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SYMPOSIUM 2026

24th - 25th March, 2026
At Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi

Content - Cable TV - Technology - Internet Broadcasting
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Distribution Paradigm:
CTV, FAST, OTT... DTH and CABLE TV?





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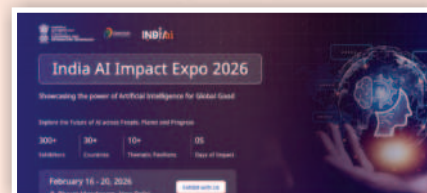
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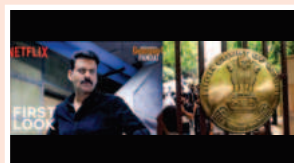


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भविष्य के गर्भ में लगे संभावनाओं के अम्बार AI दीवाना ...देखें हैं ना!

वही जो दूसरो से बेख़बर खुद ही से बतियाते दीखते हों, अब ज्यादा ही दीखने लगे हैं

इनमें जेंडर कोई महत्व नहीं रखता व ना ही उम्र की कोई सीमा, बस स्वयं में खोये खोए ऐसे प्रतीत होते हैं जैसे बावले हो गए हैं ...-दीवाने !

बारीकी से देख समझ आ जाता है कि वार्तालाप में खोए हैं ,शरीर अवश्य दीख रहा है इनका पर ये हैं नहीं यहाँ....!

एक अलग ही दुनिया है टेलीफोनिक संसार, लोकल सिर्फ शरीर है वो नहीं,वो तो वर्चुअल दुनिया में रमते जा रहे हैं,बस ! उन्हें टोकने छेड़ने की हिमाकत मत कर बैठना झल्ला जाएँगे, गुस्सा आयेगा चिड़चिड़े होते जा रहे हैं, बस आप ख़ामोश देख सकें तो देखते रहें,उन्हें अपनी उसी दुनिया में रहने की अब आदत सी हो गई है !

अपने आस पास से दूर होते जा रहे हैं अब वो ...!

आपसे कर लेंगे ना जब वो करना चाहेंगे संवाद लेकिन फुर्सत ही कहाँ है,देखो ना मोबाइल को चार्ज भी तो करना होता है नहाने धोने फ्रैश होने के अतिरिक्त ,खाने का समय तो मिल ही नहीं पाता है बस बात करते करते कब ख़त्म कर हो गया पता ही कहाँ चलता है !

रात कम पड़ जाती है सोने के लिए समय ही नहीं मिल पाता फिर सुबह के सेड्यूल के लिए मजबूरीफटाफट उठ कर भागना होता है , फोन देखने का समय भी सिमटने लगा अब तो, कैसे होगा ना मालूम समय ही बिल्कुल नहीं मिल पा रहा है ,फोन लेकर ही उठना,पकड़े रहना जो होता है ! भला हो ईयरबड्स का कम से कम हाथ तो दोनों फ्री हो गए हैं ,क्या फर्क पड़ता है कि आस पास क्या हो रहा है हम तो डिस्टर्ब नहीं हो रहे थैंक्स ईयर बड्स थैंक यू !

इसके परिणामों के लिए लंबी प्रतीक्षा नहीं करनी होगी वो भी शीघ्र सामने आयेंगे जबकि डॉक्टर्स के लिए बड़ी चुनौती साबित होंगी , क्योंकि वर्चुअल संसार में रहने वाली दुनिया के इन दीवानों को शारीरिक समस्या के साथ साथ जो मस्तिष्क की समस्याएं होंगी उनको नियंत्रण में लाने के लिए सबसे पहले तो इन्हें वर्चुअल से बाहर निकाल कर वास्तविक दुनिया में लेकर आना ही बहुत कठिन होगा !

इतने के लिए ही घोड़े खोलना-इलाज तो उसके बाद की बात है

Dr. A. K. Rastogi

-डॉ.ए.के.रस्तोगी



India M&E looks for a place under AI sunshine as global meet starts

India is set to host the AI Impact Summit, a high-profile gathering of global leaders and industry heavyweights in artificial intelligence — a technology widely seen as one of the biggest disruptors since the advent of electricity.

India's burgeoning entertainment and media industry looks to amplify the AI-related challenges and opportunities at the summit with several media industry veterans slated to be speakers at the event, apart from related activities and sessions, including a high profile keynote by JioStar Vice-Chairman Uday Shankar at the main event. Recent amendment to IT rules and FAQs around AI-generated content and labelling is the huge talking point in the industry at the moment, as is increased accountability of social media platforms and AI tool providers. The summit will offer insights into India's approach to tackling deepfakes and AI misinformation, a PTI report from New Delhi stated.

The summit, at the grand Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi from February 16-20 that will see PM Narendra Modi inaugurate it today evening, will bring together policymakers, industry leaders and technology innovators at a time when nations are racing to define their AI agenda.

For India, the event is as much about signalling capability as it is about intent — showcasing its deep talent pool, expanding digital public infrastructure and growing startup ecosystem, while positioning itself as a key architect of responsible, scalable and inclusive AI solutions for the world.

Artificial intelligence or AI has moved well beyond research labs and boardroom buzzwords — it is reshaping healthcare delivery, transforming agriculture, recalibrating financial markets, redefining education systems and rewriting corporate strategy, even as it alters the very nature of work and, increasingly, everyday life.

For India, the global summit underlines the nation's intent to not merely be a participant, but a key architect in shaping the rules, standards and opportunities of the AI age.

At its core lies the ambition to secure a seat at the global high

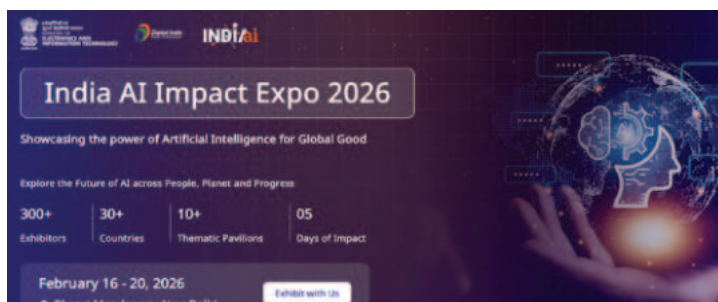
table of technology leadership and help shape the next phase of Artificial Intelligence development.

"The key message we want to send is that whatever happens with AI needs to be human-centric and inclusive. There needs to be democratic access to AI resources, and it needs to be done in a way where people are at the centre of this process," IT Secretary S Krishnan told PTI.

At the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, many global leaders are scheduled to attend the AI Impact Summit, including French President Emmanuel Macron and Brazilian President Lula da Silva. The presence of these heads of state underscores the high-level international engagement and interest around the AI agenda.

Ministerial delegations from over 45 countries would be participating in the summit. The UN Secretary General and senior officials from several international organisations will also join the deliberations.

Prime Minister Modi will address the Summit, visit the Expo, and engage closely with the CEOs. The event will be closely watched globally as it unfolds, given that some of the biggest names shaping the tech narrative are slated to be part of it.



While earlier global gatherings, including the UK's AI Safety Summit at Bletchley Park (2023), the Seoul Summit (2024), and the Paris meet (2025), placed significant emphasis on frontier risks, safety guardrails and voluntary commitments, India is widening the lens to foreground AI's developmental impact and real-world applications that can drive economic growth, social inclusion and sustainability. In essence, People, Planet and Progress.

India is the architect of one of the world's largest digital public infrastructures, which has drawn global recognition, and is home to a fast-growing startup ecosystem.

Backed by the IndiaAI Mission's push for compute capacity, datasets and skilling, the summit will signal New Delhi's strategy for harnessing Artificial Intelligence while balancing rapid innovation with appropriate safeguards.

Seven thematic working groups, co-chaired by representatives from the Global North and Global South, will present concrete deliverables, including proposals for AI Commons, trusted AI tools, shared compute infrastructure, and sector-specific compendiums of AI use cases.

Power-packed sessions, over 700 planned over five days, will address AI safety, governance, ethical use, data protection and India's approach to sovereign AI, including the development of indigenous foundation models for strategic sectors.

The summit will have deep dives into how AI is impacting professions and industries, the new skill requirements for the evolving job market, and the role of AI in supporting farmers, small businesses and individuals.

AI and the future of work:

Unlike the EU's regulation-heavy AI Act or the US' market-driven approach, India has opted, and indeed advocated, for an innovation-first approach. A development-first model focused on scaling benefits across emerging economies.

"Concerns of each society and each country are different in where the negative impact could lie, and so we need to understand that our approach to regulate AI will depend on the objective situations we find ourselves in. "If we need to legislate and regulate, we can do it quickly and

do it in a way that does not impact innovation. Which is why we say innovation-first is the approach, we stand ready to regulate when the need arises, and to the extent possible, we will use existing legislation and regulations," Krishnan said.

The India AI Impact Summit 2026 will be the first global AI summit to be hosted in the Global South.

The summit has a blockbuster lineup of CEOs headlined by Sundar Pichai (CEO of Google), Sam Altman (CEO of OpenAI), Demis Hassabis (CEO of DeepMind Technologies), Dario Amodei (Anthropic CEO), Brad Smith (Microsoft president) and many others.

The collective presence of these influential tech voices under one roof elevates the summit proceedings to a centre of gravity for global tech deliberations.

Audiences will keep a close eye on frontier AI labs (OpenAI, Anthropic) and leading players (Microsoft, Google) for cues and company-related updates and announcements.

Indian startup founders building indigenous models will share the summit stage, highlighting the country's growing role in the AI stack.

The deliberations from Bharat Mandapam will influence how AI is built, governed and deployed across the world in the years ahead.

India showcases cinema, innovation at Berlin Film Market

India marked a strong presence at the European Film Market (EFM) 2026 with the launch of the Bharat Pavilion, highlighting the country's growing global role across cinema, culture and creative technologies.

The initiative reflects India's expanding engagement with international film industries and its strategic push to position itself as a global hub for storytelling and media innovation.

According to an official media statement issued by the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, India inaugurated the Bharat Pavilion at the market held alongside the Berlin International Film Festival, underlining its focus on strengthening global partnerships in film, culture and technology. The pavilion was inaugurated by India's Ambassador to Germany, Ajit Vinayak Gupte, in the presence of international market leaders, cultural representatives and members of the Indian film and innovation delegation. The event reflected growing India-Germany cooperation in the creative and cultural sectors.

Representatives from the global film market ecosystem, officials from the National Film Development Corporation of India, and members of the Indian embassy in Berlin attended the launch, highlighting the increasing depth of bilateral collaboration in the entertainment space. A key highlight of India's participation is the presence of nine Indian filmmakers, who are engaging with international producers, distributors and festival programmers through structured market meetings and project discussions. Their participation signals rising global interest in Indian stories across languages and genres, while also opening avenues for cross-border co-production partnerships and long-term creative alliances. India's delegation also includes four emerging start-ups from the country's media-tech and creative-tech sectors, showcasing solutions that combine



storytelling with digital production and technology. Their participation reflects India's transition from being primarily a content-producing nation to becoming a hub for technological innovation within the global entertainment ecosystem. The delegation further features winners of the Create in India Challenge, highlighting young creative entrepreneurs and breakthrough ideas in innovation-driven storytelling. Cultural delegations from Maharashtra and Delhi are also participating, promoting film production incentives, shooting locations and international collaborations, while positioning their regions as attractive filmmaking destinations. During interactions at the pavilion,

officials highlighted India's upcoming major film festivals, including the Mumbai International Film Festival scheduled for June 2026 and the annual International Film Festival of India in November, positioning them as key global platforms for cinematic exchange and industry collaboration.

Organised by the NFDC, the Bharat Pavilion is serving as a central meeting point for filmmakers, producers, technology innovators and global stakeholders, hosting business meetings, networking sessions and co-

production discussions. India is also participating in the EFM Innovation Hub, where Indian start-ups are presenting advanced tools in immersive storytelling, digital production and media ecosystems, demonstrating the country's growing footprint in AVGC-XR and creative technology.

The Ministry said India's structured participation at EFM 2026 reflects a broader national strategy to strengthen creative entrepreneurship, foster cultural exchange and drive innovation-



led growth in the global media landscape. The Bharat Pavilion, it added, represents India's expanding engagement with international markets and its ambition to shape the future of global entertainment.

India's wireless subscriber base expanded in December 2025, but the gains were concentrated largely with Bharti Airtel and Reliance Jio, while Vodafone Idea Ltd and state-run Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) continued to see subscriber erosion, according to operator-wise data released yesterday by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).

As per an ANI report, Bharti Airtel emerged as the biggest gainer during the month, adding 5.42 million wireless subscribers. Reliance Jio followed with a net addition of around 2.96 million users. The growth for both private operators was spread across multiple licensed service areas, reflecting sustained momentum in their mobile businesses. In contrast, Vodafone Idea reported a net loss of nearly 9.4 lakh wireless subscribers in December, extending the trend of declining user numbers seen over the past several months. BSNL also remained under pressure, losing about 2.06 lakh wireless subscribers during the month. While the public sector operator recorded marginal gains in a few circles, its overall wireless subscriber base continued to shrink.

Taken together, all operators added a net 7.23 million wireless subscribers in December. TRAI data showed that India's overall telephone subscriber base, including wireless and wireline connections, increased to 1.306 billion as of December 2025, registering a monthly growth rate of 0.66 per cent. The expansion was primarily driven by the wireless segment, which continued to account for the bulk of new additions.



Airtel, Jio add users in Dec '25; Vi, BSNL continue to lose base

The total number of wireless subscribers, including mobile and fixed wireless access (FWA), rose to 1.258 billion, with a net addition of 8.21 million users during the month. Wireless tele-density improved to 88.41 per cent, though the gap between urban and rural areas remained stark, with urban tele-density at 140.66 per cent compared to 59.07 per cent in rural regions. The wireline segment also recorded modest growth. Wireline subscribers increased from 47.05 million in November to 47.37 million in December, reflecting a monthly growth rate of 0.68 per cent. Urban areas continued to dominate this segment, while rural wireline penetration stayed relatively low.

In broadband, total subscribers crossed the one-billion mark to reach 1,007.35 million by the end of December. Mobile wireless broadband remained the dominant mode of access, while 5G fixed wireless access subscribers grew by 5.59 per cent month-on-month, indicating a gradual but steady uptake of next-generation broadband services.

The TRAI report also highlighted continued churn in the mobile market. During December 2025, around 16.12 million subscribers submitted Mobile Number Portability requests, underlining the intense competition among telecom operators.

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Govt. issues stringent 3-hour content takedown rule for SM firms

India's government said social media companies would have to take down unlawful content within three hours of being notified about it, tightening yesterday an earlier 36-hour timeline in what could be a compliance challenge for Meta, YouTube and X.

According to a Reuters report from New Delhi, the changes amend India's 2021 IT Rules, which have already been a flashpoint between Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government and global technology companies. The new regulations will take effect from February 20.

The move reinforces India's position as one of the world's most aggressive regulators of online content, requiring platforms to balance compliance in a market of 1 billion internet users against mounting concerns over government censorship.

The government directive did not give any reason for the change in the timeline for takedowns.

"It's practically impossible for social media firms to remove content in three hours," said Akash Karmakar, a partner at Indian law firm Panag & Babu who specialises in technology law, "This assumes no application of mind or real world ability to resist compliance."

India has taken many steps to control online speech, empowering scores of officers in recent years to order content removal. That has often drawn criticism from digital rights

advocates and prompted clashes with companies including Elon Musk's X.

Facebook-owner Meta declined to comment on the changes, while X and Alphabet's Google, which operates YouTube, did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

There is mounting global pressure on social media companies to police content more aggressively, with governments from Brussels to Brasilia demanding faster takedowns and greater accountability.



India's IT rules empower the government to order the removal of content deemed illegal under any of its laws, including those related to national security and public order.

The country has issued thousands of takedown orders in recent years, according to platform transparency reports. Meta alone restricted more than 28,000 pieces of content in India in the

first six months of 2025 following government requests, it disclosed.

"This rule was never in consultation. International standards provide a longer timeline," a social media executive said on condition of anonymity.

The amended rules also relaxed an earlier proposal that would have required platforms to visibly label AI-generated content across 10 percent of its surface area or duration, instead mandating that such content be "prominently labelled".

Govt's OTT accessibility guidelines gives 36-month implementation period

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) has come out with its final guidelines for content accessibility on streaming platforms aimed at ensuring that persons with hearing and visual disabilities can independently access and engage with online video content.

The guidelines — issued on February 6 under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016 and posted on the MIB website yesterday — have been framed after detailed consultations

with stakeholders and require OTT platforms to make content and user interfaces more accessible, with special emphasis on Closed and Open Captioning (CC/OC), Audio Description (AD) and Indian Sign Language (ISL) interpretation. Platforms are instructed to ensure that newly published content carries at least one accessibility feature each for hearing-impaired and visually-impaired users and that accessibility indicators are prominently displayed at the time of release.

Under a 36-month phased implementation schedule, publishers of online curated content must also integrate accessibility across their platform interfaces and strive to expand accessibility features across their entire content libraries on a best-effort basis.

The guidelines further mandate that platforms make their services compatible with assistive technologies used by persons with disabilities.

The document lays down the following technical standards for accessibility

features:

Captions must be accurate, synchronized, complete and legible

Audio descriptions should be clear, comprehensive and unobtrusive; and Indian Sign Language interpretation — where provided — must be correctly synchronized and visible in picture-in-picture mode.

Publishers are also required to file Accessibility Conformance Reports on compliance status and publicise accessible content through suitable indicators and discovery features on platform guides.

The guidelines carve out specific exemptions from accessibility mandates for live and deferred live content, audio-only media such as music and podcasts, and standalone short-form content

(including ads), citing practical and operational challenges in real-time captioning and description.

However, in the case of short form content, the exemption is applicable to standalone content only and not for multiple individual episodes/segments of a content.

To oversee compliance and address complaints, MIB will set up a Monitoring Committee, headed by a Joint Secretary-level official, to meet every three months and monitor implementation. A three-tier grievance redressal mechanism is laid out, beginning with self-regulation by publishers, followed by their self-regulating bodies, and, if necessary, escalation to the central or federal government monitoring structure.

Complainants will receive



acknowledgement of grievances within 24 hours, with defined timelines for resolution.

The issuance of these final guidelines, a government statement states, follows a draft put out by the Ministry in October 2025 for public and stakeholder comments, as part of efforts to make India's digital entertainment landscape more inclusive.

Dish TV faces Rs.7,203 cr licence fee demand amid uncertainty

Direct-to-home operator Dish TV India Limited has disclosed a fresh licence fee demand of Rs.7,203 crore raised by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB), competition intensifying the long-standing regulatory overhang hanging from OTT platforms and rising compliance costs. For Dish TV, the over the company's DTH business.

The disclosure was made as part of the company's statutory navigating operational headwinds and balance sheet stress. filings on Feb 06, where Dish TV said the demand pertains to Industry observers note that large retrospective demands such licence fees and is part of an ongoing dispute with the as this continue to weigh on investor sentiment across the government. The matter, the company clarified, is sub judice broadcasting and distribution space. The prolonged nature of and continues to be contested through legal channels. such disputes also creates uncertainty around future liabilities, According to Dish TV, the claim relates to differences in the making it difficult for companies to plan long-term capital interpretation of licence fee calculations under the DTH policy allocation and growth strategies.

framework. The broadcaster has maintained that the demand Dish TV said it remains confident of its legal position and is is not tenable and has been challenged before the appropriate pursuing all remedies available under law. The company judicial forums. As a result, no provision has been made for the reiterated that the outcome of the case will depend on judicial amount in the company's financial statements at this stage. proceedings and any future directions from the authorities, The fresh claim adds to the regulatory challenges faced by the keeping the issue firmly in focus as a key regulatory risk for the DTH sector, which has been grappling with shrinking subscriber sector.



Prasar Bharati adopting digital-first content strategy: Murugan

India's public broadcaster Prasar Bharati has adopted a digital-first content strategy for its platforms, including the streaming service, which is indicative of the pubcaster's changing business plans for distribution of its content and expand viewership base, Minister of State for Information & Broadcasting L Murugan said.

Answering to a query from a fellow parliamentarian in Rajya Sabha (Upper House) yesterday, the Minister said, "Pay-per-view framework launched in 2025 covers content acquisition for digital and OTT platforms, including WAVES (the streaming service), reflecting a strategic shift from traditional TV and radio broadcasting to digital content distribution."

The content being sourced for Akashvani (radio), Doordarshan TV channels and WAVES OTT platform were being done under the Content Sourcing Policy 2024 of Prasar Bharati.

“This framework has enabled Prasar Bharati to source content tailored for digital audiences and significantly expand its reach, particularly among youth,” Murugan added.

Dwelling on a specific part of the parliament query relating to examining the feasibility of distributing DD FreeDish DTH set-top-boxes as part of the government’s Direct Benefit

Transfer welfare mechanism to further expand the pubcaster’s reach, the Minister clarified why distribution of boxes was not

being pursued aggressively anymore.

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), he said, has issued a notification that all television sets

sold in India shall have a built-in satellite tuner, and, hence, the proposal for distribution of DD FreeDish boxes was not being pursued.

He also informed that Prasar Bharati has engaged an expert agency to enhance monetization of its land assets to increase revenue generation.

The Minister was asked a question on Prasar Bharati’s content sourcing strategy, apart from revenue-increasing initiatives and staff vacancies.



NHRC notice to MIB as separate petition filed against ‘Ghooskhor Pandat’

A writ petition has been moved before the Delhi High Court seeking a stay on the release and streaming of an upcoming Netflix film titled ‘Ghooskhor Pandat’, with the petitioner alleging that the film’s title and proposed content are defamatory and communally offensive to the Brahmin community.

According to an ANI report yesterday, the plea has been filed by Mahender Chaturvedi through Advocate Vineet Jindal, seeking a writ of mandamus directing the authorities to intervene and restrain the streaming of the film, along with other consequential reliefs. Chaturvedi, who describes himself as an Acharya engaged in the study, teaching and propagation of Indian scriptures, philosophy and spiritual traditions, has stated that he is directly aggrieved by the film.

The petitioner has contended that the use of the word ‘Pandat’ in association with alleged corruption and bribery harms the dignity and reputation of the Brahmin community and also impacts his own vocation. He has alleged that Netflix India has announced and promoted the film and circulated promotional material that links the term ‘Pandat’ with immoral and corrupt conduct.

The plea argues that historically, the term signifies scholarship, ethical conduct, spiritual guidance and moral authority within Indian society and religious traditions. According to the petitioner,

portraying it in a negative light amounts to stereotyping and vilification of an entire religious and social community.

The petition further claims that the impugned title and content

violate fundamental rights guaranteed under Articles 14, 21 and 25 of the Constitution, asserting that the film discriminates against a particular religious and social group, infringes upon the right to dignity and reputation, and demeans religious and cultural identity connected with faith, rituals and traditions.

While acknowledging the constitutional protection of freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a), the plea states that this right is subject to reasonable restrictions under Article 19(2) and does not extend to hate speech, defamation or content that may disturb communal harmony and public order.

The petitioner has also alleged that the Union Government has failed to put in place an effective regulatory mechanism to prevent the misuse of creative freedom on OTT platforms. The plea claims that such regulatory gaps enable platforms to promote sensational or community-based vilification for commercial gain, amounting to an abdication of constitutional duty to protect fraternity and public order.

Through the petition, Chaturvedi has sought directions to the Union of India



and Netflix India to stay the release and streaming of the film. He has also prayed for an interim order staying the release of the content during the pendency of the case and has urged the court to direct the Union Government to take appropriate action against Netflix India under applicable laws governing digital and OTT platforms.

Meanwhile, a PTI report from New Delhi added that the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued a notice to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in the wake of a complaint alleging that the title of an upcoming movie to be released on a web-based platform, “promotes negative stereotypes” and “vilifies a recognised social group”, according to the proceedings of the case.

The story of Netflix’s crime thriller, ‘Ghooskhor Pandat’, follows a character, a corrupt police officer whose plans for a lucrative and eventful night are disrupted when he finds himself caught in the middle of a global conspiracy unfolding in the heart of Delhi. The complainant, Sanjeev Newar, founder of ‘Gems of Bollywood’, in the complaint has alleged that the film contains “casteist and discriminatory content”.

TRAI amendments overhaul audit provisions, compliance levels



The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) yesterday came out with amendments to the existing interconnection framework for broadcasting and cable services, issuing the Telecommunication (Broadcasting and Cable) Services Interconnection (Addressable Systems) (Seventh Amendment) Regulations, 2026, aimed at overhauling audit-related provisions and easing compliance for distributors and broadcasters.

The amendments introduce clearly defined timelines for audits, mandating that distributors carry out audits on a financial year basis and submit audit reports to broadcasters by September 30 every year.

Broadcasters have also been permitted to depute their representatives during audits to enhance transparency, while a structured mechanism has been laid down for seeking clarifications on audit reports and, if required, conducting fresh audits with the regulator's approval.

Key additional amendments introduced by TRAI include the following:

- Broadcasters can seek time-bound clarifications from auditors through distributors if discrepancies are found in audit reports.
- If dissatisfied with clarifications,

broadcasters may conduct an audit at their own cost after obtaining TRAI's approval.

- In cases where audit reports are not received by September 30, broadcasters can independently cause audits of such distributors.
- Annual audits at distributors' cost have been made optional for distributors with fewer than 3,00,000 subscribers, though broadcasters may still audit them at their own expense.
- For infrastructure sharing arrangements, separate SMS and CAS/DRM instances are required for each distributor to enable entity-wise reconciliation.
- Infrastructure providers must insert network logo watermarking for pay channels at the encoder end, while seekers must provide logos through the set-top equipment or middleware, with a preference for no more than two logos on screen.
- TRAI, in a statement on Feb 5, said a revised audit manual aligned with the amended regulations will be issued shortly.

The amendments follow repeated representations from stakeholders seeking improvements in audit provisions

under the 2017 Interconnection Regulations, reduction in repetitive audits of distributor platform operators and better incorporation of infrastructure-sharing arrangements into the audit framework.

Stakeholders had also flagged the need to enhance auditor accountability and ensure technical competence.

To address these concerns, TRAI had earlier strengthened technical proficiency and accountability norms in the Expression of Interest issued in August 2025 for empanelment of auditors, including categorisation based on experience. The regulator also issued a consultation paper on audit-related provisions in August 2024, receiving 64 comments and three counter-comments, followed by an open house discussion in December 2024.

According to the regulator, the amendments, coupled with stricter empanelment norms for auditors, are expected to enhance the credibility and accountability of the audit process, reduce repetitive audits, lower compliance costs for DPOs and broadcasters, and ensure time-bound completion of audits without compromising stakeholder confidence.

Prasar Bharati CEO rejects DD FreeDish encryption demand

Prasar Bharati CEO Gaurav Dwivedi has drawn a clear line on the future of DD Free Dish, categorically ruling out any move to encrypt the country's largest free-to-air direct-to-home platform, according to a Storyboard18.com report. Addressing concerns from an increasingly vocal broadcasting industry, Dwivedi said the public broadcaster has no plans to convert DD Free Dish's MPEG-2 service into an addressable or encrypted system. The remarks were made during a recent stakeholder meeting attended by broadcasters and industry representatives.

Citing people present at the discussion, the Storyboard18.com report added Dwivedi, while responding directly to a query on whether DD Free Dish would be encrypted and the timeline for such a transition, stated unambiguously that the platform will never be encrypted.

DD FreeDish is the country's biggest DTH platform with an unverified subscriber base of about 40-50 million (industry estimates) and is subscription-free, unlike similar private sector DTH platforms.

The broadcast industry has long



demand that FreeDish too should be brought under regulations that are put on other similar distribution platforms. TRAI had suggested earlier that FreeDish signals should be encrypted, apart from other measures undertaken to streamline operations.

Guest Column:

Budget's policy interventions to boost Orange Economy

By : Rajiv Khattar



The Union Budget 2026, presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman yesterday, marks a decisive policy intervention aimed at strengthening India's orange economy, with particular emphasis on local production, talent development and digital infrastructure for the media and entertainment sector.

The enhanced allocation for the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) — increased to Rs. 4,551.94 crore from Rs. 4,010.32 crore in FY 2025–26 — signals the government's intent to move beyond ad-hoc incentives and adopt a structured, long-term approach to creative industries. Budget 2026 positions creativity as an economic multiplier rather than a soft-power by-product.

Strategic Growth Sector In AVGC: A central pillar of the Budget is the renewed focus on Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming and Comics (AVGC). Recognizing the sector's export potential, employment intensity, and alignment with digital India objectives, the government has articulated a policy roadmap centered on capacity building at scale.

The proposal to establish AVGC content-creator laboratories in 15,000 secondary schools and 500 colleges under the Indian Institute of Creative Technologies is among



the most significant announcements. This initiative aims to institutionalize creative and technical skill development at an early stage, addressing a long-standing industry concern around talent shortages and uneven skill quality.

India's creative strength lies not only in its studios but in its classrooms. Budget 2026 recognises this by embedding AVGC skills into the education ecosystem.

This move also reflects continuity with discussions initiated during WAVES (World Audio Visual Entertainment Summit) 2025, translating industry consultations into actionable policy outcomes.

Boosting Local Production Ecosystems: In a notable shift, the government has withdrawn the customs duty exemption on the import of television and film production equipment by foreign film and television units. While this marks a departure from earlier incentives aimed at attracting foreign shoots, the policy intent is clear: strengthening domestic production capacity.

By encouraging foreign producers to source equipment locally, the measure is expected to:

Improve asset utilisation among Indian production houses.

Generate employment across technical and logistics roles.

Encourage domestic investment in high-end production gear.

Pull-out highlight: The policy focus is moving from attracting projects to building sustainable production infrastructure. From an industry perspective, this shift underscores the government's confidence in the maturity of India's production ecosystem, while nudging it towards greater self-reliance.

Cloud Infrastructure and OTT Enablement: The budget also advances India's digital content ambitions by encouraging foreign investments in data centres and cloud infrastructure.

This move directly benefits OTT platforms, broadcasters and content distributors — all of whom are increasingly dependent on cloud-based workflows for content storage, distribution, and analytics.

Greater competition in cloud services is expected to:

Lower operational costs for content platforms.

Improve service resilience and scalability.

Support emerging technologies such as remote production and AI-driven workflows.

Affordable and localised cloud infrastructure is now as critical to content creation as cameras and studios.

A Long-Term Policy Vision: Taken together, the measures announced in Union Budget 2026 reflect a coherent policy framework aimed at:

Developing talent pipelines.

Strengthening domestic production capabilities.

Enabling digital infrastructure for next-generation content.

Rather than relying solely on fiscal incentives, the Budget adopts a systems-driven approach, positioning India to emerge as a global hub for animation, gaming, visual effects, and digital content production.

Budget 2026 treats the AVGC sector not as a niche industry, but as a core pillar of India's digital and creative economy.

For industry stakeholders, the message is clear: the government is laying the foundations for scale, sustainability and global competitiveness, while placing the onus on industry to match policy ambition with execution.

Telecom budget proposed at Rs 73,990cr ; BSNL gets major boost

The government has proposed a sharp increase in the outlay for the Department of Telecommunications, pegging it at Rs 73,990 crore, a jump of nearly 38 per cent over the previous year. The higher allocation is largely driven by a substantial rise in capital infusion for state-run telecom operator Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL), as the Centre steps up efforts to strengthen the public sector company.

According to a PTI report, the enhanced allocation will support a range of initiatives, including the rural broadband project BharatNet, BSNL's capital requirements such as spectrum costs and network rollout, and the company's internal operational needs. Telecom Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said the increase reflects the government's commitment to building a stronger telecom ecosystem while pushing BSNL onto a sustained growth path.

Highlighting the scale of the increase, Scindia said the telecom ministry's allocation has risen from a revised estimate of about Rs 53,000 crore last year to nearly Rs 73,000 crore now, marking close to a 40 per cent jump. He

added that the government is consciously focusing on taking BSNL "from strength to strength" as part of its broader telecom strategy. Explaining the rationale behind the higher allocation to BSNL, Scindia pointed to improving financial indicators at the PSU. He said BSNL's average revenue per user (ARPU) has grown by almost 9 per cent, from around Rs 90 to nearly Rs 99, and expressed confidence that it would soon cross the three-digit mark. The minister noted that revenue growth has been recorded across all three of BSNL's business verticals, creating the need for fresh capital expenditure support alongside internal cash flows to fuel its resurgence.

Scindia also said the proposed incremental Budget includes funding for BharatNet, the flagship rural broadband programme. He referred to allocations covering a wide spectrum of needs, from spectrum provisioning for BSNL to its internal capital expenditure requirements, including towers, media infrastructure and battery systems, adding that the government is pushing on multiple fronts simultaneously.



In addition to telecom, the minister highlighted a significant rise in allocation for the Development of the North East Region. The proposed outlay has increased from a revised estimate of Rs 4,495 crore to Rs 6,800 crore, a jump of nearly 50 per cent. He said the Budget reflects a strong focus on the region, citing initiatives such as the deployment of 4,000 e-buses, the development of five Buddhist circuits across six northeastern states, and enhanced spending on health and education.

The proposed increase in telecom spending underlines the government's emphasis on infrastructure expansion, digital connectivity and the revival of BSNL, as it seeks to balance public sector strengthening with broader sectoral growth.

Five channels win slots in DD Free Dish 95th and 96th e-auctions

Prasar Bharati has announced the outcomes of the 95th and 96th e-auctions for DD Free Dish, finalising channel allotments for the two-month period from February 1, 2026 to March 31, 2026.

The 95th e-auction, conducted for MPEG-2 slots, saw GTC Punjabi and Movieplex emerge as successful bidders. Both channels will be carried on the DD Free Dish platform during the allotted period, strengthening the bouquet of regional and movie content available to free-to-air viewers.

In parallel, the 96th e-auction, which focused on MPEG-4 slots, concluded with three channels securing placement on the platform. North East Live, FM News and K News India won slots under this round, expanding the presence of regional and news broadcasters on DD Free Dish's higher-quality transmission format.

DD Free Dish continues to be a critical distribution platform for free-to-air broadcasters, offering extensive national reach without subscription costs.

The latest auction results reflect sustained interest from broadcasters across genres, particularly regional and news channels looking to maximise visibility and audience access through India's largest free DTH service.



NDTV posts quarterly loss on higher expenses, new launches

India's New Delhi Television posted its ninth-straight both news quarterly loss yesterday as the news broadcaster's higher a n d expenses continued to pressure margins. The broadcaster, in entertainment which ports-to-energy conglomerate Adani Group owns at channels, 69.02 percent stake, has been investing in newly launched TV f l a g g e d a channels and infrastructure, such as NDTV World and NDTV weak advertising environment, saying TV news ad inventory Marathi, alongside other programs and events, which has kept demand fell more than 10 percent year-on-year during the margins under pressure. quarter.

According to a Reuters report yesterday, NDTV reported a 20.9 Zee Enterprises, which runs entertainment channels, also percent surge in expenses due to higher operating, production reported a decline in ad revenue amid soft advertising and marketing costs, outpacing a 13.3 percent increase in conditions.

revenue from operations to 1.5 billion rupees, driven by its The company reported a loss of 802.5 million rupees (\$8.72 expanding channel portfolio. million) in the October-December quarter, compared to a loss of

Additionally, Indian consumer goods makers, who typically 556.9 million rupees a year earlier. NDTV did not disclose its ad spend the most on television advertising, have reined in their revenue for the quarter.

spending due to muted demand amid rising costs of living. Other rivals, TV Today Network and Zee Media Corporation, are Reliance group-controlled Network18 Media, which owns yet to report their results.



Sri Adhikari Brothers is now officially called Aqylon Nexus

Veteran broadcaster Sri Adhikari Brothers Television Network has formally adopted a new corporate identity, rechristening itself as Aqylon Nexus Limited after securing approval from the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA). The change marks a significant moment for the company as it looks to reposition itself in a rapidly evolving media and entertainment landscape.

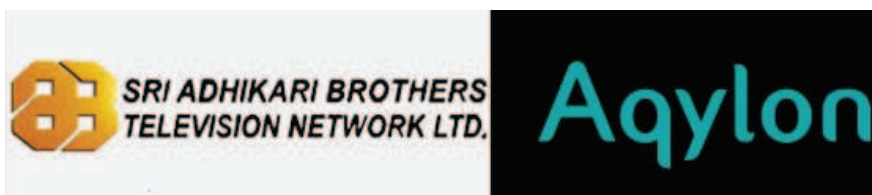
According to a regulatory filing with the Bombay Stock Exchange, the MCA has approved the change of name with effect from January 23, 2026.

The disclosure was made under Regulation 30 of the Securities and Exchange Board of India's Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements (LODR) Regulations, 2015.

Confirming the development, the company said the ministry cleared the transition from Sri Adhikari Brothers Television Network Limited to Aqylon Nexus Limited after completion of all statutory and regulatory formalities. The broadcaster has since initiated the process of updating its new name across

official records, filings and statutory documents.

Aqylon Nexus added that it is working closely with concerned authorities and departments to ensure a smooth transition and complete alignment of its corporate identity across platforms. In line with Section 12 of the Companies Act, 2013, the MCA has directed the company to continue displaying its former name alongside the new one for a period of two years.



Founded in 1994 and headquartered in Mumbai, the company has been a familiar name in India's television and content ecosystem for over three decades. The

rebranding is seen as part of a broader strategic repositioning, coming at a time when the media sector is witnessing consolidation, digital disruption and shifts in content consumption patterns.

While the legacy name will continue to exist in statutory references for the time being, the adoption of Aqylon Nexus signals a clear intent to turn the page and chart a new phase of growth and relevance in a changing industry.



THE CONTENT ENGINE



Men's T20 WC digital engagement up 53%; spike in SEA, UAE, US

Fans around the world have been captivated by the opening weekend of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, with supporters packing stadiums and digital engagement soaring, the International Cricket Council said yesterday, adding digital engagements till now have shown a 53 percent spike compared to the previous edition of the tournament.

After the first six thrilling matches across India and Sri Lanka, the ICC's digital channels have seen a huge increase in engagement compared to the first two days of the 2024 tournament, highlighted by the 647 million video views across all platforms, which is an increase of 53 percent, ICC said in a statement.

The ICC app has enjoyed an 83 percent spike in users since 2024, while there has also been 16 percent more people using the ICC website across the same period. The biggest growth has been seen from fans outside the Full Member countries. Nepal, who pushed England hard during their Group C clash on Sunday (Feb 8), leads the way in terms of individual country increases, with users from the

southeast Asian country up a staggering 442 percent.

There have also been 196 percent and 49 percent jumps in users from the UAE and the USA, respectively, showcasing the tournament's ability to grow the sport globally.

India's victory over the USA at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium saw the highest attendance over the weekend with 24,997, with four of the five other matches seeing more than 15,000 people through the gates.

An improved accessibility to tickets through the pricing strategy and an early announcement of the match schedule has also seen very encouraging numbers in the crowd turnouts for the Group Stage of the 20-team tournament being played across eight venues, the ICC statement said.

The total attendance across the opening weekend was 107,781, building on the combined 48,000 people who watched the warmup encounters between India and South Africa (43,000) and India A vs



USA (5,000).

The uptake also stretches across to streaming figures with the total views on ICC.tv up by 296 percent, including a 192 percent increase in unique users.

The ICC's commitment to making this the most accessible ICC tournament ever has paid dividends with engagement from the non-traditional territories of Japan, Germany, South Korea, France, Malaysia, Italy and the Netherlands now accounting for over a quarter of total views on ICC.tv.

This growth has been powered by the introduction of non-English commentary on ICC.tv for the first time with the Nepali feed for England v Nepal and the Hindi feed for India v USA being the top two streamed matches.

JioStar proposes merger of TV distribution arm IndiaCast

JioStar India, the Reliance Industries–Disney joint venture, has proposed merging its wholly owned television distribution subsidiary, IndiaCast Media Distribution, into the parent company through a fast-track process under Section 233 of the Companies Act. The move is aimed at streamlining the group's structure and improving operational efficiency.

According to The Economic Times report, the proposed scheme is to transfer all assets, liabilities, contracts, employees and ongoing legal proceedings of IndiaCast to JioStar India, subject to statutory and regulatory

approvals. Since IndiaCast is a wholly owned subsidiary, the amalgamation will not involve the issuance of shares or any monetary consideration. Once the scheme becomes effective, IndiaCast will be dissolved without the need for a separate winding-up process.



The effective date for the amalgamation has been proposed as April 1, 2025, or any other date as may be approved by the board of JioStar India. The board cleared the scheme on July 14, 2025, and a formal notice inviting objections or suggestions was filed with the Registrar of Companies on January 23, 2026.

ICC unveils ICC Men's T20 WC global b'cast arrangements

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has announced the broadcast arrangements for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, which will see 20 teams compete across 55 matches over a period of one month from February 7 to March 8 2026.

The tournament is being co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka and fans around the world would be able to follow the action live across television, digital, audio and emerging formats, the ICC said in a media statement.

In addition to the main tournament, official warm-up matches are also being broadcast across select TV and digital platforms, giving fans an early opportunity to follow teams ahead of the opening fixture.

In India, JioStar will bring the tournament to fans via Star Sports on linear television, as well as through the JioHotstar digital platform. Every fixture will be available in five languages — English, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu and Kannada on JioStar's TV and digital coverage, with additional regional feeds (Bengali, Bhojpuri and Haryanvi) available on JioHotstar.

Coverage in Marathi and Indian Sign Language will be available for all team India matches, the semi-finals and the final on JioHotstar.

Following the success of previous ICC events, a vertical live feed will once again be made available in English and Hindi on JioHotstar for mobile-first audiences.

In addition, on JioHotstar, viewers will also have the option to enjoy the games via 360 view and the multicam feature — an option to engage with the live match from a specific POV/vantage point of Hero, Stump, Battery, Field view and Multi-View.

JioStar has engaged with theatre chain PVR-Inox on a partnership for screenings nationwide across several matches during the ICC Men's T20 World Cup.

Star Sports will also be available to viewers in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives through its distribution partners across the sub-

continent.

For co-hosts Sri Lanka, Dialog TV will ensure comprehensive coverage across the island as the official broadcast partner, with live telecasts on linear television, via the ThePapare.com website and Dialog Play mobile app. Dialog TV will also have a Sinhala language feed for all matches on their linear and digital offerings. Coverage will be further extended through Dialog TV's free-to-air partner, TV Supreme, as well as with Sri Lanka Telecom owned platform PEO TV.

Fans in the United Kingdom and Ireland can follow the action on Sky Sports Cricket and Sky Sports Main Event, with digital streaming available on NOW. Sky Sports will be making Hindi commentary available to viewers for the semi-finals and the final.

Additionally, with Italy participating in their first ICC Men's T20 World Cup, Sky Italia will be covering all Italy matches, the semi-finals and the final live on their platforms.

Proteas' fans can watch all the action live on SuperSport's wide array of TV and digital offerings in sub-Saharan Africa.

In Australia, coverage will be on Prime Video, with an additional Hindi commentary feed available to viewers for all India matches, the semi-finals and the final.

Fans in New Zealand can tune in via SKY Sport, which will also make Hindi commentary available for all India matches, the semi-finals and the final.

In Pakistan, coverage will be delivered by PTV and Myco, supported by digital partners Tamasha, ARYZapp and Tapmad. Additionally, the ICC will produce an Urdu commentary feed for Pakistan matches, which will be broadcast on PTV Home and will be streamed by digital partners.

Willow TV will continue to bring live coverage of ICC events in the United States and in Canada. All 55 matches will be available in English and Hindi, with all team USA matches available for free to viewers in the US and Canada. The USA



matches will also be available for free on Willow's official YouTube handle.

The English and Hindi commentary feeds will be available on Willow DTC and CricBuzz DTC, with the rest of Willow's platforms carrying the English feed. Collaborating with popular social media personality Jomboy, Willow will enable fans to access an alternate commentary feed for the USA v India and USA v Pakistan matches.

In the UAE and the wider MENA region, the tournament will be aired on CricLife Max, available via StarzPlay. Additionally, fans across the Middle East can experience StarzPlay's coverage of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup on the big screen, through their partnerships with VOX (UAE, KSA, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman), Reel (UAE), Roxy, Cinapolis, Star (UAE), Mukta (Bahrain) and Epix Cinema (Bahrain).

ESPN will broadcast all matches live in the Caribbean Islands, with the Disney+ app streaming the event in Latin America. Select matches will be shown with Portuguese commentary on ESPN's linear TV platforms in Brazil.

Total Sports Management (Bangladesh) will cover the event through leading linear broadcasters T Sports and Nagorik TV, and digital platform Rabbithole.

Other broadcasters include PNG Digicel (Pacific Islands), Hub Sports 4 (Singapore), and Lemar TV (Afghanistan), who will also be providing commentary in Pashto and Dari. In Nepal, Kantipur TV will broadcast the tournament, with selected matches produced locally with Nepali commentary. The Nepali commentary feed will also be made available to certain territories via ICC.tv, ensuring wider access for Nepali-speaking audiences.

India programming careful blend of art, science: Netflix's Shergill

Programming for a diverse country like India is a careful blend of art and science, where data and instinct work hand in hand, says Monika Shergill, Vice President – Content, Netflix India.

Emphasising the importance of plurality in storytelling, Shergill underlined that the platform's approach is rooted in offering audiences a wide spectrum of viewing experiences that reflect India's linguistic, cultural, and creative diversity, according to a PTI report from Mumbai.

In an interview to PTI, Shergill said the responsibility of an entertainment streaming service goes beyond simply delivering popular content. For Netflix, it is about ensuring that every time a viewer logs in, they discover something fresh, engaging, and meaningful.

She highlighted that audiences should be able to find everything on the platform — from exciting new titles and timeless classics to stories emerging from deep within India, across different languages, as well as compelling narratives from around the world.

"Every time members tune in to watch Netflix, they should have something new, something exciting, something really special, something really classic, something from a deep part of India, something in a different language and from across the world," Shergill said.



ICC warns Pak Cricket Board of legal action against it by JioStar

The ICC (International Cricket Council) has warned the Pakistan Cricket Board that it faces the prospect of legal action from T20 World Cup's official broadcasters JioStar for boycotting its February 15 game against India, a PCB source said yesterday.

Pakistan decided to boycott the match in Colombo on February 15 on instructions of their government but haven't yet officially specified the reasons to ICC, according to a PTI report yesterday compiled with inputs from Karachi and New Delhi bureaus. As reported by PTI, there is a possibility that the ICC will withhold the entire annual revenue share of Pakistan, which is around USD 35 million and pay the broadcasters from that purse.

A PCB source informed that although chairman Mohsin Naqvi had taken advice from the board's legal experts before briefing PM Shehbaz Sharif on the issue last week, the board is bracing for some serious consequences.

"If Pakistan doesn't relent and play against India, not only will they face financial penalties, perhaps a lawsuit from broadcasters but also any efforts to go to the ICC Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC) are likely to fail," a PCB source told PTI.

ICC's DRC is an internal committee which doesn't hear appeals against the decisions made by its own board.

"The PCB might face problems regardless of their government directive to not play India as they are playing all their matches at a neutral venue (Sri Lanka) as per their wishes and not in India," another PCB source said.

"Secondly, while the Indian government has not given permission to its team to play in Pakistan, it has not stopped them from playing against Pakistan at neutral venues in Asia Cup or ICC events even after the May conflict," the board source, who tracks Naqvi closely, added.



Bangladesh after their ouster.

"When the ICC signed its four year deal with the broadcaster for all ICC events, the contract included Pakistan and India matches based on which the broadcaster made the payments to the ICC," the source explained, "So the broadcaster will be within its rights to take the PCB and ICC to court over a major breach of the contract."

It is reliably learnt that the PCB approached other members' boards for support on the matter but failed to find any backers.

Will Naqvi make a U-turn after the Bangladesh elections? There is a school of thought that Naqvi, who is also the interior minister of his country, might just make a U-turn once the general elections are held in Bangladesh on February 12 and a democratic government takes charge instead of the present one headed by Mohammed Yunus.

"Naqvi, more than a cricket administrator, is a politician, who is not one bit bothered about the welfare of the national team. He is trying to score a brownie point with his and could well flip once elections are held on February 12.

"There would still be two days before the India game and things could just change. Else he knows that Pakistan could be ostracised," another source tracking Pakistan cricket said.

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Jio Studios takes 50% stake in production house Sikhya Entertainment

Reliance Jio Studios has strengthened its content strategy with the acquisition of a majority stake in Sikhya Entertainment, one of India's most globally recognised production houses.

According to a press release from Reliance Jio, Reliance Strategic Business Ventures Limited (RSBVL), a wholly owned subsidiary of Reliance Industries Limited, has acquired a 50.1 per cent equity stake in Sikhya Entertainment Private Limited for an aggregate cash consideration of Rs.150 crore through a mix of primary and secondary transactions.

The move is aimed at consolidating Jio Studios' position in the media and entertainment space by expanding its slate of premium films and series for Indian and global audiences. The partnership brings together Jio Studios' scale, distribution strength and long-term vision with Sikhya Entertainment's strong reputation for culturally rooted storytelling that has found resonance on the world stage.

Over the years, Jio Studios has emerged as a key force in India's content economy, backing projects that have delivered both commercial success and critical acclaim. Its portfolio includes landmark titles such as 'Dhurandhar', 'Laapataa Ladies' and the 'Stree' franchise. The collaboration with Sikhya is expected to further strengthen its ability to build enduring intellectual property while nurturing a creator-led ecosystem.

Sikhya Entertainment, founded by Guneet Monga Kapoor and Achin Jain, is widely regarded for redefining the global perception of Indian storytelling. The production house is the only one from

India to have won both an Academy Award and multiple National Film Awards. Its Oscar wins include 'Period. End of Sentence.' and 'The Elephant Whisperers', while its National Award-winning films span languages and regions, including 'Masaan', 'Soorai Pottru' and 'Kathal'. Its diverse filmography also features acclaimed titles such as 'The Lunchbox', 'Pagglait' and 'Kill', underscoring its focus on strong narratives and performance-driven cinema. Commenting on the development, Jyoti Deshpande, President – Jio Studios, said the association reflects a shared belief in stories that are deeply Indian yet universally relatable. She noted that the partnership will help Indian stories travel further, backed by Jio Studios' creative and distribution capabilities and Sikhya's distinctive storytelling legacy.



Guneet Monga Kapoor and Achin Jain described the partnership as a natural next step in Sikhya's journey, stating that it would enable the company to take bold, authentic stories to wider audiences while continuing to champion new talent across the country. They emphasised that the collaboration aligns with their long-held belief in cinema's ability to connect cultures, languages and geographies.

With this acquisition, Jio Studios signals a clear intent to invest in high-quality, globally relevant storytelling, while Sikhya Entertainment gains a platform to scale its creative ambitions and deepen its impact across markets.

No India-Pak cricket match could lead to estimated loss of \$250mn

An India-Pakistan fixture in an ICC event generates revenue to the tune of a staggering "USD 250 million (over Rs 2200 crore)", as per some estimates and the absence of the cash-cow fixture from the upcoming T20 World Cup is certain to cause heavy losses to all stakeholders, including the host broadcaster. According to a PTI report from New Delhi yesterday, such is the pull of the contest between the arch-rivals, who only play in multi-team competitions due to the tense relations between the two countries, that the ICC (International Cricket Council) places them in the same pool in every world event. If Pakistan remain adamant, they would risk losing millions in revenues and a no-show would cause significant financial damage to the ICC coffers and India media rights holder JioStar, which is already trying to renegotiate a USD 3 billion deal with the world body.

The host broadcaster could incur advertisement revenue losses in the range of Rs 200 crore to Rs 250 crore for a marquee game whose 10 second commercial slot can cost up to Rs 40 lakh.



While a walkover, according to the PTI report, would hand full points to India, the ICC retains the authority to impose financial penalties on the PCB (Pakistan Cricket Board).

A former ICC and PCB communications head, Sami-ul-Hasan Burney, summed up the magnitude of the money riding on just one game.

"As regards the sanctions or the losses, as I said, the one match is costing USD 250 million (everything accounted for not just broadcaster's loss). Pakistan's annual revenue is USD 35.5 million, so there is a big, big difference," he told PTI.

The Sydney Morning Herald quoted industry sources with knowledge of confidential negotiations on the costs involved in the game with a billion plus audience. Each game between India and Pakistan has an estimated value of around USD 250 million, it stated.

The tone and tenor of ICC's statement following the Pakistan government announcement also underlined the undisputed value of the contest.

"This position of selective participation is difficult to reconcile with the fundamental premise of a global sporting event where all qualified teams are expected to compete on equal terms per the event schedule," the ICC said.

"ICC tournaments are built on sporting integrity, competitiveness, consistency and fairness, and selective participation undermines the spirit and sanctity of the competitions," cricket's governing body said.

Amid the drama, Pakistan left for Colombo to play its other

games in the showpiece starting February 7.

With the ICC, PCB and BCCI (Indian cricket's governing body) agreeing to a hybrid model for the India-Pakistan games till 2027, the Pakistan board would find it tough to justify the selective pullout.

It all started with Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman's removal from the IPL on BCCI instructions, leading to the withdrawal of the Bangladeshi national team from the ICC event co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka.

Budget push for content creators' labs in 15K+ schools, colleges

In her annual Budget presentation today, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman placed a major spotlight on India's Orange Economy — a broad ecosystem encompassing creative and cultural industries such as media, entertainment, animation, visual effects, gaming and comics — heralding it as a future driver of jobs and innovation.

Central to the Indian government's budgetary plan is the support for the Indian Institute of Creative Technologies (IICT), Mumbai, which will lead the establishment of AVGC Content Creator Labs across the country. Funds have been provisioned to set up these labs in 15,000 secondary schools and 500 colleges nationwide— part of a broader strategy to nurture creative talent at scale and strengthen India's next-generation workforce for digital storytelling and media production. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been a shining brand ambassador for India's Orange Economy for quite some time now, emphasising that the country has the potential to be a global content hub. 'Make in India for the world' has been his mantra. Conceptualisation and execution of the inaugural World Audio Visual Entertainment Summit in Mumbai in 2025 — based on the PM's vision — was one step towards making India a media and entertainment hub. Presenting the Union Budget for 2026-27 in Parliament yesterday, Sitharaman outlined a suite of targeted initiatives and investments aimed at integrating creative content sectors into India's larger economic growth agenda.

Sitharaman described the Orange Economy as an emerging engine of employment and urban services that derives value primarily from ideas, artistic expression and cultural capital rather than physical goods. Noting the rapid expansion of India's animation, visual effects, gaming and comics (AVGC) sector, she underscored projections that the industry will require about two million professionals by 2030, reinforcing the case for skilling and infrastructure support.

Minister for Information & Broadcasting Ashwini Vaishnaw, while addressing the media yesterday after the Budget-related

activities in parliament, noted that Prime Minister Modi had placed India's creative economy on the global stage through WAVES, adding that the IICT Mumbai, established on the lines of Indian Institutes of Technology and Indian Institutes of Management, will connect with schools and colleges through Creators' Labs, creating 20 lakh new jobs.

The Economic Survey, an economic health status of the country that was released last week, also noted that India's media and entertainment sector has emerged as a major pillar of the services economy, covering audio-visual production, broadcasting, digital content, animation, gaming, advertising and live entertainment.

Over the past decade, the sector has shifted strongly towards digital and platform-based delivery, transforming revenue models, employment and value chains. Estimated at around Rs. 2.5 trillion in 2024, growth is driven by rising incomes, internet penetration, OTT expansion and AI-led innovation.



Budgetary Support for MIB, Prasar Bharati: The 2026-27 Budget earmarked Rs. 4,551.94 crore for the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB), outlining sustained governmental support for public broadcasting, media infrastructure and communication outreach in the coming fiscal year. The allocation represents a strategic consolidation in the ministry's funding after elevated

spending in 2025-26, with key focus areas spanning public communication campaigns, talent development and digital broadcasting initiatives, the government stated.

However, in absolute terms, the 2026-27 allocation for MIB marks a reduction when compared with the revised estimates for 2025-26, which stood at approximately Rs. 6,103 crore.

Meanwhile, India's public broadcaster Prasar Bharati was allocated Rs. 2,291.88 crore as part of overall MIB's budgetary allocations.

The funds are mainly for expenses of Prasar Bharati such as salaries, pensions and other operational costs relating to its broadcasting services, Doordarshan and All India Radio.

Delhi HC cracks down on illegal streaming during ICC U-19, Men's T20 World Cups

The Delhi High Court has granted sweeping interim relief to JioStar India Private Limited, ordering the blocking of multiple rogue websites found to be illegally streaming the ongoing ICC Under-19 Men's Cricket World Cup 2026 and the upcoming ICC Men's T20 Cricket World Cup 2026.

The order marks a significant step in curbing digital piracy of live sporting events, particularly during high-value, time-sensitive tournaments. According to a TheStoryboard18 report, Justice Jyoti Singh, in an order dated January 29, 2026, held that JioStar had made out a strong prima facie case of copyright infringement. The court granted an ex parte ad interim injunction against seven identified rogue websites and, crucially, enabled a "dynamic" enforcement mechanism to deal with mirror, proxy or redirect websites that may emerge during the tournaments.

JioStar told the court that it holds exclusive broadcast and digital media rights for multiple ICC events under a media rights agreement signed with the International Cricket Council in August 2022, valid from 2024 to 2027. These rights include television and digital transmission in India, covering live streaming, highlights, clips and delayed

telecasts through its network of over 100 channels and its OTT platform, JioHotstar.

The broadcaster argued that unauthorised live streaming causes immediate and irreparable harm, undermining its Broadcast Reproduction Rights under Section 37 of the Copyright Act, 1957. Given the fleeting commercial life of live sports content, any delay in enforcement, it said, would render its exclusive rights meaningless.

The ICC Under-19 World Cup began on January 15 and runs until February 6, while the ICC Men's T20 World Cup is scheduled between February 7 and March 8, with matches in India and Sri Lanka. Citing the urgency and the ongoing nature of infringement, the court dispensed with pre-institution mediation and granted immediate relief.

In its observations, the court noted that the defendant websites appeared to be habitual offenders, structured primarily to host pirated content and unlawfully retransmit live sporting events. JioStar submitted evidence showing that some of these platforms were already streaming live matches from the Under-19 tournament, in certain cases directly using the broadcaster's feed and



registered trademarks.

Acknowledging that such websites often appear through mirror or proxy domains once blocked, the court invoked past precedents on online piracy and issued what it described as a "Dynamic+injunction". This allows JioStar to extend the injunction to newly discovered infringing websites during the currency of the tournaments by notifying authorities and filing supporting affidavits.

The High Court directed domain name registrars to suspend and block the identified domains, instructed internet service providers and telecom operators to block access to the infringing websites, and asked the Department of Telecommunications and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology to issue necessary directions to ensure compliance. Registrars have also been ordered to file sealed affidavits disclosing registrant details linked to the rogue websites.

Z rolls out 'Dilfluencer Moments' to help brands cut through multi-screen clutter

Z has launched 'Dilfluencer Moments', a new omnichannel reach solution aimed at helping brands deepen engagement and build memorability across television, digital and social platforms. The initiative comes at a time when the Indian advertising ecosystem has become increasingly crowded, with easy access to media inventory making visibility less of a challenge than standing out meaningfully.

The network said 'Dilfluencer Moments' is designed to move brands beyond interruption-led advertising and into culturally embedded storytelling. The format integrates brands into

character-driven narratives drawn from Z's popular television shows, allowing advertisers to tap into emotional familiarity and trust that already exists with viewers.

The solution is built around the idea that attention today is fragmented across screens, while emotional recall still travels seamlessly. By anchoring moments on television and then allowing them to organically spill over into digital, social and creator ecosystems, 'Dilfluencer Moments' aims to create brand experiences that feel native rather than forced. The approach leverages Z's well-known on-screen characters as

“Dilfluencers”, positioning them as cultural connectors who can carry brand stories across geographies and platforms. The format was recently demonstrated through the ‘TumHoLovely’ campaign, launched on National Girl Child Day with the line, “Jab life ko leti ho lightly toh lagti ho aur bhi lovely.” Character-led moments embedded across Z’s Hindi and Marathi shows travelled quickly to digital platforms, sparking conversations and creator-led amplification. A brand film featuring actor Sanya Malhotra further extended the narrative, illustrating how television-originated cues can translate into wider cultural resonance. According to the network, the campaign generated over 25 million impressions across TV, ZEE5 and digital platforms, along with strong engagement and conversation volumes. The moment moved from television to social media, messaging platforms and everyday discussions within 24 hours, underlining the velocity that the format aims to deliver.

Laxmi Shetty, Head – Advertisement Revenue, Broadcast &



Digital, Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd., said advertisers today need culturally earned moments that audiences choose to engage with. She added that Dilfluencer Moments allows brands to build affinity and brand love through emotionally authentic storytelling that can scale seamlessly across platforms.

Kartik Mahadev, Chief Marketing Officer, Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd., noted that while access to impressions has become universal, affinity remains the true differentiator. He said ‘Dilfluencer Moments’ enables brands to participate meaningfully in stories and characters audiences already love, allowing moments to travel organically across

screens rather than remain confined to a single platform. With ‘Dilfluencer Moments’, Z is positioning itself at the intersection of content, culture and commerce, offering advertisers a character-first media format that prioritises emotional connection alongside reach in an increasingly fragmented viewing environment.

Holiday Films, Football drive Dec viewership surge: Nielsen

Holiday programming and marquee football events powered strong viewership gains for major media companies in December, with Disney, Warner Bros. Discovery, Hallmark, Netflix and Amazon emerging as key beneficiaries, according to Nielsen’s December 2025 Media Distributor Gauge.

The Nielsen report, released in January, shows that distributors carrying major sports and festive movie line-ups recorded notable month-on-month growth during the peak holiday season, when audiences traditionally spend more time with television and streaming platforms.

Disney posted the biggest multiplatform increase in December, holding on to its No. 2 position overall. The company saw a 4 percent rise in total viewing, adding 0.2 share points to reach a 10.7 percent share. ESPN was the primary growth driver, delivering a 30 percent jump in viewership on the back of Monday Night Football, the expanded College Football Playoffs and College Gameday. At the

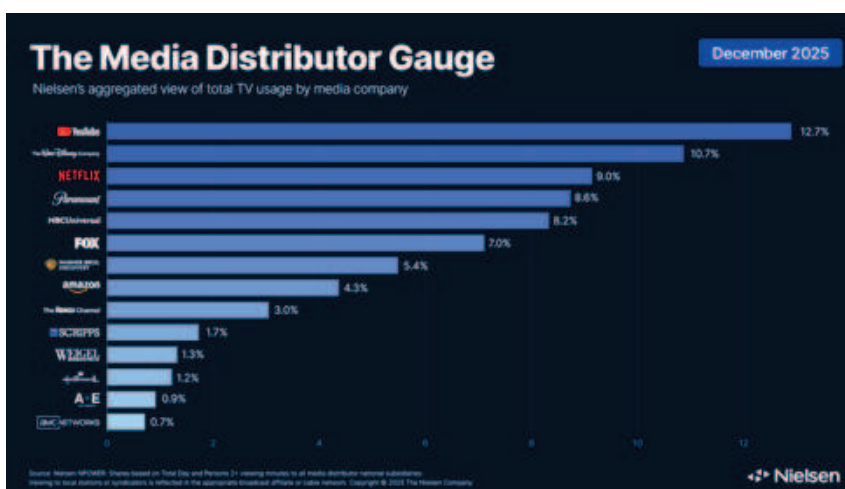
same time, Freeform doubled its November viewing, buoyed by holiday favourites such as ‘Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer’ and ‘Frosty the Snowman’.

Warner Bros. Discovery also enjoyed a strong month, led by its cable networks. TBS and TNT registered gains of 23 percent and 24 percent, respectively, driven by college football

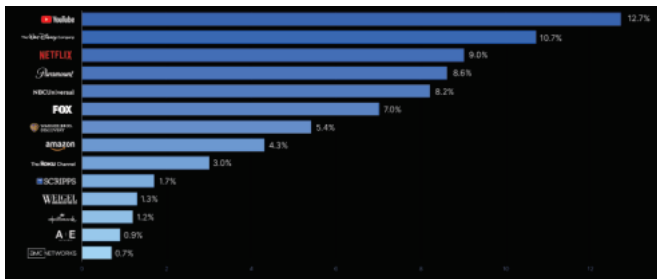
playoff coverage and seasonal movie programming. ‘A Christmas Story’ emerged as a key title for TBS, while HBO Max recorded a 10 percent increase in viewing, supported by original series ‘It:

Welcome to Derry’ and sustained interest in evergreen sitcoms ‘The Big Bang Theory’ and ‘Friends’.

Hallmark Channel continued its holiday dominance, maintaining momentum from November and claiming the top five



movie telecasts across cable in December. The most-watched titles included ‘She’s Making a List’, ‘Single on the 25th’, ‘A Suite Holiday Romance’, ‘A Make or Break Holiday’ and ‘Oy to the World’, underscoring Hallmark’s grip on festive



movie audiences.

Streaming platforms also set new benchmarks. As highlighted in Nielsen's 'The Gauge' December report, Christmas Day became the most-streamed day on record, with 55.1 billion viewing minutes. NFL coverage on Netflix and Prime Video led the surge, helping both platforms achieve their highest-ever monthly shares.

Netflix climbed to the third position overall, posting a 10 percent increase in monthly viewing. Its NFL Christmas Day doubleheader, combined with the continued popularity of 'Stranger Things' cited as the most-streamed original series ever — added 0.7 share points, taking Netflix to a record 9.0 percent share.

Amazon, meanwhile, logged a 12 percent rise in December viewing, driven by 'Thursday Night Football', a record-setting NFL game on Christmas Day and the new season of 'Fallout'. The platform closed the month with a 4.3 percent total share, its best to date. The Roku Channel

also achieved a platform-best 3.0 percent share, continuing a sharp growth trajectory that has seen it rise 45 percent year-on-year and nearly triple since December 2023.

In contrast, broadcast network affiliates and cable news networks saw declines compared to November. Nielsen attributed this to the absence of high-profile sports events such as Thanksgiving NFL games, a lighter college football slate on broadcast television and no World Series games during the month.

Nielsen noted that the December 2025 measurement period covered four weeks, from December 1 to December 28, in line with the broadcast calendar, which tracks weekly intervals starting on Mondays.

'Black Warrant' star Cheema says initial OTT focus intentional

Actor Paramvir Cheema, who rose to prominence with his critically-acclaimed performances in 'Black Warrant' and 'Chamak', says as an outsider it was a conscious decision to build his presence first on OTT before stepping into the world of movies.

After appearing in a string of series such as 'Kaleerein', 'Jeet Ki Zid', 'Half CA', Cheema first gained recognition with 'Chamak' and 'Tabbar', but it was Vikramaditya Motwane's web-series 'Black Warrant' that turned out to be his breakout performance, a PTI report from Mumbai stated.

He made his Hindi film debut with Aanand L Rai's romance-drama, 'Tere Ishq Mein', starring Dhanush and Kriti Sanon in the lead. His latest release was "Border 2", which has turned out to be a major hit in theatres.

"I'm not from the industry; I'm an outsider. I don't have anyone from my family in the industry. So, I've to work a little harder to create a mark for myself in the hearts and minds of people.

"When I first worked on OTT, people started appreciating me. So, an audience base was built from there, and eventually I got confidence that, 'People like me'. It made me feel that people are interested

in watching (good) content, unlike earlier times where they would watch film (of only) stars," Cheema told PTI in an interview.

The Jalandhar-born actor said that he was initially interested in acting, regardless of the platform. However, he soon recognised the potential of cinema.

"For me, acting is all about giving my best performance. Gradually, I understood the reach of films, and that you can become a star by doing films. This is what my manager used to tell me," Cheema recalled.

"I knew that not many people will go to the theatre to watch my films, and I didn't want to start out with a flop film. Hence, I build an audience (base)," he said.

In 'Border 2', Cheema portrays the character Subedar Nishaan Singh. The film, a sequel to the 1997 film of the same name, features Sunny Deol, Varun Dhawan, Ahan Shetty, Mona Singh and others.

"Doing a film with Sunny sir, Varun bhai, Diljit bhai, this is such a big cast, and if I'm able to stand out and create a mark for myself, then there's nothing better I could ask for. I'm doing a Punjabi film as a lead



(hero) with Sonam (Bajwa). I'm taking one small step at a time (in films)," the actor said.

Interestingly, 'Border 2' was going to be Cheema's Hindi cinema debut but Aanand L Rai's 'Tere Ishq Mein', in which he plays Sanon's husband, was released first.

"I'm fortunate enough that in both the films, I got to work with some great people. Like, in 'Tere Ishq Mein' with Anand sir, Dhanush, and Kriti, and 'Border 2' the name itself is enough as everyone knows about the film."

Cheema was one of the actors who had auditioned to play the title role in Imtiaz Ali's 'Amar Singh Chamkila' but the role eventually was essayed by Diljit Dosanjh, and at the same time, he was offered to play the lead in the SonyLIV acclaimed series, "Chamak", and he choose the latter. Cheema said he "regrets" missing out on the opportunity of being directed by Ali.

Cinema, TV different media to entertain audiences: Akshay Kumar

It feels like homecoming to the family audience, says superstar Akshay Kumar as he returns to television as the host of the Indian version of the celebrated game show 'Wheel of Fortune'. Akshay, who earlier served as the host of stunt-based show 'Fear Factor: Khatron Ke Khiladi' (2008-2011) and judged 'MasterChef India' (2010), said TV can unite family audiences and he is hoping his new show will foster this connection. "Over the years, iconic television formats and their hosts haven't just entertained, they have built trust, brought generations together, and created moments where families sit together, play along and celebrate wins as one. For me, 'Wheel of Fortune' feels like coming home to that family audience, the kind that gathers after a long day to unwind together," he said, according to a PTI report from Mumbai.

'Wheel of Fortune', which started on American television in 1975, challenges contestants to uncover hidden words or phrases by guessing letters. The Indian edition of the show premiered on Sony Entertainment Television and Sony LIV yesterday.

A large spinning wheel determines the value of each correct letter and players take turns to reveal the puzzles. The contestant who successfully solves the puzzle and amasses the highest score walks away with a cash prize.

According to Kumar, both cinema and TV are different mediums entertaining audiences in distinct ways.

"Cinema is larger than life, played out on a big canvas where you play a certain character for a few hours, creating a significant impact on the audiences beyond those few hours.

"Television, however, creates a different kind of bond. While cinema makes you dream, television gives you a sense of belonging. It walks into homes every single day and becomes part of people's routines and conversations," the actor said. Kumar said he instantly jumped at the idea of hosting 'Wheel of Fortune India' as it gave him the chance to directly interact with people. "As a host, the role is very different from cinema. Hosting gives me the chance to be myself, interact directly with contestants, share their excitement, and be part of their journey in real time.



World Legends Pro T20 League launches in Goa on Sony LIV

The inaugural season of the World Legends Pro T20 League (WLPT20L) officially began on January 26, 2026, in Goa, promising ten days of high-octane cricket action and fan engagement. The tournament features a mix of international cricket legends and popular Indian players, creating a unique blend of nostalgia and competitive T20 excitement.

Fans can catch every match live across multiple platforms, including Sony LIV, DD Sports, FanCode, YouTube, and Waves, ensuring wide accessibility for audiences across India and beyond. This multi-platform strategy is designed to bring the thrill of the league to both television viewers and digital-first audiences.

Goa Tourism headlines the league's commercial ecosystem as the Presenting Partner, alongside Pantheon Development as the Official Umpire Partner. The sponsorship roster also includes Indigo 91.9 FM as Official Radio Partner, Viacation as Official Travel Partner, BookMyShow as Official Ticketing Partner, Campa Energy as Official Beverage Partner, Mirchi and Gaana as Official Entertainment Partners, and Kingfisher Premium Drinking Water as Official Goodtimes Partner.

Held at the 1919 Sportz Cricket Stadium, Goa, the league features six teams competing over ten days, with more than 90 cricket legends in action. Indian stars such as Harbhajan Singh, Shikhar Dhawan, Irfan Pathan, and Suresh Raina



headline the domestic contingent, while global icons including Chris Gayle, Shane Watson, Martin Gupthill, and Ben Cutting add international flair.

With its high-profile player roster, strong broadcast reach, and integrated sponsor ecosystem, the World Legends Pro T20 League aims to deliver a cricketing spectacle that combines thrilling on-field action with fan-centered entertainment, carving a distinctive place in India's 2026 cricket calendar.

'Special Ops' S2 emerges as India's most-watched streaming title of 2025

JoHotstar's espionage thriller 'Special Ops' S2 has emerged as India's most-watched streaming original of 2025, clocking an impressive 29.6 million viewers. The series topped a fiercely competitive streaming landscape, underlining the growing

appetite for high-stakes spy dramas among Indian audiences.

According to The Variety report, citing Ormax Media's

annual audience measurement data, the Friday Storytellers production led a year that saw intense competition between platforms across premium and ad-supported services. JioHotstar showcased strong dominance, securing three spots in the top 10 and four of the top 11 most-watched streaming originals of the year.

While JioHotstar commanded the top ranks, Netflix emerged as the overall leader in volume, placing 20 titles in the top 50 list. Prime Video and Amazon MX Player also delivered strong performances, reinforcing their positions as formidable players in India's rapidly evolving streaming ecosystem.

JioHotstar followed its top-ranking success with 'Criminal Justice: A Family Matter', which secured the second position with 27.7 million viewers. Produced by Applause Entertainment in association with BBC Studios India, the legal drama continued the franchise's strong connect with

audiences. Close behind, Amazon MX Player's 'Ek Badnaam Aashram' Season 3 Part 2 claimed the third spot with 27.1 million viewers, highlighting the rising influence of free, ad-supported streaming platforms in reaching mass audiences. Prime Video's flagship offerings also made a strong impact during the year. 'The Family Man' Season 3, produced by D2R

Films, attracted 24.6 million viewers, placing it among the most-watched originals of 2025 and reaffirming the franchise's sustained popularity.

The rankings reflect a year where compelling storytelling, franchise strength, and platform reach played decisive roles in audience

engagement. With JioHotstar dominating the top positions and Netflix leading in overall presence, 2025 proved to be a defining year in India's streaming wars, marked by scale, diversity of content, and intensifying competition across platforms.



'Bigg Boss Marathi 6' records 6.5x watch-time growth on JioHotstar

Bigg Boss Marathi' Season 6 has made a powerful entry into Maharashtra's living rooms, registering a strong opening across both television and digital platforms. Airing simultaneously on Colors Marathi and JioHotstar, the latest season has drawn impressive viewership and engagement, reaffirming the franchise's position as one of the most influential non-fiction properties in Marathi entertainment.

As per a press release from JioHotstar, the Grand Premiere on Colors Marathi attracted over 5 million viewers in its first week, highlighting the show's enduring mass appeal. On the digital front, the launch episode on JioHotstar delivered a 2.2x higher reach and a remarkable 6.5x growth in watch-time compared to the Season 5 premiere, indicating a sharp rise in audience interest and deeper engagement.

The momentum continued throughout Week 1, with 'Bigg Boss Marathi 6' recording 1.8x higher video views and 1.3x higher watch-time on JioHotstar compared to the previous season. These numbers underline not just strong sampling, but sustained consumption and repeat viewership across platforms.

Commenting on the performance, Sumanta Bose, Cluster Head – Star Plus, Star Bharat and Star Utsav (East and West), JioStar, said that 'Bigg Boss Marathi' continues to prove its strength as a scalable, multi-platform format. He noted that the show's success lies in its culturally rooted storytelling and its ability to reflect the sensibilities of Marathi audiences, thereby

expanding reach while deepening viewer connection.

A key driver behind the season's buzz has been host Riteish Deshmukh. From the release of the promos, his sharp one-liners and unmistakable Maharashtrian swagger created strong social media chatter. His now-viral line, "The last season was a hit, but this one will be legendary... are you ready?", set the tone for what has turned into one of the most talked-about launches in recent times.

On premiere night, Riteish Deshmukh's confident hosting, authenticity, and high-energy presence transformed the launch into a true event television moment. With 17 contestants entering the house, the very first week delivered intense drama, fiery confrontations, and rapidly evolving equations, keeping audiences hooked from the outset.

The season has also attracted strong brand support, with Danube Properties, Santoor Soap, and Vithoba Premium Herbal Toothpaste as Co-Powered Partners, Dazzler as the Digital Co-Powered Partner, and a



wide lineup of special and associate sponsors across television. With its theme, "The door will open, and destiny's game shall change," already playing out through unexpected twists and tasks, 'Bigg Boss Marathi' Season 6 has quickly become one of the most discussed shows since its launch on January 11, 2026. The show airs every night at 8 pm on Colors Marathi and JioHotstar.

ROLL ON

Saurabh Goel appointed national revenue head of NDTV profit

NDTV has appointed seasoned ad-sales executive Saurabh Goel as the national revenue head of its business news channel, NDTV Profit, marking his return to the network with an expanded leadership mandate. The move signals NDTV's renewed focus on strengthening its revenue strategy amid evolving market dynamics in the news broadcastingspace.

Announcing the development on LinkedIn, Goel shared that he has taken charge as national revenue head – NDTV Profit at NDTV Network, expressing appreciation to senior leadership for the opportunity. The appointment comes as NDTV sharpens its commercial approach for its business news offering, at a time when broadcasters are navigating fragmented audiences and cautious advertiser spending.

Goel brings with him over two decades of experience in media sales across television, radio and digital platforms. His journey with NDTV in recent months has been marked by rapid progression. He

served as revenue head at NDTV Profit in February 2026 before being elevated to the national revenue head role within the same month. Prior to this, he was revenue head – West at NDTV Network from July 2025 to February 2026, overseeing key regional markets.

Before rejoining NDTV, Goel spent more than 17 years with ABP Network, where he held multiple senior roles. As group account director from June 2021 to July 2025, he was responsible for leading corporate business for the northern region, handling business development, strategic planning, customer relationships and B2B partnerships. His long tenure at ABP also included a 13-year stint as account director from 2008 to 2021, during which he managed ad-sales revenue for channels such as ABP News, ABP Ananda and ABP Majha, working closely with corporate advertisers, media agencies and brand partners to drive yield and strengthen the advertising portfolio.

Earlier in his career, Goel worked with



ETV Network between 2006 and 2008, where he managed DAVP and PSU business, and with Radio Today 93.5 FM from 2005 to 2006, handling airtime sales in the New Delhi market. This diverse experience across media formats has shaped his understanding of advertiser needs in a rapidly changing ecosystem.

For NDTV Profit, Goel's appointment points to a sharper focus on monetisation as business news channels look beyond conventional spot advertising to unlock new revenue streams. For Goel, the role represents a homecoming with higher stakes, as the challenge now lies in converting viewership and credibility into sustainable revenue growth in an increasingly competitive news market.

Zee appoints Sandeep Mehrotra as COO for Ad Revenue

Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd has strengthened its senior leadership with the appointment of Sandeep Goenka.

Mehrotra as Chief Operating Officer – Advertisement Revenue, In his new role, Mehrotra will be responsible for maximising Zee's advertisement revenue potential by leveraging the convergence between its broadcast and digital businesses.

a move aimed at sharpening the company's monetisation strategy across linear and digital platforms. The appointment will take effect from February 3, 2026.

The development was disclosed by the company in a regulatory filing to the stock exchanges and through an official press release issued on February 2, 2026.



Zee informed that Mehrotra will be designated as Senior Management Personnel and will be based at the company's Mumbai headquarters, reporting directly to CEO Punit

advertisement revenue vertical as Head – Advertisement Revenue, Broadcast & Digital, and will work closely with Mehrotra to further scale revenues.

Commenting on the appointment in the press release, Punit

Goenka said the evolving entertainment landscape demands outcome-driven and platform-agnostic monetisation strategies. He added that Mehrotra's deep understanding of the advertiser ecosystem and his experience in building integrated revenue frameworks across linear and digital segments would be critical in driving sustainable and diversified growth for the company.

Mehrotra brings over three decades of experience in revenue leadership, with a strong track record in managing large-scale P&Ls, multi-portfolio monetisation and enterprise growth across consumer-facing businesses. Over the years, he has led sales transformations, built high-performance teams and developed scalable, client-centric commercial models. Prior to

joining Zee, he was associated with Culver Max Entertainment Pvt. Ltd., formerly Sony Pictures Networks India, where he served as Head of Advertisement Sales – Network Channels.

Speaking on his appointment, Mehrotra said he was pleased to join Zee at a pivotal phase as the company strengthens its monetisation capabilities for the future. He noted that Zee's strong presence across both linear and digital platforms presents a significant opportunity to deepen advertiser engagement and build an integrated, scalable advertisement revenue ecosystem.

With this appointment, Zee continues to reinforce its leadership bench as it sharpens focus on revenue growth and long-term value creation in a converging media landscape.

Palki Sharma exits Firstpost; Prabhakar named CCO

Palki Sharma has stepped down as Managing Editor of Firstpost, bringing to a close a significant chapter in the digital news platform's editorial journey. During her tenure, Sharma played a pivotal role in shaping Firstpost's editorial identity, most notably through the launch and success of its prime-time show 'Vantage', which earned recognition for presenting global developments through a distinctly Indian perspective.

Sharma's contribution extended well beyond her on-screen presence. She was instrumental in building a strong editorial team and nurturing a culture focused on sharp analysis, credibility and consistency. Under her leadership, Firstpost strengthened its positioning in the competitive digital news space, with

'Vantage' emerging as a flagship property that resonated with a wide and engaged audience. While Sharma has not formally announced her next professional move, sources familiar with the development indicate that she is stepping away to pursue entrepreneurial interests.

At the same time, Firstpost has announced the appointment of Binoy Prabhakar as its new Chief Content Officer. Prabhakar recently concluded his stint as Chief Content Officer at Hindustan Times and brings with him over 25 years of editorial experience across some of India's most respected media organisations.

Over the course of his career, Prabhakar has held senior editorial roles at The Economic Times, The Indian Express,



Hindustan Times, and digital platforms such as Moneycontrol and CNBCTV18.com. Known for building and scaling digital news operations, he is expected to play a key role in steering Firstpost's content strategy and strengthening its digital newsroom.

The leadership transition marks an important phase for Firstpost as it looks to build on its existing editorial strengths while charting its next phase of growth in the evolving digital media landscape.

Sagar Gonsalvez joins JioHotstar as associate director, performance sales – sports

JioHotstar has bolstered its commercial leadership with the appointment of Sagar Gonsalvez as associate director, performance sales for sports. Based in Bengaluru, Gonsalvez will be responsible for strengthening the platform's performance-led advertising strategy across its live sports and digital offerings.

In his new role, Gonsalvez will focus on building data-driven, outcome-oriented advertising solutions for brands, while deepening relationships with advertisers and driving revenue growth across JioHotstar's expansive sports and OTT ecosystem. The appointment comes at a time when digital sports consumption continues to scale rapidly, creating fresh opportunities for

measurable, results-focused brand partnerships. Commenting on his new role, Gonsalvez said he was excited to begin this next phase of his professional journey at JioHotstar, with a clear focus on unlocking scalable performance growth for advertisers and working closely with teams to deliver tangible business impact for brands.

Gonsalvez brings with him over a decade of experience across digital media, ad-tech and performance marketing. Prior to joining JioHotstar, he served as deputy general manager, ad sales at Paytm, where he led high-performing teams and designed multi-channel strategies for gaming, ecommerce and digital-first brands. His earlier career includes leadership stints at Tyroo,



ShareChat, ByteDance, Sony Pictures Networks India, underlines JioHotstar's intent to further strengthen its Network18 and Times Internet. outcome-led advertising capabilities, especially as sports viewership and advertiser demand continue to grow across digital platforms.

SPNI appoints Harsh Sheth as Business Head of SET

Sony Pictures Networks India (SPNI) has appointed Harsh Sheth as Business Head – Sony Entertainment Television (SET), strengthening the leadership at one of India's most iconic Hindi general entertainment channels. In his new role, Sheth will oversee SET's overall business strategy and P&L, reporting to Nachiket Pantvaidya, Chief Content Officer – SET, Sony Marathi and Movie Production.

According to a press release, the network signals a renewed focus on driving growth, profitability and sharper business execution for SET as competition in the Hindi GEC space continues to intensify. Sheth brings close to two decades of experience in building and scaling high-impact media businesses across television and digital platforms. He joins SPNI from JioStar, where he served as Business Head – Star Bharat and Star Utsav. During his tenure, he played a key role in Star Utsav's transformation after

its free-to-air entry, steering the channel to the number one position nationally, while also improving Star Bharat's financial performance through disciplined cost management and content optimisation.

Earlier, Sheth spent over a decade with Disney Star, where he was instrumental in building the network's Hindi and English movie portfolio. As Business Head – Hindi & English Movies, he helped create one of India's leading movie networks, driving sustained profitability and forging long-term partnerships with major studios and creative talent.

Commenting on the appointment, Nachiket Pantvaidya said Sheth brings a strong blend of commercial acumen, audience insight and leadership experience, which will be valuable as SET sharpens its growth ambitions. "His experience in building large, profitable entertainment businesses will be a valuable addition to the team," Pantvaidya noted.



Harsh Sheth said he was excited to join SPNI at a time when SET continues to be a defining force in Indian television. He added that he looks forward to working closely with the leadership team to drive the channel's next phase of growth and further strengthen its market leadership. Sony Pictures Networks India, the consumer-facing identity of Culver Max Entertainment Private Limited, operates a portfolio of 28 premium channels across genres including general entertainment, movies, sports, kids and factual programming, along with OTT platform Sony LIV. The network reaches over 700 million viewers in India and is available in more than 150 countries worldwide.

NDTV reappoints Sanjay Pugalia as full-time director for three-year term

New Delhi Television Limited (NDTV) has reappointed Sanjay Pugalia as its full-time director for a further three-year term, signalling continuity in leadership as the company moves ahead with its operational and financial priorities.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the NDTV board held on January 28, 2026, where several key resolutions were approved. As per the regulatory filing, Pugalia's new term will begin on April 1, 2026, and run until March 31, 2029, subject to the approval of shareholders at the company's forthcoming annual general meeting.

Alongside the leadership decision, the board also approved NDTV's unaudited financial results for the quarter and nine months ended December 31, 2025, on both standalone and

consolidated bases. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Sebi regulations and include the limited review report issued by the company's statutory auditors, S. N. Dhawan & Company LLP. The results have been made available on NDTV's official website.



NDTV

In the same meeting, the board reappointed Sanjay Gupta & Associates as cost auditors for the financial year 2026–27, further ensuring continuity in statutory and compliance-related processes.

Pugalia brings with him decades of experience across television, digital and print media. Over the years, he has held senior

editorial and leadership roles at some of the country's most prominent media organisations. He spent over a decade with CNBC Awaaz and was part of its launch team, served as News

Director at Star News, led Zee News, and was also among the founding team at Aaj Tak. His print journalism credentials include contributions to publications such as Business Standard and Navbharat Times, while in the 1990s he was a regular contributor to BBC Hindi Radio. Prior to joining NDTV, he served as President and Editorial Director at Quint Digital Media Limited.

The company has clarified that Pugalia does not have any family

relationship with other members of the board and that there are no adverse orders or restrictions against him from Sebi or any other regulatory authority.

The board meeting, held from 4 pm to 6 pm on Wednesday, reflected NDTV's focus on stability and governance, with swift decisions on leadership continuity, financial disclosures and auditor appointments, reinforcing the broadcaster's emphasis on steady execution rather than disruption.

Vijay Rawat joins NDTV as Executive Editor, Hindi Digital

NDTV has strengthened its Hindi digital leadership with the appointment of senior journalist Vijay Rawat as Executive Editor, Hindi Digital. Rawat has taken charge of NDTV's Hindi website, marking a new phase in the network's ongoing push to sharpen its digital news operations.

Based in the Hindi digital newsroom, Rawat will lead editorial strategy and daily operations for the platform. He will report to Santosh Kumar, Senior Managing Editor, NDTV Hindi Digital. The move comes as NDTV looks to deepen its engagement with Hindi news audiences amid intensifying competition in the digital space.

Rawat brings with him over two decades of newsroom experience across print and digital journalism. He recently concluded a more than nine-year tenure with the India Today Group, where he served as

Executive Editor of aajtak.in and played a key role in shaping the platform's editorial growth. His last working day with the group was January 21.

Originally from Gwalior, Rawat has spent over 25 years in journalism. He began his career as a staff reporter with Dainik Jagran in Gwalior, before moving on to editorial roles at leading Hindi publications including Haribhoomi, Amar Ujala and Dainik Jagran, gaining experience across both reporting and desk functions.

In 2008, he joined the launch team of Network18's Hindi digital platform IBNKhbar, now News18 India. During his eight-year stint there, Rawat rose from copy editor to news editor, contributing significantly to the platform's digital evolution. He later moved to Aaj Tak Digital in 2016 as Assistant Editor and went on to become a core member of the



NDTV

India Today Group's Hindi digital leadership team.

On the academic front, Rawat holds a master's degree in Mass Communication from Guru Jambheshwar University, Hisar, and a postgraduate diploma in journalism from Dr B R Ambedkar University, Agra.

With Vijay Rawat at the helm of its Hindi digital operations, NDTV is aiming to sharpen its editorial edge and build a stronger connect with Hindi-speaking audiences as digital news consumption continues to grow rapidly.

Aparna Ramachandran joins Zee as EVP, Head of Network Digital

Zee Entertainment Enterprises Limited has appointed Aparna Ramachandran as Executive Vice President and Head of Network Digital, underlining the company's renewed focus on strengthening its digital and streaming ecosystem across platforms.

Ramachandran joins Zee from Balaji Telefilms, where she was serving as Head of Digital Originals and was responsible for driving content strategy and overseeing the creation of original programming for the company's digital offerings. She announced her move on LinkedIn, calling it the

beginning of a new chapter in a career that spans over 15 years across media, entertainment and technology.

Over the years, Ramachandran has held senior leadership roles at several leading organisations, including Viacom18 Media,

Viu, FremantleMedia, Miditech, BigSynergy, BBC Worldwide, CNBC-TV18 and Bloomberg UTV. Her diverse professional journey reflects deep experience across broadcast television, streaming media and digital-first content businesses.



Interestingly, she began her career in 2005 as a software engineer at Infosys, before transitioning into the media and entertainment industry, where she steadily built expertise in digital strategy, content development, project management and video production.

At Zee, Ramachandran is expected to play a pivotal role in shaping the network's digital roadmap, driving content

innovation and accelerating growth across its digital and streaming platforms, as the broadcaster looks to strengthen its position in an increasingly competitive digital entertainment landscape.



SATCAB

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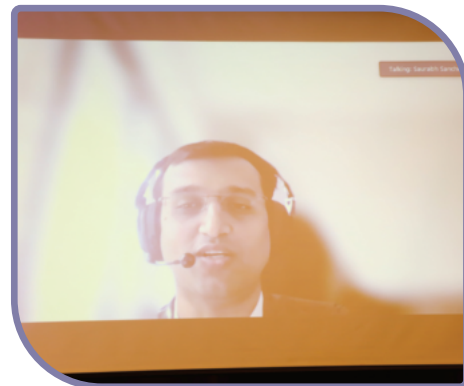




SATCAB

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Previous Glimpses





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SYMPOSIUM

Previous Glimpses



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Previous Glimpses





TV9 Network's announces Lounge Knights Awards 2026

TV9 Network's Lounge Knights Awards 2026 brought together some of the most influential voices in Indian hospitality for an evening that placed credibility, craft and consistency at the centre of the spotlight. Hosted at Hilton Gurugram, the invitation-only ceremony celebrated institutions and professionals who are redefining excellence across food, beverage, luxury stays and guest experience, setting a new benchmark for the industry.

According to a press release, the awards were conceived as a curated platform that values discernment over display and substance over spectacle. The 2026 edition reflected this intent, recognising brands and leaders who have consistently raised standards through innovation, integrity and an uncompromising focus on quality within India's rapidly evolving hospitality ecosystem. Presented by Radico Khaitan, co-powered by Morpheus – Be Your Dream, and styled by Mia by Tanishq, the evening brought together industry leaders

shaping the country's food and beverage narrative. The atmosphere reflected a shared appreciation for thoughtful luxury and refined experiences, rather than fleeting trends.

Barun Das, MD and CEO of TV9 Network, said the Lounge Knights Awards were designed with a clear editorial purpose. He noted that the platform aims to honour credibility rather than popularity, and to recognise hospitality brands and leaders who are genuinely influencing India's culinary and nightlife landscape through excellence and integrity.

Radico Khaitan expressed its delight at partnering with the 2026 edition, describing the awards as an evening dedicated to elegance and refined experiences. The company highlighted the value of bringing together distinguished voices and meaningful conversations around contemporary luxury.

Conceptualised and curated by News9, the Lounge Knights Awards continue to position themselves as an editorially



driven initiative anchored in rigorous curation. The platform celebrates restaurants, bars, lounges, pubs and hotels that demonstrate sustained excellence and innovation, while maintaining a long-term commitment to quality.

This year's honours went to some of the most respected names in the industry, including Grand Hyatt Gurugram, The Lalit – Connaught Place, Radisson Blu Dwarka, ITC Mughal – A Luxury Collection Resort & Spa, Leela Convention Hotel – East Delhi, The Lodhi – New Delhi, Welcomhotel by ITC – Dwarka, Taj Surajkund, Roseate House – Aerocity and The Leela Palace – Chanakyapuri, among others.

India Today Group named exclusive media partner for WGS Dubai

The India Today Group will bring India's perspective to the global stage as the exclusive India media partner for the World Governments Summit 2026, scheduled to be held in Dubai from February 3 to 5. One of the world's most influential platforms on governance and public policy, the Summit will see participation from global leaders, policymakers and industry thinkers shaping conversations around the future of nations.

According to a press release issued by the network, the partnership will see the Summit streamed live exclusively across the India Today Group's platforms, including Aaj Tak, India Today and Business Today. The coverage will span television, digital and print, with real-time analysis, expert commentary and digital-first reporting

designed to make global governance conversations accessible to Indian audiences.

The three-day Summit will focus on five priority themes that are redefining governance worldwide — leadership and purpose, people-centric and resilient societies, inclusive and sustainable

growth, reimagined cities, and future-facing frontiers covering artificial intelligence, space and innovation. These discussions are expected to address how governments adapt to rapid technological change, economic uncertainty and evolving social expectations.

Senior journalists from the India Today Group, including Siddharth Zarabi, Anjana Om Kashyap, Marya Shakil and Geeta Mohan, will moderate multiple high-level sessions at the Summit. Their participation



places Indian journalism at the heart of critical global conversations on sustainability, economic transformation, geopolitics and digital innovation. Beyond on-stage sessions, the Group will conduct exclusive interviews with global leaders and decision-makers on the sidelines of the Summit. These conversations will offer viewers and readers in India deeper insights into international policy thinking, emerging economic models and governance strategies, delivered across the network's television, digital and print platforms.

NDTV tops digital charts with strong January YouTube viewership

NDTV has begun 2026 on a strong digital note, cementing its leadership position in India's online news ecosystem with an impressive performance on YouTube during January. As per data released by Playboard, NDTV 24x7 emerged as the most-watched English news channel on YouTube in January 2026, garnering 129.21 million views to claim the top spot. In the Hindi news segment, NDTV India recorded a massive 1,914.30 million views during the month, comfortably placing it ahead of several established competitors such as Times Now Navbharat, India TV, TV9 Bharatvarsh, ABP News, and Republic Bharat. The figures underline NDTV's growing influence across both English and Hindi digital audiences. In an official press release issued by NDTV, Rahul Kanwal, CEO and Editor-in-Chief, described the performance as a reflection of sustained digital focus and teamwork. He said the January YouTube

numbers highlight the consistent efforts of NDTV's digital teams across platforms, adding that digital has clearly become a primary destination for news consumption. Kanwal emphasised that the network remains committed to delivering credible journalism and meaningful conversations that audiences can trust on platforms like YouTube. The strong showing in January mirrors NDTV's broader digital strategy, which places equal emphasis on breaking news, explainers, long-form stories, and live coverage. By creating formats specifically designed for digital-first audiences, the network has been able to scale its reach while staying aligned with its core editorial values of clarity, balance, and credibility. Looking ahead, NDTV plans to introduce new digital conversations and formats over the coming months as it continues to deepen engagement across platforms. With changing news



consumption habits in India, the network aims to strengthen its digital footprint while remaining rooted in the trust that defines its journalism. This steady and focused approach, NDTV says, will continue to guide its digital journey in a rapidly evolving media landscape.

Times Now marks 20 years of shaping India's news narrative

When Times Now went on air in 2006, India's television news landscape was still evolving, with measured debates and limited primetime intensity. Two decades later, the channel stands as one of the most influential forces in English news broadcasting, having played a defining role in shaping national conversations and holding power to account. According to an official press release issued by the network, Times Now's 20-year journey has been driven by a clear editorial purpose — to go beyond reporting headlines and instead provoke thought, demand accountability and push debates towards outcomes. What began as an English news channel steadily grew into a platform recognised for sharp questioning, high-

impact debates and journalism that consistently asked what must happen next. Central to this evolution has been the channel's philosophy of "positive provocation," an approach that encouraged tough questions and uncomfortable conversations in the public interest. Over the years, this belief translated into several influential editorial campaigns such as 'End VIP Raj', 'Swachh Neta', 'End Triple Talaq', 'Right to Pray' and 'Path to Life'. Many of these initiatives started as newsroom discussions and went on to influence public sentiment and policy-level debates. As viewer expectations changed, Times Now's primetime formats also evolved. Shows such as



'The Newshour', 'India Upfront', 'Frankly Speaking', 'Blueprint' and 'NewsHour @9 & 10' became appointment viewing for audiences seeking depth, context and rigorous debate at the close of the day. These formats helped cement the channel's reputation for driving the national agenda rather than merely reacting to it.

To commemorate the milestone, Times Now is marking 20 years with a curated series of high-impact conversations featuring prominent personalities, including legendary cricketer Kapil Dev and actor Vikrant Massey, among others. The initiative reflects the channel's effort to blend reflection with forward-looking dialogue.

Commenting on the occasion, Vineet Jain, Managing Director of The Times Group, said that when Times Now was launched, the media environment was very different, but the belief in fearless, credible journalism rooted in truth was unwavering. He said the channel's growth into a household name was built on conviction, consistency and an unrelenting focus on what matters, adding that the future of news would demand sharper insights, faster adaptation, deeper storytelling and an even

stronger bond of trust with audiences.

Ashish Sehgal, CEO of Times Television Network and Chief Growth Officer – Media & Entertainment, described Times Now as a broadcast channel with a difference, crediting its leadership position to record-breaking content, award-winning journalism and the trust placed by viewers who see it as an agent of change in India and beyond.

Navika Kumar, Group Editor-in-Chief of Times Now and Times Now Navbharat, who has been with the channel since its inception, said the 20-year journey has been defined by credible, fearless and action-oriented journalism. She noted that the channel's objective has always been to empower citizens by keeping truth at the forefront and holding power accountable, rather than becoming the story itself.

As Times Now celebrates two decades on air, the channel positions itself not just as a chronicler of India's modern history, but as an active participant in shaping it — reaffirming its commitment to journalism that is credible, fearless and independent, while continuing to evolve with the changing news habits of the nation.

Network18 platforms among top-viewed Budget Day news streams

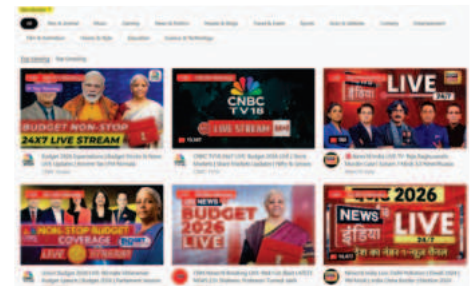
In the much-anticipated Union Budget Day, February 1, 2026, Network18 platforms — CNBC-AWAAZ, CNBC-TV18, News18 India and CNN-News18 — featured among the top-viewed news streams, reinforcing the network's leadership across business and general news genres, the news network stated. CNBC-AWAAZ decisively led digital live streams, outpacing key competitors by a wide margin. During the peak live window between 11am and 12.40 pm, CNBC-AWAAZ emerged as the clear leader in digital viewership, registering a peak concurrency of 765.1K, followed closely by News18 India at 667.1K. CNBC TV18 followed with 581.3K, while CNN-News18 recorded a strong 362.0K, Network18 said in a press release.

Among rival channels, the statement

asserted basing its views on Databeings data, Zee Business recorded a peak concurrency of 211.5K, while Aaj Tak saw 153.1K, and NDTV Profit registered 137.3K, underscoring the Network's dominant presence across business and general news genres.

The data clearly reflects the Network's sustained leadership, with News18 India delivering 4.3x higher concurrency than Aaj Tak, CNBC-AWAAZ recording 3.5x the viewership of Zee Business, and CNBCTV 18 achieving 4.24x higher concurrency than CNBC-TV18. CNN-News18 further strengthened the Network's lead, clocking 4.95x that of India Today, reaffirming its strong audience connection during critical news moments, the statement added.

The strong performance highlights



Network18's strength in delivering sharp, real-time economic coverage, expert-led analysis, and audience-first explainers.

With seamless integration across TV, digital, and social platforms, Network18 once again demonstrated its ability to command audience attention during high-impact national moments, cementing its position as the go-to destination for credible, and timely news on India's most important fiscal event.

Bharat Express celebrates 3 years of ethical, impactful journalism

Bharat Express, one of India's fastest-growing national Hindi news channels, marked its third anniversary yesterday, saying since its inception, the channel has upheld its commitment towards ethical and impactful journalism.

Over the past three years, Bharat Express has established itself as a trusted name in the Indian news landscape, consistently prioritizing factual reporting, national interest, and people-centric stories over noise-driven narratives, the news channel said in a press release yesterday.

Known for its impactful ground reporting and incisive coverage of national issues, Bharat Express has delivered several high value

investigations and on-ground stories that strengthened public discourse. Its balanced editorial stance has been consistently recognised by industry bodies.

Bharat Express' digital vertical has also witnessed exceptional growth, recording high video views, strong engagement, and rising follower trust across major social media platforms. This surge demonstrates a clear audience preference for the channel's sensible, clutter-free news delivery at a time when viewers increasingly seek clarity over chaos.

Reflecting on the milestone, Upendra Rai, CMD and Editor-in-Chief of Bharat Express News Network, said: "These three years are a testament to the unwavering trust our viewers have placed in us. Bharat Express was built on the belief that journalism must serve the nation with integrity and responsibility.

"As we enter our fourth year, we are gearing up for an exciting phase of expansion, stronger regional reach and deeper digital innovation while staying firmly committed to truthful, sensible journalism."



Moneycontrol Eco Pulse shows Indian economy gaining steady momentum in Dec

India's economic momentum strengthened steadily in December 2025, according to the newly launched Moneycontrol Eco Pulse Index, a high-frequency monthly indicator designed to track real-time economic activity. The Index stood at 53.4 in December, signalling stronger-than-average economic conditions compared to the previous month, as readings above 50 indicate expansion while those below suggest moderation.

As per a press release, the Moneycontrol Eco Pulse Index tracks over 30 high-frequency economic indicators on a monthly basis to provide early signals on the direction of economic growth. The December reading points to a gradual improvement in overall momentum, supported by a pick-up across several key indicators during the month. The steady trend was visible in multiple data points. GST collections improved to 1.3 percent growth in December from 0.7 percent in November. Electricity demand returned to positive territory after witnessing contraction for two consecutive months. Automobile sales also showed improvement, with four-wheeler sales rising during the month, while non-food credit growth strengthened. Two-wheeler sales, often seen as a barometer of rural demand, were also higher compared to November. However, the data showed some moderation in select consumption indicators. Growth in UPI transaction

volumes slowed during the month, while Aviation Turbine Fuel consumption, a proxy for air travel and cargo movement, also tapered, indicating uneven trends across segments of the economy.

The Moneycontrol Eco Pulse is a composite index aimed at capturing India's economic momentum on a monthly basis and offering early insights ahead of official GDP data. It combines a wide set of indicators spanning industrial activity, consumption, business confidence, transport and employment to present a comprehensive snapshot of economic conditions. By using a dynamic statistical framework, the Index filters out short-term volatility and extreme fluctuations to extract the underlying economic signal, aligning its methodology with global best practices followed by central banks and statistical agencies.

The methodology and framework of the Index have been vetted by an independent panel of economists and policy experts, including Laveesh Bhandari, Shubhashis Gangopadhyay, DK Srivastava and Amitendu Palit. The Index is also supported by a customised Economy Heat Map that tracks month-on-month changes across sectors, helping identify early turning points and emerging trends.

Commenting on the launch, Nalin Mehta,



Managing Editor, Moneycontrol and Chief AI Officer – Editorial Operations, Network18, said the Eco Pulse aims to bridge the time gap between official statistics and fast-moving economic activity. He noted that the Index is designed to offer a transparent and robust early signal on whether economic momentum is strengthening or weakening, helping investors and policymakers make more informed decisions.

Industry experts have welcomed the initiative, describing it as timely and relevant in a fast-changing economic environment. Economists said the Index's real-time, data-driven approach would be useful for policymakers, businesses, analysts and students seeking a clearer understanding of sectoral trends and overall economic direction.

Moneycontrol, which has over 1.2 million paying subscribers, will update the Eco Pulse Index regularly and use it as a core analytical tool across its macroeconomic coverage, offering readers an early, monthly assessment of India's growth trajectory ahead of official GDP releases.

ET NOW Global Business Summit '26 spotlights decade of disruption, change

The ET NOW Global Business Summit is set to return to the national capital on February 13 and 14, 2026, bringing together global leaders at a time when business and policy are being reshaped by continuous disruption. This year's edition will be held under the theme A Decade of Disruption, A Century of Change, reflecting how the past ten years have fundamentally altered economic thinking, corporate strategies and governance models worldwide.

According to a press release, the summit comes against the backdrop of shifting geopolitics, changing capital flows, accelerating climate risks and rapid technological advances that have transformed the way economies and companies operate. Developments such as artificial intelligence, climate-linked policy responses, the Covid-19 pandemic and repeated financial and trade realignments have unsettled long-established business models, making disruption a permanent feature rather than a temporary phase.

The 2026 agenda will centre on the forces redefining global business and policymaking, including economic disruption,

Industry 5.0, the future of globalisation, workforce transitions, energy security and the growing need for diversification in volatile markets. More than 2,000 senior delegates from India and overseas are expected to attend, underlining the summit's stature as a key platform for dialogue between governments, industry leaders and the international business community.

With uncertainty now a constant, the discussions will move beyond short-term recovery to examine deeper structural change. The summit aims to explore how leadership, economic expansion and governance must evolve in an environment where resilience, inclusion and responsible innovation are critical to sustainable growth.

India's role as host adds further significance, with the country now the world's fourth-largest economy and an increasingly influential voice in global economic affairs. Over the years, the ET NOW Global Business Summit has built a reputation for drawing senior decision-makers from across the world, including Nobel laureates, heads of state, cabinet ministers, technology pioneers and leading corporate executives.



NDTV Profit rolls out 'Return on Watching' campaign ahead of Union Budget 2026

With the Union Budget 2026 approaching, NDTV Profit has announced the launch of its expansive editorial campaign titled 'Return on Watching', aimed at delivering in-depth insight, clarity and context around one of India's most critical economic events of the year.

The initiative is positioned as a comprehensive, multi-platform conversation for investors, businesses, professionals and households tracking the Finance Minister's roadmap for growth.

According to a press release issued by the network, the campaign is rooted in NDTV Profit's core philosophy of 'For Your Profit' and is built on the idea that time and attention are valuable commodities.

Applying the principle of return on investment to news consumption, the channel says its Budget coverage is designed to ensure that every moment spent watching translates into actionable understanding and informed decision-making.

The campaign will run across television, digital, social media

and live streaming platforms, supported by on-ground activations. Coverage will be led by NDTV CEO and Editor-in-Chief Rahul Kanwal, Managing Editor Tamanna Inamdar, Markets Editor Niraj Shah and the wider NDTV Profit editorial leadership, bringing together some of the most recognised

voices in Indian business journalism.

NDTV Profit's programming will span the entire Budget lifecycle, beginning with pre-Budget expectations and policy signals, followed by live and uninterrupted coverage of Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's record ninth consecutive Union Budget, and extending into detailed post-Budget analysis. The focus will remain on

markets, taxation, industry, households and long-term economic growth.

A key pillar of this year's editorial effort is 'Budget for Bharat', a nationwide reporting initiative featuring on-ground stories from 32 states and regions. The segment aims to assess how



central policies and schemes translate into real-world impact for citizens, entrepreneurs and local economies, bringing regional perspectives into the national Budget discourse.

The editorial build-up, themed 'The Growth Agenda', will include a slate of original formats such as 'Budget Breaking', 'Budgetopedia', 'The Budget Math' and 'Budget Wishlist', along with Budget Masters, which will feature leading economists, policymakers and industry leaders. Another highlight is the NDTV Profit Budget Think Tank, a real-time analysis forum offering instant expert interpretation as the Budget speech unfolds.

Market veterans including Saurabh Mukherjea, Madhusudhan Kela, Nilesh Shah, Sandeep Bhatia, Rashesh Shah, Sunil Singhania, Radhika Gupta and Dharmesh Mehta will feature across the coverage, offering data-driven perspectives on sectors, strategy and market direction.

On Budget Day, NDTV Profit will carry the Finance Minister's speech live from early morning, supported by real-time market reactions, sector dashboards, on-ground reports and graphics-led explainers. Post-Budget programming will include 'Mega Budget Decode', editor roundtables, citizen reactions and sector-wise impact specials, culminating in the NDTV Budget Conclave in New Delhi on February 7, with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in attendance.

Announcing the initiative, Rahul Kanwal said the Union Budget remains the most important economic conversation of the year, and that 'Return on Watching' reflects NDTV Profit's commitment to helping viewers understand policy and act with confidence. Tamanna Inamdar added that the campaign is designed to move beyond headlines and equip viewers with the insight needed to interpret the Budget and plan their financial future.

Zee Business sets 'Bold and Bullish' agenda for Union Budget 2026 coverage

Zee Business is set to deliver comprehensive and market-focused coverage of Union Budget 2026 under the theme 'Union Budget 2026: Bold and Bullish', positioning itself as a key destination for viewers seeking real-time insights and sharp financial analysis. India's leading business news channel will track the Budget developments minute by minute, combining speed with structured interpretation of policy announcements.

According to a press release, the channel's Budget programming will follow Union Budget 2026 in real time, offering detailed analysis of key policy measures across taxation, capital expenditure, infrastructure, manufacturing, MSMEs, consumption, employment, and investment flows. A strong emphasis will be placed on market impact, money management, and how policy decisions translate into opportunities and risks for investors and businesses.

The coverage will feature extensive live programming on Budget Day, including expert-led discussions, sector-wise breakdowns, real-time market reactions, and data-driven explainers. Zee Business's editorial approach aims to go beyond headline announcements, helping viewers decode complex policy

decisions and understand the implications for markets, business sentiment, and long-term financial planning.

Union Budget 2026 is

expected to outline fiscal priorities at a crucial stage of India's economic journey. Against this backdrop, Zee Business intends to offer viewers clarity on how Budget decisions could shape investment behaviour, consumption trends, and overall economic momentum in the new fiscal year.

Commenting on the editorial intent, Anil Singhvi, Managing Editor, Zee Business, said that Budget coverage must help viewers interpret policy decisions through a market-focused lens. He noted that through 'Bold and Bullish', the channel's objective is to provide clear and actionable analysis that enables investors and businesses to assess the real impact of Budget measures on markets and emerging opportunities.

Raktim Das, CEO, Zee Media Corporation Limited, highlighted the broader



economic context ahead of the Budget. He pointed out that with the RBI revising India's GDP growth forecast for FY26 upwards to 7.3 per cent from the earlier estimate of 6.8 per cent, the upcoming Union Budget will be pivotal in sustaining confidence across sectors. He added that as India strengthens its position among the fastest-growing major economies, Zee Media will focus on decoding Budget implications with credible, sharp, and citizen-first coverage.

With 'Union Budget 2026: Bold and Bullish', Zee Business aims to offer viewers a structured and comprehensive understanding of the Budget and its impact on the economy. Audiences can tune in to Zee Business across television and digital platforms for in-depth coverage and real-time analysis of Union Budget 2026.

India TV has unveiled a new avatar of its Speed News Channel, refreshing India's first 24x7 speed news platform with a sharper focus on clarity, context, and viewer understanding. The revamped format marks a significant shift in how fast news is presented, aiming to ensure that speed no longer comes at the cost of comprehension.

According to an press release, the reimagined Speed News Channel moves away from the conventional format where headlines flash for just a few seconds, often leaving viewers struggling to grasp the full story. Under the new structure, each news item will now be presented for 25–30 seconds, giving audiences enough time to clearly understand the news while maintaining the brisk pace that defines speed bulletins.

The refreshed Speed News format is designed for viewers who want to stay informed quickly but meaningfully. It will continue to deliver timely updates on politics, major national developments, significant events, and key international stories, while ensuring that essential facts and context are not missed. The idea, the network says, is to make fast news more intelligible without slowing it down.

In addition to core news coverage, the new avatar places a strong emphasis on content that resonates with younger audiences. Regular updates on cinema and entertainment, sports, business and markets, gadgets, technology, and new



product launches will be an integral part of the channel's programming, making it more contemporary and relevant to today's viewers.

Commenting on the revamp, Ritu Dhawan, Managing Director, India TV, said that audience expectations from fast news are clearly evolving. She noted that viewers now seek not just speed, but also clarity and context. "The new avatar of Speed News reflects this shift by balancing speed with better understanding. Our aim is

to ensure viewers receive complete and clear information in a short span of time, while staying aligned with responsible news delivery," she said.

With this transformation, India TV is reinforcing its position as a pioneer in the speed news genre. The updated Speed News Channel promises a clearer, smarter, and more engaging fast news experience, strengthening the network's commitment to innovation in news delivery and viewer-first journalism.

Aaj Tak to host 'Salaam Cricket' as build-up to ICC Men's T20 World Cup

Aaj Tak, India's leading Hindi news channel, has announced the return of 'Salaam Cricket', a flagship cricket property that will bring together some of the biggest names in Indian cricket to analyse Team India's preparedness ahead of the upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup.

The initiative is positioned as a comprehensive pre-tournament build-up, offering viewers sharp insights into the squad's form, strategy and mindset as the global event approaches.

According to a press release, 'Salaam Cricket' will feature in-depth discussions on key aspects of India's World Cup campaign, including player combinations, tactical decisions and the pressure of performing in high-stakes encounters.

The platform aims to go beyond match previews, focusing instead on nuanced cricketing conversations that decode the modern T20 game while drawing from India's rich cricketing legacy.

One of the highlights of the event will be Rishabh Pant, who will share his journey as a World Cup winner and reflect on leadership under pressure in contemporary cricket. Fast bowling will take centre stage as Mohit Sharma, Ishant Sharma

and Umesh Yadav break down the craft of pace, swing and adaptability in the shortest format. Veteran cricketers Madan Lal, Atul Wassan and Chetan Sharma will revisit India's bowling heritage, offering perspectives that remain relevant in today's evolving game.

Adding further depth to the line-up, Sunil Gavaskar will feature in a special session, reflecting on technique, temperament and

how the game has transformed over the decades. World Cup winners Harbhajan Singh, Suresh Raina and Yuzvendra Chahal will also share candid insights into the mental approach required to succeed on the world stage. The event will culminate in a high-profile panel discussion, where leading voices from Indian cricket will deliberate on India's road ahead and what it will take to lift the trophy once again.

With 'Salaam Cricket', Aaj Tak continues its tradition of creating high-impact, viewer-first properties that blend credibility with engaging storytelling. Anchored in trust and driven by journalistic depth, the channel aims to offer cricket fans a definitive and authoritative lens on Team India's World Cup journey.



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SPNI bets on game shows and reality TV to revive appointment viewing

At a time when content consumption is increasingly defined by endless scrolling and individual screens, Sony Pictures Networks India (SPNI) is placing renewed emphasis on shared viewing experiences. By reimagining game shows and reality television, the broadcaster is seeking to turn formats once considered traditional into powerful unifiers that bring Indian families across generations back to the living room.

According to a press note issued by the company, SPNI's strategy is rooted in rebuilding the habit of appointment viewing through participation-led formats that encourage audiences to play, predict, learn and aspire together. As viewing fragments across platforms, the network is focusing on collective experiences that restore the sense of immediacy and momentum associated with linear television.

This approach reflects SPNI's understanding of today's audiences as selective and value-driven. Viewers respond to formats that offer visible progress and emotional

engagement—qualities that game shows and reality programming naturally deliver. This thinking underpins the network's recent adaptation of 'Wheel of Fortune', the world's longest-running game show, hosted by Akshay Kumar and designed as a participative family



experience.

The strategy also aligns with the sustained success of long-running franchises such as 'Kaun Banega Crorepati', which completed 25 years this year. The show continues to draw strong engagement from viewers aged 18–40 across metros as well as Tier 2 and Tier 3 markets, aided by its Play Along format that allows audiences to actively participate beyond the television screen.

By blending interactivity with emotion-

led storytelling, SPNI is reinforcing the relevance of linear television in a digital-first era. The network's focus remains

firmly on shared, participative viewing that brings families together, rather than solitary consumption across devices.

Commenting on the shift, Makarand Palekar, Head – Linear Distribution at Sony Pictures Networks India, said the future of linear television lies in creating moments audiences choose to watch together. He noted that when formats evolve while retaining their emotional core, they are able to connect across generations. According to him, interactivity, cultural relevance and forward momentum are essential to attracting younger viewers while continuing to serve family audiences that have grown up with these iconic shows.



Sippy Films repositions as character IP-led studio with backing

Sippy Films, the iconic banner behind some of Indian cinema's most enduring cultural milestones, including 'Sholay', is entering a new phase of transformation as it repositions itself as a character IP-led content studio.

The shift is being driven under the custodianship of Shehzad Sippy and is backed by a strategic investment from Kuberans Tech Ventures Private Limited, co-founded by Jeet Wagh. The investment has been completed at an undisclosed valuation.

According to a Variety report, the restructuring marks a significant evolution for the storied studio, which occupies a singular position in Indian film history as the owner and custodian of rare and enduring intellectual properties such as 'Sholay', 'Seeta Aur Geeta' and 'Shaan'. These titles continue to retain cultural relevance across generations, platforms and formats, making them valuable assets in an increasingly IP-driven entertainment landscape.



Netflix marks a decade in India with SRK-narrated tribute film

Netflix has marked 10 years of its presence in India with the release of a special commemorative film narrated by superstar Shah Rukh Khan, celebrating the platform's decade-long storytelling journey and its growing bond with Indian audiences.

According to a PTI report, the streaming giant said the film goes beyond commemorating an anniversary, capturing the shared habit of watching, feeling and falling in love with stories together. It reflects how Netflix has evolved alongside Indian viewers since its launch in the country a decade ago, becoming part of everyday conversations and viewing rituals. Warm and emotionally resonant in tone, the film traces Netflix's journey in India through familiar moments and cultural cues. It highlights the subtle shift in how people talk about content—from casual exchanges like “Netflix pe kya dekha?” to the now-common question, “Netflix pe kya dekhein?”—underscoring the platform's deepening presence in daily life.

Narrated by Shah Rukh Khan, whose voice has long been associated with popular culture and mass connection, the film brings together nostalgia and contemporary relevance. It mirrors Netflix's own arc in India, from being a new entrant in the streaming space to becoming a go-to

destination for diverse stories across languages, genres and formats.

Netflix said the film is a tribute to the audiences who have shaped its journey in India, as well as to the creators and storytellers who have found a home on the platform over the past ten years.

Colors Gujarati launches two new shows

Colors Gujarati, the only television channel dedicated exclusively to Gujarati entertainment, is expanding its programming slate with the launch of two new shows that draw deeply from the cultural and emotional fabric of the state.

From February 2, viewers will be treated to a double dose of drama with the devotional saga ‘Gangasati–Paanbai’ airing at 7.30 pm, followed by the romantic family drama ‘Manmelo’ at 9.30 pm. According to an official press release issued by the channel, the two new launches reflect Colors Gujarati's continued focus on delivering content that is rooted in Gujarat's cultural soul, its devotion, literature, emotions and history. Staying aligned with its promise of “Authentic Gujarati Entertainment”, the channel aims to strengthen its bond with audiences through stories that feel meaningful, relevant and emotionally engaging.

Opening a new chapter in its programming journey is



‘Gangasati–Paanbai: Shyam Dhun No Navo Adhyay’. Inspired by the timeless bhajans and devotional poetry of Gujarat's revered saint-poetesses Gangasati and Paanbai, the show presents their teachings through a contemporary narrative lens. Designed to resonate with today's generation, the series blends spirituality with human values and introspection, with each episode offering a thoughtful mix of devotional philosophy and soulful music.

Adding a contrasting yet equally compelling narrative is ‘Manmelo’, a family drama that explores relationships shaped by social and economic differences. The story centres on three sisters from a middle-class family whose lives change when they develop emotional bonds with three brothers from an affluent household. As these two worlds come together, the show delves into love, ambition, social divides and emotional responsibility, following each couple as they

navigate the complexities of married life. The layered storytelling aims to strike a chord with viewers through its relatable situations and emotional depth.

Commenting on the new launches, a Colors Gujarati spokesperson said the channel remains committed to offering meaningful, high-quality content while staying true to the essence of Gujarati culture.

The spokesperson added that ‘Gangasati–Paanbai’ goes beyond devotion to celebrate human values and harmony, while ‘Manmelo’ reflects the emotional choices faced by young audiences as they balance love and responsibility in modern times.

With the premiere of these two shows, Colors Gujarati continues to reinforce its promise of authentic Gujarati entertainment, bringing fresh narratives to television that are firmly anchored in strong storytelling and cultural resonance.

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Imtiaz Ali–Diljit Dosanjh film set for June 12

Filmmaker Imtiaz Ali's next feature film starring actor-musician Diljit Dosanjh will now hit theatres on June 12, 2026, the makers announced on Thursday. The film, which is yet to be titled, has been described as a "charming story of love and longing" and is expected to carry Ali's signature emotional depth and lyrical storytelling. According to a PTI report, the film was originally slated for an April 2026 release, timed around the festival of Baisakhi. However, the release date has now been pushed to mid-June, with the makers opting for a wider summer theatrical window. The upcoming project marks the

second collaboration between Imtiaz Ali and Diljit Dosanjh, following the success of their 2024 Netflix film 'Amar Singh Chamkila'. The biographical drama, which



explored the life and legacy of the iconic Punjabi singer, was widely appreciated by audiences and critics alike, strengthening

anticipation around their next outing together.

While details about the plot and supporting cast remain under wraps, the new film is expected to blend music, emotion and intimate storytelling—elements that have long defined Ali's cinema. With Dosanjh continuing to expand his footprint across both mainstream Hindi and Punjabi cinema, the pairing is being closely watched by fans and industry observers. More updates regarding the film's title, music and full cast are expected to be announced in the coming months as the June 2026 release approaches.

'Dhurandhar' set for Netflix debut on January 30

Ranveer Singh's blockbuster 'Dhurandhar' is set to stream on Netflix from Friday, January 30, following a spectacular theatrical run that saw the film cross the Rs.1,000 crore mark at the Indian box office in just 53 days. The film, which premiered on December 5, has become a landmark success, consolidating its place among India's highest-grossing single-language releases, UNI reported from Mumbai.

According to box office estimates from Sacnilk, 'Dhurandhar' earned over Rs.1 crore during its eighth weekend, holding firm despite the release of the new war drama 'Border 2', which collected Rs.180 crore over the Republic Day weekend. The film's achievement is particularly notable as it becomes the first Hindi-language release to surpass Rs.1,000 crore net, a milestone previously achieved only by multi-language releases such as 'Baahubali 2: The Conclusion', 'KGF: Chapter 2', and 'Pushpa 2: The Rule'.

Fans of the franchise now have double reason to celebrate, with the sequel, 'Dhurandhar 2: The Revenge', scheduled for a grand theatrical release on March 19, 2026.

The Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) has cleared multiple teaser cuts for the sequel: Teaser 1A received a U/A 16 certificate with a runtime of 1 minute 9.6 seconds, while Teasers 2 and 2A were rated A (Adults Only), with runtimes of 1 minute 48 seconds and 1 minute 9.6 seconds respectively.

With its OTT release imminent and the sequel generating buzz, 'Dhurandhar' continues to dominate conversations in both cinema halls and digital platforms, cementing its status as one of the most successful Hindi films in recent years.



Amazon MX Player announces revenge drama 'Ab Hoga Hisaab'

Amazon MX Player has announced its upcoming original series 'Ab Hoga Hisaab', a revenge drama set against the socio-political landscape of Punjab. The series, which will stream free of cost on the platform, brings together an ensemble cast led by Sanjay Kapoor, Shaheer, Mouni Roy and Nimrit Kaur Ahluwalia, and promises a gritty narrative rooted in ambition, brotherhood and survival.



'Ab Hoga Hisaab' is loosely inspired by true events and follows the turbulent journey of two brothers, Bobby and Bunty Manocha, whose lives spiral into a dangerous world of power and greed after a life-altering incident. The story explores the emotional and moral cost of choices made under pressure, set against the backdrop of migration, crime and fractured loyalties.

As per a press release issued by Amazon MX Player, 'Ab Hoga Hisaab' The announcement promo offers a dark and intense glimpse

into the show's universe, driven by themes of revenge and reckoning. Sanjay Kapoor is seen as Goldy Sekhon, a ruthless figure who believes in striking before time runs out, while Shaheer essays Bobby Manocha, a man pushed to his emotional and physical limits. Mouni Roy plays Kamna, a sharp and calculating character who understands the true price of power. The refrain, "Gunahon ka aur karmon ka... Ab hoga hisaab," underscores the series' morally charged tone. Produced by Arré Studio and directed by Divyanshu Malhotra, the series also features Avinash Mishra, Harman Singha, Asheema Vardaan and Nimrit Kaur Ahluwalia in pivotal roles. The narrative leans heavily on themes of brotherhood, betrayal and resistance against overwhelming forces.

Commenting on the project, Amogh Dusad, Director and Head of Content at Amazon MX Player, said the platform remains focused on telling raw and rooted stories. He added that Ab Hoga Hisaab combines strong performances with an intense emotional core, offering a gripping experience inspired by real-life events.

The cast echoed similar sentiments, with Shaheer calling the series emotionally intense and layered, while Sanjay Kapoor highlighted the realism and honesty in its writing. Mouni Roy said she was drawn to the depth of the world and the complexity of the characters, which made the project both challenging and exciting.

'Ab Hoga Hisaab' will stream exclusively on Amazon MX Player across the MX Player app, Amazon shopping app, Prime Video, Fire TV and Airtel Xstream, marking another addition to the platform's growing slate of original, ad-supported content.

COLORS' 'Dr. Aarambhi' charts powerful journey from self-sacrifice to self-worth

COLORS is set to strike an emotional chord with its new fiction offering 'Dr. Aarambhi', a setback-to-comeback drama that explores the quiet erasure many women endure in the name of love, marriage and family. The show brings to the forefront the cost of self-neglect and the courage it takes to reclaim one's identity, positioning itself as a story of resilience, healing and second chances. At the heart of the narrative is Dr. Aarambhi Balbir Chaudhary, once a gold medallist and AIPMT topper with a future full of promise. Groomed into the role of the "perfect" daughter-in-law, mother and trophy wife, Aarambhi is slowly manipulated into believing that sacrifice is her greatest virtue. Her medical career is cut short even before it can begin, while her husband, Dr. Vishwas, rises as the celebrated face of the family's powerful medical legacy. When a devastating personal setback forces her to confront the reality of her life, Aarambhi chooses not to break but to

rebuild, stepping into her own power and deciding to become the hero of her own story.

What follows is the transformation of pain into purpose. Aarambhi's calling as a doctor becomes both her refuge and her rebellion, guiding her towards independence and self-respect. Anchored by the line "Bahut hua setback, ab hoga comeback," the show traces her emotional and professional resurgence, highlighting the strength it takes to begin again.

The series stars Aishwarya Khare in the titular role, with Aditya Redij as the outwardly charming yet deeply manipulative Dr. Vishwas, and Anjuum Faakih as Dr. Avantika, a complex character driven by ambition, longing and emotional vulnerability. Together, the trio bring to life a layered narrative that examines power dynamics, betrayal and the fragile truths behind seemingly perfect relationships.

Speaking about her role, Aishwarya Khare describes Aarambhi as a reflection of



countless women who are asked to adjust, stay silent and wait their turn, slowly losing faith in themselves along the way. She notes that Aarambhi's comeback is not fuelled by revenge, but by realisation and quiet courage, as she chooses to stand up for herself and her son, breaking the cycle she was once trapped in.

Aditya Redij, who essays the role of Vishwas, says his character is unsettling precisely because of his calm demeanour. Beneath the surface of an ideal, progressive husband lies a man who views marriage as possession, using manipulation and gaslighting to strip Aarambhi of her confidence. Redij adds that Vishwas represents a reality

society often enables, making his character disturbingly familiar.

Anjuum Faakih, meanwhile, brings nuance to Dr. Avantika, a confident and self-made doctor whose strength does not shield her from loneliness or emotional conflict. She describes Avantika as a woman who longs for honesty and to be chosen without hesitation, reminding viewers that vulnerability and desire do not negate empowerment.

'Dr. Aarambhi' premieres tonight and will air Monday to Friday at 8 pm on COLORS, with streaming available on JioHotstar. The show promises a stirring tale of courage, redemption and the power of starting over.



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Amazon Ads India head outlines 2026's 5 brand-consumer connect trends

A new analysis from Amazon Ads India outlines five major advertising trends that are expected to reshape how brands connect with Indian consumers in 2026. The trends underscore a pivot toward AI-driven efficiency, personalised engagement and stronger customer trust, signalling a shift from traditional broadcast messaging to more relevant, dialogue-oriented brand experiences.

The insights, highlighted in a blog post by Priyanka Khaneja-Gandhi, Head, Marketing and Creative Solutions at Amazon Ads India and published on the Amazon India website on February 13, highlight how technological and strategic shifts will influence advertising strategies across sectors next year.

According to Khaneja-Gandhi, the advertising landscape is at an “inflection point” where brands that listen to real-time consumer signals are better

positioned than those relying on broad, generic messaging.

According to Khaneja-Gandhi, customer insight is becoming a core creative catalyst. She notes that traditional creative processes—often developed in isolation and validated after production — are giving way to approaches where audience intelligence actively shapes creative work from the outset. This shift, she says, allows brands to pair intuition with first-party shopping and streaming data, leading to more emotionally resonant campaigns.

A second trend emphasised is the democratisation of creative excellence through AI. She points out that tools powered by agentic AI are dramatically reducing production timelines and lowering the barrier to sophisticated creative work. Small businesses, in particular, stand to benefit as AI enables faster iterations, greater operational



flexibility and scaled campaign deployment with reduced budgets and resources.

The third force Khaneja-Gandhi identifies is machine-speed performance optimisation. She writes that AI's most significant impact is behind the scenes — processing complex audience data, optimising campaigns and delivering measurable outcomes efficiently. Rather than replacing human strategists, these systems augment human judgement by handling routine optimisation tasks at scale.

YouTube to launch cheaper TV bundles in US

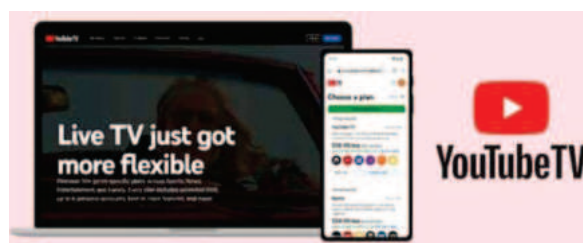
YouTube is set to introduce a range of budget-friendly television packages in the United States, offering smaller and more targeted channel bundles aimed at viewers seeking affordable alternatives to traditional cable subscriptions.

According to a Bloomberg report, the platform is preparing to roll out so-called “skinny bundles”, including a dedicated sports package priced at \$65 per month. The move reflects a broader shift in the media industry as streaming platforms attempt to cater to audiences who prefer paying only for the content they actually watch.

The sports-focused tier is expected to be about 22 per cent cheaper than the standard \$83 monthly YouTube TV subscription, which includes a comprehensive range of channels. Designed primarily for sports enthusiasts, the package will combine major broadcast networks with select sports content that was previously limited to niche streaming services.

The company is also reportedly planning more than 10 themed bundles tailored to different viewing preferences. These include packages centred on live sports, breaking news, and entertainment programming such as drama and comedy, offering consumers greater flexibility in selecting content.

YouTube CEO Neal Mohan highlighted the initiative on social media, stating that the new structure aims to provide viewers with greater “choice and control” over their viewing experience.



Instagram rolls out Valentine's Day fonts, stickers and chat themes

Instagram has introduced a set of limited-time Valentine's Day features, including themed fonts, stickers and chat themes across Stories, Reels and direct messages, aimed at making user interactions more expressive and festive during the season of love.

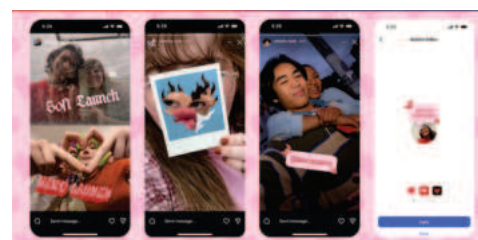
According to a MoneyControl report, the platform, along with its companion app Edits, has rolled out a range of creative tools designed to help users personalise posts, messages and content with a romantic touch. The update focuses on enhancing visual storytelling and social interactions with playful and expressive elements.

As Valentine's Day approaches, the new features bring themed fonts, animated text effects and love-inspired sticker frames, allowing users to turn everyday posts into more engaging content. Whether sharing a romantic moment, posting a friendly shout-out, or sending

a casual message, the tools are intended to add colour, personality and a festive appeal to digital communication.

On Instagram, users can experiment with new text styles and effects for Stories and Reels, decorate photos with Valentine's-themed frames and use customised mention stickers to tag friends and loved ones. The comments section has also been updated with interactive elements, where specific phrases trigger hidden animations and themes. Notes on the platform now feature seasonal hints and secret phrases to make conversations more engaging, while direct messages can be customised with Valentine's-themed chat backgrounds in both dark and light modes.

The companion app Edits offers additional creative controls for content creators. These include themed fonts, romantic sound effects such as harp



music and heartbeat tones, and enhanced speed controls that allow users to accelerate reels by up to 100 times, enabling both comic and cinematic effects.

The Valentine's Day features on Instagram will remain available from February 12 to February 16, while the creative additions on Edits will continue beyond the festive period. With these updates, the platform aims to transform routine social media interactions into more personalised and emotionally engaging experiences during the Valentine's season.

YouTube lists family, kids safety tips on Safer Internet Day

With an aim to mark International Safer Internet Day on February 10, Dr. Garth Graham, Director and Global Head of YouTube Health, unveiled a set of practical guidelines aimed at helping families and teens navigate the online world more safely, underscoring three core strategies: setting customized digital boundaries, prioritizing age-appropriate content, and creating clear, supervised accounts for younger users.

These measures, Dr. Graham said in a blog yesterday, are intended to foster healthier, more secure interactions with online platforms, while reinforcing family engagement in digital wellbeing.

Dr. Graham emphasized that setting boundaries that reflect each family's unique needs is foundational to online safety. YouTube now allows parents to tailor experiences across a range of environments — from YouTube Kids for younger children to supervised teen accounts — equipped with tools to limit time spent on Shorts and adjust content consumption.

Such controls, he noted, help parents maintain the “final say” on what's appropriate for their children while encouraging responsible viewing habits.



Another key recommendation focuses on age-appropriate content settings. According to Dr. Graham, YouTube's policies for younger audiences are significantly stricter to ensure recommended videos meet safety and quality standards. In supervised setups, parents can choose content settings aligned with specific age brackets, helping to ensure exploration stays within safe bounds.

The third pillar of YouTube's Safer Internet Day guidance is the creation of clear, supervised accounts. Dr. Graham highlighted YouTube's 'Who's Watching' feature, which allows families to switch instantly between age-appropriate experiences and manage accounts through Family Center. This simplifies supervision and reinforces a secure starting point for kids and teens as they explore online content.

With youth increasingly engaged in digital spaces, YouTube's Safer Internet Day initiative aims not only to protect younger users but also to encourage families to build a healthy relationship with technology that lasts a lifetime, Dr. Graham wrote. He called on parents and caregivers to leverage these tools and remain active participants in their children's online journeys.

Spotify forecast first-quarter earnings above Wall Street estimates yesterday, as the Swedish streaming company benefits from strong user growth and price hikes, sending its shares up nearly 12 percent in premarket trading. The results are the first since co-CEOs Gustav Soderstrom and Alex Norstrom took the reins from founder Daniel Ek, who became executive chairman in January.

According to a Reuters report yesterday, while price increases in several markets and cost cuts powered profits in the December quarter, the company's revenue growth hit the slowest since its 2018 market listing.

Spotify has rolled out an AI-powered playlist that can be generated with a simple prompt, invested in video podcasts, including through a Netflix deal and expanded beyond audiobooks with physical books to ward off competition from Apple and Amazon's streaming services.

The company forecast operating income of 660 million euros (\$786.13 million) in the first quarter, compared with analysts'

Spotify Q1 earnings above estimates on user growth, price hikes

average estimate of 652.3 million euros, according to data compiled by LSEG.

Its quarterly revenue forecast of 4.5 billion euros was slightly below the estimate of 4.57 billion euros. Fourth-quarter revenue rose 7 percent to 4.53 billion euros, in line with estimates.

Fewer of Spotify's new users are coming from Europe and North America.

Spotify raised the price of its monthly premium subscription plan by \$1 to \$12.99 in the US, Estonia and Latvia markets this year, following a similar move in more than 150 markets in 2025.



Paramount sweetens WBD deal by enhancing per share bid

Paramount Skydance has enhanced its \$30-per-share bid for Warner Bros Discovery by offering extra cash for each quarter the deal fails to close and agreeing to cover the breakup fee the HBO owner would owe Netflix if it walked away from their deal. The 25-cent per share "ticking fee" will equal to about \$650 million in cash each quarter between January 1, 2027, and the consummation of the Paramount deal, the company said yesterday.

According to a Reuters report, Paramount will also fund the \$2.8 billion termination fee that Warner Bros owe Netflix if the deal falls through.

Warner Bros Discovery and Netflix did not immediately

respond to requests for comment.

Both Netflix and Paramount covet Warner Bros for its leading film and television studios, extensive content library and major franchises such as 'Game of Thrones', 'Harry Potter' and DC Comics' superheroes Batman and Superman. Paramount has engaged in an aggressive media campaign to try to convince shareholders that its bid is superior, but Warner Bros has spurned the David Ellison-led company.

Warner Bros will hold a special investor meeting to vote on the Netflix deal, with the streaming pioneer saying that the meeting was expected to be held by April.



Skybag named CSK's luggage partner ahead of 2026 IPL edition

Noted brand Skybags, part of VIP Industries, has been named the official luggage partner of IPL franchise Chennai Super Kings for the 2026 season. VIP Industries Ltd Managing Director and CEO Atul Jain formally exchanged documents with Chennai Super Kings Managing Director KS Viswanathan at an event in Chennai yesterday.

According to a PTI report from Chennai, under the partnership, Skybags will retail an exclusive co-branded range of luggage and backpacks reflecting CSK's brand identity while catering to the needs of today's consumers, the company said in a statement.

Commenting on the association, Atul Jain said, "Cricket is deeply woven into India's cultural fabric, and CSK is one of the most respected and successful franchises in the league."

"This partnership is a natural extension of Skybags' philosophy of connecting with young, aspirational Indians through platforms



they are most passionate about. This is just the beginning of many such meaningful sporting associations for Skybags,” he added. The collaboration will see Skybags closely integrated into CSK’s fan engagement activities throughout the 2026 season. Luggage will be priced from Rs 4,590, while backpacks will start at Rs 1,999, the statement said. CSK’s Viswanathan said, “We are delighted to welcome Skybags to the CSK family as our Official Luggage Partner. We are confident this partnership will enhance the fan experience and strengthen our connection with supporters. Fans now have an additional way to celebrate their passion for CSK.” The co-branded Skybags and CSK range will be available nationwide through 500 Skybags retail outlets, e-commerce platforms, and the official CSK website, it added.

Concept Public Relations named media and communications partner for NSE

Concept Public Relations India Limited has been appointed as the media and strategic communications partner for the National Stock Exchange of India Ltd (NSE), reinforcing the exchange’s focus on a cohesive and credible communications framework as India’s capital markets continue to expand.

Under the mandate, Concept Public Relations will oversee NSE’s integrated media and communications strategy across financial, business, mainstream and digital platforms. The remit spans all NSE Group businesses, with an emphasis on delivering a unified narrative that strengthens stakeholder engagement, enhances transparency and reinforces investor confidence across market participants.

NSE is a cornerstone of India’s financial ecosystem and one of the world’s leading exchanges by trading volumes. Companies listed on the exchange account for a significant share of India’s overall market capitalisation. With its technology-driven and scalable market infrastructure, NSE plays a critical role in broadening

market access, improving efficiency and supporting innovation across multiple asset classes.

Commenting on the appointment, Ashish Jalan, Managing Director, Concept Public Relations India, said NSE has consistently set benchmarks in market infrastructure, innovation and investor participation. He noted that as India’s capital markets scale rapidly—driven by rising retail participation, technological transformation and growing global investor interest—strategic and credible communication becomes central to building long-term trust.

Jalan added that the firm looks forward to partnering with NSE at a pivotal moment and to amplifying the exchange’s leadership narrative with its deep



expertise in BFSI communications.

Through this partnership, the firm will support NSE in engaging with an increasingly diverse and expanding investor base, while strengthening its positioning as a key voice in India’s evolving capital markets landscape.

Facebook India profit jumps 28% to Rs 647 crore in FY25

Facebook India has reported a sharp rise in profitability for the financial year ended March 2025, posting a nearly 28 per cent increase in standalone profit at Rs 647.45 crore, according to regulatory filings accessed via Tofler. The company had recorded a profit of Rs 504.93 crore in the previous financial year, reflecting strong growth momentum in its India operations.

As per a PTI report, the growth in profit was supported by a robust increase in revenue from operations, which rose 25 per cent year-on-year to Rs 3,792.91 crore in FY2025, compared with Rs 3,034.82 crore in FY2024. The

improvement underscores

Facebook India’s expanding advertiser base and sustained demand for digital marketing solutions across the country.

The filing highlights Facebook India’s continued ability to scale its business amid intensifying competition in the digital advertising space. Higher revenues, combined with operational efficiencies, contributed to the healthy jump in the bottom line during the year.

India remains a key market for Meta’s platforms, with Facebook continuing to play a central role in connecting users and



businesses. The latest financial performance reflects the platform’s relevance for advertisers seeking reach and engagement at scale, even as the broader digital ecosystem evolves.

The regulatory disclosure offers a snapshot of Facebook India’s steady growth trajectory, reinforcing its position as one of the major digital players in the Indian market.

GIZMOS & GADGETS



01. Apple May Launch Budget MacBook at \$599 in 2026

Apple is reportedly preparing to introduce a new affordable MacBook in 2026, with rumours pointing to a starting price of around \$599. The device is expected to target students and entry-level users, offering basic performance for everyday tasks. Reports suggest the laptop could feature a processor based on Apple's iPhone chips to lower costs and strengthen competition with budget Windows laptops and Chromebooks, although the company has yet to confirm the launch.



02. Google Releases First Android 17 Beta for Pixel Devices



Google has rolled out the first beta version of Android 17 for supported Google Pixel devices, offering an early look at the next-generation mobile operating system. The update introduces system-level improvements, subtle user interface tweaks, and enhanced tools for developers, as the company accelerates its Android development cycle.

The Android 17 beta brings performance optimisations, stronger privacy and security features, and improvements aimed at better support for large-screen devices such as tablets and foldables. Users can also expect UI refinements, updated system controls, and enhanced app behaviour management, while developers gain access to new APIs and debugging tools.

03. Final Fantasy Remake Series Going Multiplatform Won't Impact Part 3 Quality, Says Director

The director of the Final Fantasy VII Remake series, Naoki Hamaguchi, has assured fans that expanding the franchise to multiple platforms will not compromise the quality of its upcoming third installment. Addressing concerns about performance and development focus, Hamaguchi emphasised that the team remains committed to maintaining the series' high production standards. The move toward a multiplatform strategy is aimed at reaching a wider global audience beyond its traditional exclusivity. Despite the shift, the developers confirmed that Part 3 will deliver the same level of storytelling, graphics, and gameplay experience that fans expect from the remake trilogy.



04. Acer, ASUS suspend PC sales in Germany after Nokia patent win



A German court has ordered Acer and ASUS to halt direct sales of laptops and desktop PCs in Germany after ruling in favour of Nokia in a patent infringement case involving video technology. The Munich I Regional Court found that the companies violated Nokia's standard-essential patents related to H.265 (HEVC) video coding and had not complied with fair licensing terms.

Following the ruling, both companies removed affected products from their official German online stores, though customers can still purchase devices through third-party retailers and resellers. The decision specifically targets direct sales rather than existing retail stock already in the market.

The dispute centres on licensing rules under FRAND (Fair, Reasonable and Non-Discriminatory) conditions for essential technology standards.

05. NASA, SpaceX Launch Crew-12 Mission to International Space Station



NASA, in partnership with SpaceX, has launched the Crew-12 mission to the International Space Station, carrying astronauts on a long-duration science expedition. The mission will support ongoing research in microgravity, conduct technology demonstrations, and carry out maintenance operations aboard the orbiting laboratory. The launch marks another key step in NASA's commercial crew programme, reinforcing international collaboration and sustaining human presence in low Earth orbit.

The Crew-12 mission will focus on a wide range of experiments in microgravity, including research related to human health, space technology, and Earth observation. Scientists hope the findings will contribute to future deep space exploration missions, including potential human missions to the Moon and Mars, while also providing benefits for life on Earth through advancements in medicine, materials science, and environmental monitoring.

06. Maruti launches e Vitara at Rs 10.99 lakh, battery rental extra

Maruti Suzuki India Limited has officially launched its electric SUV, the e Vitara, in India at an introductory price of Rs 10.99 lakh (ex-showroom), with the cost of the battery to be charged separately through a rental or subscription model. The launch marks a significant step for the country's largest carmaker as it strengthens its presence in the rapidly growing electric vehicle (EV) segment.

The e Vitara introduces a flexible ownership approach, allowing customers to pay for the vehicle upfront while opting for a battery subscription plan. This model is expected to reduce the initial purchase cost of the electric SUV and make EV adoption more accessible for a wider range of consumers. The company said the strategy aims to address concerns around battery life, replacement costs, and long-term maintenance.



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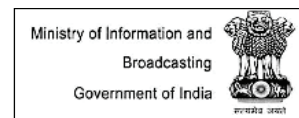


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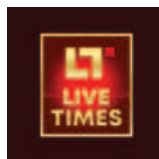


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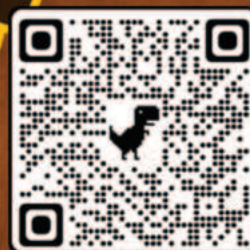




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