

India leads charge on inclusive media: WAVES 2025 panel calls for accessibility as a core design ethic

■ VIVEK SHARMA
MUMBAI: As India under- goes a rapid digital trans- formation, accessibility in media and entertainment is no longer just a moral obli- gation or regulatory check- box-it is a vital design phi- losophy. This was the cen- tral message of the panel discussion titled "Accessibility Standards in the Media & Entertainment Sector" at WAVES 2025, where leaders from acade- mia, technology, law, jour- nalism, and the creative industry came together to chart a more inclusive future for content creation and distribution.

The discussion opened with a powerful statement from Prof. Brij Kothari of IIT Delhi, who emphasized that India is not simply fol- lowing global trends in accessibility but, in many respects, is leading them. "India is not just catching up; in many ways, we are leading the conversation on inclusive design," Kothari declared. He stressed that accessibility is no longer limited to people with hear- ing or visual impairments-it is a universal concept that can benefit the entire popu- lation, especially in a coun- try as diverse and populous as India.



Kothari also pointed out that embedding accessibili- ty in content and technolo- gy has the potential to transform education, enter- tainment, and communica- tion across demographics. "When we design for the margins, we often end up benefiting the majority," he noted, referencing subtitle initiatives that help not only the hearing-impaired but also language learners and rural audiences.

Adding a global perspec- tive, Christopher Patnoe, Head of Accessibility and Disability Inclusion for EMEA at Google, explained how systemic reform is the need of the hour. "We're lay- ing the groundwork now for systemic change in how accessibility is implement- ed," he said. Patnoe acknowledged that while countries like the United States and regions like the European Union have cre-

ated strong legislation-such as the Americans with Disabilities Act and the European Accessibility Act-their implementation on the ground often falls short.

Ashay Vinay Sahasrabudde, CEO of media-tech firm Kintel, brought in the artistic and technical nuances of acces- sible content creation. "Content is shaped by the creator's vision. To make it truly accessible, we need to preserve that creative essence, not reduce it with one-size-fits-all automated tools," he said. He high- lighted that film and visual storytelling require accessi- bility tools that align with narrative techniques and artistic intent, such as nuanced audio descriptions or culturally appropriate sign language interpreta- tion.

The role of innovation was discussed by journalist Priti

Salian, who showcased how AI is accelerating accessi- bility efforts in media. "We've launched an AI- based channel that features sign language interpreter avatars. Tasks like creating audio descriptions-which used to take weeks-now take about 30 hours," she said. Despite these break- throughs, Salian cautioned against over-reliance on technology without systemic backing. "We need govern- ment support, funding mod- els, and structured public- private partnerships to ensure accessibility becomes the norm, not the exception," she added.

Legal expert and disability rights advocate Rahul Bajaj addressed the regulatory landscape. He emphasized the importance of updating and enforcing legal frame- works to ensure inclusivity across media platforms. "It's not just about having laws;

it's about implementing them through cross-sector collaboration-from content creators and distributors to regulators and accessibility professionals," he said.

Danish Mahajan, Founder of the community radio plat- form Radio Udaan, empha- sized the importance of rep- resentation in decision-mak- ing. "We need people with disabilities in policymaking and regulatory positions. Only then can we ensure that accessibility is consid- ered from the ground up, rather than added later as an afterthought," he said. Mahajan also called for bet- ter monitoring of policy implementation and stronger accountability mechanisms.

As the discussion conclud- ed, the panelists unanimous- ly agreed that accessibility must move beyond compli- ance and be integrated into the creative and production process from the start. It should be seen not only as a legal or ethical requirement but also as a creative oppor- tunity and a strategic advantage.

With India at the forefront of digital content growth, the panel emphasized that inclusive media is the future-and the time to act is now.

Yudhvir, Surinder listen to issues at public Darbar

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) lead- ers Yudhvir Sethi, Vice- President, J&K BJP and MLA from Jammu East, and Surinder Bhagat, MLA from Marh, held a public darbar at the party headquarters in Trikuta Nagar, Jammu.

People from Jammu and surrounding areas visited party headquarters in the form of deputations to voice their issues and con- cerns to the party leader- ship.

Yudhvir Sethi and Surinder Bhagat gave patient hearing to each deputation, assuring them of swift and effective redressal. Many issues were resolved on the spot as the leaders contacted concerned departmental officials through phone calls and issued written directives for immediate action.

Yudhvir Sethi, while listen- ing to the grievances, said that the BJP's public darbar serves as a platform for transparent and direct communication between the people and their elected representatives.

The deputations present- ed a range of civic and administrative issues, including the urgent need for the repair and con- struction of lanes and



MLA Yudhvir Sethi listening to public issues.

drains, installation and maintenance of street lights, improvement in drinking water supply, and issues related to the Revenue Department. Several grievances also highlighted the need for better implementation of welfare schemes and infra- structure development in under-served areas.

Yudhvir Sethi reiterated the BJP's unwavering commitment to serving the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

"BJP does not believe in mere political slogans. We stand with the people at the grassroots level, work-

ing tirelessly to facilitate development, employment opportunities, and welfare programs," he said.

Surinder Bhagat, in his address, said that these forums allow people to directly connect with their representatives, discuss their problems without intermediaries, and become active participants in the democratic process. "The BJP is committed to taking public service beyond the election cycle. Such events reaffirm our resolve to stay connected with the people and serve them with dedication," Bhagat said.

Swadeshi Jagran Manch launches campaign to boycott Amazon, Flipkart in J&K



Swadeshi Jagran Manch members talking to reporters.

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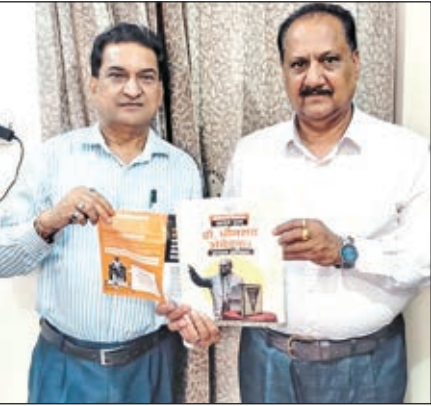
JAMMU: The Swadeshi Jagran Manch, a leading nationalist economic move- ment, has launched a powerful region-wide campaign urging citizens of Jammu & Kashmir to boycott e-commerce giants Amazon and Flipkart in a bid to promote indigenous indus- tries and economic self- reliance. At a press conference held today in Jammu, Ajay Singh Chandel, Provincial Contact Head of the Swadeshi Jagran Manch, formally announced the campaign, which will run from May 1 to May 10. Addressing the media, Chandel declared, "This is not just a boycott; it is a declaration of economic inde- pendence. Every rupee spent on a local vendor nourishes our families, fortifies the local economy, and strengthens our cultural roots."

The Manch is calling on all residents to abstain from online shopping during the 10-

day period and instead support neighborhood stores and local markets. The campaign urges consumers to choose Swadeshi (indigenous) prod- ucts across categories-from clothing and electronics to gro- ceries and handicrafts-as a meaningful step toward Atmanirbhar Bharat (self- reliant India). The initiative will include awareness drives, street-corner meetings, pam- phlet distribution, and a robust social media campaign to highlight the long-term risks of economic dependence on foreign corporations. Chandel emphasized, "We must reclaim our market space and ensure our wealth stays within our communities."

The Swadeshi Jagran Manch expressed confidence that this campaign will become a mass movement across Jammu & Kashmir, inspiring citizens to embrace local businesses and sustain- able development.

Under Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar Samman Abhiyan, Balbir distributes booklets and pamphlets



Balbir Ram Rattan, spokesperson, J&K BJP presenting book.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: As part of "Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar Samman Abhiyan" Balbir Ram Rattan, spokesperson, J&K BJP & former Vice Chairperson, distributed booklets and pam- phlets based on the life and thoughts of Dr. Ambedkar among prominent citizens of various sections of the society.

The aim of this initiative is to spread the ideas of Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar to the masses and to give his contributions the due respect they deserve.

The booklets and pamphlets elaborate on how the BJP has truly adopted and honoured

Dr. Ambedkar's ideas and work.

They highlight key steps taken by the BJP government under PM Narendra Modi, such as the development of the five "Panchteerth" sites, declaring national holiday on Ambedkar Jayanti and laying foundation stone for con- structing tallest statue of Dr. Ambedkar in Maharashtra.

The BJP also persuaded VP Singh in 1990 to honour Dr. Ambedkar with Bharat Ratna, when it was supporting his government from outside.

Balbir Ram Rattan stated that Dr. Ambedkar gave India a strong and inclusive Constitution and the BJP has always worked to promote his ideas.

The booklet also exposes how the Congress Party historically neglected and disrespected Dr. Ambedkar. His name and contributions were sidelined for years. His ideas were not taken seriously. Moreover, the Congress failed to appropriately recognize his contributions.

Balbir further noted that the BJP govern- ment has launched several schemes aimed at building the India envisioned by Baba Saheb, with a focus on social justice, education, and economic empowerment.

He said that this campaign will not only promote Dr. Ambedkar's ideas but also raise awareness among all sections of society about his contributions, paving the way for a more inclusive and just India.

SKUAST-J conducts Technical Assessment of RAWE&AIA students for Agro-Industrial Attachment



Students appearing in assessment.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Under the leader- ship of Prof. B.N. Tripathi, Vice Chancellor, SKUAST- Jammu and guidance of Dr. Rajinder Peshin, Director Education, Dr. Sanjay Guleria, In-charge, Placement Cell and Dr. Vinod Gupta, Coordinator RAWE & AIA programme, a technical assessment test was conducted on Friday by Division of Agricultural Extension Education at Main Campus, Chatha in collabora- tion with Bayer Crop Science for shortlisting B.Sc.(Agri.) Hons. students who are under- going Rural Agriculture Works Experience and Agro-

Industrial Attachment (RAWE & AIA) programme.

The shortlisted students will undergo industry internship in Bayer Crop Science for 30 days. Selected candidates will be deployed across various teams, including Market Development and sales.

Dr. Vinod Gupta, Head, Division of Agricultural Extension Education and Coordinator RAWE & AIA programme said that attach- ment of agriculture graduates with agro-industries provides them an opportunity to under- stand the work culture and gains insights into the agro- based industry. This experience

can help students make informed decisions about their career paths and develop skills relevant to the industry. It also enhances their understanding of value addition, agri-entrepre- neurship and the role of agro industries in modern agricul- ture. Attachment of students in agro-industry is one of the cru- cial activities of RAWE & AIA programme of the University because it bridges the gap between theoretical learning and practical application, offer- ing valuable hands-on-experi- ence and foster a deeper under- standing of the agricultural sector and its challenges.

Besides, these programmes also equip students with employability skills and con- fidence needed for future careers, whether in farming, agribusiness or related fields.

The technical assessment test was conducted under the super- vision of Dr. J.S Manhas, Co- coordinator and Sarabjeet Singh, Technical Incharge of the programme and a team of Bayer Crop Science.

Dr. Narinder inaugurates development works in Sainik Colony

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Dr. Narinder Singh, Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) RS Pura-Jammu South and National Secretary of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), inau- gurated newly completed development works in Sector-C of Sainik Colony. The inauguration event wit- nessed the presence of several prominent leaders and local residents who appreci- ated the efforts made to address longstanding civic issues in the area.

The works, carried out by the Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC), were completed at an estimated cost of ₹22 lakh and include development works such as the construction of a drain and road crossing. These projects aim to ease the challenges faced by the local population due to waterlog- ging and poor infrastruc- ture, thereby improving day-



MLA Dr. Narinder Singh inaugurating development work.

to-day commuting and living conditions.

Dr. Singh, while address- ing the gathering, empha- sized the importance of infrastructure development in urban areas like Sainik Colony. He stated that the projects now dedicated to public use are a testament to the B-JP-led government's

commitment to holistic development and the well- being of every citizen.

He added, "The Narendra Modi government is working with a vision to ensure that basic civic amenities and infrastructure reach every household. At the local level, BJP representatives are tirelessly implementing this

vision to bring development to the doorsteps of the peo- ple."

The event was graced by District President Jammu South Naresh Singh Jasrotia, Mandal President Ajay Partap, former Councillor Gurmeet Kour Randhawa, former Councillor Narinder Bunty, and other senior party work- ers and prominent locals. The collective participation underscored the BJP's inclusive approach in addressing public issues and working towards their reso- lution. Local residents expressed their gratitude to Dr. Singh and the municipal authorities for their prompt response to civic problems that had persisted for years.

The newly constructed drain and road crossing are expected to significantly reduce the inconvenience faced by com- muters, especially during the rainy season.

International Labour Day celebrated by MIER College



MIER college students and others at a programme.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: To commemorate Labour Day on May 1, 2025, the Extension Unit of MIER College of Education (Autonomous) organised a Gram Sabha at Bathyari vil- lage under the flagship initia- tive of Unnat Bharat Abhiyan.

The event aimed to raise awareness among villagers about workers' rights and to disseminate critical informa- tion on various government welfare schemes designed for labourers and daily wage earn- ers. Approximately 20 students from the School of Education and the School of Social

Sciences and Humanities at MIER College actively partici- pated in the outreach program. The initiative was skillfully coordinated by Suman Devi, Coordinator of Unnat Bharat Abhiyan. The keynote speaker for the event, Dr. Nadini, Assistant Professor, School of Sciences and Humanities at MIER College, delivered an insightful and comprehensive lecture. Her talk emphasised fundamental labour rights such as fair wages, safe working conditions, and access to social security. She also elaborated on several key government welfare schemes, including the E-

Shram Card, Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maandhan Yojana, benefits under the Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Board, and Ayushman Bharat health insurance cover- age. The Gram Sabha drew enthusiastic participation from villagers, especially youth, women, and local workers. Following the lecture, an inter- active discussion session allowed attendees to raise perti- nent questions and clarify their doubts.

The event successfully sensi- tized the rural community about their legal rights and the importance of enrolling in wel-

fare programs. Concluding the program, Mrs. Suman Devi expressed her gratitude and emphasized the need for sus- tained grassroots-level aware- ness initiatives.

Dr. Adit Gupta, Principal of MIER College of Education, commended the efforts of the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan team and extended heartfelt thanks to the Sarpanch, Panches, and residents of Bathyari vil- lage for their support and enthusiastic involvement. He remarked that such initiatives play a vital role in bridging the gap between policy and prac- tice in rural India.

Wave Mall Jammu marks its 11th Anniversary with prayers for peace

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Today marks the 11th anniversary of Wave Mall Jammu. In light of the recent tragic terror attack in Pahalgam, Kashmir, we chose not to hold any cele- bratory events this year; Wave Mall Jammu manage- ment members said.

"Instead, we observed the day with a solemn Sukhmani Sahib Path fol- lowed by Langar at the mall premises. The entire Wave Mall team came together to pray for the souls of those who lost their lives in the heartbreaking incident," they said and added, "We prayed that Waheguru gives strength and courage to the families and loved ones of the victims during this incredibly difficult time. Our thoughts and prayers are with all those impacted. May peace prevail."

Randhawa organizes Janta Darbar at Govindpura

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: A Janta Darbar was organized by MLA Bahu Ch. Vikram Randhawa at Govindpura, Chatha, Satwari, with the participation of officials from all concerned depart- ments. Present at the event were Assistant Director of Food and Civil Supplies, Santosh; Naib Tehsildar Randhir Singh; CDPO Madam; TSWO Jasbir Singh; Bharat Bhushan, member of the Cantonment Board; along with officials

from PHE, PDD, CAPD, and other departments. A large number of local resi- dents also attended the occasion to voice their con- cerns and grievances.

MLA Ch. Vikram Randhawa patiently lis- tened to the issues raised by the local people and gave on-the-spot directions to the concerned officials for immediate redressal. Matters related to water supply, electricity, ration distribution, and welfare schemes were among the



MLA Bahu Ch. Vikram Randhawa speaking at public Darbar.

key issues addressed during the Darbar.

The officials present at the event gave their assur- ance to the MLA and the public for the early redres- sal of all genuine griev- ances. Necessary instruc- tions were issued on the spot to expedite the reso- lution process. The local resi- dents expressed their grate- tude to the MLA and the administration for organiz- ing such an interactive plat- form, which brought govern- ance closer to the people.

Speaking on the occasion, MLA Ch. Vikram Randhawa reaffirmed his commitment to the welfare of the people and assured that such Janta Darbars will be organized regularly in different areas to ensure that every genuine griev- ance is addressed at the earliest.

He emphasized that the government is dedicated to delivering transparent, accountable, and people- friendly governance at the grassroots level.