

WAVES 2025 Sessions Explore Innovations in Sports and Technology

Saudi Arabia's Esports Ambitions Spotlights at WAVES 2025

Vision, Investment and Innovation Drive Saudi Gaming Growth

“Media and tech today are like a helmet in your kit—essential:” Ravi Shastri at WAVES 2025

Posted On: 02 MAY 2025 8:27PM by PIB Mumbai

Mumbai, 2 May 2025

Day 2 of WAVES 2025 in Mumbai featured two forward-looking discussions on the future of sports and esports, with particular focus on how media, technology, and storytelling are reshaping global engagement.

Gaming Revolution: A Bold Vision for the Future

In a high-impact fireside chat titled *“Building a Global Powerhouse: Saudi Arabia's Vision for Gaming & Esports”*, HE Faisal bin Bandar bin Sultan Al Saud, Chairman of the Saudi Esports Federation, presented the Kingdom's sweeping plans to redefine the global esports landscape. The session, moderated by Girish Menon, Chief Strategy Officer at Jetsynthesys, explored how the Kingdom's youth-driven policies, strategic investments, and global partnerships are transforming Saudi Arabia into an emerging hub for gaming and esports innovation.

With over 67% of its population identifying as gamers, Saudi Arabia is cultivating an ecosystem designed for long-term sustainability. From landmark events such as *Gamers Without Borders* to the hosting of the Esports World Cup, the country is positioning itself at the forefront of international competition.



The cornerstone of this vision is the *Saudi Esports Academy* which provides training across a range of fields—coaching, event production, game development—creating meaningful career pathways for young professionals. The Federation's efforts are also supporting the rise of content creators, fostering an inclusive and scalable industry built on community engagement and cross-border collaboration.

HE Faisal emphasized that Saudi Arabia's goal extends beyond tournaments. "This is about opportunity creation, ecosystem development, and showcasing what's possible when a country aligns resources, vision, and talent," he said. As the discussion revealed, the Kingdom's approach could well shape global gaming trends over the coming decade.

The Changing Face of Sports: Media, Technology and Human Connection

Earlier in the day, a dynamic panel on "*Sports, Technology, Entrepreneurship & Media – The REAL STEM*" brought together voices from across the sports ecosystem. The session was moderated by producer and entrepreneur Dheer Momaya and featured cricketing icon Ravi Shastri alongside Prashant Khanna (Jiostar), Nullah Sarker (Kosmos), Vikrant Mudaliar (Dream Sports), and Dhaval Ponda (Tata Communications).

Ravi Shastri shared his insights on cricket's transformation through media and technology. "Media and tech today are like a helmet in your kit—essential," he remarked, reflecting on how fan engagement and athlete branding have grown. He described his own journey as "a wave"—symbolic of both personal highs and the broader evolution of the sport.

Panelists pointed to technological advances such as immersive feeds, fantasy gaming, and AI-driven content personalization as tools reshaping how fans connect with sports. Vikrant Mudaliar underlined how fantasy platforms have turned audiences from passive viewers into active participants. Prashant Khanna highlighted inclusivity tools like sign language commentary and custom visual feeds.



Nullah Sarker stressed the importance of storytelling: “Fans don’t just follow stats—they follow people.” Echoing this, Dhaval Ponda noted how live sports remain the soul of global content consumption, with technology now enabling custom viewing experiences.

The session concluded with Shastri expressing optimism: “The future of sports, tech and media is limitless. We’re only just getting started.”

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(Release ID: 2126337)