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## 11th-Hour Save for Astro's Interim Boss

Henry Tan Rescue Plan  
Keeps RTM Channels,  
Focus on Possible World  
Cup Sub-license

Malaysian media platform Astro has made peace with the country's national broadcaster, Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM), rolling back a clash widely believed to have contributed to Group CEO Euan Smith's sudden departure earlier in June.

The big question going into the finals of the FIFA World Cup in July is whether Astro can sub-license some of the matches from rights holders – RTM and Telekom Malaysia's Unifi.

Bets are now being made on Tan's ability

*More on page 2*

# contentasia

ON AIR

## Asia's content industry, in conversation

Coming Friday, 3 July 2026  
New video/audio series ahead of  
ContentAsia LIVE in Bangkok on  
26/27 August.

Building a Global Microdrama Community with WenWen Han  
Thailand's No-BS Opportunity with Indra Suharjono  
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Teams from RTM, under newly appointed director-general of broadcasting Ashwad Ismail (second left), and Astro under interim CEO Henry Tan (middle right), celebrate Friday's announcement

**Continued from page 1**

to pull off a last-minute deal for access to the World Cup final matches in July.

Friday's reversal follows at least two months of high anxiety over Astro's relationship with Malaysia's media powers.

In early May, Astro lost its 20-year hold on the World Cup to a private-government partnership between RTM and Telekom Malaysia's Unifi.

Astro framed the result as a cost issue, saying the landscape for premium content – particularly sports – “has changed significantly”, and that it couldn't justify the investment.

The government contribution to the World Cup campaign came in at RM24 million (US\$6 million), according to Communications Minister Fahmi Fadzil.

The loss was seen as part of the same environment that led to the collapse of the RTM channels carriage negotiations in May. An RTM exit would have ended a 30-year relationship.

RTM announced the breakdown of negotiations and the result on 11 May, on the letterhead of the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission. The official reason given was that the two failed to agree on pricing and contract terms.

At the time, the statement (and the optics) put the industry on high alert for further

political messaging.

The 11th-hour save came a few days ahead of RTM's intended 1 July exit.

Friday's announcement came exactly 10 days after former Group CEO Henry Tan returned as interim head. The announcement was carried in Bahasa Malaysia on Astro's corporate newsroom.

Tan's most urgent task was likely to repair the relationship with the powerful government body before larger commercial issues are tackled. As the hunt for a new CEO continues, those problems may not land in his lap.

For now, the repair is partial. RTM free-TV channels TV1, TV2 and Okey (previously known as Muzik Aktif and TVi) remain on Astro's primary platform as well as on streaming service Sooka and free-TV platform NJOI.

Three other services – RTM News, sports network Sukan+ and RTM's radio network – will be added “in the near future”.

The key for World Cup watchers is Sukan+, which carries the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

In Friday's joint message, RTM and Astro used language that sweetened their reversal.

They talked about a “strengthened partnership” and committed to joint projects to develop local content as well as ensuring “continued access to quality content at affordable prices without placing an additional financial burden on Malaysians”.

DITP



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**Celebrating Asia's storytellers year round: Welcome to our dedicated site focusing on ContentAsia Awards' winners**

### Nippon TV ramps up international efforts

Japan's Nippon TV has formed a new global strategy division under former Hulu Japan head Kazuo Takaya. Hulu Japan is majority owned by Nippon TV.

Takaya's appointment as president of Global Strategy was announced today, along with the promotion of Satoru Hiramatsu to EVP of Nippon TV's content business.

Nippon TV described the move as a "strategic evolution of its international divisions and leadership structure". The focus will be on expanding the international scale of Gyokuro Studio, the company's unscripted content production brand, and AiDi, Nippon TV's proprietary AI-powered solution.

The new unit will drive growth across IP development, technology, strategic partnerships, and region-specific market strategies, and will work in parallel with the company's long-established content business division, which will continue to lead content sales, format remakes, and global distribution.

## Love Tested on Malaysia's Tonton

"Keturunan" Rides Sales High for Media Prima



"Keturunan"

Picture: tonton/Media Prima

Malaysian broadcaster Media Prima releases its latest drama series, "Keturunan", on domestic streaming platform Tonton today (29 June), adding to a powerful and growing slate of local originals picked up by international streamers.

The 20-episode series airs Monday to Friday at midnight, running through 24 July 2026.

The drama is a love story tested by fate and loyalty. The plot centres on two powerful corporate families whose long-standing business ties are upended when a high-profile engagement collapses, triggering a spiral of power struggles, buried secrets and betrayal.

The series is directed by Orangetree Production's Azmi Md Hata, known for "My Sweet Lavender" on TV9 and "Awak Sangat Nakal" for Astro Ria, and produced under Media Prima Television Networks.

The cast includes Syarul Ezani, Shah

Rezza, Hafidzuddin Fazil, Syazuwan Hassan and Ruhainies.

"Keturunan" lands as Media Prima continues its push into regional streaming distribution. The group's content sales arm has been licensing titles to international platforms including Netflix since 2017, a relationship now approaching a decade.

With the exception of regional streamer Viu, streamers have kept original production in Malaysia at arm's length, preferring an acquisitions model for local content relevance.

Media Prima's content sales surged 85% in the six months to December 2025 (1HFY26), contributing to a 75% year-on-year increase in after-tax profit for the first half of the platform's financial year.

For the nine months to end March 2026, content sales were the standout performer, up 52% to RM15.7 million (US\$3.6 million).



# AI: “Quality content with the best human talent”

Utopai’s Cecilia Shen on Film & Franchise Investments, Opportunity & What’s Next

China’s Huace is reimagining “Monkey King” for global audiences in partnership with U.S. AI studio Utopai. The announcement earlier this month came a few days after Utopai said it was backing Korean-German co-pro “Half Moon” from Silver Bear-winning filmmaker Hyo-joo Yang as part of its expanding original film slate.

Both projects give credence to Cecilia Shen’s view of AI as a creative enabler and “another step in Utopai Studios’ push to build a global, filmmaker-driven production studio model focused on original films, international co-productions, and emerging creative voices”.

Shen, Utopai Studios’ 25-year-old co-founder and CEO, said the new projects spoke to the studio’s reason for being – “to help partners unlock iconic IP, expand worlds at franchise scale and bring ambitious stories to life in ways that were not possible before”.

During the “Half Moon” announcement, Shen said Utopai’s studio model would help change the situation where projects “struggle to reach audiences because they do not have the infrastructure, resources, or market support to move from vision to production”.

“Half Moon” represents “the kind of filmmaker-driven, internationally relevant story we want to champion – deeply human, visually ambitious, and built around a singular creative voice,” she said.

Both “Half Moon” and “Journey to the West” will use Utopai’s cinematic storytelling AI system, PAI, which Shen acknowledges is not perfect – yet.

“We’re trying to make PAI the go-to infrastructure, so whenever you think about professional long-form content or production generation, you’ll be using PAI... We’re also trying to make sure that you can have control at every step, because that’s what creatives need... but I still think there’s a long way to go,” she said, referring, for instance, to training a visual language model and ensuring visual consistency across long-form productions.

“Half Moon” – Yang’s feature directorial debut – is co-produced by Germany’s In Good Company and Korea’s Paper Barn Studios, alongside Utopai Studios. The film also has German public funding and is scheduled to begin principal photography in Germany in August 2026.



Cecilia Shen, co-founder and CEO, Utopai Studios



“Journey to the West: The Lost Five Hundred Years”

Utopai said “Half Moon” would “remain grounded in live-action performance, director-led storytelling, and traditional cinematic craft, with PAI serving as a production tool for specific visual components of Yang’s creative vision”.

“Half Moon” follows the 13-year-old Korean-German Yeri (played by Rina Kim) and her aunt Ah-Jin (Elisa Hofmann) as they spend a fractured summer together on a remote North Sea island. The film explores loneliness, family trauma, belonging, and emotional repair.

“Journey to the West: The Lost Five Hundred Years”, the reimagined legend of Monkey King Sun Wukong, involves animated series and theatrical releases as part of broad development ambitions built on the partnership Utopai and Huace announced in April this year.

The series follows Jin Chanzi, a fallen celestial monk condemned to 10 reincarnations to complete an impossible pilgrimage.

PAI will support mythological world-building, character continuity, stylised action, multi-episode storytelling and reusable digital assets designed to evolve across future seasons and theatrical extensions.

Huace will produce the series; Utopai Studios will hold distribution rights outside China.

The first season is planned as an animated series for distribution across broadcast, streaming, and digital platforms, with the broader franchise developed for future theatrical expansion.

Shen’s approach, which she outlines endlessly in a manic global speaking schedule, has made her a central character in the love-hate conversation around AI and filmmaking.

The world she’s building cuts across age, past experience, filmmaking pedigree and geography, and rests on her belief that Utopai can redefine the future.

“The big entertainment company that we’re building is very different,” she told ContentAsia in an interview ahead of APOS (which she didn’t make because of flight delays). Shen is scheduled to speak at MIP-COM in October.

“We have to work with global young talent and young creatives to produce the next generation of IP, give them the freedom, give them the respect, and give them the creative space.

“At the same time, we also believe that technology is a very important part, all of it, so it can become a really great flat world, and that is really what we’re trying to achieve out there,” she said.

Does she think AI solves money problems or story problems?

AI will never solve story problems, she said. “Story is key, and humans are the key to representing the story.”

But it can solve budget challenges. “AI will enable much higher quality content with the best possible human talent,” she said.

Picture: Utopai Studios

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ContentAsia's interview series goes behind the trophies, into the decisions, risks and creative calls that turned shortlisted ideas into ContentAsia Awards' winners. The 2026 Awards ceremony will be held in Bangkok on 27 August.

## "No matter what gender or who you are, you deserve love"

Thai writer/director Mui Aticha Tanthanawigrai on her Award-winning BL series "ThamePo Heart Skips a Beat"

Thai writer/director Mui Aticha Tanthanawigrai carried "ThamePo Heart Skips a Beat" in her pocket for five years before the series finally found a home at GMMTV. The wait was worth it. The series – a gentle, quietly radical take on BL that trades hi-drama tropes for emotional complexity – has 5.2 million YouTube views, landed on Netflix in six languages, and took Gold at the ContentAsia Awards 2025 for Best LGBTQ+ Series. Mui, also known for "F4 Thailand: Boys Over Flowers", spoke to us about the long road to a greenlight, shooting concert scenes with 600 extras and a secret code system, and why she believes men don't have to be portrayed as tough.



Pictures: GMMTV

Thamepo Heart That Skips a Beat

**BL drama is having a significant moment internationally. Where do you think the genre goes from here, and how are you thinking about that as a creator?** "For me, BL series (also GL) is a sub-genre of romantic. It is placed into everybody's heart because it portrays pure love. No matter what gender/who you are, you deserve good love. If the world says you shouldn't have, you can yell that they are wrong. This is the magic of the BL/GL series."

**The series has 5 million views on YouTube. How do you view that audience – who are they, and what does YouTube give you that a broadcast or streaming window doesn't?** "I think mostly is the worldwide audience. Also, somebody who keep re-running it. I heard our audience keep on watching it over and over again for 10 times because it is their comfort zone. I really appreciated it."

**The series is on Netflix in Tagalog, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Malay, Portuguese and Spanish. Has anything about that reach surprised you?** "It really surprises me that we have fans from every area of this world. I know that BL se-

ries and T-pop hit in some countries, but I've never thought this series would get this far. It is honor to hear that ThamePo is a part of new wave soft power in both BL and T-pop."

**What do you think it is about "ThamePo Heart Skips a Beat" that landed so well with audiences?** "Our passion to do this work. Everybody who is involved in ThamePo put wonderful energy into it".

**Where did the idea come from, and how long did it take to go from that first spark to a greenlight?** "About 7 or 8 years ago, my producers and I talked about making a BL. We also discussed the idol industry. So, we merged two ideas together, and this project popped up. I was developing this idea while finding the right cast. But it didn't turn out right. It's not only about the cast but also, we need an investor who can bet on this big project with us. I have carried this project in my pocket for five years. I really don't know how it will happen, if I can't find any cast or investor. Finally, we handed this project to GMMTV and it is what it is. It was very long journey."

*Adapted from the original version of this article, published on ContentAsia's dedicated Awards platform on 15 June 2026.  
Access ContentAsia Awards Focus here*

**Thame and Po are both gentle. This seems to be something of a departure from the hi-drama tropes of early BL. Do you think we will see more of these kinds of characters?** "I hope so! I want to see more gentle man in the series. In my opinion, Man doesn't have to be portrayed as a tough person as we get used to seeing. Man has complicated emotions because we are human. I write Thame and Po's character based on this idea. I hope everybody will see a complicated feeling in both of them."

**What would you like the audience take-away to be?** "I hope everybody will find their own happiness. Free from social expectations. They can design their own path in life".





All3Media International is one of the leading independent distributors of television programming and formats in the UK. As the distribution arm of All3Media Group, All3Media International manages a distribution catalogue spanning more than 35,000 hours of content across all genres.

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### Trends & Outlook 2026

“Fewer commissions and tighter budgets are driving a sharper focus on strong, proven IP that can deliver across platforms, monetisation models, and stand out in a crowded market. Collaboration is becoming even more central, from funding and production to marketing and international rollout. The Asian market continues to grow locally and internationally in ambition. Recently **The Traitors India** aired on BBC in the UK, a testament to the strength of the local version and highlights the power of strong partnerships.”

### Genres

Thanks to our expansive and high-quality catalogue we are able to meet the diverse and evolving needs of our clients: from premium scripted drama, factual documentaries, lifestyle, wildlife, and both scripted and unscripted formats

### Original production/co-production

The global format phenomenon *The Traitors* from IDTV continues a successful rollout, with Prime Video's Hindi Series1 being awarded multiple Asian Academy Creative Awards and a second season coming up later on this year. We have also just announced Telegu language version also for Prime Video for 2026. Several other version will be coming to Asia in 2026 including Mongolia and Indonesia and few more to be announced! Australia and New Zealand will both launch a third season later year.

An Indian adaptation of Studio Lambert's bold reality format *Rise and Fall* has also proved hugely successful. This game of wealth and privilege, strategy and survival became Amazon MX Player's most-watched unscripted show in the streamer's history and has since been commissioned for a second season.

Recent scripted format successes have seen the Indian adaptation of *Shameless* through our partnership with Rose Audio Visual for SAB TV in India. All3Media International has an additional 11 scripted formats either launching or commissioned by various partners across the market.

### Top shows are...

#### Secret Service

Trailer ▶

A sophisticated globe-trotting series espionage thriller from Potboiler Productions, *Secret Service* stars Gemma Arterton as a senior MI6 officer in a desperate race to uncover evidence that a high-ranking UK politician may be working as a Russian asset. Genre: Thriller, Drama. Episodes/length: 5x1 hour.



Secret Service

#### The Circle (Format)

Trailer ▶

Bold, buzzy and addictive, *The Circle*'s blend of human drama, tech intrigue, and social strategy makes it one of the most innovative reality formats today. Genre: Reality. Length: 1 hour.



The Circle

#### Incredible Encounter: When Socrates met Confucius

Trailer ▶

The way we think in East and West can be traced back to two extraordinary men who lived over 2,000 years ago: Socrates and Confucius. This series follows their lives and ideas, comparing their views on human nature, ethics, and power as they confront humanity's biggest questions. Genre: Documentary, History. Episodes/length: 2x45 mins.



Incredible Encounter: When Socrates met Confucius

### Asia focus in 2026

“We are home to a very strong catalogue of IP across formats and finished content. Our experience with global hit **The Traitors** allows us to support partners, from development to production and rollout. On the scripted side, dramas like **Liar** from Two Brothers Pictures have proven highly adaptable formats. Our slate also continues to grow with returning titles and new projects such as a second season of **The Assassin** and recently launched **Secret Service**. Our key focus remains on the strength of the partnerships and the relationships we have built over time, based on trust and collaboration, which are central to everything we do in the region.”

Sabrina Duguet, EVP Asia Pacific





# The Big List Digital Directory 2026

ContentAsia's Big List is the only directory of its kind, fully focused on Asia with lists of the top content providers, services, channels, platforms and people in key markets, including streaming/OTT/online players, free-TV broadcasters, pay-TV platforms, production houses, streaming/broadcast tech, regulators/associations and others.

The directory, distributed monthly, offers video value-adds as part of ContentAsia's Screening Room.

The Big List's enhanced listings appear across multiple platforms, including year-round visibility at ContentAsia's online destination at [www.contentasia.tv](http://www.contentasia.tv).

The initial distribution is via email to our full database of over 12,900 verified addresses, with links to the enhanced listings to our full database every two weeks.

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## What's on where...

July 2026	20-22	Bangkok International Content Market (BICM) 2026	Bangkok, Thailand
August 2026	19-22	Beijing International Radio, TV & Film Exhibition 2026	Beijing, China
	26-27	ContentAsia Screenings & Conversations 2026	Bangkok, Thailand
	27	ContentAsia Awards 2026	Bangkok, Thailand
September 2026	10-13	Gwangju Ace Fair 2026	Gwangju, Korea
	10-16	Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) Market 2026	Toronto, Canada
	14-16	BCWW 2026	Seoul, Korea
October 2026	6-15	31st Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) 2026	Busan, Korea
	10-13	Asian Contents & Film Market 2026	Busan, Korea
	10-11	MipJunior 2026	Cannes, France
	12-15	Mipcom 2026	Cannes, France
	21 Oct-1 Nov	37th Singapore International Film Festival (SGIFF) 2026	Singapore
	26 Oct-4 Nov	39th Tokyo International Film Festival 2026	Tokyo, Japan
	28-30 Oct	TIFFCOM Market 2026	Tokyo, Japan
November 2026	6-9	Taiwan Creative Content Fest 2026	Taipei, Taiwan
	10-11	DICM 2026	Madinat Jumeirah, Dubai
	28-30	JAFF Market 2026	Indonesia
December 2026	1	ATF 2026 - ATF Leaders Dialogue	Singapore
	2-4	ATF 2026 - Market & Conference	Singapore
February 2027	21-26	The London TV Screenings 2027	London, U.K.
March 2027	15-18	Hong Kong Filmart 2027	Hong Kong
	19-26	Series Mania Festival 2027	Lille, Hauts-de-France
April 2027	13-15	World Content Market 2027	Moscow, Russia
May 2027	26-28	Busan Content Market 2027	Busan, Korea
June 2027	23-25	20th Content Tokyo 2027	Tokyo, Japan

\* As of 29 June 2026

The full list of events is available at [www.contentasia.tv/events](http://www.contentasia.tv/events)

# 2THE POINT

with Patrick Frater & Janine Stein

**The APOS Debrief: What Asia's Media Industry Heard in Bali**  
AI, Microdrama, Investment, Attention & Engagement across Asia



## GREENLIGHTS & GROUND TRUTHS

ContentAsia's Conversations with Asia's Creators



**Power Shift**  
Asia's New Media Map with Vivek Couto



**Sixty Seconds to Tears: Inside the Microdrama Hustle**

**How one Italian festival changed Asian Cinema**  
with Thomas Bertacche & Sabrina Baracetti



**Ding Zhong on Chinese Animation, Mythology and Into the Mortal World**



**How To Tame a Billion \$\$\$\$ Business**  
with Anne Chan

**Nezha 2 The Truths Behind A US\$2.25B Success**  
with Chris Chan



**Has He Cracked Streaming in Indonesia?**  
Mark Francis on Vidio's Local Content Strategy



# “Teach You a Lesson” at #1 in HK

Korean blockbuster beats back anime, U.S. drama, reality

Netflix’s “Teach You a Lesson” was the runaway hit among Hong Kong digital audiences for the week of 8-14 June, topping both the digital originals and overall TV charts with demand reaching nearly 25 times the market average.

Parrot Analytics’ data also shows YouTube’s “The Amazing Digital Circus” snapping at the heels of Prime Video’s “The Boys” in the digital originals rankings, with the animated series hitting 18x the

market average against 18.8x for “The Boys” – a gap so slim it’s almost a dead heat.

MGM+’s “Stranger Things” holdout “Spider-Noir” comes in at #2 among digital originals at 19.6x, with Netflix’s “Stranger Things” close behind at #3 on 19.2x.

Apple TV+ lands two titles in the bottom half of the top 10 while Canadian streamer Crave closes the chart at #10 with “Heated Rivalry”.

## Top 10 overall TV originals: Hong Kong

Rank	Title	Difference from Market Average (x times)
1	<i>Teach You A Lesson</i>	24.7
2	<i>Jujutsu Kaisen</i>	24.2
3	<i>Grey's Anatomy</i>	23.6
4	<i>Frieren: Beyond Journey's End</i>	22.1
5	<i>Saturday Night Live</i>	21.4
6	<i>Supergirl</i>	20.0
7	<i>Sesame Street</i>	19.8
8	<i>Spider-Noir</i>	19.6
9	<i>Re: Zero - Starting Life In Another World</i>	19.5
10	<i>Rick And Morty</i>	19.2

## Top 10 digital originals: Hong Kong

Rank	Title	Platform	Difference from Market Average (x times)
1	<i>Teach You A Lesson</i>	Netflix	24.7
2	<i>Spider-Noir</i>	MGM+	19.6
3	<i>Stranger Things</i>	Netflix	19.2
4	<i>The Boys</i>	Amazon Prime Video	18.8
5	<i>The Amazing Digital Circus</i>	YouTube	18.0
6	<i>Invincible</i>	Amazon Prime Video	16.2
7	<i>Love Island USA</i>	Peacock	15.0
8	<i>For All Mankind</i>	Apple TV+	14.6
9	<i>Your Friends And Neighbors</i>	Apple TV+	14.6
10	<i>Heated Rivalry</i>	crave	14.2

Date range: 8-14 June 2026

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 10 times more in demand than the average TV show in this market



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