transmissions could disrupt telecom networks or cause abnormal thermal load on handsets.

According to Prasar Bharati, the tests were commissioned after the broadcaster received repeated queries over possible interference effects and device heating behaviour linked to D2M services. The public broadcaster has noted in its notification that these concerns surfaced during consultations following early trials. Prasar Bharati had signed an MoU with IIT Kanpur in 2019 to jointly build a roadmap for next-generation digital terrestrial broadcasting, and the latest exercise forms part of that ongoing collaboration.

IIT Kanpur had earlier conducted a small-scale Proof of Concept (PoC) on D2M next-generation broadcasting in Bengaluru along with its technology partner, followed by a hybrid PoC in Delhi involving both High Power High Tower (HPHT) and Low Power Low Tower (LPLT) systems. The Delhi trial used the Pitampura TV transmitter as the HPHT site, supported by LPLT nodes deployed across Kartavya Path.

As apprehensions grew among some stakeholders particularly regarding whether D2M services might interfere with telecom signals operating in adjacent bands or whether continuous reception might trigger unusual heating in mobile devices Prasar Bharati held multiple rounds of discussions before

asking IIT Kanpur to carry out structured, laboratory-grade tests. The broadcaster said the objective was to secure a scientific, measurable understanding of the interference profile and thermal behaviour associated with available D2M technologies in the 470–582 MHz range.

IIT Kanpur arranged for the test measurements and demonstrations of an ATSC 3.0-based D2M Broadcast Radio Head (BRH) at M/s Aracion Technology Private Limited, Bengaluru—a Telecommunication Engineering Centre (TEC)-recognised laboratory. The tests were conducted on 14 November 2025 using the ATSC-based D2M BRH model YOGA40W01.

The evaluation covered the full Terms of Reference issued by Prasar Bharati, including verification of any interference impact on telecom networks operating nearby and observation of thermal conditions on mobile devices while receiving D2M broadcast signals. While the detailed

findings have been uploaded for public access, the broadcaster noted that the study provides a formal technical assessment aimed at addressing the concerns raised. The report does not list any instances of harmful interference or abnormal heating during the controlled tests but focuses on measurement parameters, methodologies and compliance observations.

Prasar Bharati said the results will inform ongoing industry deliberations with telecom operators, device manufacturers, equipment suppliers and regulatory bodies as India explores broader adoption of D2M broadcasting. The organisation added that the initiative reflects its commitment to developing spectrum-efficient and consumer-safe broadcast technologies in partnership with national research institutions.



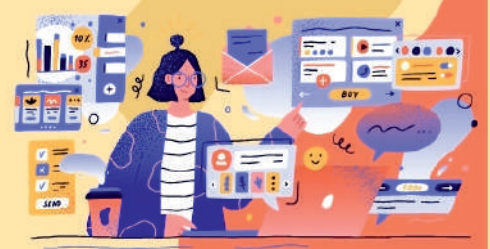
ABP News' Sr. Journalist Vibha Kaul Bhatt passes away in Mumbai

Senior journalist Vibha Kaul Bhatt, a well-known entertainment reporter and one of the prominent faces of ABP News, passed away on Nov 25 in Mumbai. She had undergone heart surgery a day earlier, but her condition reportedly deteriorated, leading to her demise. The news has left the media fraternity in deep shock and grief.

Bhatt, who built a distinguished career covering the entertainment industry for over two decades, was widely respected for her sharp reporting, credible storytelling and deep connections within the film and television world. Her work at ABP News made her a familiar and trusted face for millions of viewers who followed celebrity news, cinema coverage and industry developments.



THE CONTENT ENGINE



GTPL Hathway unveils 'GTPL Infinity', new satellite-based HITS platform

GTPL Hathway Limited, India's largest Digital Cable TV provider and a leading broadband operator, has announced the launch of its new Headend in the Sky (HITS) platform, GTPL Infinity, marking a major upgrade in digital broadcasting and satellite-based content distribution across the country. According to the company's announcement, the platform is powered by one of the world's largest C-Band teleport setups, located in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. Backed by this infrastructure, GTPL Infinity is designed to deliver nearly 800 channels, including around 100 HD channels, to partners and viewers across India with seamless reliability.

The company added that this initiative aligns with the government's Digital Bharat vision by enabling robust, high-quality signal delivery even in remote areas.

The launch report states that GTPL Infinity uses multiple C-Band transponders on satellite Telkom-4, through a partnership with Asia's leading satellite operator PT TelkomSat Satellite, Indonesia. By transitioning to this advanced delivery system, GTPL aims to reduce operational costs, expand reach, and create new monetization opportunities through content partnerships and regional market growth.

With GTPL Infinity, digital service providers—including LMOs, LCOs, MSOs, and commercial establishments—will be



able to go live quickly using a single dish antenna and minimal infrastructure investment. The company said the new platform ensures high uptime, superior signal quality, and low maintenance requirements due to the use of advanced equipment.

The platform also allows GTPL and its partners to offer a wide suite of services beyond cable TV, including high-speed broadband, bundled OTT services, and cloud gaming, creating an integrated entertainment and connectivity ecosystem.

Highlighting the transformative potential of the platform, GTPL Hathway Managing Director Anirudhsinh Jadeja said, "GTPL Infinity represents a significant milestone in our journey to modernize and democratize content delivery across India. By leveraging one of the world's largest C-Band teleport infrastructures, we are not only scaling our operational capabilities but also unlocking new

efficiencies for our partners—enabling faster deployment, broader reach, and superior signal quality. This is not just a technological upgrade—it's a national enabler for digital equity and growth."

Vishal Mathur, Managing Partner of VMCLLP and authorized representative of PT TelkomSat in India, added that the collaboration will help expand television access across rural and semi-urban regions. "India's broadcast landscape is undergoing a dynamic transformation, and our partnership with GTPL marks a pivotal step in expanding digital television access. GTPL is well-positioned to scale its HITS platform and deliver reliable, carrier-grade services nationwide," he said.

With nationwide scalability, expansive content capacity, and a focus on bridging digital gaps, GTPL Infinity is set to emerge as a significant force in India's broadcasting and connectivity landscape.



A novel way of receiving and distributing ~800 Digital TV channels with **Single Dish Antenna and Minimal Investment.**

ONE SERVICE, MANY BENEFITS



PAN-INDIA AVAILABILITY



LOW MAINTENANCE



RAPID DEPLOYMENT



HIGH RELIABILITY & UPTIME



COST-EFFICIENT OPERATIONS



FAST RESPONSE

Email us at partner-us@gtpl.net OR Give a Missed Call on **8425 88 4643** For more information and to submit inquiry click here

JioHotstar to invest \$444mn over 5 years in South Indian content

India's JioHotstar plans to invest \$444 million over five years to acquire and produce content from South India, an executive said on Dec 09, as the Walt Disney and Reliance Industries-owned streaming platform seeks to capitalize on growing demand for regional cinema.

The expansion, according to a Reuters report from Chennai, comes at a time when the Mumbai-based Hindi film industry is struggling to regain its allure in the world's most-populous country even as South Indian films gain wider acceptance locally and globally, rivaling Hindi films' box-office performance.

"To reiterate our belief in this market, we are committed to spend 40 billion rupees ... over the (next) 5 years on JioHotstar," said Krishnan Kutty, the head of entertainment for southern India at JioStar, the Reliance-Disney joint venture that runs the streaming platform.

JioHotstar, which has more than 200 million subscribers and competes with Amazon's Prime Video and Netflix in India, plans to more than double the number of subscribers, including through regional and influencer-based content. It did not provide a timeline.

South India has four widely spoken languages, each with a vibrant film industry: Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam. Consumers in southern Indian states spend 70 percent more time on

JioHotstar, whose cheapest plan costs as little as 50 rupees (about 50 US cents) a month, Kutty said. JioHotstar will invest in series and movies from the region and also expand its portfolio of non-scripted content, Kutty said. Movies that have already been released in cinemas will make up most of its investments in films, he said.

When asked about the impact of Netflix's deal to acquire Warner Bros Discovery's TV, film studios and streaming business, Sushant Sreeram (in the file photo), the chief marketing officer at JioStar, said the partnership with Warner Bros will "continue till its end date." He did not disclose the date.

Paramount Skydance has since launched a hostile bid for Warner Bros Discovery for \$v 108 billion after Netflix announced last Friday a deal to acquire WBD.

Meanwhile, a PTI report from Chennai quoted Sreeram as saying that the investment forms part of a broader collaboration with the Tamil Nadu government.

The event was attended by Tamil Nadu Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin and veteran actor-politician Kamal Haasan among other prominent personalities from South cinema.

'Pharma' Trailer Drops: JioHotstar has unveiled the trailer for its upcoming Malayalam web series 'Pharma', which also marks the return of acclaimed actor Rajit Kapur to Malayalam content after nearly ten years.

The series, written and directed by P. R. Arun and produced by Krishnan Sethukumar under the Moviee Mill banner, traces the life and evolving phases of K.P. Vinod, a medical representative navigating a world shaped by ambition, pressure and personal choices.

According to a press release from the streamer, 'Pharma' promises a layered narrative anchored by Kapur's performance, supported by a strong ensemble cast. The series brings together Binu Pappu, Narain, Shruti Ramachandran, Veena Nandakumar, Muthumani and Aalekh Kapoor in pivotal roles. With Sreejith Sarang handling the editing and

Abinandhan Ramanujam behind the camera, the show aims to deliver a polished and immersive viewing experience. The trailer hints at a tense and emotional exploration of the pharmaceutical world through the journey of its protagonist, offering viewers a mix of drama, conflict and introspection. The makers have positioned the series as a

character-driven story that delves into the complexities of professional and personal life, making Kapur's return a notable highlight for Malayalam audiences.

Streamer Names Debasmita Ghosh as VP-Agency Biz: JioHotstar has appointed Debasmita Ghosh as its new vice-president for agency business, with the Bengaluru-based executive stepping into the role after a successful two-year stint at Disney+ Hotstar.

At Disney+Hotstar, she served as director and head of agency relations, leading strategic sales teams and strengthening the platform's proposition for advertisers across categories.

According to her LinkedIn update, Ghosh played a key role at Disney+ Hotstar in shaping revenue growth by managing high-level partnerships, scaling engagement with large enterprise agencies and more than 500 mid-tier and SMB partners. Her efforts also contributed to expanding the company's digital, impact and content-led offerings, backed by sustained collaboration with India's advertising ecosystem.



JioStar–Nielsen study redefines cross-screen advertising during IPL 2025



JioStar in collaboration with Nielsen has unveiled the findings of its first-ever Cross-Screen Measurement Study conducted during TATA IPL 2025.

The study, which examined audience behaviour across Linear TV (LTV), Connected TV (CTV) and mobile, delivers unprecedented clarity on how consumers engage with live sports across platforms. According to a Nielsen press release, evaluated the campaigns of five major brands across key sectors including carbonated beverages, consumer durables, automobiles, fintech and FMCG. This diverse brand mix ensured that results reflect both impulse-driven and high-consideration categories, making the findings broadly relevant for advertisers planning large-scale sports investments. According to the study, the digital campaigns (covering CTV, mobile and other digital formats) were tagged for volumetric and reach reporting and calibrated against Nielsen demographics using JioStar's first-party data. CTV co-viewing was corrected through co-viewing factors supplied by JioStar, while de-duplication across screens was derived using profile overlap analytics. A unified three-screen reach was then further de-duplicated against TV using

survey-based measurement.

One of the most striking insights is the exceptionally low audience overlap of under 5 percent across LTV, CTV and mobile. This signals that each screen independently contributes to incremental reach, proving that cross-screen advertising on JioStar's platforms offers unduplicated and highly efficient exposure for brands.

Calling the study a "game changer", JioStar's Chief Revenue Officer – Sports, Anup Govindan, said that the findings demonstrate with scientific precision how advertisers can expand reach during live sports without wastage. He added that the study establishes a blueprint for the future of sports advertising by combining scale, data science and technology to help brands meet business goals more effectively.

Akhil Parekh, Chief Product Officer at Nielsen, said the collaboration marks India's first deduplicated cross-screen measurement initiative, offering advertisers a unified audience view at a time when media consumption is increasingly fragmented. He noted that the work sets new benchmarks for global markets as well, equipping brands with deeper insights to optimise their

investments across TV and digital.

Among the notable outcomes, the study found that unified cross-screen media plans added 20 to 40 percent incremental reach across all categories and budget levels analysed. Advanced digital targeting further reduced duplication, in some cases bringing overlaps close to just 1 percent. This positions cross-screen planning as significantly more efficient compared to siloed strategies traditionally adopted by brands.

The measurement framework relied on Nielsen's digital trackers, BARC television data and Nielsen's proprietary de-duplication methodology, which combines analytics with available datasets to deliver a coherent audience picture. Since Nielsen's India cross-media solution is yet to be introduced, this exercise was undertaken as a custom project for JioStar.

As live sports continues to be one of the most powerful real-time engagement drivers, this initiative marks a significant shift toward transparent, measurable and unified audience planning in India. It sets the stage for a new era of cross-platform brand storytelling backed by data, expanded in reach and optimised for stronger impact across screens.

Dish TV launches lifetime free tech service for customers

In a significant move aimed at elevating customer experience, expense.

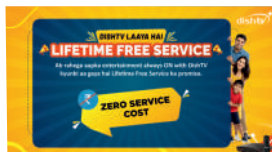
Dish TV India has introduced its 'Lifetime Free Service Visit' initiative, positioning it as a first-of-its-kind offering in the DTH industry. The new feature directly addresses long-standing consumer concerns around charges levied for technician's visit at customer's premises.

According to a Dish TV press release issued yesterday, the company has eliminated all service visit charges for its customers. Traditionally, DTH operators levy fees ranging between Rs.200 and Rs.250 for technician visits at homes. Dish TV's

revised mechanism now requires subscribers to simply recharge their account with Rs.200, which is then added entirely to their Dish TV balance. This effectively ensures that users incur no cost for service requests, allowing them to receive assistance without any additional out-of-pocket

expense. Earlier, every technician visit required customers to pay a service fee, making after-sales support a recurring burden for many households. With this shift, Dish TV aims to streamline and simplify the support process, offering greater value by ensuring that users continue to enjoy uninterrupted service without worrying about ancillary charges, the company explained.

Manoj Dobhal, CEO & Executive Director of Dish TV India, said in a statement, "At Dish TV, our customers have always been our top priority. This Lifetime Free Service Visit is our way of acknowledging the value of our customers and making after-sales service truly hassle-free. By linking it to a nominal Rs. 200 recharge, we're not just adding value — we're building trust and ensuring uninterrupted service for our users across the country."



At IFFI, 'Sholay's director Ramesh Sippy goes down memory lane

Cinema lovers were yesterday transported back in time as filmmaker Ramesh Sippy, creator of the iconic Hindi film 'Sholay', took the audience on a riveting journey through the movie's history at an 'In-Conversation' session at the 56th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in Goa. Online movie streaming services

The session, titled "50 Years of Sholay: Why Sholay Still Resonates?", was hosted by Sippy's wife and actor-producer Kiran Sippy. It was a session filled with nostalgia, revelations and heartfelt tributes as the ace filmmaker reflected on the making of a film that became nothing short of a cultural milestone, stated an official gist of the session put out by the organisers.

Sippy also shared one of the most eagerly awaited announcements for cinephiles: the re-release of 'Sholay' with its original ending intact.

When the film first released in 1975 during the Emergency period imposed by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the then film certification board objected to the climax where Thakur Baldev Singh (Sanjeev Kumar) kills Amjad Khan's Gabbar Singh using his spiked shoes. Reason: the CBFC insisted a police officer could not be portrayed seeking revenge.

Reluctantly, the filmmaker and his team had to reshoot the ending. "Now you will see the movie as it was made," an elated Sippy told the audience, celebrating the long-overdue restoration of his creative vision.

The director described how he sought a completely new visual palette for the film. At a time when Hindi cinema's dacoit dramas were mostly shot in Rajasthan and the Chambal valley, Sippy scouted and discovered rugged terrain near Mysuru and Bengaluru in South India. The rocky backdrop gave 'Sholay' a distinctive look never seen before in Indian cinema.

This setting also added an unusual contrast — Gabbar Singh, with

his raw Uttar Pradesh accent, terrorizing a landscape in South India. Speaking about Khan's unforgettable portrayal, Sippy revealed that Danny Denzongpa was the original choice, but was unavailable due to overseas shooting commitments.

Khan, recommended by film's writer duo Salim-Javed, impressed Sippy with his theatrical prowess, and the rest is cinematic history.

The filmmaker also noted that the screenwriting duo had initially pitched a two-line concept to Manmohan Desai, who was not impressed. But the Sippy father-son duo (GP Sippy and son Ramesh) immediately recognized its potential.

Sippy revealed that within a month the screenplay was complete, and a mercurial villain was born when he told Salim-Javed that he wanted a character who was unpredictably dangerous. That is how Hindi cinema got one of its finest villains of all times.

Reflecting on the passage of time, Sippy grew emotional remembering the towering actors of the film who were no longer amongst them. He paid heartfelt tribute to

Sanjeev Kumar, Khan and Dharmendra (who essayed Viru), who passed away recently.

In a touching anecdote, Sippy recalled how dedicated Dharmendra was during shoots. Dwelling on a horse-riding action sequence, where the saddle slipped and the actor fell, Sippy said his heart "stopped for a moment", but added: "Dharamji just stood up, dusted himself off, and was ready to go again. He always wanted to push himself and try new things."

Sippy emphasized that 'Sholay' was a product of extraordinary teamwork. Out of the many firsts introduced in and by the film, he said one being that it was the first Indian film to bring in a professional fight sequence team from the United Kingdom. It pioneered safety protocols for action scenes in Hindi cinema, informed Kiran Sippy.



IFFI OTT jury feel streaming reshaping India's creative culture

The jury of the Indian Panorama Web Series (OTT) section at the 56th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in Goa, created to mirror India's rapidly evolving and increasingly dynamic storytelling landscape, were of the opinion that streaming services were not only liberating stories from confines of formula, but were reshaping the creative realm.

Addressing the media yesterday in Goa, jury chairperson Bharatbala, along with distinguished members Shekhar Das, Munjal Shroff and Rajeshwari Sachdev, reflected on the expanding universe of

digital narratives and the profound ways in which OTT platforms were reshaping India's creative culture, an official statement from the festival organisers stated.

Their insights traced not only the shifting grammar of contemporary storytelling but also the growing appetite for authentic, diverse and boundary-pushing content among audiences across the country.

Speaking about the tectonic shift ushered in by OTT platforms, Bharatbala described the medium as "a space that has liberated stories from the confines of



formula and convention." He noted that while many social dramas and regional narratives once vanished from cinema halls, OTT platforms have revived them with renewed energy.

"India is as diverse as a continent. OTT

allows us to tell stories of our neighbours, our local environments, our immediate society — stories that would otherwise never surface. This format helps new talent breathe and experiment, allowing gems to rise from grassroots creativity into mainstream cinema,” he observed. While emphasising the global reach of Indian stories in the streaming era, he said, “Once you put your work on an Amazon or Netflix, it’s global. We must encourage our storytellers to sharpen their craft so our narratives remain rooted, authentic, and yet universal in appeal.”

Reflecting on the influx of unconventional creators — from engineers to self-taught filmmakers — he urged a return to emotional nuance and sensitivity in storytelling.

Veteran filmmaker Das spoke about the artistic responsibilities of digital creators.

Calling OTT an exciting extension of cinema, he noted how the format enables immersive explorations of complex social realities.

“Art reflects the conflicts of society,” he said, praising the web series selections for their depth, diversity and honest portrayal of contemporary India. He likened watching an eight-episode series to “experiencing eight independent films,” highlighting the effort and cinematic rigour behind long-form storytelling.

Producer and director Shroff described the OTT revolution as “the democratisation of distribution.” With gatekeeping diminishing and audience choice expanding, he noted that viewers now reward sincerity over stardom.

“It’s refreshing to see creators boldly experimenting across genres. Thanks to OTT and YouTube, filmmakers have the

freedom to tell unconventional stories without worrying about box office formulas or television restrictions,” he remarked.

He added that the paradigm of content consumption has changed dramatically, with viewers consciously choosing diverse, sometimes challenging narratives.

Actor Rajeshwari Sachdev highlighted the intimate relationship between viewers and their screens. “With stories streaming into our palms, the appetite for new perspectives has grown,” she observed. She cited a series on prison life to illustrate how once-taboo subjects were now being explored with honesty and humanity. “These stories might not have made it to the big screen earlier, but today they are being told and watched with curiosity and compassion,” she flagged.

WAVES Film Bazaar ends with high-value biz leads, MoUs

WAVES Film Bazaar 2025, organized alongside the 56th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in Goa, concluded on a high note, reaffirming India’s position as a rising global hub for film production, collaboration and market expansion, organisers said yesterday in an official statement.

This year’s Bazaar edition witnessed exceptional international participation, landmark partnerships, and unmatched opportunities for content creators, distributors and industry professionals, the government statement added.

This year, 2,500+ delegates from 40+ countries participated in the five-day market, marking one of the largest international gatherings at a South Asian film market. A total of 320 projects were showcased across the Viewing Room, Co-Production Market, Screenwriters’ Lab and Market Screenings, representing 15+ countries and demonstrating strong global interest in India’s content ecosystem.

WAVES Film Bazaar 2025 facilitated a dynamic environment for networking, collaborations and deal-making as over 1,200 one-to-one closed-door business meetings were held with 220+ buyers from across the world.

Substantive business discussions and negotiations worth over Rs.1050 crore were reported, according to the statement, reflecting the growing influence of the platform in enabling global partnerships. Over 320 closed-door project discussions were held with a valuation of over Rs. 750 crore.

Projects worth over Rs.200 crore were discussed in open meetings by the delegates, while MoUs worth Rs. 100 crore were signed on the sidelines of the event.

In a landmark development, WAVES Film Bazaar 2025 facilitated the signing of four key memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with media & entertainment sector firms based in Australia, greatly enhancing bilateral cooperation across education, distribution, talent development and festival exchanges.

These MoUs include those between IFFI, NFDC and the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne, and Deakin University, Film and Television Institute of India (FTII, Pune) and Indian Institute of Creative Technologies (IICT Mumbai). PTC Punjabi has partnered with Australian production company Temple to co-present three Punjabi language feature films under the Australia-India co-production treaty. The estimated valuation of the projects are said to be over USD 7 million.

WAVES Film Bazaar 2025 also served as a catalyst for deeper international cooperation, hosting high-level government-to-government (G2G) and commission-to-commission meetings with delegations from Australia, South Africa, Spain, Finland, Russia, UK and New Zealand.

These outcomes underline WAVES Film Bazaar’s emergence as one of South Asia’s most influential film markets, offering unmatched access to Indian and international storytellers, producers, distributors, and investors, the statement stressed.



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ZEE forays into kids' entertainment via KidZ on ZEE5

Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd. (ZEEL) has officially stepped into the kids entertainment genre with the launch of KidZ, a new offering on its digital platform ZEE5, starting November 24, The Economic Times reported.

The service is designed to deliver engaging, safe and enriching content that both educates and entertains young viewers, strengthening the platform's family-oriented content strategy.

Through a dedicated profile available across devices, 'KidZ' will offer access to more than 140 titles in multiple languages, with fresh content releasing every Friday.

The ET report quoted Chandan Khandelwal, Business Head – Kids Division, ZEE5 India & Global, as saying that KidZ aims to become more than just a screen-based experience, with the target also being a gamut of fresh originals that will be offered in future.

The initiative also aligns with ZEEL's long-term strategy outlined in its May 2025 investor presentation, where the company identified kids entertainment as a high-potential, value-accretive segment, the ET report added.



Grammy-nominated Acyuta Gopi to perform at IFFI closing

Grammy-nominated devotional singer Acyuta Gopi will headline the closing ceremony of the 56th International Film Festival of India (IFFI), the organisers announced.

The New York-based singer, known globally for her devotional music and kirtan tracks such as 'Radhe Govinda', 'Lagan Tumse Laga Baithe' and 'Tu Bas Gaya Kitni Dur', will present a specially curated act for the festival finale on Friday (Nov. 28), a PTI report from Panaji stated yesterday.

Sanjay Jaju, Secretary in the Information & Broadcasting Ministry, said in a statement that the growing interest of young audiences in spiritual and devotional music made Gopi a natural choice for the cultural showcase.

"As part of the cultural programme for IFFI's closing ceremony, we felt it fitting to invite Acyuta Gopi, whose Krishna bhajans have a unique way of bringing communities together. I am confident her performance will offer audiences a refreshing and memorable experience," he added.

Gopi will also appear in WAVES OTT's (Prasar Bharati's streaming platform) special showcase, performing alongside select winners from last year's Create India Challenge.

Stories of Memory, Resilience, Survival: At IFFI 2025 yesterday in Goa, audiences were treated to a rare glimpse into the lives of people often left on the margins—

through the cinematic lenses of Colombia and Mozambique. The press interaction with the makers of 'Forensics' and 'Ku Handza' offered a masterclass in storytelling that is as much about memory and resilience as it is about art, an official statement from the organisers of the festival stated.

Federico Atehortúa Arteaga's 'Forensics' is a bold, experimental film that threads three narratives together: a female director reconstructing the life of a deceased transgender woman, filmmaker's family grappling with a missing relative and the testimony of forensic pathologist Karen Quintero.

The result is a film where the personal becomes political, exploring Colombia's turbulent past and the scars left by disappearances.

Federico spoke passionately about the real-life connections that drive his work. "This is the story of many in Columbia. Everyone in the country knows someone who has gone missing. After the screenings of this movie, people would raise their hands saying, 'My uncle, my brother...' Some even cried," he recalled, "It's humbling to see a story reach people in such a deep way.

For Federico, the research done for the film was as challenging as it was vital, and the film became a platform for those searching for the disappeared to find a sense of solidarity.

Across the globe, 'Ku Handza', produced



by Jacinta Maria De Barros Da Mota Pinto and Rui César De Oliveira Simões, brought a different flavour of reality.

Set in Mozambique, the film follows ordinary people navigating extraordinary circumstances: Benjamin scrambling to fund his son's birthday, Filimone balancing family and wartime duties and Eulália returning to work at a landfill just days after giving birth.

Jacinta explained that the film's authenticity comes from its people, as they are not actors but real lives woven into a cinematic narrative. "Mozambique became a second home for the director. We wanted to portray these lives honestly, as if we were one among them," she said.

Both films, though rooted in distinct realities, converge in their ability to give voice to the unheard. 'Forensics' unpacks the grief and political turmoil of Colombia, while 'Ku Handza' captures the resilience and everyday heroism of Mozambican life.

WAVES Film Bazaar '25 wraps up with momentum at IFFI

The Waves Film Bazaar 2025 wrapped up with a grand closing ceremony at the 56th International Film Festival of India (IFFI), marking the end of five vibrant days filled with collaboration, creativity and breakthrough cinematic showcases.

According to a press release from the organisers, the event once again proved to be a dynamic meeting ground for global filmmakers, funders, industry leaders and emerging talent.

The evening brought together an impressive lineup of dignitaries, including Joint Secretaries of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Dr. Ajay Nagabhushan MN and Dr. K. K. Nirala, Managing Director of NFDC Prakash Magdum, Advisor of Waves Film Bazaar Jerome Paillard, Festival Director Shekhar Kapur, celebrated filmmakers Rajkumar Hirani and Sriram Raghavan, and international actor Rachel Griffiths. The ceremony opened on an emotional note with a one-minute silence observed in honour of legendary actor Dharmendra, recognising his immeasurable contribution to Indian cinema.

In his address, Dr. Ajay Nagabhushan announced that the 20th edition of WAVES Film Bazaar will see an expanded version, promising larger engagement and enhanced opportunities for filmmakers. Prakash Magdum highlighted the strong impact of previously selected projects and reaffirmed NFDC's commitment to nurturing independent minds and giving emerging creators a platform to grow. A special wrap-up video showcasing the best moments of the five-day event set the celebratory tone for the evening.

This year's edition recognised excellence across multiple sections including the Co-Production Market, Work-in-Progress Lab, Script Lab and the newly introduced AI-driven categories. 'Kakthet' ('Idiot') won the First Co-Production Grant of \$10,000, while 'Ulta' (Madam) secured the Second Co-Production Grant of \$5,000. 'Simhastha Kumbh' received a Special Documentary Grant worth \$5,000. Projects such as 'The Manager', 'Azhi' and 'Ustad Bantoo'

were honoured with the Red Sea Fund Awards, while 'Nazma Ka Tadka' was awarded the Platoon One Script Development Grant. The Casting Company Awards went to 'Teacher's Pet' and 'White Guy', with 7 to 7 winning the UCCN City of Film Best Project Award.

In the post-production segment, several standout projects including 'Khoriya', 'Azhi', 'The Ink Stained Hand' and the 'Missing Thumb', 'Born Yesterday', 'Aakkaatti' and 'Khamosh Nazar Aate Hain' received major support from Nube Studios, Prasad Corporation, Moviebuff and other industry partners. Additional recognitions included the Matchbox GAP Award for Echoes of the

Herd, M5 Global Film Fund support for 'Soul Whispers', and the Reborn India Theatrical Distribution Award presented to 'Chingam'. Online movie streaming services

A landmark addition to this year's festival was the AI Film Festival and CinemAI Hackathon, powered by LTIMindtree, marking a global first in exploring AI's role in storytelling. With entries from over 18 countries, the awards celebrated innovation across categories. 'KYRA' won Best AI Animation, 'The Cinema That Never Was' was honoured as the Most Innovative AI Film, and Nagori won Best AI Short. Special mentions included 'The Last Backup Final Part' and 'Miracle on the Kachua Beach'. The CinemAI Hackathon recognised talent across sound, visuals, storytelling and innovation, with 'The

Red Crayon' winning Best AI Film.

The spotlight on emerging talent continued with the Student Producer's Workshop, celebrating exceptional young creators such as Kaashviy Ommkaar, Aniket Joshi, Radhika Kinare, Riya Varghese and Sakshi Mishra—underscoring the bright future of Indian cinema.

The ceremony concluded with a warm Vote of Thanks delivered by Vineeta Mishra, Head of Waves Film Bazaar, followed by a celebratory stage appearance by the festival team. With strong participation, strategic partnerships and visionary storytelling at its core, Waves Film Bazaar 2025 ends on a powerful note, setting the stage for an even bigger and more ambitious edition in 2026.



India showcases global co-production strength at IFFI roundtable

India reaffirmed its ambition to emerge as the "studio of the world" as the International Film Festival of India (IFFI) hosted a high-level Ambassadors' Roundtable on Friday, bringing together envoys and senior diplomats to explore deeper collaborations in filmmaking, co-production, and creative-economy partnerships. The meeting, held on November 21 in Goa, focused on strengthening cultural and technological synergy with partner nations. According to a PIB press release, the roundtable was designed as a dedicated platform for



India and participating countries to

exchange ideas on expanding bilateral audio-visual cooperation, easing regulatory frameworks, and enhancing cross-border creative mobility. The discussion centred on co-production treaties, economic opportunities in the creative sector, and the growing potential of India's talent and technology landscape.

Delivering the welcome remarks, Sanjay Jaju, Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, highlighted the rapid expansion of India's media ecosystem and its emergence as an increasingly attractive production hub. He said the dialogue would "help in strengthening cultural ties and deepening partnerships," pointing to India's multilingual creative workforce, world-class animation and VFX studios, and diverse outdoor locations that allow global stories to be told with authenticity and scale. Jaju also urged delegates to engage with the WAVES Film Bazaar, IFFI's flagship marketplace, and noted that working with India offers unparalleled

access to a vast global diaspora.

Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Dr. L. Murugan, who chaired the session, underscored co-production as "the most powerful avenue for strengthening audio-visual cooperation." He said India's media and entertainment sector is expected to reach USD 31.6 billion in 2025, driven by rapid growth in next-generation production technologies. Dr. Murugan highlighted how bilateral agreements streamline permissions, enhance talent mobility, and create smoother pathways for joint content development. He also referred to India's strengthened anti-piracy measures, enabled through collaboration with MeITY, MHA and the Ministry of Law, aimed at creating a more secure environment for global productions.

In a detailed presentation that followed, Shruti Rajkumar, Consultant at NFDC, outlined India's evolving anti-piracy ecosystem, including new technological tools and policy mechanisms aimed at curbing digital leakages and safeguarding

creators' rights.

Ambassadors and diplomats from Cuba, Nepal, Israel, Guyana, Australia, Ireland, Morocco, Togo and Côte d'Ivoire participated in the roundtable, sharing insights into their national film industries and expressing strong interest in co-producing with India's creative and technical talent pool. Many highlighted India's strengths in post-production, visual effects and storytelling, noting that expanding partnerships would mutually enrich cinematic cultures across regions. The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks by Rajesh Parihar, Director (XPD), Ministry of External Affairs, who acknowledged the contributions of the diplomats and reiterated India's commitment to fostering a collaborative global audio-visual environment. With renewed interest from partner countries, the Ambassadors' Roundtable at IFFI 2025 marked a significant step toward building stronger bilateral ties and shaping a shared future for international storytelling.

IFFI Day2: India's creative potentials were on display

The second day of the 56th India International Film Festival (IFFI) 2025 in Goa yesterday witnessed a dynamic blend of global cinematic exchange, emerging talent showcases, high-level diplomatic engagement and vibrant cultural conversations.

A series of key events—including the inauguration of the Masterclass Series, launch of Creative Minds of Tomorrow (CMOT) 2025, the Ambassadors' Roundtable, a dialogue on cinema, and a star-studded red carpet—highlighted IFFI's growing stature as a premier international festival.

Federal Minister of State for Information & Broadcasting L. Murugan inaugurated the Masterclass Series at Kala Academy in Goa in the presence of senior officials and noted film personalities, according to an official statement.

For the first time, the inauguration was opened to the general public, reflecting IFFI's commitment to wider accessibility. Participants from Australia, Japan, Germany, and Canada have joined the segment.

The fifth edition of Creative Minds of Tomorrow (CMOT) commenced with 125 emerging filmmakers participating in an intensive 48-hour filmmaking challenge.

Dr. Murugan encouraged participants to harness the high-



pressure environment to refine their craft and highlighted initiatives such as the new Indian Institute of Creative Technologies in Mumbai, aimed at strengthening the country's creative economy and supporting next-generation talent.

The red-carpet segment continued to be a major attraction, with renowned cinema personalities attending gala premieres of films at the festival. Designed to connect audiences with filmmakers, the segment showcased world, Asia and India films, adding glamour and vibrancy to the festival atmosphere.

IFFI hosted an Ambassadors' Roundtable with diplomats from partner nations to explore enhanced cooperation in co-production, technology partnerships, and regulatory facilitation.

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Secretary Sanjay Jaju highlighted India's emergence as a global

production hub, while Dr. Murugan underscored co-production as a key pillar of audio-visual collaboration. Jaju noted the projected growth of India's media and entertainment sector is pegged at USD 31.6 billion in 2025, supported by advancements in VFX, animation and anti-piracy measures through inter-ministerial coordination. A special In-Conversation session featuring Muzaffar Ali and Shaad Ali offered insights into Indian cinema across generations. The interaction, preceded by a felicitation by Ravi Kottarakara, presented a rich dialogue on memory, creativity, and evolving artistic practices.

Murugan: Film Bazaar 'bridge between creators, producers'

The WAVES Film Bazaar, South Asia's global film market, opened Nov 21 in Panjim, Goa with an inspiring inaugural ceremony attended by a distinguished gathering of leaders, policymakers, filmmakers and global delegates.

Held annually alongside the prestigious International Film Festival of India (IFFI), the 19th edition of the Film Bazaar, now rebranded as the Waves Film Bazaar, serves as a global meeting point for filmmakers, producers, sales agents, festival programmers, and distributors seeking creative and financial partnerships. The market is scheduled from November 20 to 24.

According to an official statement put out by the government yesterday, the Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting L. Murugan, while inaugurating the Bazaar, spoke about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for

making India a global hub of film production.

Calling it a "bridge between creators and producers", the Minister praised the Bazaar platform for empowering young voices and new storytellers, noting the participation of 124 new creators in the bazaar this year and reaffirming its role in taking Indian culture and content to the world.

In his opening remarks, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting secretary Sanjay Jaju described the WAVES Film Bazaar as the natural and fitting beginning to IFFI's celebrations. He called it a "complete ecosystem of screenings, masterclasses, and technology showcases," and emphasised how the new identity of WAVES aligns with the Prime Minister's vision of "converting art into commerce."

He, according to the statement, highlighted the world's first e-marketplace for



filmmakers and stressed that WAVES is "connecting creators and countries, making India a meeting point for global collaboration". He enumerated the wide array of curated projects, cash grants and structured feedback processes, while also spotlighting India's first-ever AI Film Festival and Hackathon as essential steps toward embracing the future of cinematic technology.

Those who were present during the bazaar inaugural ceremony included MIB Additional Secretary Prabhat, who gave a vote of thanks; IFFI Festival Director and celebrated filmmaker Shekhar Kapur, actors Nandamuri Balakrishna and Anupam Kher; Jerome Paillard, Advisor to Waves Bazaar; Garth Davis, Australian film director Prakash Magdum, NFDC MD. Guest of Honour Ms. Jaewon Kim, Member of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea, applauded the organisers for their commitment and consistency since the first edition of the festival. Expressing hopes for active collaboration between India and Korea, she also delivered a soulful rendition of India's national song Vande Mataram, drawing warm applause and standing ovation from the audience.

IFFI opening turns Goa streets into open-air cultural carnival

The 56th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) opened its 2025 edition yesterday in Goa with an unprecedented, citywide celebration that spilled out of auditoriums and onto the streets. In its first-ever open-city format, the festival transformed public spaces into live performance arenas, blending cinema, culture and community participation.

Officials described the move as a bold reinvention aimed at

bringing IFFI "closer to the people" and marking a dramatic new chapter in the festival's legacy.

For the opening event, according to an official statement, artists, performers and cinephiles converged across Goa's streets and boulevards, turning the state into what organisers dubbed a "living canvas" of storytelling and creativity.

The government said the reimagined format was designed to

showcase India's cultural dynamism while giving visitors and residents an immersive festival experience beyond traditional venues.

Inaugurating the celebrations, Goa Governor Ashok Gajapati Raju hailed IFFI's expanding global stature, calling it a platform that fosters creative exchange, collaboration and cinematic excellence.

Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant highlighted the State's growing status as an international filmmaking hub, underscoring its world-class infrastructure and film-friendly policies. He said the 2025



theme, 'Convergence of Creativity and Technology', reflects India's leadership in the global creative economy.

Union Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting L. Murugan said IFFI continues to evolve with each edition, noting that this year's street-level inauguration marks a departure from its traditional stadium openings. He linked the festival's expanding scope to Prime Minister Modi's push for India's orange economy driven by content, creativity and culture, and highlighted initiatives such as the World Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit.

IFFI to dazzle with innovations: opening parade, inflatable theatres

Even as the 56th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) is set to unveil a spectacle, starting on Nov 20, innovations are being trumpeted and celebrated too. Classic films, including some of Shah Rukh Khan's, will be screened in inflatable theatres.

According to a PTI report from Panaji, Goa, three films of superstar Shah Rukh Khan will be screened at the 56th IFFI in inflatable theatres, which is a collaboration among the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) and the Entertainment Society of Goa (ESG) that have partnered with mobile digital cinema company PictureTime Digiplex for this innovation.

In a first-of-its-kind showcase, 'Chak De! India', 'Darr' and 'Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge' will be screened inside a fully equipped inflatable cinema to be set up at Goa's Kala Academy, one of IFFI's primary venues. The festival runs from November 20 to 28.

PictureTime, known for deploying inflatable theatres in remote and underserved regions, will install a high-tech mobile theatre at the Academy grounds, according to a press release.

Meanwhile, an official government statement on the IFFI yesterday said that the 56th IFFI would "redefine" how a festival begins — a grand, immersive Opening Parade.

For the first time, according to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB), the film festival will welcome its audience with a moving celebration where "stories glide, music breathes, characters step off the screen, and India reveals itself through rhythm, colour, pride and breath-taking imagination".

Scheduled to take place today at 3 pm from the



Entertainment Society of Goa office to Kala Academy, this one of its kind parade will transform the streets of Goa into a living canvas of India's cinematic and cultural brilliance. The parade will be led by the magnificent state tableaux of Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, and Goa, each presenting a vivid portrait of identity and imagination. Andhra Pradesh brings the charm of Visakhapatnam's golden shores, the mystic valleys of Araku and the pulsating spirit of Tollywood. Haryana offers a colourful fusion of folklore, theatre, culture and cinematic pride. Goa, the festival's long-standing home, forms the emotional heart of the procession, celebrating its cosmopolitan warmth and timeless bond with world cinema.

Marching alongside the states are grand cinematic tableaux from India's leading production houses — each a moving universe of storytelling excellence. The mythic power of 'Akshanda 2', the emotional depth of Ram Charan's 'Peddi', the creative force of Mythri Movie Makers, the iconic legacy of Zee Studios, the global vision

of Hombale Films, the Odia heritage of Bindusagar, Ultra Media's centenary homage to Guru Dutt and the vibrant storytelling realm of WAVES OTT will all converge to showcase the boundless diversity of Indian cinema, the statement added.

Adding a historic dimension is the NFDC 50-year tableau, honouring five decades of nurturing filmmakers and fostering cinematic innovation across the nation.

Adding charm, nostalgia and delight will be India's beloved animation favourites — Chhota Bheem & Chutki and Motu Patlu & Bittu Bahanebaaz — who will be stepping off the screen to greet audiences with laughter, warmth and playful spirit.

ROLL ON

JioStar's Aru, MPA's Couto elected as new directors to AVIA board

The Asia Video Industry Association (AVIA) has announced the election of two new Board Directors — K. Aravamudhan, Executive Vice President, Public Policy & Legal at JioStar, and Vivek Couto, Co-Founder, CEO and Executive Director of Media Partners Asia.

Both leaders bring decades of industry experience and a strong grasp of the evolving media landscape, strengthening AVIA's strategic focus as the video sector undergoes rapid digital and regulatory shifts.

According to a press note from AVIA, the association has also confirmed the re-election of several existing board members, including Emily Yri of Pubmatic, Desmond Chan of TVB, Joe Welch of The Walt Disney Company, and Shonali Bedi of Warner Bros. Discovery. Their continued presence on the board ensures continuity of expertise at a time when the industry is navigating complex challenges around growth, monetisation and consumer behaviour.

The newly elected and re-elected directors are expected to play a key role in AVIA's efforts to advance industry advocacy, support regional collaboration, and shape policy dialogue across markets. Their collective experience spans content strategy, international marketing, public policy, legal frameworks and data-driven insights, offering AVIA a broad spectrum of perspectives to guide its work.

AVIA also extended its gratitude to outgoing directors Agnes Rozario of Astro and Greg Armshaw, formerly of Brightcove, acknowledging their valuable contributions to the association. Their tenure supported AVIA through significant phases of industry change, and their efforts remain an important part of the organisation's ongoing progress.



Navneet Sehgal steps down as Prasar Bharati Chairman

Navneet Kumar Sehgal has resigned as Chairman of public broadcaster Prasar Bharati, with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting accepting his resignation and relieving him from service with immediate effect.

According to an official ministry communication, Sehgal had submitted his resignation on Tuesday. The notice, addressed to him at Prasar Bharati House and issued by the BA-P Division of the Ministry, confirms that the competent authority has accepted his request under the provisions of the Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India) Act, 1990.

Sehgal, a retired IAS officer of the 1988 batch from the Uttar Pradesh cadre, was appointed Chairman of Prasar Bharati in March 2024. With over 35 years of leadership experience, he has held key administrative positions at both the Centre and the Uttar Pradesh government, where he is credited with driving major governance and policy reform initiatives.

Before joining Prasar Bharati, Sehgal served in several high-impact roles, including heading departments linked to infrastructure, industry, and public policy. According to Prasar Bharati's official portal, he led the construction of



the 302-km, six-lane (later upgraded to eight lanes) Agra–Lucknow Expressway during his tenure as CEO of the Uttar Pradesh Expressway Industrial Development Authority (UPEIDA), completing the project in a record 22 months.

The Ministry's letter, issued on December 3, notes that Sehgal has been relieved of all responsibilities with immediate effect.

Ashish Sehgal takes over as CEO of Times TV Network

Ashish Sehgal has taken charge as the new CEO of Times TV Network, while also assuming the role of chief growth officer for Times Media and Entertainment.

Bringing nearly two decades of experience from ZEEL, Sehgal is set to play a key role in expanding the network's broadcast portfolio, deepening audience engagement, and steering overall business growth across platforms in a rapidly evolving media landscape.

Sehgal announced the move through a

LinkedIn update, where he reflected warmly on his long association with Zee. Calling his two decades at the organisation “incredible and truly defining,” he expressed gratitude for the opportunities, milestones and people who shaped his journey. In the post, he also thanked MD Vineet Jain and N. Subramanian for placing their trust in him as he begins a new chapter at Times Media & Entertainment.

Over the years at Zee, Sehgal held several senior leadership roles, eventually serving as chief growth officer where he oversaw broadcast and digital revenue. His journey with the organisation began in 2006 as AVP – Sales (North), followed by responsibilities as network sales head and COO of the

consolidated ad-sales arm. His tenure saw him drive strategic initiatives and revenue growth across both broadcast and digital platforms until his departure in August 2025.



Before joining Zee, Sehgal was associated with Star India, where he served as National Head for Star Gold and contributed to the channel’s launch project.

He later managed sales across the network at a PAN-India level and spearheaded properties for Channel V, including VIVA Popstars. His early experience also includes roles with Buena Vista TV and The Times Group, giving him a strong foundation across television and radio media as he steps into his new leadership role at TimesTV Network.

Sumit Awasthi bids farewell to NDTV

Senior journalist Sumit Awasthi has officially announced his departure from NDTV, marking the end of his brief stint at the network.

The announcement came on Thursday morning through a post shared on his social media platforms, where he wrote, “Bye bye NDTV... Wish you best.”

Awasthi added, “A new chapter begins... Now!!” signalling that he is already set to step into his next professional move. While he did not mention the reason behind his departure or details of his upcoming role, the tone of his message

suggested optimism and readiness for his next assignment.

Awasthi is one of India’s well-known broadcast journalists, respected for his political reportage, prime-time anchoring, and decades-long presence across major Hindi news networks. His exit comes at a time when the media industry is witnessing frequent, high-profile transitions as channels restructure their editorial and on-air teams.

Though NDTV has not issued a formal public statement yet, the update shared

by Awasthi has been widely circulated, with many noting that his departure adds to the list of prominent newsroom movements seen in recent months.

Industry watchers now await clarity on Awasthi’s next destination, as his post hints that an official announcement may follow soon.



Tushar Shah to exit SPNI after 16 years

Sony Pictures Networks India (SPNI) has announced that Tushar Shah, its Chief Marketing Officer and Business Head for Movies, Regional, FTA and Infotainment Channels, will step down from the organisation after a long and impactful tenure. His last working day will be March 31, 2026, and he will remain with the company until then to oversee a smooth transition. Online movie streaming services

According to an SPNI press release, Shah has spent a combined 19 years with the network, including his earlier stint between 2002 and 2005. Over his three-decade-long career across print, telecom and media, he has built a strong reputation for driving revenue, marketing and business strategy while shaping multiple high-value portfolios at SPNI. During his time at the network, Shah played a pivotal role in



steering key channels such as Sony MAX, MAX 1, MAX 2, Sony PAL, Sony WAH, Sony Marathi, Sony AATH, Sony PIX and Sony BBC Earth. One of his most notable achievements was leading the turnaround of Sony AATH, which has remained a consistently profitable regional channel for more than ten

years. He also led the Hindi and English Movies, Regional, FTA and Infotainment clusters with a clear emphasis on brand-building, profitability and audience expansion. Shah is also credited with helming SPNI’s full-scale network rebranding the first complete identity refresh since the channels were launched. The

initiative marked a significant milestone in the company’s brand journey and showcased his deep understanding of audience behaviour, brand development and sharp execution

across genres.

Speaking on Shah's exit, Gaurav Banerjee, Managing Director & CEO of SPNI, said, "Tushar has been a valued part of SPNI for many years, contributing to some of our most important brand and business milestones. His leadership, clarity of thought and consumer-first approach have helped build a strong foundation across multiple portfolios. We are grateful for his long-standing service and wish him the very best for his next chapter."

Reflecting on his journey, Shah said, "SPNI has been a defining part of my professional life, and I am deeply grateful for the trust, opportunities and relationships that have shaped my journey here. I have had the privilege of working with exceptional teams across the organisation and am proud of what we have built together. As I move on to explore new avenues, I carry with me many learnings and fond memories." SPNI is expected to announce its succession plan in due course.

Aravamudhan K elevated as EVP-Legal & Regulatory at JioStar

Aravamudhan K has announced that he has taken on a new leadership role as Executive Vice President (Legal & Regulatory) at JioStar India Pvt Ltd.

The senior legal and regulatory professional shared the update through a LinkedIn post, expressing both gratitude and excitement.

In his LinkedIn announcement, Aravamudhan said he is "happy to share" the news of his new position at JioStar, noting that he is looking forward to the challenges and opportunities that come with the role. He also thanked his seniors and his team for their continuous support, acknowledging their contribution in helping him reach this milestone.

With extensive experience in legal

strategy, regulatory affairs and compliance, Aravamudhan's appointment is seen as a significant addition to JioStar's leadership structure. His expertise is expected to help strengthen the company's regulatory framework at a time when the sector is undergoing rapid transformation driven by technology, policy shifts and evolving market dynamics.

JioStar India Pvt Ltd, which operates in the digital and communications ecosystem, continues to expand its footprint across multiple verticals. The inclusion of a seasoned legal and regulatory head is likely to support the company's long-term plans as it scales operations and navigates an increasingly complex regulatory environment.



As Aravamudhan steps into his new role, industry peers and colleagues have begun extending their wishes on social media, welcoming the move and highlighting his track record of leadership. His transition marks another noteworthy leadership development in the sector, underscoring the growing importance of robust regulatory oversight in India's fast-evolving telecom and digital landscape.

Adityan Kayalakkal joins Pocket FM as VP – Brand

Pocket FM has appointed Adityan Kayalakkal as Vice President – Brand, marking his return to the

entertainment ecosystem after spending the past few years building brand momentum across fintech, edtech, and emerging web3 companies.

The update was shared by Kayalakkal through a LinkedIn announcement, where he described the move as a "homecoming" to a category he believes creates stories that travel, resonate, and stay.

In his new mandate, Kayalakkal will work closely with Vineet Singh and a cross-functional leadership team as Pocket FM

sharpens its brand and go-to-market strategy. This appointment comes at a crucial moment for the audio entertainment platform, which is rapidly expanding its global footprint and investing heavily in original content as it prepares

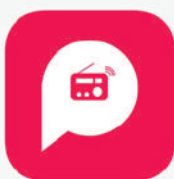
for its next phase of scale.

Kayalakkal brings a strong record of brand building and growth leadership across some of India's most competitive sectors. His experience spans NBA India, Publicis, BYJU'S, Jupiter Money, and Veera, where he led launches, content strategy, brand

communication, and large-scale audience growth. His portfolio includes high-impact milestones—from steering distribution for the NBA in India, to leading high-visibility campaigns at BYJU'S, to driving Veera to 4 million users in its first year.

At Pocket FM, his responsibilities sit at the intersection of storytelling, culture, and scaled brand creation—areas where he has repeatedly delivered

measurable momentum. As the platform accelerates its global ambitions and strengthens its library of originals, Kayalakkal's entry comes with both strategic clarity and the experience required to fuel the company's next leap forward.





TV9 Network unveils AI² Awards to spotlight AI-driven storytelling

TTV9 Network has announced the launch of the AI² Awards 2026, a first-of-its-kind initiative aimed at celebrating the convergence of artificial intelligence and human creativity in filmmaking.

Positioned at a time when AI is reshaping everything from scripting to soundscapes, the awards seek to recognise creators who are pushing the boundaries of cinematic expression through hybrid, tech-enabled storytelling. According to the press release, the AI² Awards are open to students, independent artists, early-career professionals and experimental storytellers who wish to explore how AI can collaborate with human imagination to craft bold and unconventional narratives.

The competition welcomes formats ranging from animation

and music videos to documentaries and branded content, reflecting the growing democratization of filmmaking, where a single creator can animate complete worlds using AI-driven tools. Registrations will open on December 8, 2025, and remain live until January 31, 2026, with a distinguished jury of filmmakers, technologists and creative innovators set to evaluate the entries. The jury round is scheduled for February 2026 in Mumbai.



Winners will be announced at the WITT-News9 Global Summit 2026 in New Delhi in March, where the selected films will be screened before global leaders in media, technology and innovation.

As the lines between art and algorithms continue to blur, the AI² Awards 2026 aim to spotlight a new generation of creators defining the future language of

cinema one where technology enhances, rather than replaces, the emotional depth and soul of storytelling.

India TV crosses 50mn YouTube subscribers

India TV has achieved a significant milestone by surpassing 50 million subscribers on YouTube, strengthening its position as one of India's most trusted and widely followed digital news networks.

The achievement underlines the channel's growing influence among viewers in India and across the global diaspora, who rely on its mix of breaking news, debates, reports, and real-time updates.

According to a press release issued by the network, India TV's YouTube journey began in 2006 and has since grown into one of the most subscribed news channels globally. Over the years, it has amassed billions of views through a wide library of content that includes live streams, exclusive ground reports, primetime shows, and detailed explainers.

Ritu Dhawan, Managing Director & CEO, said the milestone reflects the audience's trust and the organisation's continued commitment to honest journalism and engaging storytelling.

India TV's digital-first strategy has been central to this rapid growth, shaped by evolving viewer behaviour and the increasing demand for news across multiple formats. The channel has built a robust content ecosystem spanning long-form videos, interviews, explainers, shorts, and podcasts, ensuring that audiences can consume news in ways that best suit their preferences. This approach has strengthened viewer loyalty and widened its reach across platforms.

With more than 50 million subscribers now on YouTube, India TV has set a new benchmark for digital news credibility and scale. The network's continued focus on innovation and audience engagement reinforces its standing as one of the most influential and future-ready news brands in the country.



Sussanne Khan on luxury at Network18 Privé event

As ideas of luxury continue to shift in an age shaped by technology, conscious choices and evolving lifestyles, Network18's Innovate & Evolve — powered by Liebherr — is driving a national conversation on how innovation and design are redefining modern living in India. The latest Privé edition brought together leading voices from the world of design to explore how refined, future-forward living is now rooted in intelligence, purpose and emotional connection.

According to a press release, designer and entrepreneur Sussanne Khan spoke about how the meaning of luxury has transformed far beyond opulence or excess. She said design today must integrate technology with human warmth, natural materials and mindful creation to build spaces that are both functional and soulful.

"Design has been part of my world from the very beginning. I was taught that luxury has nothing to do with money and everything to do with warmth, beauty, and intention," Khan said. Speaking about The Charcoal Project, she noted that her approach has always been about crafting narratives rather than merely creating furniture. "Today, modern luxury is the meeting point of technology and emotion. A home must have both a heart and a brain. While people want smart automation, they are also searching for nature, rare materials, artisanal detail, and spaces that feel

soulful," she added.

Khan also underlined that sustainability is no longer an optional value but a fundamental responsibility for designers. "From reworking industrial waste into new forms to supporting local artisans and exploring new eco-materials, sustainability is non-negotiable. As creators, our strength lies in staying curious. The moment we think we know everything, we stop evolving," she said.



Jewellery designer Farah Ali Khan, who also spoke at the event, reflected on her own creative path, describing how she drifted from interior design to filmmaking before eventually discovering her passion in gemology and jewellery design. "I went just to have fun — I wanted to party in America — but ended up becoming the Indian nerd who fell in love with the science of gemstones. I even topped my class," she shared.

Talking about her design philosophy, she said, "For me, design isn't just about how something looks;

it has to serve a purpose. As Steve Jobs said, design is function, not self-expression. My work blends modern technology with traditional craftsmanship at its core."

With Innovate & Evolve, Network18 continues to explore how innovation, design excellence and conscious thinking are shaping the future of sophisticated living in India. The conversations make it clear that luxury today is defined less by extravagance and more by meaning, intention and the intelligence to evolve.

NDTV to reveal Indian of the Year 2025 winners on Dec 19

NDTV is gearing up to announce the winners of the prestigious Indian of the Year 2025 awards at a special ceremony on December 19, continuing a tradition that has, for more than two decades, celebrated individuals whose ideas, achievements and leadership have shaped India's national narrative.

The annual honour has long been regarded as a definitive benchmark of excellence, recognising figures who reflect the ambition and confidence of a rapidly evolving India.

According to an NDTV press release, this year's theme 'Ideas. Inspiration. Impact.' underscores the spirit of progress and imagination that defines the awardees across 14 diverse categories. An eminent jury panel, featuring Sanjiv Goenka as Jury Chair along with Rajiv Memani, Sharmila Tagore, P. Gopichand, Cyril Shroff and Rajiv Kumar, convened to evaluate an impressive slate of nominees whose contributions span innovation, sports, arts, public service and industry. The selection process was described as extensive and rigorous, reflecting the legacy of the awards.

The jury's deliberations centred on nominees who have shown exceptional leadership and influence, with a focus on individuals whose work advances national aspirations and exemplifies contemporary excellence. Over the years, the awards have honoured people who redefine what is possible, and the 2025 edition aims to spotlight those shaping India's future through their talent, imagination and public impact.

Rahul Kanwal, CEO and Editor-in-Chief of NDTV Network, said the awards celebrate individuals who not only succeed but elevate the national conversation. As the country embraces new possibilities, the Indian of the Year 2025 awards will recognise those whose ideas and actions continue to inspire and guide India's journey forward.



CNBC-TV18, IndiaBonds unveil 'Bond Street' to decode India's growing bond market

CNBC-TV18, along with CNBC AWAAZ, CNBC Bajar and IndiaBonds, has announced the launch of 'Bond Street', a new initiative aimed at demystifying India's fast-expanding bond market and making it more accessible to everyday investors.

The digital-first programme will deliver structured, high-frequency updates that simplify key trends, market movements and developments shaping the country's fixed-income ecosystem.

According to a press release issued by the network, the initiative comes at a crucial time for India's fixed-income landscape, which now stands at nearly USD 2.81 trillion (SEBI, CCIL — as of September 30, 2025). Despite the scale and momentum of the market, corporate bonds continue to receive limited mainstream coverage compared with equities.

'Bond Street' has been designed to address this gap by offering consistent, educational insights into credit rating actions, issuer activities, market flows, and regulatory or technological shifts that influence the fixed-income space.

The new platform will feature daily coverage on CNBC-TV18, CNBC AWAAZ and CNBC Bajar, presenting essential market movements in an easily digestible format. These will be supplemented with weekly deep-dive analyses that bring in expert commentary, trend assessments and contextual understanding of India's evolving bond market.

The effort aims to not only simplify fixed-income instruments for new investors but also strengthen CNBC-TV18's position as a key destination for bond-market intelligence, supported by IndiaBonds' domain expertise.

S. Shivakumar, CEO — News18 Studio, said the initiative reflects the network's ongoing commitment to delivering credible and comprehensive financial news. "Bond Street represents our continued commitment to delivering comprehensive and credible financial coverage. The bond market is becoming integral to India's capital formation and investment behaviour. This initiative will ensure that audiences have access to timely, structured information on a segment that is increasingly shaping how Indians save and invest," he said.



India Today hosts high-level Moscow roundtable ahead of Putin's India visit

India Today is set to host an exclusive, high-level roundtable in Moscow on December 3, in association with BnWDevelopers, a prominent name in luxury real estate.

The initiative comes just ahead of President Vladimir Putin's much-anticipated visit to New Delhi, marking a significant moment in the conversation around India–Russia relations.

According to an India Today press release, the roundtable will bring together influential voices from both nations to discuss key pillars of bilateral cooperation.

Energy will be among the central themes, with leaders from major Russian sectors — including oil, gas, nuclear, renewables, mining, and critical minerals — expected to share insights on strengthening long-term strategic engagement.

With India's deepening involvement in Russia's energy landscape, the timing of this dialogue adds considerable relevance ahead of the President's visit.

The agenda also includes a focused discussion on life for Indians in Russia, featuring inputs from community organisations, cultural groups, and business chambers that shape the experience of the thriving diaspora.

Another important segment will examine whether Russia continues to remain a preferred destination for Indian students. Representatives from the Association of Indian Students in Russia, along with leading medical and technical universities, will discuss safety, educational standards, career opportunities, and evolving expectations among young Indians studying abroad.

Given the historical depth of India–Russia military cooperation, the roundtable will additionally host a session dedicated to defence and security collaboration.

Leaders from Russian defence, aviation and technology sectors, alongside Indian entrepreneurs across pharmaceuticals, FMCG, IT, engineering, logistics, textiles, and tea, will contribute to a broader conversation on industrial and economic partnerships. India Today will deliver comprehensive coverage of the roundtable through expert reactions, exclusive interviews, and continuous updates.

The platform will also offer extensive live reporting of President Putin's visit to India, reflecting its commitment to capturing one of the most defining diplomatic engagements of the year.



The News Broadcasters Federation (NBF), India's largest and only accredited collective of broadcasters, convened its Annual Meeting on December 1 in Delhi NCR, where it raised sharp concerns over recent corruption allegations linked to BARC's audience measurement system. The gathering also marked a significant structural milestone, with the Federation announcing its expansion into the News Broadcasters & Digital Media Federation (NBDF).

According to a press release, members expressed deep unease about the emerging reports of tampering and alleged kickbacks within BARC, including the Kerala case involving an employee reportedly linked to irregularities from BARC's headquarters. Senior representatives noted that such incidents undermine the credibility of television ratings—an essential pillar for both editorial and commercial decision-making within the news sector. The Federation underlined that confidence in an independent, tamper-proof measurement system is non-negotiable for the industry's functioning.

Taking a firm position, NBF passed a dedicated resolution confirming that the matter will be formally raised with BARC. The body will seek transparent corrective action, strict accountability, and structural reforms to ensure that audience ratings remain free from manipulation. There was unanimous agreement among members that the issue demands urgent attention to restore trust in the system and to safeguard the integrity of the broadcasting ecosystem.

Even as it addressed this pressing concern, the Federation announced its transition into NBDF, a broadened national



NBF concerned about alleged BARC corruption; expands ambit

platform that will bring together television broadcasters, digital news publishers, and technology-driven news organisations. With India's media landscape rapidly converging across TV, digital, and new-age platforms, NBDF aims to steer policy dialogue, address digital regulation, foster platform governance, and develop technology frameworks to support a unified industry approach. The expanded mandate reflects the rising influence of digital media and the evolving behaviour of Indian audiences.

To ensure continuity through this transformation, the Federation confirmed that all current office bearers and the existing management structure will continue in their roles. This stability, NBF noted, will help maintain direction and leadership as responsibilities grow under the NBDF umbrella.

Through the decisions taken at the Annual Meeting, the Federation reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening India's news industry, demanding transparent and reliable audience metrics, and shaping a future-ready organisation that represents both regional and national voices across television and digital media.

NDTV strengthens its digital lead as network records unmatched growth

The NDTV Network has achieved a significant digital milestone, underscoring its expanding influence in a rapidly shifting news ecosystem where online leadership increasingly defines market relevance.

With NDTV India rising to the No. 1 position among all Hindi news channels on YouTube for November 2025, as reported by Databeings, and NDTV 24x7 retaining its top rank for six consecutive months from June to December 2025 on Playboard, the network has cemented its position at the forefront of India's digital news landscape.

According to an NDTV press release, this strong performance is not an isolated achievement but the result of an

intentional transformation within the network — one that places mobile-first design, data-led storytelling, and viewer-focused innovation at the core of its strategy.

NDTV India's dominant lead in November, surpassing its nearest competitor by more than 700 million views, highlights a clear viewer shift toward credible and in-depth journalism on digital platforms.

Meanwhile, NDTV 24x7's consistent viewership advantage — ahead by 48.2 million views in November alone — demonstrates the English news channel's sustained appeal among audiences seeking trustworthy coverage in a cluttered information environment.

This digital rise is firmly rooted in the

network's re-engineered workflows and strengthened technological backbone. NDTV has integrated advanced data intelligence into its content

processes, enhancing livestream quality, elevating discovery, sharpening narrative formats, and expanding platform-specific verticals tailored for high engagement. These efforts have reshaped the viewer experience for a generation that consumes most of its news on mobile and values clarity over noise.



News18 Kannada tops Karnataka, dethrones TV9 after 20 Years

News18 Kannada has ended TV9 Kannada's two-decade reign to emerge as the new leader in regional news viewership. For the first time since TV9 Kannada's debut in 2006, the channel has slipped from its long-held No. 1 position, marking a turning point in how Kannada audiences are consuming broadcast news. According to a News18 Kannada press release, the latest BARC ratings show News18 Kannada rising to the top with 33,757 AMA 000s, capturing a 25.4 percent market share. TV9 Kannada followed closely with 32,937 AMA 000s and a 24.8 percent share. (Source: TG: NCC 15+; Week 46'25: 15-11-2025 to 21-11-2025 vs Week 45'25: 08-11-2025 to 14-11-2025, All)

The milestone underscores News18 Kannada's deepening presence across the state and its growing connection with Kannada-speaking viewers. The channel's emphasis on fast-paced, reliable, and viewer-focused journalism appears to have played a strong role in strengthening audience trust, contributing to its surge in ratings.

Industry watchers note that the shift mirrors a wider trend

sweeping across southern markets, where viewers are increasingly gravitating towards channels offering sharper reportage, wider ground

coverage, and seamless digital integration. The transition also highlights evolving expectations among regional news viewers, who now prioritise immediacy, accuracy, and a balanced mix of on-ground and digital-first storytelling.

News18 Kannada forms part of Network18's expansive regional footprint, which spans multiple states through channels such as News18 Uttar Pradesh/Uttarakhand, News18 Bihar/Jharkhand, News18 Rajasthan, News18 Punjab, News18 Assam/NE, News18 Bangla, News18 Kerala, News18 Tamil Nadu, News18 Gujarati, News18 Odia and News18 Lokmat, among others.

With its first-ever No. 1 rank in 20 years, News18 Kannada has now firmly positioned itself as Karnataka's leading television news channel, redefining the competitive landscape in the region.



BT Golf 26th season starts in Hyderabad

Business Today Golf 2025-26 is set to begin its 26th edition with a grand launch in Hyderabad on November 29, marking the start of a seven-city premium corporate golf circuit that has long been regarded as one of India's most distinguished sporting and networking platforms.

The tournament, presented by AU Small Finance Bank, continues to hold its position as the country's most respected corporate golf property, drawing CXOs, industry leaders and high-profile personalities for a season of competitive play and high-value camaraderie.

According to a press note shared by the organisers, this year's season will once again blend the spirit of championship golf with a rare networking environment, strengthening its legacy built over more than two decades. After Hyderabad, the circuit will move through Chandigarh, Bengaluru, Kochi, Chennai, Gurugram and Mumbai, with the seven-city tour concluding on March 6.

Adding to the excitement of the season opener, former Indian cricket captain Mohammad Azharuddin will attend the Hyderabad leg as Guest of Honour, lending additional prestige to an event already synonymous with aspiration, exclusivity and

leadership. Over the years, the tournament has been enriched by the presence of celebrated sports icons such as Kapil Dev, Suresh Raina, Ajit Agarkar, Shiv Kapur, Gaurav Bajaj and Madan Lal, whose participation has underscored the shared values between golf and leadership — focus, strategy, discipline and resilience.

Now celebrating 26 years, Business Today Golf continues to evolve beyond a traditional sports event. It has firmly established itself as an annual gathering where decision-makers step away from boardrooms and engage on the greens, strengthening professional connections in a setting known for its elegance and competitive energy.

With its 2025-26 edition, the circuit is poised for yet another memorable season, bringing together champions, corporate influencers and accomplished golfers across India's premier courses. As

the tournament tees off in Hyderabad, it promises a compelling celebration of sport, leadership and the enduring culture of excellence that defines Business Today Golf.



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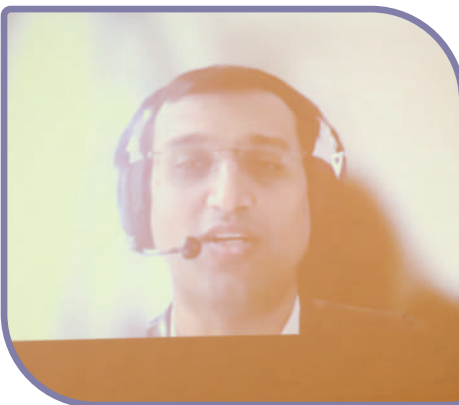


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NDTV Good Times announces Honey Singh's 'My Story' tour

Honey Singh, one of India's most influential musical icons, is stepping into a new space — one where the performer takes a backseat and the person steps forward.

NDTV Good Times has announced the rapper's nationwide 'My Story' Tour, an intimate and revealing experience that promises to bring audiences closer to the life behind the music.

According to an NDTV press release, this tour is unlike anything Singh has done before. It focuses not on the spectacle of performance, but on the journey that shaped the artist — the detours, the difficult chapters, the rediscovery, and the moments of clarity that came along the way. For an artist who has lived every rise and fall under a public lens, this tour marks a deeply personal turn.

The tour will present his familiar hits in a new light — reintroduced as fragments of lived experiences, each song connected to the emotional or personal milestone that helped shape it. Honey Singh intends to narrate his life through his music, moving through its highs, interruptions, and the revelations that eventually helped him reclaim his purpose.

The 'My Story' tour will span 11 cities across India and fittingly begins in Delhi — the city where Singh's own story took shape.

The rapper, who grew up in Karampura in West Delhi, insisted that the tour must start "from where it all started," bringing his journey full circle with both nostalgia and renewed intent.

The tour was unveiled at the NDTV Studios in an atmosphere charged with energy and celebration. Speaking at the announcement, Singh said, "People have heard my music for years, but very few have heard the story that shaped it. The 'My Story' tour is my chance to share that journey — the moments, the lessons, and the turning points that made me who I am. It feels like the right time to tell it, and the right moment to do it with NDTV Good Times."

Rahul Kanwal, CEO and Editor-in-Chief of NDTV, described Honey Singh's journey as one of the most compelling narratives in contemporary Indian music. "'The 'My Story' tour draws from that journey — it's fire, its fragility, and its fearless honesty. We are proud to partner with an artist who is willing to share not just his hits,

but his life story," he said.

Adding to this, Rahul Shaw, Chief Experiences Officer at NDTV, said that every city on the tour will offer a different rhythm, a different energy, and a unique window into the artist's experiences.



CNN-News18 to host Indian of the Year Awards on Nov 28

CNN-News18 is gearing up to host the 15th edition of its flagship 'Indian of the Year Awards' on November 28, celebrating individuals whose achievements have shaped India's remarkable journey over the past year.

The event will begin at 6 pm and will honour changemakers under the theme 'India's Invincible Icons', recognising those who have inspired millions through their work.

According to a CNN-News18 press release, the awards continue their legacy as one of the most respected honours in Indian news broadcasting. Since 2006, the Indian of the Year Awards have upheld a reputation for credibility, spotlighting personalities who push boundaries and fuel the nation's aspirations.

The awards have grown into a nationally awaited annual celebration, known for its editorial integrity and the channel's commitment to recognising excellence. Over the years, they have become a benchmark for honouring distinguished

individuals across diverse sectors who have left a meaningful impact on society.

This year's winners will be selected by an eminent jury panel comprising some of India's most respected leaders, including Sanjiv Goenka, former CJI DY Chandrachud, Justice Indu Malhotra (Retd.), Prasoon Joshi, Mahesh Jethmalani, Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit, Amitabh Kant, Shefali Shah, Sanjeev Bikhchandani, Gagan Narang, and Lara Dutta. Their collective expertise ensures a rigorous and thoughtful evaluation process.

The awards span eight categories—Entertainment, Business, Influencer, Rising Sports Stars, Youth Icon, Global Indian, Iconic Woman Achiever, and Climate Warrior—each featuring five nominees who have made a striking impact this year. Some of the prominent names in the nominations list include Mohanlal, Rashmika Mandanna, Arijit Singh, Jaideep Ahlawat, Ananya Panday, Zakir Khan, Raj Shamani, Falguni Nayar, Manish Malhotra,

Payal Kapadia, and Hanumankind, among others.

Adding to the grandeur of the awards night will be several special guests, including World Cup-winning cricketers



Harmanpreet Kaur and Deepti Sharma, coach Amol Muzumdar, and ICC Chairperson Jay Shah. The Blind Women's T20 World Cup champions will also attend, symbolising a powerful moment of national pride. The cast of the recent blockbuster 'Saiyaara'—Ahaan Panday and Aneet Padda—will join the celebrations as well.

At 'Sahitya Aaj Tak 2025' opening Kalli Purie dwells on literature, life's bonds

India Today Group Vice Chairperson and Executive Editor-in-Chief Kalli Purie set the tone for the 8th edition of 'Sahitya Aaj Tak' with a reflective, heartfelt address that touched on loss, resilience and the power of literature.

Speaking at the annual literary festival in Delhi, Purie said that while life remains fragile and unpredictable, literature serves as the thread that binds people together and strengthens human connections.

Her remarks came against the backdrop of a difficult year for India. The country entered 2025 overshadowed by grief, beginning with the Pahalgam terror attack in January, where 26 tourists lost their lives while admiring the scenic Baisaran Valley. Just two months later, tragedy struck again when Air India

flight 171, travelling from Ahmedabad to London, crashed into a medical college building, resulting in 260 fatalities.

Purie said these incidents were stark reminders of how sudden and unpredictable life can be. Reflecting on that vulnerability,

she quoted the iconic Kishore Kumar line, "Zindagi ek safar hai suhana, yahaan kal kya ho kisne jaana", noting that the beauty of life is often intertwined with its uncertainty. Amid such unpredictability, she stressed, literature becomes a source of comfort, meaning and deeper bonds between individuals.

She highlighted how 'Sahitya Aaj Tak' has grown into a platform that not only celebrates literature and art but also brings together writers, poets, musicians and thinkers—people who help society make sense of its joys and sorrows. As the festival opened its doors to eminent personalities across creative fields, Purie reiterated that storytelling remains one of humanity's strongest anchors.

The 2025 edition of the festival continues to host a diverse lineup of sessions, performances and conversations aimed at exploring evolving literary landscapes while staying rooted in the emotional and cultural fabric of India.



CNBC-TV18's 'Future Female Forward' being hosted in Delhi

CNBC-TV18's flagship initiative 'Future Female Forward' is set to make its New Delhi debut, with the State Chapter scheduled for November 25, 2025.

After successful editions in Mumbai and Bengaluru, the third season now comes to the Capital, deepening the conversation around gender parity, leadership and inclusive growth.

According to a press release, the platform continues to build momentum as a national movement that brings together voices across policy, industry and community to shape long-term impact.

The New Delhi edition aims to create a sharper focus on institutional influence, mindset shifts and accountability frameworks that can make equity measurable and actionable.

According to the organisers, the conversations this year are designed to move beyond inspiration and into tangible strategies that workplaces and ecosystems can adopt and replicate.

The event will open with a welcome address by Shereen Bhan, Managing Editor, CNBC-TV18, followed by a keynote by Hitendra Dave, CEO, HSBC India, who will speak on transforming the intent of institutionalising parity into practice.

One of the key highlights will be the recognition of the Future Female Forward Icons — women who have broken barriers across fields. The honourees include Dr Sonali Ghosh, Field Director, Kaziranga Tiger Reserve; Sonika Yadav, Woman Constable, Delhi Police; social reformer Mittal Patel; sustainability advocate Kamana Gautam; globetrotting sisters Remani Menon and Valsala Menon; artist



Aanchal Anita Dhara; Bibijan Halemani, President of the Bibi Fatima Self Help Group; Rimjhim Agrawal, Co-founder & CTO, BrainSightAI; and Mona Khandhar, Principal Secretary, Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs Department, Government of Gujarat.

The evening will feature a series of high-impact conversations including a Leaders' Forum and a townhall.

One of the key highlights will be the recognition of the Future Female Forward Icons — women who have broken barriers across fields. The honourees include Dr Sonali Ghosh, Field Director, Kaziranga Tiger Reserve; Sonika Yadav, Woman Constable, Delhi Police; social reformer Mittal Patel; sustainability advocate Kamana Gautam; globetrotting sisters Remani Menon and Valsala Menon.

Aaj Tak dominates counting day viewership, leads DAU charts across genres

Aaj Tak strengthened its position as India's leading news broadcaster on counting day, securing the highest national viewership in the 08:00–12:00 time band on Friday, November 14. The latest Week 45 data shared which highlights the channel's commanding performance across key audience metrics.

According to a press release, Aaj Tak posted an AMA of 1,847, placing it well ahead of its nearest competitor, News18 India, which recorded 1,005 AMA. The numbers reaffirm Aaj Tak's dominance in the Hindi news segment, especially during high-engagement political events where real-time updates drive mass tune-ins.

In the general entertainment category, SONY SAB emerged as the top performer in the same time slot with 1,436 AMA, followed closely by B4U Music (1,160) and STAR Maa (1,057). The ratings indicate that morning viewership remained robust across genres, with non-news channels retaining



consistent audiences despite the nationwide election buzz. Regional broadcasters continued their strong hold over language markets. South Indian networks such as Gemini TV (1,079), Sun TV (1,221), and Zee Telugu (707) maintained solid traction, reflecting stable loyalty among regional audiences even on nationally significant days.

Daily average reach (DAU) metrics mirrored the overall trend. As per the Aaj Tak press note, the channel achieved the highest daily reach at 12,593, while News18 India followed at 10,531. Among entertainment channels, SONY SAB registered a reach of 10,344, reinforcing its steady weekday momentum.

The Week 45 performance sets the tone for an increasingly competitive year-end phase, with broadcasters across news and entertainment gearing up for stronger audience acquisition strategies. With political developments, festival specials, and annual programming peaks aligning, the broadcast ecosystem is expected to witness heightened viewership battles as the year draws to a close.

Live Times becomes Mumbai's most engaging News channel with 1hr 23min ATS

Live Times, India's first Global Multicast News Hub, has marked a significant breakthrough in the country's broadcast landscape by emerging as Mumbai's No. 1 news channel in engagement. As per BARC Week 45 data, the channel has recorded an unprecedented Average Time Spent (ATS) of 1 hour and 23 minutes, a historic achievement in one of India's most competitive news markets.

According to the Live Times press release, this milestone places the channel ahead of several long-established national players, indicating a notable shift in viewer preferences—particularly among younger, urban audiences who are gravitating toward credible, fact-driven reporting. ATS remains one of the most vital performance indicators in broadcast media, reflecting not just reach but the depth of viewer loyalty and content stickiness. Live Times' exceptional score demonstrates its ability to hold audience attention for longer periods, signalling strong trust and consistent engagement.

Dilip Singh, Founder of Live Times, called the achievement "historic and unparalleled", noting that the unprecedented ATS reinforces the channel's commitment to truth-based journalism. "This gives us strength to continue with the truth-based journalism, and we thank the viewers for the continued support and encouragement," he said.

Live Times' rising viewership is further supported by its widespread availability across major platforms. In broadcast distribution, it can be accessed on DD Free Dish (Channel 100), Tata Play (539), Airtel Digital TV (385), Dish TV (665), Sikka Cable (519), and Jio TV (359). The channel also enjoys a strong digital presence on Tata Play Mobile, Airtel Xstream, Dish TV Watcho, and DD Waves, making it accessible to viewers across traditional and digital environments.

With this new benchmark, Live Times has positioned itself firmly as a leading force in Mumbai's news ecosystem—one that blends credibility with modern, multi-platform reach to meet the expectations of today's evolving audience.



CNN-News18 tops English news viewership on Bihar election result day

CNN-News18 strengthened its hold over the English news genre during the Bihar election result day, emerging as the most-watched channel throughout the high-stakes political coverage. The strong performance reaffirmed the channel's dominance at a time when viewer interest peaked across the country.

According to the channel's report based on BARC data, CNN-News18 delivered a standout performance on November 14, capturing a substantial 41.9 percent market share across the day. Its closest rivals, NDTV 24x7 and Times Now, trailed significantly with 23.7 percent and 23.6 percent respectively.

The numbers were even more striking during the crucial counting hours between 8 am and 12 pm, when audiences were glued to the screens for real-time updates. During this window, CNN-News18 commanded an impressive 53 percent share, far ahead of NDTV 24x7's 18.6 percent and Times Now's 15.1 percent. The figures, sourced from BARC India (Market: India | TG: 2+ | Week 45'25), firmly underline the channel's continued leadership.

Throughout the intense political showdown in Bihar, viewers gravitated towards CNN-News18 for swift, reliable and accurate election updates. The channel's on-ground presence, supported by a strong panel of experts and seasoned analysts, helped keep it consistently ahead of the competition. On a day marked by massive news consumption, CNN-News18's decisive lead underscored the credibility it commands among English news viewers. The latest viewership results echo the trust

audiences have placed in CNN-News18's citizen-first news approach — reporting that remains factual, fearless and rooted in national interest. Over the past three years, the channel has maintained its position as India's No. 1 English news channel, powered by impactful storytelling, sharp analysis and



ON YOUR SIDE

informed debates.

Anchor such as Zakka Jacob, Anand Narasimhan, Rahul Shivshankar and Shivani Gupta have become reliable names that viewers turn to for dependable coverage. With the newest BARC numbers again highlighting the channel's unmatched reach, CNN-News18 has reaffirmed that when the nation wants news that counts, it continues to choose CNN-News18.

Times Network announces global expansion of Pickleball Now

Times Network has announced a major global expansion of Pickleball Now, the world's first dedicated television channel for pickleball, available across Connected TV and digital platforms.

Positioned as a 24x7 destination for the fast-growing sport, the channel delivers an extensive programming slate ranging from live international tournaments to insights, interviews, match analysis, and global pickleball news, creating a complete viewing experience for fans.

In a statement shared by Times Network, the company noted that the channel has already featured prominent pickleball tournaments across India, the United States, Australia, and other regions. Events such as NPL Australia – Sydney, NPL Australia – Brisbane, the PWR DUPR

India Masters, and the Pickleball World Cup have helped the platform build a steadily expanding global audience.

As part of its push to strengthen the sport's presence worldwide, Pickleball Now will broadcast the inaugural edition of the Indian Pickleball League — the official national league sanctioned by the Indian Pickleball Association and recognised by the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports (MYAS). The league will stream live beginning December 1, 2025. With global interest in pickleball growing at an unprecedented pace, the channel is also widening its content mix. Upcoming programming will include LIVE tournament coverage across multiple continents, the PWR World Tour 2026 spanning Japan, the UK, Italy, the USA,



Brazil and more, as well as learning modules tailored to players of all skill levels. Audiences will also find rules explainers, equipment and paddle reviews, grassroots stories, and community features aimed at nurturing talent and building awareness at every level of the sport.

Distribution for Pickleball Now is set to expand across smart TVs, connected devices, and leading OTT platforms in India and international markets. Viewers in the Indian subcontinent can watch live tournaments on Times Play — Times Network's flagship OTT service — along with JioTV, JioTV+, Airtel Xstream, DailyHunt, and OTT Play.



ENTERTAINMENT



Studio9 earns India's first-ever OTT documentary win at Asian Television Awards 2025

Studio9, the in-house production arm of TV9 Network, has created history by bringing home India's first-ever win in the OTT documentary programme category at the 30th Asian Television Awards 2025 held in Singapore.

The landmark achievement comes through its documentary *Fanatics*, commissioned by DocuBay, which clinched the award amid strong competition from six other nominees across Asia. According to a press release, *Fanatics* stands out for its gripping exploration of the intense, emotional and at times extreme fan culture surrounding South Indian cinema. The 55-minute documentary examines the deep-rooted devotion that fuels this world, portraying it not merely as admiration but as a form of reverence where fans worship their stars, build temples, and celebrate releases like festivals.

The documentary features candid insights from leading actors Kichcha Sudeep, Allu Arjun and Vijay Sethupathi, along with views from industry experts, mental health professionals, and film historians. It also brings to light the darker shades of fandom—rivalries among groups, instances of violence, and the psychological weight of unrestrained devotion. Stories like that of a young fan who found healing through Allu Arjun after facing stigma over a cleft palate add emotional depth to the narrative.

Speaking on the win, Aditya Pittie, Managing Director, The EPIC Company, said, "Receiving this honour at the 30th Asian Television Awards is a defining moment not just for DocuBay, but for India's growing presence in global nonfiction storytelling. As the first Indian documentary in the OTT category to win this prestigious award, *Fanatics* reaffirms our belief in backing culturally rooted narratives that carry universal resonance."

Barun Das, MD & CEO of TV9 Network, added, "We knew we had a winner on our hands from the word go. The subject was unique, its appeal universal, and the stories in it both gripping and insightful. I thank DocuBay for giving Studio9 the opportunity to produce it."

STUDIO9



ShemarooMe rolls out 10-day 'Gujju Film Fest'

ShemarooMe has added a festive twist to December by announcing a special year-end celebration for Gujarati cinema lovers.

The platform has launched a 10-day 'Gujju Film Fest', running from December 6 to 15, offering viewers one acclaimed Gujarati film for free each day. The initiative brings a vibrant mix of genres and storytelling styles, giving audiences an easy way to revisit some of the most talked-about regional titles of the past decade.

According to a press release, the festival has been designed as a 'Gujarati glitter' moment for the year-end, spotlighting films that have shaped modern Gujarati cinema. Over the years, the industry has steadily expanded its footprint with richer narratives, stronger performances and a growing viewer base both in India and abroad. The curated line-up aims to celebrate that evolution while ensuring free access to stories that resonate deeply with Gujarati audiences.

The films chosen for the fest represent the diversity the industry is now known for—from heart-warming dramas to thrillers, slice-of-life stories and socially rooted narratives. Viewers can stream favourites like 'Fakt Mahilao Maate', 'Jhamkudi', 'Vash' and the National Award-winning 'Hellaro', which remain milestones in the new Gujarati wave.

Titles such as 'Bachubhai', 'Mithada Maheman' and 'Kutch Express' bring emotional depth and relatable themes, while 'Naadi Dosh' explores relationships through the lens of astrology. Rounding off the catalogue is 'Umbarro', a story of liberation and joy centred on seven women finding their voice. ShemarooMe has positioned the fest as both a celebration and an appreciation of homegrown storytelling. Gujarati cinema has seen significant growth in the past few years, driven by distinct voices, relatable characters and universal themes wrapped in regional flavour. With this festival, the platform aims to make premium films easily accessible to a larger audience while giving viewers a chance to revisit the titles that contributed to the industry's creative rise.



Ahaan Panday, Aneet Padda top IMDb's most popular Indian stars of 2025; Mohit Suri leads directors list



IMDb has unveiled its Most Popular Indian Stars and Directors of 2025, with newcomers Ahaan Panday and Aneet Padda securing the top two spots after the success of their debut romantic drama 'Saiyaara'.

The announcement is based on the platform's STARMeter rankings, which reflect page views from more than 250 million monthly visitors worldwide. Their film's director, Mohit Suri, has simultaneously been named the most popular Indian director of the year, marking a rare sweep for a single project. The rankings, released by IMDb, also coincide with the pair's earlier recognition as recipients of the IMDb "Breakout Star" STARMeter Award in August—an honour that has historically anticipated major career breakthroughs. This year also marks the launch of IMDb's first-ever Most Popular Indian Directors list, introduced after the IMDb Industry Report highlighted the growing influence of filmmakers as engines of fandom and creative world-building.

Yaminie Patodia, head of IMDb India, said the new list reflects a shift in audience engagement: "We are introducing our first-ever IMDb Most Popular Indian Directors list alongside our annual Most Popular Indian Stars ranking. Directors are now consistently appearing on our weekly charts, indicating that they are becoming fan favourites as audiences are drawn to world-building and storytelling."

For Ahaan Panday, who debuts at No. 1, the achievement is both emotional and overwhelming. Calling it a "full circle Paulo Coelho moment", he credited the people who shaped his first film: "Whatever I did on screen was a reflection of Mohit Suri's guidance and his genius. I thank Aditya Chopra for giving me the opportunity of a lifetime, and Shanoo Sharma for believing in me. This recognition makes me more aware of the responsibility I have

towards my craft." He added that the support he received for Saiyaara is "something I will cherish for a lifetime".

Aneet Padda, who ranks No. 2, described the honour as "still a little unreal", noting that 'Saiyaara' fundamentally transformed her life. She said, "To know that people across countries and languages connected with my work means more than I can explain. Mohit Suri saw something in me before I saw it in myself, and the faith in his eyes gave me courage." She thanked Aditya Chopra, Shanoo Sharma, and the film's team for shaping her journey, adding that the IMDb recognition serves as "a gentle push toward everything I want to grow into".

This year's Most Popular Indian Stars list also features Aamir Khan (No. 3), Ishaan Khatter (No. 4), Lakshya (No. 5) and Rashmika Mandanna (No. 6), whose diverse slate of releases across Hindi, Telugu, and Tamil kept her consistently in viewer demand. Triptii Dimri (No. 8) and Ishaan Khatter are the only two names who return from last year's list.

On the directors' side, Mohit Suri leads, followed by Aryan Khan—whose directorial debut *The Ba**ds of Bollywood** earned him a place as the youngest filmmaker on the list and the only series creator among the top 10. Lokesh Kanagaraj, Anurag Kashyap, Prithviraj Sukumaran, R.S. Prasanna, Anurag Basu, Dominic Arun, Laxman Utekar, and Neeraj Ghaywan round out the rankings. Ghaywan's 'Homebound' was recently selected as India's official entry to the 2026 Academy Awards.

The 2025 lists underline a year shaped by breakout talent, crossover appeal, and expanding global curiosity toward Indian cinema — with 'Saiyaara' emerging as the defining catalyst behind the top performers.

'Emily in Paris' S5 drops Dec 18

Netflix on Dec 02 unveiled the official trailer and new stills for the fifth season of its hit romantic-dramedy series 'Emily in Paris'. The upcoming season, comprising 10 episodes, is set to premiere globally on December 18.

The new chapter follows Emily Cooper as she steps into her expanded role as the head of Agence Gateau Rome. While the job marks a fresh professional milestone, her transition to a new city comes with its own set of challenges. A promising work idea unexpectedly spirals, triggering a chain of emotional and career complications that force Emily to reassess her path and regain a sense of balance.

According to PTI, Season 5 also delves deeper into Emily's personal journey as she finds herself guarding a significant secret—one that affects an important relationship and shapes her choices through the season. As she navigates the fallout, the story continues to blend workplace drama, romantic tension and the show's signature escapist charm.



Star Plus unveils 'Gita Mahotsav: Tulsi Ki Sang' featuring Smriti Irani

Star Plus has announced a special three-episode cultural event titled 'Gita Mahotsav: Tulsi Ki Sang', set to air from December 1 to 3, 2025, at 6.30 pm.

The series arrives in time for Gita Jayanti and aims to bring the timeless teachings of the Bhagavad Gita to today's audiences through the iconic lens of Tulsi Virani, portrayed by Smriti Irani. The channel shared the update through its official Instagram handle, highlighting the significance of the project within India's evolving creative landscape.

As one of Indian television's most recognisable and emotionally rooted characters, Tulsi Virani brings a rare mix of credibility and cross-generational resonance to the format.

Her cultural ubiquity was vividly underlined when Bill Gates greeted her with a "Jai Shri Krishna" during the 'Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi' Season Two integration—an interaction that not only stunned viewers but also reaffirmed Tulsi's cross-border recall value and the soft-power potential of India's creative intellectual property.

Speaking about reprising her role, Smriti Irani said, "Returning as Tulsi for Gita Mahotsav has been both grounding and

creatively enriching. India's cultural and creative economy is witnessing a powerful resurgence, with audiences—especially the young—seeking stories that offer meaning, introspection, and emotional clarity. The Bhagavad Gita remains one of our greatest sources of wisdom, and interpreting its teachings for a new generation has been an honour. I hope viewers find the same strength and purpose in these episodes that I did while bringing them to life."



With its blend of tradition and modern storytelling, 'Gita Mahotsav: Tulsi Ki Sang' reflects India's shifting relationship with identity, spirituality and media. As the country's spiritual economy continues to expand—fueled by innovative content formats, creator-led ecosystems and active digital communities—the special aims to tap

into stories that draw from cultural archives while inspiring renewed curiosity.

Star Plus positions the event as a meaningful contribution to the creative economy, driven by narratives that resonate deeply with audiences seeking connection, clarity and continuity with heritage.

CloudTV adds Swastik Stories to deepen cultural content offering

CloudTV, India's first homegrown Smart TV operating system, has strengthened its content slate by onboarding Swastik Stories India's first cultural storytelling and entertainment FAST (Free Ad-Supported Streaming TV) channel from Swastik Productions. The partnership gives CloudTV OS users free access to an expansive lineup of mythological dramas, reimagined legends and original cultural narratives, bringing viewers closer to India's timeless storytelling heritage. According to the company, the collaboration further boosts CloudTV's FAST channel library, which now includes more than 300 free channels across genres such as entertainment, news, kids and mythology. With a pan-India footprint of over 12 million users, CloudTV aims to offer a richer and more diverse content experience on Smart TVs

across the country.

Swastik Stories, known for presenting India's legacy through a contemporary and cinematic lens, expands CloudTV's ecosystem with its culturally immersive programming. The channel showcases visually rich narratives and high-quality storytelling that appeal to both traditional audiences and new-age viewers. Swastik Stories has already built a strong following across digital platforms and offline, backed by Swastik Productions' longstanding expertise in mythological and cultural storytelling. Speaking about the partnership, Abhijeet Rajpurohit, COO and Co-Founder of CloudTV, said the platform is committed to building a content library that reflects the preferences of a diverse Indian audience. "This collaboration with Swastik Stories helps us bring together the richness of our cultural heritage with

the possibilities of digital innovation. We look forward to continuing to expand our ecosystem of partners and shaping the future of connected entertainment in India," he said.

Siddharth Kumar Tewary, Founder and Chief Storyteller at Swastik Stories, said the aim has always been to narrate India's stories with authenticity and craftsmanship. "This partnership with CloudTV helps us take that effort into more homes and more hearts. If India's stories can reach the next generation in a way that feels modern and meaningful, then we're moving in the right direction," he noted.

CloudTV has recently been expanding its cultural collaborations. Earlier, it partnered with Prasara Bharati's WAVES OTT to bring public service and heritage content to Smart TVs.



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MHJ Unplugged crosses 23 million views, marks strong debut for Sony Marathi's new digital IP

'Maharashtrachi Hasyajatra' (MHJ), Sony Marathi's flagship comedy show, continues to extend its cultural imprint with the success of its digital-first spin-off, MHJ Unplugged, which has hit an impressive 23 million views across the network's digital platforms.

The achievement marks a major milestone for the channel's new digital IP under MGEC's first initiative, strengthening MHJ's status as one of Maharashtra's most loved entertainment brands.

Now in its ninth year, 'Maharashtrachi Hasyajatra' has completed more than 950 episodes, earning a loyal audience through its family-friendly humour and a roster of beloved comic performers. MHJ Unplugged was conceptualised as an extension of this universe—a format that takes fans behind the scenes through candid conversations with nine of the show's most popular artistes. The podcast explores their journeys, struggles, inspirations and personal moments, offering a closer emotional connect beyond the stage performances.

The first season, supported by presenting partners Waman Hari Pethe Jewellers and Ravetkar Group, received overwhelming appreciation for its raw and honest storytelling. This season-long partnership not only elevated the show's credibility but also enabled impactful brand integrations that blended seamlessly into the narrative. Sony Marathi ensured premium visibility for both partners through host mentions, logo placements, L-bands, Aston bands and dedicated branding on set.

Waman Hari Pethe Jewellers' association stood out with a

personalised "Waman Hari Pethe Soneri Kshan moment" in each episode, culminating with a sponsored silver coin for every guest—an emotional hook that aligned perfectly with the brand's philosophy of celebrating golden moments. Ravetkar Group, too, benefitted from prominent on-ground and in-show visibility, deepening its presence among MHJ's massive community of viewers.

The debut season not only strengthened Sony Marathi's digital footprint but also showcased the platform's commitment to experimentation, regional storytelling and innovative content formats. Hosted by Amit Phalke, MHJ Unplugged successfully brought fans closer to the MHJ universe, with candid insights and heartfelt conversations that resonated strongly with its loyal fan base.

Speaking about the association, Amol Ravetkar of Ravetkar Group said, "Just as we build homes, we want to build moments of joy. Sponsoring this beloved show, which celebrates local talent and humour, reinforces our

commitment to the culture and values of the communities we serve."

Ashish Pethe of Waman Hari Pethe Jewellers added, "This collaboration allows us to connect directly with our customers. MHJ Unplugged is a perfect vehicle for us as there is a perfect synergy between our customers and the audience of MHJ."

Encouraged by the resounding success of Season 1, Sony Marathi is now gearing up for Season 2, which promises a bigger canvas, fresh formats and wider brand participation. With multiple sponsors already in the pipeline, the upcoming season is expected to offer brands a high-engagement digital property backed by a passionate regional fan base.



Aamir Khan backs Vir Das' 'Hatke' spy comedy 'Happy Patel: Khatarnak Jasoos'

Aamir Khan's production house has announced a quirky new spy entertainer titled 'Happy Patel: Khatarnak Jasoos', marking actor-comedian Vir Das' directorial debut.

The film, described as a "hatke" mix of action, comedy and romance, is set to hit theatres on January 16, 2026. The announcement was made through a humorous video featuring Aamir Khan and Vir Das, giving audiences a taste of the film's offbeat flavour. The teaser was shared with the caption: "From 'Kya BANAYA' to 'KYA BANAYA'. Get ready for a wild ride of comedy, action, romance, and some spy stuff as well."

In the video, Aamir is seen mock-scolding Vir for making a film that seemingly defies the rules of an action thriller. "This is a film? You said it's an action film, spy film, thriller. Where is the action?" he asks in mock irritation. Vir tries to defend himself by insisting the film does have action, only to be cut off by Aamir pointing out that the only action seems to be Vir getting beaten up throughout the film.



DocuBay's 'Fanatics' becomes first Indian documentary to win at Asian Television Awards 2025

DocuBay's original documentary 'Fanatics' has scripted history by becoming the first-ever Indian documentary to win the Best Documentary Programme (OTT) at the 30th Asian Television Awards 2025 held in Indonesia.

The achievement marks a major milestone not only for DocuBay—part of The EPIC Company (formerly IN10 Media Network)—but also for India's growing nonfiction ecosystem.

According to a press release, 'Fanatics', produced by Arpita Chatterjee under STUDIO 9 and directed by Aryan D Roy, dives deep into the emotionally charged and culturally layered world of South

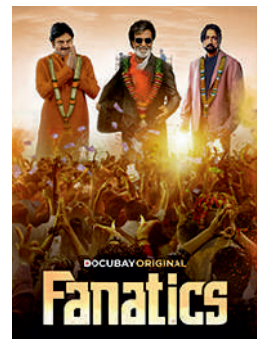
Indian cinema fandom.

The film examines how fan devotion often borders on worship, with actors viewed as larger-than-life figures whose influence extends far beyond the screen. Through intense narratives, socio-cultural insights and rarely seen perspectives, the documentary captures how pride, rivalry, and identity shape fan behaviour—sometimes escalating into real-world consequences.

With compelling interviews from major stars such as Allu Arjun and Kiccha Sudeep, 'Fanatics' explores the psychology behind fan culture and traces how social media has amplified both unity and conflict across fan

communities. Its raw, unfiltered portrayal of a region where cinema operates almost as a religion has resonated with audiences and jury members alike.

The category at this year's Asian Television Awards was packed with strong global contenders. Competing films included Bitter Sweet Ballad from iQiyi and multiple Chinese studios.



Colors announces new drama 'Seher Hone Ko Hai'

Colors is set to launch its newest fiction drama, 'Seher Hone Ko Hai', a story that brings together emotion, generational struggle, and the fight for a young girl's right to education.

The show traces the journey of a mother who was married off too early, yet chooses a braver, different path for her daughter, determined to give her a life she could never live.

Set in Lucknow, the narrative follows Kausar, who dreams of seeing her daughter Seher become a doctor. Standing firmly against her is Parvez, Seher's father, who plans to marry her to Mahid—the grandson of the influential Osmaan family. As Seher's future hangs in the balance, the tension between her aspirations and the expectations imposed upon her forms the emotional core of the story. The announcement comes via an official report introducing the new show and highlighting the themes it hopes to bring forward.

The story pivots when Mahid seeks treatment from Dr. Farid, and Seher finds herself at a crossroads that could change the course of her life. The show features a compelling ensemble: Parth Samthaan as Mahid, Rishita Kothari as Seher, Mahhi Vij as Kausar, Vaqaur Shaikh as Parvez, Apurva Agnihotri as Dr. Farid, and Deepak Qazir as Osmaan. 'Seher Hone Ko Hai' premieres on December 2 and will air every day at 10 pm on Colors and

JioHotstar.

Speaking about his role, Parth Samthaan shared that Mahid is "a beautifully conflicted soul," shaped by a troubled childhood and the burden of family expectations. He described it as one of his most challenging characters to date—emotionally unstable, wounded, yet defined by a strong sense of justice. "Returning to television with a character this layered feels incredibly special," he said.



Mahhi Vij, who plays Kausar, called the role deeply personal. "Coming back to fiction with Kausar feels like coming home, both as an actor and as a mother," she said. She expressed how the character's silent strength and relentless determination to secure her daughter's future resonated with her on a profound level.

Rishita Kothari, who brings Seher to life, said the character is a tribute to

young girls whose dreams often remain unspoken. "Her dream of becoming a doctor is a continuation of a dream Kausar never got to chase," she reflected. Transitioning from digital content to a powerful television role, she sees Seher as a beacon of courage and quiet resilience.

With 'Seher Hone Ko Hai', Colors brings forward a story that intertwines ambition, empowerment and the complexities of tradition—promising a fresh, moving narrative that champions the importance of a girl's right to choose her own future.

Star Pravah is set to premiere its next landmark historical series, 'Mi Savitribai Jyotirao Phule', a powerful retelling of the life and legacy of Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule, India's first woman educator and one of the most influential social reformers of the 19th century.

According to a press release, the show, starring Madhurani Gokhale as Savitribai Phule and Dr. Amol Kolhe as Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, will begin airing on January 5.

The series, produced by Jagdamba Creations, traces the extraordinary journey of the Phule couple as they challenged oppressive traditions, championed girls' education and ignited a social revolution that reshaped Maharashtra and the nation.

Set against the backdrop of 19th-century Maharashtra, 'Mi Savitribai Jyotirao Phule' brings to life the story of a woman who defied rigid societal norms at a time when educating girls was considered unacceptable. Alongside her husband, Savitribai Phule launched a reform movement that laid the foundation for a more equal and just society.

Star Pravah has consistently showcased Maharashtra's historic and cultural icons through acclaimed series like 'Raja Shivchatrapati', 'Jai Bhavani Jai Shivaji' and 'Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar'. With this latest offering, the channel once again turns to a revolutionary figure whose work continues to inspire generations.

The show aims to reintroduce Savitribai's courage, resilience and pioneering thought to today's viewers.

A JioStar spokesperson said the channel believes in using entertainment as a meaningful medium for reflection and social awareness. "Mi Savitribai Jyotirao Phule isn't just a historical retelling it is a celebration of a revolutionary woman whose courage reshaped the future of every girl in this state. Maharashtra's heritage is rich with stories of progress and equality, and it's our privilege to bring this legacy to homes across the state," the spokesperson said.

Madhurani Gokhale, who plays Savitribai, shared that stepping into the role of such a towering reformer comes with immense responsibility. She noted that the freedoms enjoyed by women

Star Pravah brings 'Savitribai Phule's inspiring story from Jan 5



today are rooted in battles fought more than a century ago. "Savitribai Phule was a woman ahead of her time. Portraying such a personality is a huge responsibility. I feel blessed to have this opportunity, and I hope the audience supports us," she said.

Dr. Amol Kolhe, who portrays Jyotirao Phule and also produces the series, called the role an emotional journey. Known for playing several iconic characters, Kolhe said portraying Phule is uniquely challenging. "He was a blazing torch of revolutionary thought. To convey the ideas of such a reformer is a great responsibility," he said. Kolhe also reflected on his long association with Star Pravah, adding that returning to the channel after 17 years — this time also as a producer — makes the project even more meaningful.

'Mi Savitribai Jyotirao Phule' promises to bring the inspiring story of India's first woman teacher to a new generation of viewers, highlighting her immense contribution to women's rights and social justice.

The show premieres on January 5, only on Star Pravah.

IN10 Media Network rebrands as The EPIC Company

IN10 Media Network has officially rebranded itself as 'The EPIC Company', marking a significant shift in its identity as it moves toward becoming a future-ready, tech-enabled storytelling powerhouse.

The announcement comes as the organisation completes a decade of crafting culturally rooted stories for Indian and global audiences.

According to an IN10 Media press release, the new identity reflects the company's evolution from a platform-led network to a content-creation universe designed to operate across formats, screens and geographies.

The rebranding was unveiled at a special event attended by industry leaders including Anand Mahindra, Chairman of the Mahindra Group; Krishna Kumar Pittie, Founder and Chairman of Pittie Group; Prasanth Kumar, CEO – South Asia, WPP Media; Shashi Sinha, Executive Chairman, IPG Mediabrand India; and Ajit Varghese, Partner & Group CEO – Media & OOH, Madison World.



Dharmendra, icon of Hindi cinema, passes away at 89

Veteran Bollywood legend Dharmendra has passed away at the age of 89, sources close to IANS confirmed on Nov 24, marking the end of an era for Indian cinema. The actor, who would have turned 90 on December 8, had been under intermittent medical care in recent weeks.

The news comes after the superstar was discharged from Mumbai's Breach Candy Hospital on November 12, where he had been receiving treatment. At that time, Dr. Rajiv Sharma had assured IANS that the actor was "fully satisfied" with the care provided and was stable enough to return home. He had urged the public not to believe or circulate false health updates, instead asking fans to pray for Dharmendra's recovery. However, Dharmendra's condition had been critical earlier. Sources had told IANS on November 10 that the actor was on life support, and he had been placed under strict medical observation by top doctors since October 31.

Dharmendra's passing leaves behind

a monumental cinematic legacy spanning over six decades and more than 300 films. Widely celebrated as one of the most handsome, charismatic and commercially successful stars in Hindi cinema, he also held the record for appearing in the highest number of hit films.

He made his screen debut in 1960 with 'Dil Bhi Tera Hum Bhi Tere' and rose to fame through a string of acclaimed films in the mid-1960s, including 'Aaye Milan Ki Bela', 'Phool Aur Patthar', and 'Aaye Din Bahar Ke'. His superstardom continued with classics such as 'Ankhen', 'Shikar', 'Mera Gaon Mera Desh', 'Yaadon Ki Baaraat', 'Seeta Aur Geeta', 'Jugnu', 'Chupke Chupke', 'Pratiggya', 'Dharam Veer, Sholay', 'The Burning Train', and 'Charas', among many others.

In the later phase of his career, Dharmendra transitioned seamlessly into mature and character roles, appearing in acclaimed films like 'Life in a... Metro', 'Johnny Gaddaar', 'Apne', 'Yamla Pagla Deewana', 'Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani'



and most recently 'Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya' (2024).

He was due to appear next in Sriram Raghavan's war drama 'Ikkis', starring Agastya Nanda and Simar Bhatia, based on the life of Param Vir Chakra awardee Arun Khetarpal.

Honoured with the Padma Bhushan in 2012, Dharmendra leaves behind a legacy defined by versatility, enduring stardom, and an unmatched contribution to Indian cinema.

His passing has left millions of fans, colleagues, and admirers mourning the loss of one of Bollywood's greatest icons.

Ajay Devgn and Rakul Preet Singh's latest release, 'De De Pyaar De 2', has sailed past the Rs.100 crore milestone at

the worldwide box office, registering Rs.100.22 crore since its theatrical release. The film, which also features R Madhavan in a key role, continues to draw audiences with its blend of humour, relationship drama and star power.

According to a PTI report, the sequel, directed by Anshul Sharma, opened in cinemas on November 14 and has maintained steady momentum in both domestic and international markets.

The film follows the success of the 2019 hit 'De De Pyaar De', and the fresh narrative spin introduced in the sequel.

'De De Pyaar De 2' crosses Rs.100cr mark at global BO



which starred Devgn, Rakul and Tabu, and also enjoyed strong box-office performance during its run.

The original film revolved around Ashish (played by Devgn), a wealthy man in his 50s who falls in love with Ayesha (Rakul), a woman nearly half his age, leading to tension within his family, especially with his ex-wife Manju, portrayed by Tabu.

The sequel builds on the characters and their complicated dynamics, exploring new chapters in their lives while retaining the emotional and comedic flavour that defined the first instalment.

'De De Pyaar De 2' continues to find resonance with moviegoers, driven by the returning cast's chemistry in the sequel.



Meta signs new deals with news outlets to boost AI



Meta on Dec 05 announced a significant expansion of its artificial intelligence assistant, revealing new partnerships with major global news organisations to deliver real-time information across Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. The move marks one of the company's most direct integrations of professional news content into its AI products in recent years.

According to an AFP report, Meta AI will now provide users with breaking news, entertainment updates and lifestyle stories drawn from a wide network of publishers whenever they ask news-related questions. The partnerships include well-known outlets such as CNN, Fox News, Le Monde, People and USA Today, reflecting what the company called an effort to bring "more diverse content sources" into its ecosystem.

In a blog post, Meta said the goal of the expansion is to make its AI assistant "more responsive, accurate, and balanced," especially at a time when AI systems often struggle to keep pace with fast-moving developments. The company added that these integrations will offer users direct links to partner websites, helping them explore stories in greater depth while providing publishers with additional referral traffic.

Meta emphasised that the newly onboarded organisations span a wide ideological range, noting that the initial list also includes conservative-leaning publications such as The Daily Caller and The Washington Examiner. The company said it will continue adding more partners and developing additional

features as competition rises among tech giants racing to advance AI-powered information delivery.

Meta AI is already active across Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and other products serving billions of users, and the company hopes the strengthened news integration will enhance the assistant's usefulness as more people rely on AI for real-time answers.

The latest announcement comes at a particularly notable moment in Meta's often turbulent relationship with the news media. Over the past several years, the company has repeatedly shifted its strategy — from promoting news content heavily to phasing it out on many markets. Facebook News was shut down in the United States, Britain and France after Meta declared that news made up only a small fraction of user engagement, bringing an end to multimillion-dollar publisher deals.

Earlier this year, CEO Mark Zuckerberg also abruptly discontinued Meta's US fact-checking program, dissolving partnerships with third-party fact checkers, including teams from AFP, that were responsible for identifying misinformation on the platform. The decision aligned with a broader retreat from news and civic information initiatives as Meta redirected resources toward AI development.

With its latest partnerships, however, the company appears to be taking a different path—one that brings traditional news content back into its platforms, but this time, through the lens of artificial intelligence.

Bisleri ups UAE presence with Emirates Cricket alliance

Bisleri International, India's leading packaged drinking water brand, has entered a three-year partnership with the Emirates Cricket Board (ECB) as its Official Hydration Partner.

The agreement, according to a Bisleri press release, was formalised at the Dubai International Stadium yesterday. This strategic alliance marks a significant step in the company's expansion in the UAE and reinforces its commitment to championing hydration, wellness and peak athletic performance across global sporting platforms.

Being the official governing body for cricket in the UAE, the ECB oversees the development of the sport across men's, women's and U19 categories. Over the years, the ECB has played a crucial role in elevating the UAE's standing as an emerging cricketing hub, hosting high-impact bilateral series, marquee international fixtures and world cricket tournaments.

As part of the association, the Bisleri branding will appear on the uniforms of the Men's National Team, Women's National Team, U-19 Men's Team, and U-19 Women's Team. The branding will feature across bilateral series, Asian Cricket Council events and ICC tournaments, strengthening Bisleri's focus on supporting athletes competing and visibility across high-viewership global cricket platforms.



Arijit Singh tops Spotify India Wrapped 2025 for 7th straight year

Spotify has released its much-anticipated Wrapped 2025, revealing the artists, songs and podcasts that defined the country's listening habits this year.

For the seventh year in a row, Arijit Singh has emerged as India's most-streamed artist on the platform — a feat that underscores his unmatched dominance in the country's music landscape.

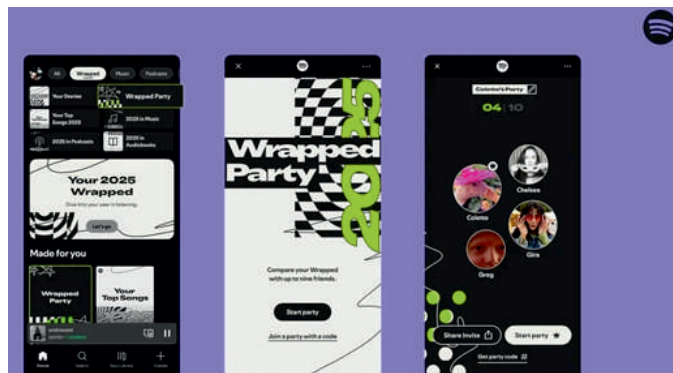
According to The Economic Times, despite topping the artist charts yet again, none of Arijit's tracks managed to break into the top five most-streamed songs of the year.

The honour of India's most-streamed song for 2025 went to 'Raanjhan' from 'Do Patti', composed by Sachet-Parampara, which pulled in an impressive 246 million streams. Romance continued to remain the country's favourite genre, with several love ballads securing top positions. Arijit still made his presence felt with 'Apna Bana Le', his feature with Sachin-Jigar, which took the eighth spot on the list.

Spotify's Top Artists list this year reflects a mix of evergreen legends and contemporary stars. Arijit leads the chart, followed by Pritam and Shreya Ghoshal. A.R. Rahman and Anirudh Ravichander rounded out the top five, while the rest of the top ten included names such as Sachin-Jigar, Alka Yagnik,

Udit Narayan, Tanishk Bagchi and Masoom Sharma. The rankings highlight a blend of nostalgia and new-age music, suggesting that iconic voices continue to command loyalty even as fresh sounds gain popularity.

The Top Songs of 2025 list carried a diverse mix — from indie tracks and new-age love songs to recreated classics and soulful ballads. Besides 'Raanjhan', tracks like 'Finding Her', 'Saiyaara', 'Sahiba', and 'Ishq' captured listeners' attention throughout the year. The album charts were similarly varied, with Tanishk Bagchi's 'Saiyaara' securing the top position, followed by timeless favourites such as 'Aashiqui 2' and 'Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani'. Karan Aujla also made a strong impact with two entries — 'P-POP CULTURE' and Making Memories. Meanwhile, podcasts continued to see massive growth, with Indian listeners gravitating towards true crime, horror, self-improvement and mythology. 'Figuring Out' with Raj Shamani topped the podcast charts, followed by shows like 'The Horror Show' by Khooni Monday, 'The Desi Crime Podcast' and 'The Stories of Mahabharata'. The mix shows that audiences increasingly seek a combination of thrill, learning and



cultural storytelling.

Wrapped 2025 also introduced several new features, making the experience more interactive. Users can now explore personalised insights such as their top genres, take the Top Song Quiz, track how their favourite artists rose or fell month-by-month, and even view a detailed breakdown of how many times each song was streamed. The new Wrapped Party feature lets friends compare their musical tastes, while the Listening Archive uses AI to highlight memorable moments from their year in music.

"This year, you can experience your Wrapped, your way — with the ability to control the speed of your experience and revisit specific moments without starting from the beginning," Spotify said.

Spotify Wrapped continues to evolve each year, but one thing remains unchanged: India's deep and enduring love for music — with Arijit Singh still sitting firmly at the top of the throne.

Airtel rejoins Google to bring RCS messaging back to Indian

In a move that could reshape the future of mobile communication in the country, Bharti Airtel has renewed its partnership with Google to roll out Rich Communication Services (RCS) messaging on its network.

The development comes after nearly a year of distance between the two companies over offering the next-generation messaging standard to Airtel subscribers.

According to an Economic Times report, both companies have now signed an agreement that will see Airtel begin offering RCS—positioned globally as a modern, feature-rich successor to traditional SMS—using Google's platform.

The renewed partnership signals a significant shift in India's messaging landscape at a time when telcos and tech giants are increasingly aligning their communication technologies with global standards.



Elon Musk appears in new teaser of Nikhil Kamath's 'WTF is' podcast episode

Elon Musk's appearance on Zerodha co-founder Nikhil Kamath's popular podcast "WTF is" has set the internet buzzing once again, with Kamath dropping a second black-and-white clip that mixes humour, curiosity and classic Musk-style quirkiness. The new video, shared on X, begins suggesting that the full conversation may explore themes of perseverance, long-term thinking and strategic patience, although he offered no further details beyond a simple "coming soon". The clip arrives just a day after Kamath released the first teaser—a 39-second silent video showing him



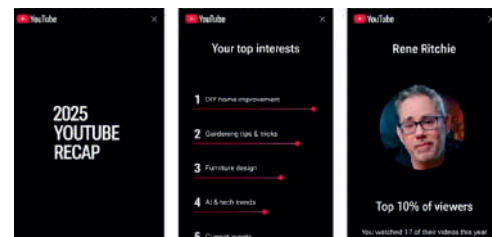
on a light note as Kamath teases Musk about looking "bigger and bulkier" than expected, prompting the Tesla and SpaceX chief to laugh before the conversation moves into more intriguing territory, IANS reported from Mumbai.

When Kamath asks Musk about his long-standing fascination with the letter 'X', Musk jokingly replies, "Sometimes I wonder what's wrong with me," sparking amused reactions from viewers. The teaser also dives into pop culture when Kamath asks which character from "The Matrix" Musk would want to be. Musk answers, "Hopefully not Agent Smith? He's my hero," keeping the exchange playful yet memorable. Kamath captioned the teaser with, "Here's to delaying gratification. The future belongs to the patient,"

and Musk sitting together in what appears to be an industrial setting. With both sipping coffee and exchanging knowing smiles, and a SpaceX logo visible on Kamath's mug, online speculation quickly escalated about the topics and tone of the upcoming episode.

Kamath's "WTF is" podcast has rapidly evolved into a platform attracting global leaders from technology, business and geopolitics. Previous guests include Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates, prominent investor Vinod Khosla, and Perplexity AI CEO Aravind Srinivas. The Musk episode, expected to be one of Kamath's most-watched conversations yet, has already generated significant interest ahead of its release.

YouTube rolls out personalized 'Recap' feature for Indian users



YouTube has launched a new personalised 'Recap' experience for users in India, offering a detailed snapshot of their viewing habits over the past year. The feature, which begins rolling out this week, is available directly on the platform's homepage as well as in the 'You' tab on both mobile and desktop.

Recap presents users with up to 12 customised cards showcasing their most-watched channels, top interests, and evolving viewing patterns. It also dives into music preferences, highlighting favourite artists, songs, genres and podcasts, with expanded insights available on the YouTube Music app.

According to YouTube, the feature is the result of extensive user research, including nine rounds of testing and more than 50 concept explorations, all aimed at understanding how viewers discover and engage with content. One of the more engaging elements of Recap is its personality profiling, which categorises users based on their viewing behaviour.

Popular personas include the 'Sunshiner',

"Wonder Seeker' and 'Connector', while more uncommon types such as the 'Philosopher' and 'Dreamer' also appear based on niche interests.

By spotlighting favourite moments, creators and content journeys, YouTube aims to give users a reflective and shareable year-end experience. The cards can be saved and shared across social platforms, making Recap both a personalised summary and a conversation starter for viewers across India.

WPL adds ChatGPT, Kingfisher and Bisleri as new partners for 2026–27 seasons

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has announced a major commercial boost for the TATA Women's Premier League, confirming new partnerships worth Rs.48 crore for the 2026 and 2027 seasons.

The league, already regarded as the world's biggest women's cricket tournament, has secured the backing of prominent global and Indian brands in what is being seen as one of its strongest commercial expansions yet.

According to a WPL press release, ChatGPT and Kingfisher Packaged Drinking Water have joined as Premier Partners for the next two seasons, signalling a powerful endorsement of the league's growing viewership, brand value and youth engagement. The partnerships reflect the league's rising stature as a modern and fast-growing sports property appealing to diverse audiences.

The WPL has also strengthened its long-standing association with CEAT, which

will continue as the Strategic Time-Out Partner, while Bisleri—a household name and one of India's most trusted beverage brands—joins as the official Beverage Partner. They will take their place alongside existing Premier Partners Sintex and Herbalife, reaffirming the league's expanding and dynamic commercial ecosystem. With TATA Group as the Title Partner, the WPL enters its next phase with a robust and high-value sponsorship lineup that mirrors its ambition and cultural impact.

Highlighting the significance of the new agreements, BCCI President Mithun Manhas said the confidence shown by leading global and Indian brands reflects the WPL's "remarkable growth" and its position among the world's most impactful sporting properties. Honorary Secretary Devajit Saikia added that the



new partners bring "exceptional value and diverse strengths," underscoring the league's commitment to excellence and world-class sports entertainment.

WPL Chairperson Jayesh George said the additions of ChatGPT, Kingfisher and Bisleri demonstrate the league's strong connect with a new generation of fans, while the renewal of CEAT reaffirms the commercial value the league continues to generate for its partners. He noted that these collaborations will play a crucial role in shaping the long-term growth of women's cricket and elevating the league's reach in the coming editions.

Airtel, 'The Family Man' roll out first-of-its-kind in-world OTT brand integration

Airtel and Prime Video India have executed a breakthrough collaboration inside the narrative universe of 'The Family Man', marking one of the rare in-world brand integrations in India's OTT ecosystem.

The partnership embeds the telco seamlessly into the show's storyline, using a moment of Wi-Fi failure during Srikant Tiwari's high-stress sequence as a narrative device.

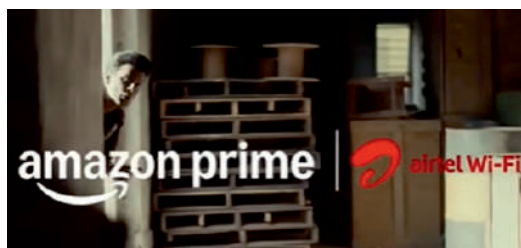
Prime Video partnered with Abhijith Nambiar, Tejas Ravindranath, and the core creative team behind the series. The goal was to avoid the conventional approach of external brand placements and instead integrate Airtel as a natural utility within the protagonist's world. The placement is designed to feel organic, mirroring real-life dependence on stable connectivity. Online TV streaming services

By converting a common digital hiccup into a story-relevant

beat, the collaboration highlights how critical connectivity is in high-pressure situations—both for everyday users and within the show's espionage-driven plotlines. It signals a shift in how brands can participate in streaming narratives, moving beyond traditional cutaways, product shots, or character mentions.

For Prime Video and Airtel, the integration models a new template for subtle, narrative-aligned brand partnerships. For creators, it opens up pathways to include brands without disrupting immersion. And for the broader M&E industry, it sets a benchmark for innovative, in-world advertising that respects viewer experience.

With this initiative, Airtel and 'The Family Man' position themselves as early movers in evolving brand participation on OTT—demonstrating how platforms can embed brand utility into character-driven storytelling in a purposeful, seamless manner.



GIZMOS & GADGETS



01. Accenture Teams Up With Anthropic to Boost Enterprise AI

Accenture has partnered with Anthropic to help large companies adopt AI faster and more effectively. The collaboration will combine Accenture's global technology expertise with Anthropic's advanced Claude AI models to create safer, smarter, and more scalable AI solutions for businesses.

The partnership will focus on building custom AI tools, improving workplace productivity, and helping enterprises move from pilot projects to full-scale AI deployment. Both companies also emphasized responsible AI development as a core priority. This alliance is expected to accelerate the next wave of enterprise-grade AI adoption across industries worldwide.

02. The Forge: Top AFK Farm Spots to Boost Your Wealth Fast

In The Forge, players looking to grow their in-game wealth without constant grinding can take advantage of the best AFK (Away From Keyboard) farm spots. These locations allow characters to automatically collect resources, earn currency, and level up while players focus on other tasks.

The most effective AFK farm spots are usually high-density areas where enemies respawn quickly or valuable resources spawn consistently. Popular choices include enchanted forests, mining caverns, and certain boss arenas with lower difficulty but high loot drops. Optimizing gear, abilities, and character positioning in these spots can significantly increase gains, letting players get rich quickly while minimizing active gameplay.



03. Samsung Rolls Out One UI 8.5 Beta for Galaxy S25



Samsung has begun rolling out the One UI 8.5 beta for Galaxy S25 users across six markets, introducing a host of new features aimed at enhancing content creation, device connectivity, and security. The update focuses on streamlining workflows within Samsung's ecosystem, making it easier for users to work seamlessly across devices.

A highlight of the beta is Storage Share, which provides instant access to files across phones, tablets, PCs, and even Samsung TVs through a single interface. Additional improvements include enhanced media editing tools, smarter notifications, and tighter security measures to protect user data. The One UI 8.5 beta reinforces Samsung's commitment to creating a unified, efficient, and secure ecosystem for its users.



04. Report Outlines Key Science Objectives for Human Mars Exploration

A new scientific report has identified the critical research goals for future human missions to Mars, offering a roadmap for how astronauts could explore the Red Planet while advancing our understanding of planetary science, human health in space, and Earth-Mars system dynamics.

The report emphasizes several core objectives that human explorers and supporting robotic systems should pursue once humans set foot on Mars. These include studying Martian geology and climate history to understand how the planet evolved, searching for signs of past or present life, and characterizing environmental conditions such as radiation, dust cycles, and subsurface water or ice deposits. Understanding these factors is essential for both scientific discovery and planning long-duration human habitation.

05. Mercedes-Benz India to Launch New EV Charging Ecosystem in 90 Days

Mercedes-Benz India has announced plans to introduce a comprehensive EV charging ecosystem within the next 90 days, marking a major step in supporting its growing electric vehicle lineup. The new initiative will include a network of fast and standard chargers, smart home charging solutions, and digital tools for seamless monitoring and management of EV charging.



The luxury automaker aims to address one of the key challenges for EV adoption in India—charging accessibility and convenience—by providing reliable infrastructure for both urban and semi-urban customers. Mercedes-Benz India also plans to integrate smart energy management features and partnerships with local power providers to ensure efficient and sustainable operations. With this move, Mercedes-Benz India reinforces its commitment to sustainable mobility, making it easier for EV owners to adopt and maintain electric vehicles while supporting the country's transition to cleaner transportation.



06. Royal Enfield Bullet 650 Set to Launch in India in Coming Months

Royal Enfield's much-anticipated Bullet 650 is expected to hit the Indian market in the coming months, rounding out the brand's growing 650 cc motorcycle family. The new model has already made its global debut at EICMA 2025 in Milan and was showcased domestically at Motoverse 2025 in Goa, where enthusiasts got their first close look at the motorcycle's blend of classic styling and modern engineering.

Powered by a 648 cc air/oil-cooled parallel-twin engine producing approximately 47 PS and 52.3 Nm of torque, the Bullet 650 pairs tradition with performance through a six-speed gearbox and slip-and-assist clutch. Its design retains the iconic Bullet identity, including a teardrop tank with hand-painted pinstripes, raised chrome handlebars, tiger-eye pilot lamps, and spoked wheels—while adding features like dual-channel ABS, a semi-digital instrument cluster with Tripper navigation, LED lighting, and USB-C charging support.

07. Infineon Stakes Out Its AI Infrastructure Role Powering the Future of Data Centers and Robotics

Infineon Technologies is strategically positioning itself at the heart of the AI infrastructure revolution, carving out a critical role that extends well beyond traditional chipmaking. As global demand for AI compute rises, the German semiconductor giant is focusing on power delivery and energy-efficient systems essential for the next generation of data centers and AI hardware.

A key part of Infineon's strategy is collaboration with industry heavyweights such as NVIDIA, where the two companies are working on 800 V high-voltage direct current (HVDC) power architectures for AI data centers. This centralized power system is designed to deliver electricity from the grid directly to AI processors (such as GPUs), improving efficiency, reliability, and scalability in environments that could need 1 MW or more per rack by the end of the decade.



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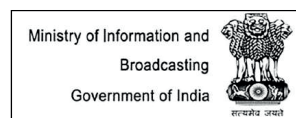


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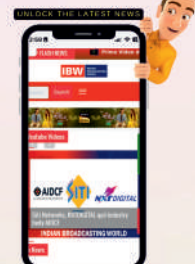


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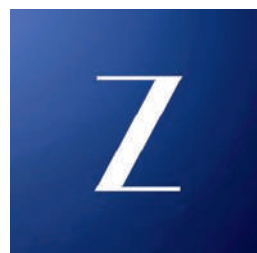


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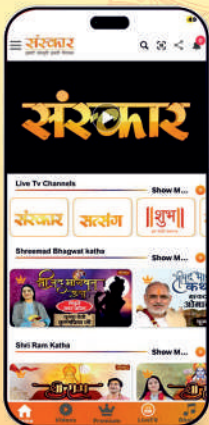


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