

# New Film City will ensure 'ghar wapasi' of UP's cinematic talent

Unique Characteristics Of UP Cities Make For Interesting Stories For Films: Industry Experts

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**T**he rich tapestry of culture, cuisine, language, locations and stories has always drawn filmmakers to Uttar Pradesh. The changing content of entertainment has found a strong footing in UP for online and OTT mediums.

This was the view shared by some prominent faces of the industry who came together for the session titled 'Transforming the silver screen: Modern cinema culture' at the Lucknow edition of TOI Dialogues on Tuesday.

The upcoming Film City in Noida will lead to 'ghar wapasi' of UP's cinematic talent to their roots, said the panellists — filmmaker Rahul Mitra, actors Faisal Malik and Amit Sial, storyteller Maroof Umar and dastango Himanshu Bajpai. "You pick any industry: Mumbai or regional, artists, technicians, thinkers, writers, many of them have their roots in UP. The state's rich cultural diversity, cuisine, language, locations and stories have enthralled audiences since long. Time has now come to make films based on local narratives utilising resources locally," said Rahul Mitra, who is also an actor and cinema commentator.

He added that if Telugu, Tamil and other leading film industries can flourish in their respective state capitals there is no reason why Hindi film industry cannot be based in UP. "Yogi administration has succeeded in making UP the friendliest



**LIGHTS, CAMERA, UP!** (Top) Filmmaker Rahul Mitra, actors Faisal Malik and Amit Sial, storyteller Maroof Umar and dastango Himanshu Bajpai during a session on modern cinema culture; (Above) Film personalities pose with anchor Richa Anirudh on the sidelines of Lucknow edition of TOI Dialogues

shooting state by introducing administrative reforms and incentivization in the shape of subsidies. The only thing left is to nourish home-grown

talent which I'm sure the (Noida) Film City will usher in," he said.

Mitra said that Film City will increase ease of shooting films here

by offering end-to-end solutions to filmmakers and also open employment opportunities in the state and technology transfers. "Most of the people in the Hindi film industry in Mumbai like spot boys, technicians, actors, lyricists, singers hail from UP. A thriving film city on their home turf will get them back. I see this as 'ghar wapasi abhiyan'," he asserted.

Actor Amit Sial, who has shot to fame with OTT series like 'Mirzapur', 'Maharani' and 'Jamtara' shared that unique characteristics of UP cities make for interesting scripts and stories for the big screen as well as OTT. Asked the reason for the popularity of tales of crime and criminals (such as Mirzapur) from UP, Sial said: "I don't think such plots reflect a negative image of the state. The mass viewing of entertainment based on crime is a universal phenomenon." Actor Faisal Malik of 'Panchayat' fame said: "There is no dearth of exceptions. Films like 'Bareilly ki Barfi' or 'Shubh Mangal

Savdhan' were received well by the audience." Sial and Faisal said that with changing times in UP, the stories and narratives will also change.

The new age storytellers Maroof Umar and Himanshu Bajpai said every nook and corner of UP is full of stories. "The next five years would see the rise of local talent and storytellers who would bring out the best from their districts for the screen in their indigenous styles," they said.

Maroof said that UP's popularity on the big screen comes from nostalgia. "Nostalgia holds a calming effect on the minds and cities of UP such as Lucknow or Kanpur. They are a powerhouse when it comes to old world charm," he said.

Himanshu confessed that there was a gap between the understanding of the previous and present generations which poses a threat to the continuity of tradition. He said that he took to decoding techniques to help the younger generation understand stories of the past.