

# Move over Big Screen!

## Make Space for the Digital Revolution!

Streaming Stardom: IIFA Digital Awards 2025 takes OTT Glitz to the next level! Digital audiences, assemble! The IIFA Digital Awards 2025 is here to celebrate the biggest, boldest, and most binge-worthy content that had us glued to our screens. From edge-of-the-seat thrillers to heartwarming dramas, these awards honour the best of Indian OTT and digital entertainment, proving that storytelling has officially gone beyond the silver screen! With the 25th edition of IIFA bringing the magic of Bollywood to Jaipur, the Sobha Realty IIFA Digital Awards, co-sponsored by NEXA, marks a revolutionary moment. This is where streaming stars shine, directors redefine cinema, and the best in digital entertainment gets its long-overdue moment in the limelight!



### Lights, Camera, Digital Action!



Get ready for an extra bonus night of entertainment, Jaipur! If you thought the grand spectacle of IIFA 2025 was all about Bollywood's biggest stars, think again! The Sobha Realty IIFA Digital Awards, co-presented by NEXA, is here to celebrate our true obsession-binge-worthy content that kept us glued to our screens all year long! And here's the best part, it's all happening as a special extra night of fun on March 8, 2025, right before the grand IIFA Weekend and Awards! Double the entertainment, double the magic!

In an industry that's constantly evolving, IIFA is staying ahead of the curve, recognizing OTT brilliance across categories like Best Film, Best Series, Best Director, Best Performance in a Leading Role, Best Reality or Non-Scripted Series, Best Docuseries, Best Original Story, and Best Title Track.

And trust us, the competition is sizzling hot! Leading the charge is the fan-favourite, critically acclaimed show *Panchayat*, which dominates the nominations with 10 nods. Following closely are two powerhouses, *Amar Singh Chamkila* and *Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar*, each securing 6 nominations.

### From Theatres to Thrilling Streams: The Rise of IIFA Digital Awards!

The IIFA Digital Awards were first introduced in 2023 to recognize the unparalleled impact of OTT content on our viewing habits. With audiences shifting from cinema halls to cozy couches and unlimited streaming marathons, IIFA knew it was time to celebrate this digital storytelling revolution! Fast forward to 2025, and we're already at the third edition of this game-changing event, now making its dazzling debut in Jaipur! So, Jaipurites, get ready because your city is about to become the epicenter of digital entertainment!

### The Heavyweights of Digital Excellence

- Panchayat, Season 3:** 10 nominations! The heartwarming, small-town comedy continues its winning streak with stellar storytelling and performances.
- Amar Singh Chamkila:** 6 nominations! The high-energy, music-fueled biopic has audiences and critics raving.
- Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar:** 6 nominations! Sanjay Leela Bhansali's grand spectacle is a visual and emotional masterpiece.

### A Night of Stars, Sizzle and Spectacular Performances!

The IIFA Digital Awards 2025 isn't just about trophies, it's about bringing the OTT world to life! This year, get ready for an entertainment explosion, featuring hilarious hosts, show-stopping acts, and the biggest digital stars!

**Global OTT Glamour:** Streaming superstars, visionary directors, and your favourite content creators will walk the green carpet in style!

## #IIFA JAIPUR



### Best Series Nominees: The Binge-Worthy Giants

- Panchayat Season 3:** The small-town comedy that continues to steal hearts with its charm!
- Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar** - Sanjay Leela Bhansali's breath-taking period drama.
- Kota Factory Season 3:** The beloved student-life saga that keeps getting better!
- IC 814: The Kandahar Hijack** - A nerve-racking thriller based on real events.
- Maamla Legal Hai** - A witty, sharp legal drama that's got everyone talking.

### Best Film: The Ultimate Digital Blockbusters

- Amar Singh Chamkila** - A musical biopic that captures the rise and fall of a Punjabi folk legend.
- Phir Aayi Hasseen Dilliruba** - The mystery romance thriller returns with more twists and turns.
- Agni** - A gripping action-drama packed with intensity.
- Sector 36** - A crime thriller that keeps you on the edge of your seat.
- Maharaj** - A historical drama with grand storytelling.

### Best Director: The Visionaries Behind the Screen

- Imtiaz Ali** (Amar Singh Chamkila)
  - Shuchi Talati** (Girls Will Be Girls)
  - Aditya Nimbalkar** (Sector 36)
  - Siddharth P Malhotra** (Maharaj)
  - Rahul Dholakia** (Agni)
- And let's not forget our powerhouse performances! Who will be crowned the King and Queen of Digital?

### Best Leading Actress Nominees

- Ananya Panday** (CTRL)
- Parineeti Chopra** (Amar Singh Chamkila)
- Taapsee Pannu** (Phir Aayi Hasseen Dilliruba)
- Preeti Pandit** (Girls Will Be Girls)
- Kriti Sanon** (Do Patti)

### Jaipur, Are You Ready?

The countdown is ON! March 8, 2025 is the date, and Jaipur Exhibition and Convention Centre (JECC) is THE place to be! Extra Bonus Entertainment Night! This isn't just an awards show, it's an electrifying tribute to digital excellence that's rewriting the

### Who's Leading the Streaming Charge?

This year's nominees prove that OTT is ruling the entertainment industry! From heartwarming village tales to high-octane thrillers, the Sobha Realty IIFA Digital Awards 2025 are set to honour the most spectacular performances and mind-blowing stories from the streaming universe! From thrilling biopics to edge-of-the-seat crime dramas, this year's nominations prove that digital storytelling has no boundaries. So, who's leading the charge in this year's race for streaming supremacy? Let's dive into the most anticipated nominees!

### Best Leading Actor Nominees

- Diljit Dosanjh** (Amar Singh Chamkila)
- Vikrant Massey** (Sector 36)
- Pratik Gandhi** (Agni)
- Pankaj Tripathi** (Murder Mubarak)
- Nawazuddin Siddiqui** (Rautu Ka Raaz)

# The Putin Interview: Stoking of a Nuclear War?

### ● Vice Admiral Vijay Shankar, PVSMA, AVSM (Retd)

On 06 February, 2024, Vladimir Putin breached his self-imposed hiatus on the Western media and offered a sitting to Mr. Tucker Carlson. This is an insight into world affairs and ramifications. The reason and timing of the interview, the Western media will have the world believe, was an attempt to influence the American presidential elections. 'Naked and provocative propaganda against President Joe Biden's Ukraine Policy,' claimed the detractors, which included the so-called 'liberal' media. And yet, the session comes at a time when NATO is suffering from pangs of 'Ukraine Fatigue,' and burden of the conflict has globally stressed economies, drain on military resources of the West following out their own preparedness, anxiety of nuclear escalation, and indeed, the third year of war and loss of lives has left the Ukrainian citizenry with fading appetite for the conflict.

In the meantime, Putin, in his inimitably sardonic style, set about delivering a primer to Tucker on Russian history. Beginning with the first East Slavic state, Kievan Rus, that arose in the 9th century, through the influence of the Byzantine Church, that gave to the state Orthodox Christianity, he arrived at the rule of Oleg the Wise (879 CE), a Varangian Prince, who founded an empire, which over three centuries, spread to cover the modern State of Belarus, Slavonic-Norse Russia and significantly, Ukraine. Putin appeared to emphasize that the unit of historical understanding was neither nations nor epochs but societies such as that which bound the Orthodox Christians together. This historical narrative, to Putin, established the civilizational connect with Ukraine and set the stage for Tucker's and obviously the West's disavowal of Russia's title to territories inhabited by cultural brethren.

In dragging Tucker through the common attributes of shared civilizational institutions, what really was Putin's aim? Was it to educate his viewers through Mr. Carlson or was it to show conviction that the West and NATO could do little to alter the new reality of Ukraine other than to accept it. Intervention, as Putin warned recently, would lead to nuclear war.

### ● Vice Admiral Vijay Shankar, PVSMA, AVSM (Retd)

threat could rise exponentially. Coming to the central issue of termination of the war in Ukraine, Putin made a revelation. A few weeks into the conflict, he disclosed that Ukraine was ready to sign a deal with Russia during peace talks in Istanbul (April 2022), until Western powers, led by the then British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, ordered Kyiv to scrap the deal. Negotiators had tentatively agreed on the outlines of an interim settlement, "Russia would withdraw to its position on 23 February, 2022, when it controlled part of the Donbas region (Donetsk and Luhansk), and in exchange, Ukraine would promise not to seek NATO membership, and instead, receive security guarantees from a number of countries." Putin then highlighted the impact of Boris Johnson's surprise visit to Kyiv on 09 April, 2022, its purpose, as he alleged, was to break off from talks and scuttle the deal for two key reasons, "Putin cannot be negotiated with, and the West was not ready for the war to end."

### ● Vice Admiral Vijay Shankar, PVSMA, AVSM (Retd)

## #WORLDVIEW

### THE PERILOUS BALANCE OF TERROR

Efforts to obtain authentic facts on details of the Johnson-Zelensky meeting through Britain's *Freedom of Information Act 2000* have thus far met with bureaucratic chicanery. While on ground, the British government has encouraged the continuation of the war through huge arm's shipments and incendiary rhetoric. When read in conjunction with the US Secretary for Defence statement of the same period, that the Biden administration's objective in arming Ukrainian forces is to 'see Russia weakened to the degree that it can't do the kinds of things that it has done in invading Ukraine,' lends credence to Putin's revelation. In the meantime, the European Union goes into strategic dither as France turns Hawk from a Dovish posture of the past. French President Macron's stance towards the war in Ukraine is at best, inconsistent. He has argued that Europe 'must get prepared for a long war' in order to put Ukraine in the best possible position for negotiations. He also defended his decision to keep talking with Putin, arguing that 'we

must do everything to make a negotiated peace possible." Differences over the response to the war have deepened between Paris and Berlin in recent weeks, after the German chancellor said that long-range Taurus missiles would need German soldiers on the ground in Ukraine, to look after them, and that was a limit that he was not prepared to cross. President Macron has angered his NATO partners by suggesting that sending Western troops could not be ruled out. In this ambience of contrariety, what may be deduced is the absence of resolve to either fuel the conflict towards a decision point or to sue for a negotiated peace. Macron's logic for peace appears skewed when he warned that Russia was seeking to extend its power and would not stop now. "If we let Ukraine lose this war, then for sure, Russia will threaten Romania, Poland, and Moldova," forgetting that NATO is bound to defend the former two being members, while public opinion in Moldova (over 60%) is against NATO membership.

What is becoming increasingly apparent is the lack of strategic solidarity in NATO's approach to the conflict, but more importantly, the inability to note that it is to the Kremlin's advantage to make this a conflict against NATO, for it frees Putin's strategic options. As the veil on the West's proxy war falls away, the West's rhetoric and discordant postures suggest the possibility of a mounting logic for a full-blown nuclear clash.



Russia will use tactical nuclear weapons. Yet, they persist with supporting the war with munitions and training in the entrenched strategic belief that tactical nuclear weapons are far less damaging than city-destroying high-yield nuclear weapons, and therefore (outrageously), more 'usable.'

## REOPENING PEACE TALKS

### THE PERILOUS BALANCE OF TERROR

Putin's exposé is the cause for several misgivings. Why did Western leaders want to stop Kyiv from signing a seemingly reasonable deal with Moscow? Did they consider the conflict a proxy war whose aim was the emancipation of Kremlin's power? Why is the NATO rhetoric suggesting a more robust intervention in the war? And, most importantly, what would it take to get back to the table?

To restore peace talks is, debatably, very challenging. Particularly so, given that both Ukraine and Russia have (at least, publicly) hardened their negotiating positions, significantly in recent months. But there are some indications that could help in piecing together a deal. One possible track back to the negotiating table is to resurrect the 'Black Sea Grain Agreement' of July 2022, in which Kyiv, Moscow, Turkey and the UN agreed to restart wheat exports from Ukraine's Black Sea ports. The deal had held strong, despite continued hostilities, allowing more than one million metric tons of grain to enter the world's 'insecure food markets.' This accord broke down in July 2023. Today, it is replaced by a precarious under-

## RAMIFICATION ON NUCLEAR ARMS CONTROL STRUCTURES AS A CONCLUSION

Russia blocked a UN agreement aimed at shoring up the much-delayed Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review in August 2022, citing concerns about clauses related to the situation in the Zaporizhzhia. The move highlights the negative effect that the conflict has had on the non-proliferation cause. But despite the failure of the NPT Review, there is a glimmer of hope in the endorsement of a framework for strategic arms limitation, 'The framework for a U.S.- Russian arms control arrangement is not perfect and will require concessions from both Washington and Moscow. But this is part of the arms control bargain, and the benefits, like the non-use of nuclear weapons in warfare since 1945, have consistently outweighed the perceived costs' and indeed, geopolitical markdovns.

The awkward strategic irony in all this is the status of Russian Uranium exports to The USA. A programme, ironically dubbed *Megatons to Megawatts* was part of a raft of non-proliferation efforts, undertaken 'cooperatively' at one time by Moscow and Washington, to sequester and dilute stocks of nuclear weapons and materials. The Program continues unabated, conflict or no conflict.

## By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

### ZITS



## By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman



## THE WALL

PEOPLE THINK I GO OUT OF MY WAY TO PISS THEM OFF. TRUST ME, IT'S NOT OUT OF MY WAY AT ALL.

## BABY BLUES

WHY ARE YOU WRITING IN THAT WEIRD BOOK? IT'S NOT A WEIRD BOOK. IT'S A JOURNAL. IT'S FOR WRITING ABOUT THINGS I THINK AND FEEL.

IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE GIVING YOURSELF HOMEWORK. YOU'RE FREE TO LEAVE ANYTIME.

MY HANDS GET SO CRACKED AND DRY IN THE WINTER! TSK! I MUST MOISTURIZE TEN TIMES A DAY!

MINE SEEM FINE.