

Bengaluru: Populism, power and media take centre stage at 'MediaCon 2026'

•  Sat, Jan 24 2026 03:30:49 PM

Media Release

Bengaluru, Jan 24: The inaugural ceremony of the 10th edition of MediaCon International Conference and the Association fests of School of Communication and Media Studies (SCMS) at St Joseph's University, Bengaluru took place on Jan 23 in the University auditorium.

“Students must arm themselves intellectually, as forces such as populism and authoritarianism will now confront them as everyday decisions instead of being mere abstract political ideas,” opined film director Dibakar Banerjee on Friday, January 23, while speaking about power and dominant narratives urging young people to prepare for what he described as a 'big bad world' ahead, Banerjee said that every minute spent in 'practicing your dreams, flexing your brains, figuring out what you want to do and what you don't want to do' would help determine how well they survive what lies ahead as they navigate emerging social and political complexities.









The inaugural ceremony was presided over by the vice chancellor (VC) Dr Victor Lobo SJ. Registrar Dr Wajeed Sayed, dean of SCMS Dr Melwyn Pinto, head of department (HoD) of SCMS Dr Marudhu Pandiyan, and coordinators Shabin PK, Dr Rupa Peter, Ajay Chandran, Jenil George and Suhas Srinivas were present.

“Media is power. Use it with care, what you create can divide or heal,” the vice chancellor said, while reflecting on the ethical responsibility of media professionals during his address at the inaugural session. Speaking on how cinema, advertising, and animation influences discourse, he added that “creativity is also responsibility”, emphasising how media shapes society.

Themed Populism and Media, this edition of MediaCon examined how digital platforms, legacy media, and alternative voices shape political discourse, public opinion, and democratic participation in an increasingly polarised global context. “We live in a world of populism today”, said Dr Pinto while addressing its presence in all aspects of life including politics. “Democracy has been turned into a drama enacted by populist leaders in many countries today”.

The inauguration was followed by a panel discussion titled “From Gatekeepers to Algorithms” which was moderated by Dr Naresh Rao, professor at CHRIST (Deemed to be University), featuring panelists Subash Rai, digital editor at The Hindu, Ammu Joseph, journalist and author, and Pranav MB, communications lead at the Centre for Internet and Society (CIS).

The session explored how digital platforms amplify populism. “Rise of right wing populism is the problem,” said Rai, while discussing the shift from editorial gatekeeping to algorithm-driven business models that reward outrage and amplification on digital platforms further worsening the spread of divisive content and populist politics.

The first day of MediaCon drew many students, academicians, and industry professionals, signalling a strong start to the conference.