

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Mr. M. V. SHREYAMS KUMAR

AT THE

86th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

OF

THE INDIAN NEWSPAPER SOCIETY

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THROUGH VIDEO CONFERENCE

2024-2025

Good Morning, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me immense pleasure to welcome you to the 86th Annual General Meeting of the Indian Newspaper Society. Your presence today is a mark of the faith and trust you continue to place in this august body. On behalf of INS, I extend my deepest gratitude for your support and partnership. With your kind consent, I will take the Annual Report together with the Audited Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March, 2025, as read.

A Year of Resilience and Recovery

The past year has been one of resilience, recovery, and cautious optimism for our industry. Globally, newspapers are under unprecedented strain, with circulation and advertising collapsing in many developed markets. Yet, in India, our story is different. We remain steadfast, with newspapers continuing to be a trusted source of information, especially in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, where faith in print runs deep.

This resilience has not been easy. Inflationary pressures, rising costs of newsprint, distribution challenges, and the digital shift have all tested us. But time and again, the

Indian newspaper industry has shown an ability to adapt, to innovate, and to move forward. At the heart of it all lies our greatest strength: credibility. Safeguarding credibility is not just our responsibility - it is the very foundation of our survival.

Industry Performance: Revenues and Readership

Let me share some key figures that highlight where we stand today.

- Advertising revenues grew by 1% in 2024, with premium formats and event-led revenues performing strongly.
- Subscription revenues dipped by 1%, reflecting circulation pressures.
- Digital revenues remain under 5% of total revenues for most publishers, but they are growing at 10 -15% annually.
- The FICCI - E&Y report projects the print segment to grow at 1% CAGR till 2027, while advertising is expected to grow at 2% CAGR.
- On the other hand, circulation is expected to decline at (-) 2% CAGR, with many households reducing

newspaper reading from daily to just three to four days a week.

Even within these challenges, there is opportunity. Recent ABC figures show marginal growth for some newspapers, and the next wave of loyal readers is emerging from the growing base of educated young people entering the workforce. They need information and analysis to build their careers, and newspapers can fill this need with depth, trust, and authority.

Advertising: A Steady Pillar

Print continues to hold its own as an advertising medium. For premium categories such as real estate, automobiles, luxury products, education, and technology, newspapers remain the preferred platform for launches and brand-building campaigns.

Today, three sectors - automobiles, services, and education - each contribute around 15% of total print ad volumes. The top five categories - cars, two-wheelers, real estate, coaching, and jewellery - each account for more than 5%.

There is also strong untapped potential in regional markets. As affluence spreads across Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, consumption is rising faster there than in metros. Regional language papers, in particular, are poised for growth, and ad rates in these markets need correction to reflect their true value.

Circulation and Distribution Challenges

Distribution remains one of our biggest concerns. Traditional agents and vendors are increasingly drawn towards e-commerce and quick-commerce platforms, which offer better remuneration and flexible timings. As a result, the pool of newspaper distributors is shrinking and ageing.

At the same time, rising costs - volatile newsprint prices, increasing oil and power costs - are forcing publishers to consider cover price increases. While necessary, this move must be balanced carefully. A loyal and engaged reader base, built on strong brands and quality content, is the only way to sustain circulation and justify higher prices.

Diversification and New Revenue Models

One of the encouraging trends has been the diversification of revenue streams. Events already contribute 4 - 5% of total revenues, and this share is expected to rise to 7- 8% by 2027. Many publishers are exploring adjacent businesses such as packaging, transportation, and community-based initiatives.

There is also great potential in high-value niche products - special magazines, career-focused supplements, and lifestyle content. Digital experiments with podcasts, reels, and short-form video are helping us connect with younger audiences who prefer to consume news differently. Monetizing archives and exploring innovative content formats will be key to future growth.

The Rise of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence is transforming industries across the globe, and media is no exception. AI is no longer a distant prospect - it is here, and it is already reshaping how content is created, distributed, and monetised.

- Studies suggest that up to 50% of working hours in media could be automated or augmented by AI.

- Generative AI enables publishers to create hyper-personalized content, generate news summaries, video scripts, and even music.
- It enhances efficiency in fact-checking, subtitling, proof-reading, and translation - reducing costs and speeding up production.

At the same time, it poses challenges. Issues of misinformation, bias, intellectual property, and deepfakes must be addressed with strong governance. The truth is clear: AI will not replace people in media - but it will replace those without AI skills. We must invest in training and re-skilling our workforce to thrive in this new environment.

Publishers must also adapt to the shift from SEO (Search Engine Optimization) to GEO (Generative Engine Optimization), as audiences increasingly rely on AI-driven answer engines rather than traditional search.

Data Protection and Regulatory Landscape

Another significant development has been the passing of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDP Act). Under this law, publishers will be recognised as data

fiduciaries, with a duty to protect the personal data and privacy of readers. This will require immediate steps, including compliance frameworks and the appointment of Data Protection Officers. While challenging, this also offers us an opportunity to reinforce the bond of trust with our audiences.

The Road Ahead

Friends, the Indian newspaper industry has weathered storms before, and we will do so again. Print remains resilient, relevant, and respected. But our future strength will come from three pillars:

1. Credibility and Trust - the heart of journalism.
2. Innovation and Diversification - to meet changing consumer demands.
3. Collaboration and Efficiency - to manage costs and leverage shared infrastructure.

I am confident that with these, we will continue to play a vital role in India's media landscape for decades to come.

Conclusion

I extend my gratitude to all members of the Executive Committee, Chairmen & Chairpersons of various Committees for their support during my tenure. I would also like to thank the Secretariat team led by Ms. Mary Paul, for their tireless dedication. Together, we have built a resilient and respected body that is ready to embrace the opportunities and challenges ahead.

Thank you.

M. V. Shreyams Kumar
President, INS