

***My Brilliant Friend* China reach soars**

First four-streamer simultaneous release deal for non-English European series in China

Mainland China's four top streaming platforms – iQIYI, Tencent Video, Youku and Bilibili – have picked up rights to Italian-language drama series, *My Brilliant Friend: The Story of the Lost Child*. The deal is global distributor Fremantle's largest by reach in China this year and is the first time all four Chinese platforms will simultaneously premiere a non-English language European drama.

The full story is on page 4

India zaps 25 streamers; former ALTBalaji on gov't smut list

Self regulation fails, Ministry ushers in new action against vulgarity

India's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has ordered ISPs to block access to 25 streaming platforms – including the former ALTBalaji, now called ALTT – for obscene, vulgar or pornographic content. The move – welcomed by many – is said to be India's largest coordinated crackdown on OTT content and is being seen as the direct result of the failure of the previous self-regulation system.

The full story is on page 2

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India zaps 25 streamers; former ALTBalaji on gov't smut list

Info & Broadcasting Ministry acts against obscenity, vulgarity and/or porn in new ban

India's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) has ordered ISPs to block access to 25 streaming platforms – including the former ALTBalaji, now called ALTT – for obscene, vulgar or pornographic content.

The move is said to be India's largest coordinated crackdown on OTT content and is being seen as the direct result of the failure of the previous voluntary self-regulation system.

The 23 July order covers 26 websites and 14 apps. Observers say this demonstrates a pivot from self-regulation toward enforceable bans.

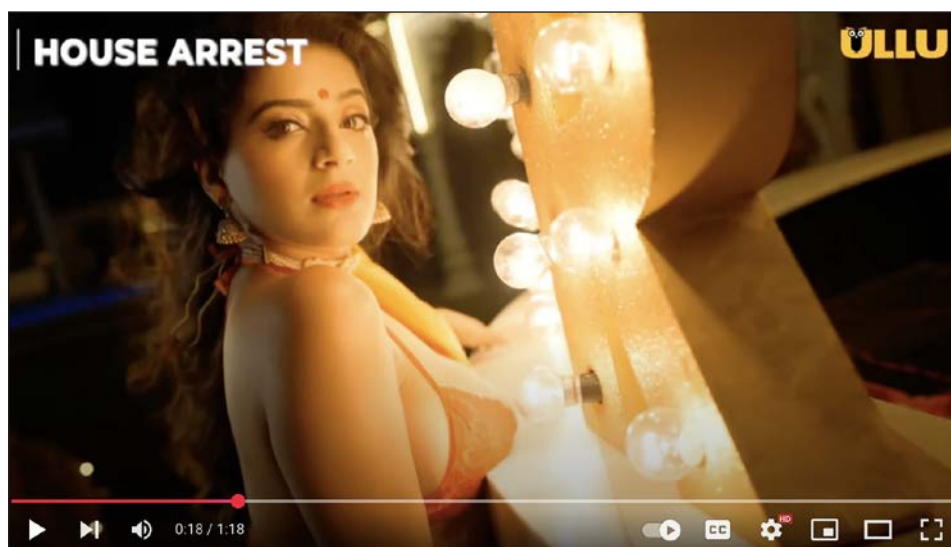
Other platforms include adult platform Ullu, founded by entrepreneur Vibhu Agarwal, who launched the Ullu Coin just before the streaming ban was announced. Launching the coin, he said in a LinkedIn post that ULLU was "not just a platform, but a global digital ecosystem". Agarwal also founded mythological/religious streaming platform, Hari Om.

Sanctioned apps also include Desiflix, Mojflix, Big Shots App and MoodX.

MIB cited violations of India's Information Technology Act of 2000 and 2021 IT Rules, 2021 in that they host sexually explicit material that undermines India's cultural and moral values.

The MIB also told a Parliamentary Standing Committee that sanctioned platforms had in the past reappeared under new names/ IP addresses.

Consultations with various government and industry bodies were held prior to the ban's publication. These included the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), and the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD).



House Arrest trailer on YouTube

opment (MWCD).

Response was swift.

"This. Done, anomaly corrected,". Shiv Sena member of Parliament, Priyanka Chaturvedi, said on X after a months-long campaign against shows like Ullu's reality series *House Arrest*, hosted by former *Bigg Boss* contestant Ajaz Khan. The series featured contestants gathered in a villa and challenged to perform increasingly explicit tasks. At the beginning of May, Chaturvedi posted a clip from the new series, saying she had raised the issue in the standing committee and was awaiting a response.

"This is great news," she said after last week's ban, again singling out Ullu and ALTBalaji as among the worst offenders. "I welcome it and will continue to raise my voice for accountability," she said.

In a guest column for trade platform

exchange4media, IN10 Media Network's COO for regional content, Anup Chandrasekharan, said the OTT crackdown was "cultural correction" rather than censorship and had come "not a moment too soon". In a blistering attack, he described an environment of "sleaze disguised as bold storytelling" and said "vulgarity was being monetised and engagement gamed... Platforms meant to democratise content were instead becoming vehicles for cheap gratification".

Sonu Tyagi, founder of Go Spiritual & Approach Entertainment, applauded the ban, putting out a statement that called the move a "monumental step toward safeguarding our society" and a "victory for Bharat's youth". He said the action "sends a powerful message that India's digital space will not be a breeding ground for obscenity or cultural sabotage".

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My Brilliant Friend China reach soars

Fremantle Int'l deal puts 4th season on four streamers



My Brilliant Friend: The Story of the Lost Child


Mainland China's four top streaming platforms – iQIYI, Tencent Video, Youku and Bilibili – have picked up rights to Italian-language drama series, *My Brilliant Friend: The Story of the Lost Child*.

The deal is global distributor Fremantle's largest by reach in China. The four platforms have a combined reach of about 1.5 billion monthly viewers.

This is the first time all four Chinese platforms will simultaneously premiere a non-English language European drama, Fremantle said in this evening's announcement out of the U.K.

The first three installments of Elena Ferrante's quadrilogy streamed on iQIYI, Youku and Tencent, and aired on state-owned national broadcaster, CCTV.

The licensing agreements, which also includes boxsets of the previous series, were brokered by Fremantle International's Asian distribution office, led out of Singapore by Haryaty Rahman, EVP Distribution Asia,

The fourth and final series was directed by Laura Bispuri and is set against the backdrop of political and social turmoil in late 1970s Italy. 

Swoon, swipe subscribe


Kedoo rolls out romance-focused micro-drama app

Dubai-based Kedoo Entertainment is rolling out new romance-focused micro-drama app, Love Drama, riding the two-minute vertical video gold rush, particularly among women in the Americas, and promising a dedicated flow of love and kisses.

In a launch announcement out of London on 24 July, the company emphasised its slate of originals, which

it says are developed in-house and through partnerships, with AI-driven recommendation engines.

The freemium app rolls out with various subscription models, including a US\$1.99 rate for 20 episodes. Regular subscriptions are US\$7.99 a week; US\$19.99 a month, or US\$99 a year.

Flagship exclusive series include *Billionaire's Secret Baby* and *Wings After 40*. 

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"Stop focusing on the trends & search for the opportunities"

Visinema boss Angga Dwimas Sasongko on life before, during and after *Jumbo*

Among other tags, Indonesian filmmaker and businessman Angga Dwimas Sasongko has been called a "visionary" and a "disruptor". And that was long before Visinema Pictures, the company he founded and leads as CEO, backed *Jumbo* – Indonesia's highest-grossing film ever. Sasongko doesn't directly answer the question of how he feels about the labels. "Every day, I just try to do better than yesterday," he says, talking about opportunities for emerging talent, the ability to make a living, enabling a healthy creative environment.

"I'm only trying to give a platform for people who have the passion,



ideas. And the courage to execute, to change the game," he says.

Sasongko steers clear of either-or choices, for himself and others. "We have to be able to live without binaries... there is no art versus commerce, there is no global versus local, there is no artist versus entrepreneur. We can build from the center, and we are not the only ones doing it," he says, adding: "It's not about chasing to be number one... but to be able to find the balance between those binaries. That's something I try to live every day.

He also talks about opportunities rather than trends. "There is a huge untapped market in Indonesia. We need to stop focusing on trends and simply search for the opportunities," he said on stage at the annual APOS event in Bali in June.

His most recent opportunity (and his biggest, as it turns out) came in the shape of a chubby boy called Don (aka *Jumbo* to the bullies) and a ghost called Meri. As they try to help each other, the two learn the true meaning of friendship.

The animated film, *Jumbo*, released theatrically in Indonesia in March this year after five years of production, was an outsize success. With a production budget of Rp22 billion/US\$1.4 million (source: IMDb), the film's global box office is said to have topped US\$25 million. The bulk of this came from its home market, where in its first six weeks it surpassed *Frozen 2* before going on to become Indonesia's highest-grossing film ever.

"You go big, or you go home," Sasongko says of his decision more than five years ago to back the project. The question at the time was: just how big did he want to go? "The benchmark at the very beginning was to beat *Frozen 2*. That was our target," he says, talking to *ContentAsia* three months after the film opened in Indonesia.

Hindsight clearly brought relief. Day one in theatres didn't look even a tiny bit good. At only 50,000 admissions, Sasongko saw his bet turning sour. Histori-

cally, box office stats in Indonesia show that a day one at 50,000 means the film won't even hit one million. "Everything seemed dark," he says. Day two was tense. Day three brought a sliver of optimism, which grew on day four... By day 10, the win was clear.

Given the outcome, the risk seems smaller than it actually was for a studio known for films such as horror feature *Blood Debt* (2024), *Stealing Raden Saleh* (2022) and *Letters from Prague* (2016).

For Sasongko, the to-do-or-not-to-do animation/*Jumbo* was a career turning point. "When I decided to invite investors to Visinema in 2018, I realised that I'm no longer a filmmaker who runs a studio. I'm an entrepreneur with a challenge and a responsibility."

First, he had to change the perception of Visinema as a company defined by annual film output and ticket sales. IP was the backbone of his new model, paving the way for experiences beyond the screen.

Sasongko is confident about leveraging *Jumbo*'s success into a bigger consumer experience, mostly because he says there is already a global playbook and he knows he doesn't have to be "the smartest person in the room".

To develop the *Jumbo* IP and licensing business, he turned to Herry Salim, the former head of Disney Indonesia and veteran Unilever boss, and Aldi Haryoprato, the former CEO of Gojek's digital wallet GoPay, both of whom have joined Visinema.

Sasongko says "Jumbo is real proof that... when you invest in craft, invest in quality, invest in empathy, the audience will respond".

There's something else, which he says *Jumbo* shares with record-breaking Chinese animated film *Ne Zha 2*. "It's not only because of the story, not only because it's cute... [*Jumbo*'s success] is also because it gives pride to its audience".

The full version of this feature is here

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BiFan thumbs up for AI filmmaking – and why the favour “Not tomorrow's fantasy,” festival goers hear as tools and titles go mainstream

The embrace of artificial intelligence by the BiFan film festival in South Korea is no longer new, as its conference and AI film competition this month amply demonstrated. But the event might serve as a lesson – or warning – to those who would rather bury their heads in the sand.

“AI filmmaking is not tomorrow's fantasy, but is already today's reality,” said Korean technologist-turned filmmaker Roy Oh, who presented *Color My Garden*, a biographical drama about Mexican artist Frida Kahlo. The 20-minute film, which drew mixed responses from professionals, was generated and musically scored inside one week by a single person.

Admittedly, Oh's three or so years of experience with the tools makes him an AI filmmaking veteran. But others are racing to join him in a fashion that could either disrupt – or democratise, depending on one's point of view – today's film and TV industries.

After an appearance at 2024's debut BiFan conference, Estonian tech consultant Sten Kristian Saluveer returned (virtually) to highlight just how rapidly the technology and its adoption for film production has been.

Whereas this time last year the number of AI filmmaking tools was limited, there are now thousands, offering additional specialised functions by the week. Training programmes were just beginning, but a year later education platform Curious Refuge can claim over 4,000 ‘graduates’ from over 170 countries and an AI Director or Studio Manager is now one of the industry's hottest jobs.

A year after the Hollywood strike in favour of protecting talent, AI-generat-



Remembering

ed images and sounds have reached the mainstream and achieved critical acceptability – in award-winning movies including *Emilia Perez* and *The Brutalist*.

The U.S. Screen Actors Guild has approved its first AI film (*Echo Hunter*) and others have been presented in prestigious festivals. These include: *Ancestra* directed by Eliza McNitt and produced by Darren Aronofsky's Primordial Soup, which premiered at Tribeca; and *Primitive Diversity*, an 80-minute feature about image technology, politics and human flaws, which launched at the Rotterdam festival in February.

Wonderment at the possibilities of AI seems to be a recurring theme for the pioneers – BiFan's opening film *About a Hero* was not only scripted by AI technology, it discusses and challenges the 2016 assertion by Werner Herzog that a computer can never produce a film as good as a human-made one.

This month too, U.S. President Donald Trump unveiled an AI Action Plan that clears the way for massive investment

in the sector, adds a layer of regulation and seeks to banish wokeness.

While government-level issues are being thrown up by the barely restrained AI arms race between U.S. and Chinese tech giants and by the need for a balance between stimulation and regulation of the sector, the new content industry is already emerging.

Saluveer argued that: capital is flowing into new AI studios, an upgrade from artists working on their own; that native AI production is being implemented by major studios, a step on from simpler AI-enhanced workflows; and that the tech is disrupting and sometimes reversing the conventional development-scripting-image generation chronology of storytelling and production.

For individuals and small-medium-sized countries alike, AI should be embraced and realistic strategies adopted, Saluveer suggests. Above all, they should give themselves a skills upgrade. The alternative may be oblivion. 🌀

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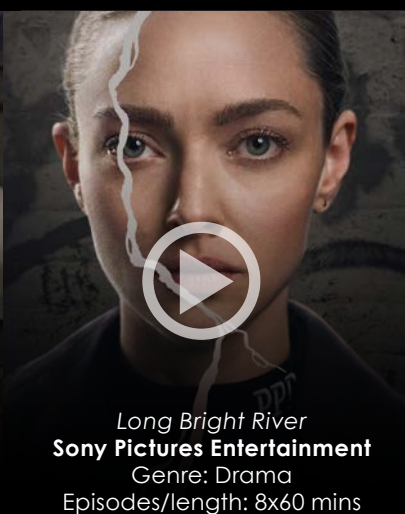
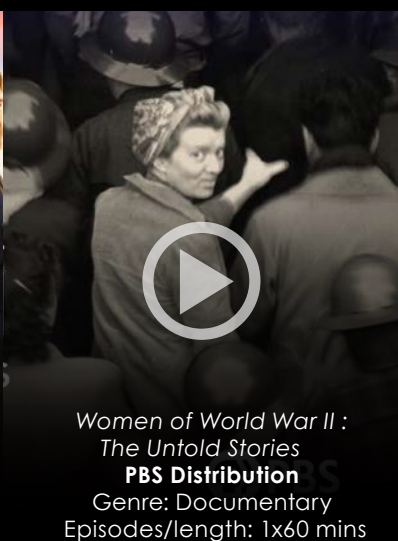
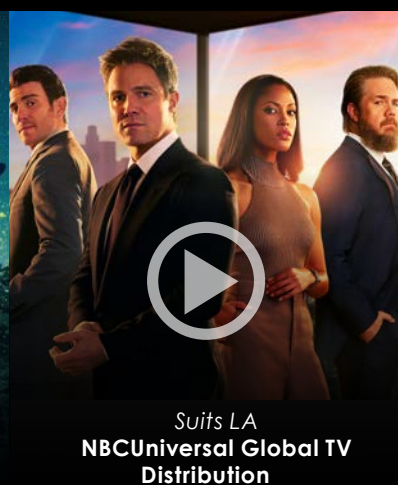
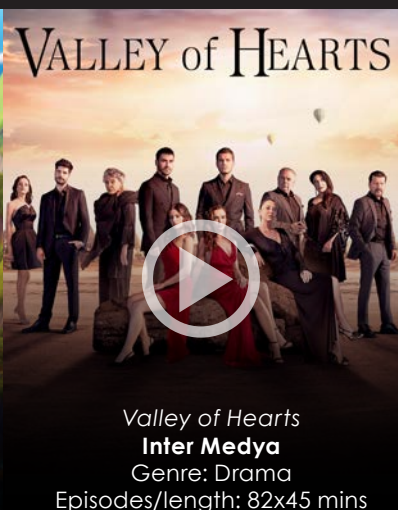
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Country Focus: Malaysia

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ContentAsia's directory, The Big List, returns in 2025 in a new monthly format, highlighting top titles from Asia and the rest of the world, along with a focus on one country and its top players every month.

Click here to access the full directory!



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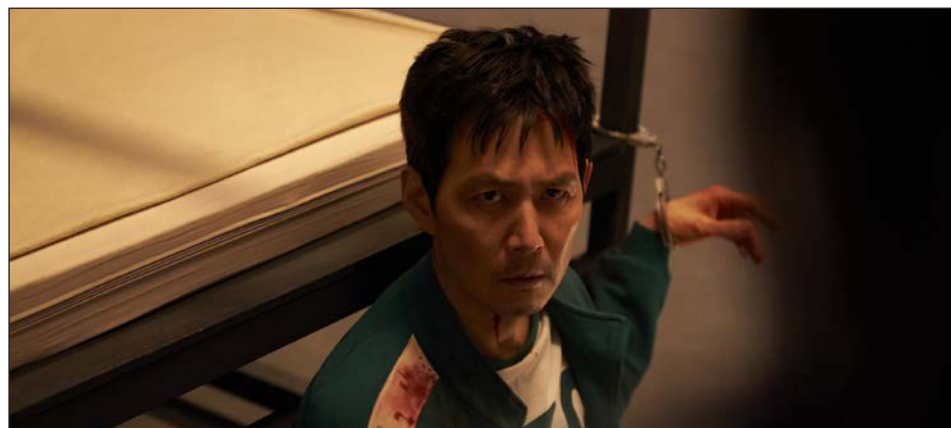


What's on where...

August 2025	28-31	Gwangju Ace Fair 2025	Gwangju, Korea
September 2025	3-4	ContentAsia Summit ContentAsia Premieres 2025	Taiwan
	4	ContentAsia Awards 2025	Taiwan
	16-19	BCWW 2025	Seoul, Korea
	17-26	Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) 2025	Busan, Korea
	20-23	Asian Contents & Film Market 2025	Busan, Korea
October 2025	11-12	MipJunior 2025	Cannes, France
	13-16	Mipcom 2025	Cannes, France
	28	AVIA: Northeast Asia Video Summit 2025	Tokyo, Japan
	29-31	TIFFCOM 2025	Tokyo, Japan
November 2025	4-7	Taiwan Creative Content Fest 2025 (TCCF)	Taipei, Taiwan
	4-5	Dubai International Content Market 2025 (DICM)	Madinat Jumeirah, Dubai
	30 Nov-7 Dec	Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival 2025	Yogyakarta, Indonesia
	29 Nov-1 Dec	JAFF Market 2025	Yogyakarta, Indonesia
December 2025	2	Asia TV Forum & Market 2025 (ATF) – ATF Leaders Dialogue	Singapore
	3-5	Asia TV Forum & Market 2025 (ATF) – Market & Conference	Singapore
	3-4	AVIA: Asia Video & OTT Summit 2025	Singapore
February 2026		Mip London 2026	London, U.K.
		The London TV Screenings 2026	London, U.K.
March 2026	17-20	Hong Kong FILMART 2026	Hong Kong
	24-26	Series Mania Forum 2026	Lille, Hauts-de-France
April 2026	23-28	Canneseries 2026	Cannes, France
June 2026	17-19	19th Content Tokyo 2026	Tokyo, Japan
	22-25	Sunny Side of the Doc 2026	La Rochelle, France
	24-26	Telefilm Vietnam 2026	Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Squid Game dominates SG demand

Love Island USA runs #2 from 6-12 July – Parrot Analytics



Squid Game

Top 10 overall TV originals: Singapore

Rank	Title	Difference from Market Average (x times)
1	Squid Game	50.0
2	Love Island USA	39.1
3	Sesame Street	28.9
4	The Voice (US)	27.8
5	The Sandman	27.3
6	Love Island (UK)	27.3
7	Saturday Night Live	25.9
8	The Apothecary Diaries	24.2
9	Ironheart	23.5
10	Spongebob Squarepants	23.4

Top 10 digital originals: Singapore

Rank	Title	Platform	Difference from Market Average (x times)
1	Squid Game	Netflix	50.0
2	Love Island USA	Peacock	39.1
3	The Sandman	Netflix	27.3
4	Ironheart	Disney+	23.5
5	The Bear	Hulu	20.0
6	The Boys	Amazon Prime Video	19.7
7	Andor	Disney+	18.0
8	Stranger Things	Netflix	17.1
9	Murderbot	Apple TV+	17.0
10	Severance	Apple TV+	16.5

Date range: 6-12 July 2025

The total audience demand being expressed for a title, within a market. Audience demand reflects the desire, engagement and viewership, weighted by importance; so a stream/download is a higher expression of demand than a 'like'/comment. In this dataset we are comparing the demand that exists for each series in this market, against the average TV show. A difference of 1x represents the market average and 10x means a series is ten times more in demand than the average TV show in this market



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