

Disjointed initiatives may not curb piracy: Kollywood

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The Centre's anti-piracy initiative may not yield the desired results as legacy issues such as poor enforcement track record, unclear demarcation of responsibilities, and absence of cohesion among the stakeholders continue to weigh on anti-piracy efforts.

According to a FICCI-EY study conducted last March, the film industry loses around \$2.8 billion of its annual revenue to piracy.

Curbs on camcorder

In his Interim Budget speech, Finance Minister in-charge Piyush Goyal had announced that the government would introduce anti-camcording provisions in the Cinematograph Act to control the piracy menace. Accordingly, the Centre last week introduced a Bill in the Rajya Sabha to amend the Cinematograph Act, 1952, by including penal provisions for unauthorised camcording and duplication of films.

The proposed amendments state that any unauthorised recording or transmission of a copy of a film or any portion thereof, or abetment to such making or transmission is a punishable offence with an imprisonment of up to three years and a penalty up to ₹10 lakh or both.

Industry reaction

"The amendment will definitely help the film industry, which is losing 30-40 per cent of revenue to piracy but the proof of any work lies in its implementation so we need to wait and watch," said Kollywood producer G Dhananjayan.

Digital cinema distribution company UFO Moviez said the amendment will definitely be a deterrent but underscored that the fight against piracy cannot be a one-time or one-person activity.

"You have to constantly monitor the pirated websites, pursue the matter in court, hire technology people, pay cyber agencies... but an individual producer may not have the wherewithal to do



The Centre introduced a Bill in the Rajya Sabha last week to amend the Cinematograph Act, 1952 (file photo) © RAMAKRISHNA

all this," said Rajesh Mishra, CEO-India operations, UFO Moviez.

UFO Moviez offers 'invisible watermarking' technology which enables film-makers to trace the name and location of the theatre from where a film was illegally videographed, along with other coordinates such as time and date from a pirated CD or DVD.

"But producers themselves are not serious about pursuing piracy once the theatre run is over. They again think about piracy only during their next movie

release," Mishra added. The Tamil Film Producers Council (TFPC) said that its anti-piracy cell has tied up with the Tamil Nadu police department's Intellectual property rights enforcement cell (IPREC) and has filed nearly 50 FIRs against pirating websites including TamilRockers and Tamil Gun besides suspending their domains.

The Council also said it had removed over 60,000 links and 3,000 pages on Facebook and blocked over 18,000 pirated videos from YouTube.

There are other issues as well. "Theatre owners are saying they can be held responsible only if illegal recording is found in their projection rooms," said SR Prabhu, Treasurer, Tamil Film Producers Council. "Who can be held responsible if someone illegally records within the movie hall?"

CCTV installation

At its last meeting, the TFPC had asked theatre owners to deploy two bouncers for every show and install CCTV cameras inside the movie halls to monitor illegal recording in theatres. The council also warned that movies will not be distributed to theatres that do not comply with the two conditions.

"CCTV installation costs ₹50,000-₹1 lakh and bouncers charge ₹500 a day, which may not be feasible for all theatres, particularly those in rural areas," said Rakesh Gowthaman, MD, Chennai-based Vettri Theatres.

As the stakeholders fight their turf battle, it's business as usual for the pirates.