

UFO Moviez to add 1100 more digital screens this fiscal

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Hyderabad, 27 September

United Film Organisers (UFO) Moviez, a Mumbai-based digital cinema provider, is planning to install 1,100 digital screens across the country by the end of 2008. The company has so far digitised 900 screens.

"Digitisation of around 30 theatres is already in the process and we hope to touch 15,00 to 2,000 theatres across the country by the end of 2008. We had already installed digital cinema systems in 228 theatres in south and expect to increase them in proportion to our national expansion," Pankaj Jaysinh, chief executive officer (exhibitions and business development), UFO Moviez, told *Business Standard*, while declining to share investment figures.

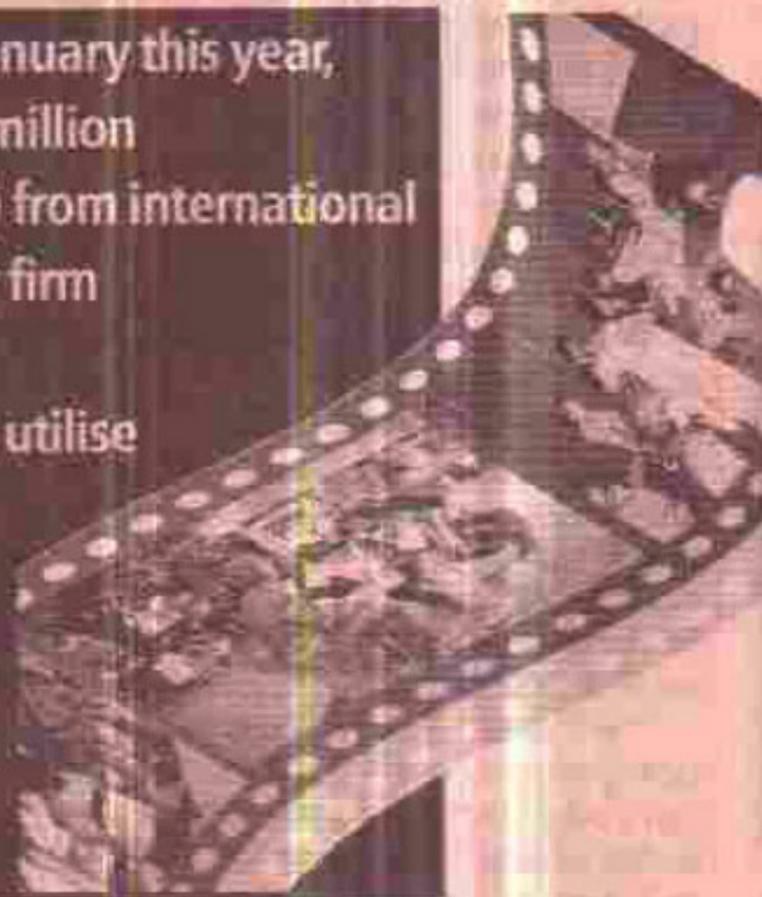
UFO had, in January this year, received \$22 million (Rs 90.2 crore) from international private equity firm 3i Group. It proposes to utilise part of these funds to finance its expansion plans.

"We have adopted a lease-rent model wherein the equipment is provided by the company to the theatre against a refundable security deposit. This deposit will be there with the company as long as the latter uses the UFO system," he said.

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Rs 15 lakh for installing the equipment comprising a server and a digital projector is borne by the company.

Stating that the company had multiplex majors including Cinemax, Adlabs, Inox and Sathyam Cinemas as its customers, Jaysinh said negotiations were in final stages with PVR Cinemas for a similar tie-up.

The company had entered into a 'mutually-beneficial' agreement with RK Films for digitising legendary actor Raj Kapoor's classics early this year.

"RK Films felt that Raj Kapoor's library should be available at many cinemas across India and of good quality. Typically, all the classics are available on

wornout prints and no new prints are struck because of commercial viability. Going digital was the only solution," Jaysinh said. In the first batch, he said, UFO has selected 7 movies from the RK library, the first one being Sangam.

"The other movies that are being digitalised are Mera Naam Joker, Bobby, Satyam Shivam Sundaram, Prem Rog, Ram Teri Ganga Maali and Henna. The digitised movies are scheduled for theatrical release in 70 mm format by Diwali, distribution of which will be handled by UFO," he said.