

# The grind meets glory

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Valorant turns five in India, but the spotlight isn't on Riot—it's on the players. From café clutches to campus champions, this is a love letter to a gaming community that didn't just log in—they leveled up the scene

**B**ack in 2020, when Valorant first popped up on Indian PC screens, it wasn't just another shooter—it was a spark. And now, five years in, Riot Games is making it crystal clear: the game's fifth anniversary isn't about the company. It's about you, the players who clicked, clutched, and carried.

**Arun Rajappa, Country Manager, India & South Asia, Riot Games**, put it simply: "It's meant to celebrate people who've been with the game for five years and grinded Valorant with us."

So, what's cooking? Think community stories, player-first content, vibrant PC café events, and a deep dive into the desi side of gaming with art and cultural tributes. This is

not just nostalgia marketing. It's a thank-you note—one that feels handwritten in every local dialect.

## ▼ India isn't just playing catch-up. It's leading the charge.

Gaming in India used to be the side dish. Today, it's the main course. Rajappa calls it like it is: India is a "booming economy with a massive Gen Z population." And these aren't just players, they're creators, competitors, and catalysts.

Valorant's homegrown ecosystem is proof. The Valorant Challengers South Asia (VCSA) circuit is no joke. It's become a hotbed for fresh talent and a magnet for massive audiences. But beneath all that glitz? A quietly

powerful movement of city-based teams, emerging organizers, and mad-skilled players building momentum from the grassroots up.

It's not just hype. Riot is throwing serious weight behind the scenes:

- Low-latency servers to keep matches smooth.
- Player support systems that respond fast and fair.
- Competitive policies that double down on inclusivity and integrity.

This isn't about parachuting into India with a global brand. It's about planting real roots.

#### ▼ From Donkey Kong to Dust 2 and beyond

Here's the twist: Rajappa isn't just a suit. He's a gamer. And not in the LinkedIn-bio kind of way. We're talking Donkey Kong Junior. Quake. FIFA. The works.

That gamer DNA bleeds into how Riot builds its India operations. The team doesn't show up at college fests or PC cafés to give speeches. They show up as fans. They queue up for demos. They vibe with the crowd.

"We're building something we would've wanted to be part of as players," Rajappa says.

And it shows. From Kolkata's underground LAN crews to Pune's café squads, talent is bubbling. Riot isn't picking favorites (well, almost—Global Esports got a nod), but their goal is clear: make it easier for every cracked player to climb, compete, and maybe one day go global.

#### ▼ Not just competitive. Safe and supportive too.

You can't build an empire if the walls are paper thin. Riot gets this. Which is why trust and safety aren't afterthoughts, they're core systems.

In-game, players get:

- Auto chat/voice moderation tools that clean up toxicity.
- Manual report review systems that take complaints seriously.

But beyond that, Riot's also thinking big on inclusivity. The Game Changers program is already offering women-led teams their space to shine. And yes, Riot's teams have seen it firsthand more women are stepping into the scene at campus events and cafés.

This is how you build a competitive space



**ARUN RAJAPPA**, Country Manager,  
India & South Asia, Riot Games

that lasts: by making sure it doesn't burn players out or shut them down.

#### ▼ The next five years? All about the players

So what's the real game plan? What's next?

Here's the truth: Riot might be designing the battlefield, but it's the players who are writing the story. Every college scrim, every LAN final, every solo queue grind; it's part of a bigger, weirder, and wildly inspiring movement.

"We just want to cheer," Rajappa says. "Whether it's two college teams or a pro match, we're fans first."

That's the heart of it. Riot's role in India isn't to dictate the meta. It's to build the stage, set up the lights, and let the community take the win.

#### ▼ Final frag

Valorant's five-year run in India is more than a milestone. It's a mirror—one that reflects a gaming culture finding its feet, its fire, and its future. Riot Games isn't leading the parade. They're holding the banner.

The players? They're already marching.

And if you listen closely at the next LAN party, or in the buzz of a midnight rank grind, you'll hear it loud and clear:

India's gaming story is just getting started. ■