

Korean ups film funding by 81% Dramatic 2026 measures to save domestic industry

Korea's culture ministry is taking dramatic measures to revive the domestic film industry, saying this month that it is increasing its 2026 budget for sector support by about 81% compared to 2025. The initiative – in response to film industry pleas – takes funding from KRW 82.9b/US\$59.7m to just under KRW150b/US\$108m. This is said to be the largest purse on record outside of the 2022 Covid emergency support measures.

The full story is on page 7

TCCF unveils pitch projects headed for Taipei

60% of 700 submissions involved international & co-production – TAICCA

International submissions and co-productions involving Taiwan accounted for 60% of entries for this year's TCCF Pitching, which takes place in Taipei in early November. The fest, organised by the Taiwan Creative Content Agency (TAICCA), received almost 700 submissions from 44 countries. 94 projects were selected. Top submitting countries (ex-Taiwan) were Japan, Thailand, the U.S., Korea and Singapore. TAICCA said international submissions underscored TCCF's growing recognition on the global stage as well as rising cross-border collaboration.

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David Foster vertical talent hunt boards new Sph3ra platform; 2026 launch planned

Music icon David Foster has partnered with new vertical-first platform, Sph3ra (pronounced Sphera), for an Asia version of his latest format, *Karaoke Star*. Sph3ra goes live in 2026, with a format that rewards creators and audiences on a daily basis based on clicks, likes, shares and subscribes.

Details of the crypto-based system – launched by Paul O'Hanlon, Aaron Bassatt and Philip Middleton – will be



Paul O'Hanlon



Aaron Bassatt



Philip Middleton

unveiled closer to the launch.

The original lineup also includes vertical series, *Alien Asia*, hosted by Justin Bratton and Selena Lo; and dating show, *LoveBytes*. In addition to providing a space for creators to curate their own content, Sph3ra's slate includes AI-series, other entertainment formats, podcasts and music.

Developed and operated out of Australia, Sph3ra emerges in an environment of dwindling commissions from traditional platforms and burgeoning demand from creators for alternative outlets and income.

The platform's creator support network includes seed funding and development backing for vertical-first IP. An open call will be made for content creators across the region. 10 selected projects will each receive AUD\$1,000 to support production and distribution.

TrueVisions picks up *Race to Space* Banijay Asia space travel format heads to Thailand

The first Thai citizen is heading to space as part of a deal announced today for Banijay Asia homegrown format, *Race to Space*.

The Thai version of the ambitious production, created by Banijay Asia out of India and international agency SERA (Space Exploration & Research Agency), is a partnership between the newly re-branded TrueVisions NOW and Southeast Asian production label, CreAsia Studio.

An Indian version of the space travel show is also in development, giving the format its first two markets.

Deepak Dhar, founder & group CEO, Banijay Asia, Endemol Shine India and CreAsia Studio, said from Bangkok this afternoon that the format was "not just a show – it is a movement that democratises space travel and inspires millions to dream big".

Race to Space Thailand is being developed under Ongard Prapakamol, head of True Corporation's TrueVisions and Media, which needs some wins against fierce competition from re-energised rival, AIS, and a declining TV subscriber base. At the end of June, TrueVisions had 1.1 million pay-TV subscribers – a 12% drop from the same time in 2024.

In May, TrueVisions ushered in an entertainment era the Bangkok-based company called "new", patting itself on the back for being "bold", and describing itself as the "King of Sports" (which is a stretch because, although it sealed the beIN renewal, it lost Premier League rights for the next six seasons to Jasmine International, which will offer the football with Mono Next/AIS Play).

The *Race to Space* deal looks like it is part of TrueVisions bid at regaining some of its fading/lost leadership narrative, which also includes the return of 2004 reality show *Academy Fantasia*, reheated for a new generation.



Deepak Dhar

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StarHub twists tech plot; Singapore platform cuts costs, ups efficiency in new deployments

Singapore's StarHub continues to refine its tech stack, adding Evrideo's cloud-based playout platform and IP delivery services for its Chinese channels, Hub Ruyi and Hub VVD. The deal marks Evrideo's entry into Southeast Asia, and puts StarHub in the tech lead for the second time this month.

The first sign that StarHub hadn't entirely given up on TV was a deal came earlier in September, with tech platform Hoppr for Darwin – an AI-powered audience intelligence platform that promises to turn “TV from a blunt instrument into a precision tool”. The StarHub deployment is Darwin's first in the world and allows StarHub/advertisers to insert ads mid-roll across live channels.

StarHub's VP of entertainment, Yann Courqueux, talked about flexibility, efficiency and reducing costs in the Evrideo adoption.



Korea's *Bloody Game* heads for Sweden

The first Swedish version of MBC Korea's survival reality format, *Bloody Game*, is in production at Banijay Nordic's Meter/Jarrowskij for Sweden's public broadcaster, SVT. This is the third Nordic adaptation of the show, which puts competitors through a series of psychosocial and physical challenges. MBC has produced three seasons in Korea.

Her Shark Story opens Earth in Focus

Singapore nature festival returns on 31 October



Her Shark Story

Chilean cinematographer Ignacio Walker's *Her Shark Story* opens the second edition of Singapore nature film festival, Earth in Focus, which runs from 31 Oct to 2 November.

The film is about Sofia, a young marine biologist returning to the Galapagos Islands where she reconnects with her father through their shared passion for preserving whale sharks.

The line up also includes Myles Storey's *Would You Still Love Me If I Were a Sticky Frog?*, and *Leopard Dynasty – The Rise of Rana*, about a young leopard who challenges his father for the kingdom of Jhalana, a forest that belonged to the Kings of Jaipur.

Panel discussions address topics such as keeping turtles and oceans alive, rethinking wildlife tourism.

The festival follows Earth in Focus' first media lab, which supported 10 storytellers on a three-month programme. The two films that came out of the lab will be showcased at the festival; one explores coexistence of wildlife in an urbanising society, and the other looks at urbanising coastlines and the ocean plastic pollution.

Festival founder and director, Daphne Ong, says the Lab builds a community of emerging storytellers and gives them the tools to "reimagine how we talk about conservation".

People involved in the festival include Jacqueline Farmer, *Leopard Dynasty* EP, and director, Aishwarya Sridhar; and wildlife biologist and photographer, Chien C. Lee; along with Ignacio Walker on the making of *Her Shark Story*.

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Dramatic 2026 measures to save domestic industry

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This is said to be the largest purse on record outside of the 2022 Covid emergency support measures.

At a media briefing in Seoul this month, new Culture, Sports and Tourism Minister, Chae Hwi-young, said films produced in the KRW3 billion/US\$2.16 million range had collapsed to about 20 this year from past annual highs of 100. The minister blamed lower investment and shrinking cinema attendance.

Among other projects, the government budget will be used to support in-

die and other smaller films, and a new KRW 16.4 billion/US\$11.8 million virtual production studio in Busan.

Mid-budget production support will double to KRW 20 billion/US\$14.4 million, and development funding has been increased to KRW 8 billion/US\$5.8 million from just under KRW5 billion/US\$3.6 million.

About KRW2.2 billion/US\$1.6 million has been allocated for AI production.

Ministry heavyweights are being quoted as saying that their "unwavering" support will return the Korean film industry to its former glory at the centre of the Hallyu wave.

The measures come just ahead of the opening of the Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) tomorrow evening (16 Sept). The festival programme runs from 17-26 Sept. A total of 87 titles (42 features & 45 shorts) will screen during the week.

iQiyi rolls out Peter Pau AI films lab

Initiative follows dismal Q2 earnings

Chinese streaming platform iQiyi has tied up with Hong Kong filmmaker Peter Pau on the *Peter Pau x iQIYI AI Theater Storytelling Lab*. The programme aims to cultivate "a new generation of professional creators skilled in AI-powered filmmaking".

The programme, announced this month, follows iQiyi's global AI Short Film Creation Competition in July with Google and ByteDance.

The Lab invites submissions for AI-driven films that are at least 15 minutes long, with proposals built around themes including "Journey to the West", "Gender, Happiness and Faith" and "Truth".

Submissions close on 25 October.

30 projects will be selected in phase one, with half of these advancing to the production phase.

iQiyi will provide support for production, distribution, promotion and continued mentorship.

The final works are scheduled to premiere in the first quarter of 2026 under the "Peter Pau x iQIYI AI Theater". Participating creators are eligible for a 30% share of net profits.

The new AI programme was unveiled shortly after iQiyi posted dismal Q2 earnings. Content distribution revenue was hit hardest, dropping 37% to RMB436.6 million/US\$60.9 million. Total revenues were down 11% to RMB6.63 billion/US\$925.3 million compared to the same quarter in 2024. Membership services revenue was down 9% to RMB4.09 billion/US\$571 million. Online advertising services revenue dropped 13% to RMB1.27 billion/US\$177.6 million.

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What's on where...

September 2025	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	9	AVIA: Archipelago Video Summit 2025	Jakarta, Indonesia
	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
	26-28	World Content Market 2025	Moscow
	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	22-24	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	8-11	Nem Dubrovnik 2026	Croatia
	10-12	20th Busan Content Market 2026	Busan, Korea
	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

Netflix, Amazon duel over India

SonyLIV slips in at #10 on Parrot Analytics' demand list



The Great Indian Kapil Show

Top 10 overall TV originals: India

Rank	Title	Difference from Market Average (x times)
1	Wednesday	41.5
2	The Great Indian Kapil Show	40.4
3	The Summer I Turned Pretty	38.5
4	Panchayat	34.9
5	Mirzapur	33.3
6	Game Of Thrones	32.6
7	WWE Monday Night Raw	32.2
8	Bigg Boss	28.1
9	The Office (US)	27.8
10	Paatal Lok	27.7

Top 10 digital originals: India

Rank	Title	Platform	Difference from Market Average (x times)
1	Wednesday	Netflix	41.5
2	The Great Indian Kapil Show	Netflix	40.4
3	The Summer I Turned Pretty	Amazon Prime Video	38.5
4	Panchayat	Amazon Prime Video	34.9
5	Mirzapur	Amazon Prime Video	33.3
6	Paatal Lok	Amazon Prime Video	27.7
7	The Family Man	Amazon Prime Video	27.3
8	Black Mirror	Netflix	27.2
9	Stranger Things	Netflix	25.5
10	College Romance	SonyLIV	23.8

Date range: 1-7 September, 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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