



CREATIVE WORLD

Web series gives freedom to experiment: Byomkesh actor

KOLKATA, OCT 16 /-/- Two days after 'Byomkesh Bakshi' made his web debut on digital content platform Hoichoi, actor Anirban Bhattacharya, who was essaying the role of the Bengali sleuth, said unlike feature films, the concept of continuity in style was not essential in the new medium. The actor, known for his performances in 'Eagler Chokh' and 'Dhanonjoy', said the digital medium gave him more freedom to experiment with the look and feel of the character. "There is no need to maintain continuity between different episodes in a web series. You can reinvent yourself in every episode while sticking to some basic traits and characteristics which the role demands," he told PTI.

The first episode streamed two popular stories of Byomkesh - 'Satyanweshi' and 'Potheo Kanak'. About his preparations, Bhattacharya said, "I have tried to project him as a crime-buster as well as an ordinary human. To think of it, the character has four to five sides to it and I tried portraying them all." The actor also said that he made his preparations without thinking too much about others who had donned the dhotti-clad detective's hat in the past. "As an admirer of author Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay, who epitomised 'Bengaliness' through his writing, the portrayal of fictional characters, including Byomkesh, I tried to depict my understanding of him," Anirban said. The second episode will be streamed on October 21 based on two more popular stories - Makorshar Rosh and Arthamanartha.

Asked if the audience would be receptive to the new series after multiple films and soaps on the sleuth's exploits, the actor said the viewers show no sign of fatigue. "The box office success of the recent Byomkesh and Feluda movies show that the Bengali sleuths are still very popular with the audience."

Amazon, Microsoft launch deep learning platform

SAN FRANCISCO, OCT 16 /-/- Amazon Web Services (AWS) and Microsoft have teamed up to launch an open-source and deep learning interface 'Gluon' that will help developers to deploy machine learning models across several platforms. According to a report in ZDNet, the interface would give developers a place where they can prototype, build, train and deploy machine learning models. "Today's reality is that building and training machine learning models requires a great deal of heavy lifting and specialised expertise," said Sivasubramanian, Vice President of Amazon AI, who was quoted as saying, "We created the Gluon interface so building neural networks and training models can be as easy as building an app." Sivasubramanian added, "The companies claim that 'Gluon' is a concise, easy-to-understand programming interface compared to other offerings, and it gives developers a chance to quickly prototype and experiment with neural network models without sacrificing performance. "We believe it is important for the industry to work together and pool resources to build technology that benefits the broader community," added Eric Boyd, corporate vice president of Microsoft AI and Research. "Machine learning has the ability to transform the way we work, interact and communicate. To make this happen we need to put the right tools in the right hands and the 'Gluon' interface is a step in this direction," Boyd added. (PTI)

Anuradha Roy's next a gripping tale of India in 21st century

NEW DELHI, OCT 16 /-/- DSC Prize winner Anuradha Roy will come out with her next book in June 2018 and the novel will span India's 20th century from the 1930s through independence to the 1990s. Titled 'All The Lives We Never Lived', the book will be published by Hachette India. "All The Lives We Never Lived" is the story of Myshkii and his mother Gayatri, a rebellious, alluring artist-heroine who is driven to abandon home and marriage and follow her primal instinct for freedom. Freedom of another kind is in the air across all of India, and in Germany the Nazis have come to power. At this point of crisis, a German artist from Gayatri's past seeks her out. His arrival ignites passions she has long been forced to suppress. What follows is Gayatri's life as pieced together by her son, a journey that takes him through India and Dutch-held Bali. Excavating the roots of the world in which he was abandoned, he comes to understand the connections between volcanic strife at home and a war-torn universe freed from patriarchy. The scale of Anuradha Roy's novel is matched by its power as a parable for our times, the publisher says. Its depiction of the contrasting ideas of Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore, of the limits of nationalism when confronted by cosmopolitanism, makes it a spell-binding saga centred on people trying to make sense of their lives. Roy's previous book 'Sleeping on Jupiter' was longlisted for the Man Booker Prize and won the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature last year. Speaking about the acquisition, Poojomi Chatterjee, Editor-in-Chief of Hachette India, says, "This is a beautifully crafted novel that embodies the restraint that is quintessentially Anuradha - in its evocation of loss, pain and love." (PTI)

Vidya enjoying being a CBFC member

MUMBAI, OCT 16 /-/- Actor Vidya Balan, who is one of the board members of Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), today said she is enjoying her new role. In August this year, the National Award-winning actor was appointed as part of the reconstituted Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC). "I am enjoying being a board member. A lot of people don't know what it means to be a board member... We don't watch all films, only when there is a problem we see the film. So I have seen very few films, which is a good news," Vidya told reporters here at the trailer launch of her upcoming film 'Tumhari Sulis'. On the board, Vidya is joined by Gautami Tadiamalla, Narendra Kohli, Naresh Chandra Lal, Neil Herbert Nongkyrni, Vivek Agnihotri, Waman Kendre, TS Nagabharana, Ramesh Patange, Vani Tripati Tikoo, Jeevitha Rajasekhar and Mihir Bhuta. The new board members were announced on the same day when Pahlaj Nihalani was sacked as the CBFC chief and replaced by noted lyricist Praseen Joshi. (PTI)



Making healthcare affordable: Vested interests keep reforms at bay

Dr Arun Mitra & Dr G S Grewal

KOLKATA, OCT 16 /-/- The shocking stories of infants dying in hospitals in our country even after 70 years of Independence should ideally have shaken the 'collective conscience' of the society. These deaths are reflective of the pathetic state of affairs of healthcare in the country. The tragedy is that we have been quite tolerant and have accepted it to be a fate accomplished. Worse is that, instead of debating the ways to improve the state of affairs, those responsible for such state of affairs are busy in a blame game. According to the National Health Policy 2017 of the government, as many as 6 crore people in India slip down 'below the poverty line' after spending and exhausting all their resources on treatment. Nearly 40 percent of hospitalised patients borrow money for treatment and get entangled in that for very long periods. About 25 percent of them have to sell their property to meet the expenses on treatment. It may not be an exaggeration to say that quality healthcare and treatment are a luxury in India today.

Barring a few reputed institutions, like the AIIMS or PGI Chandigarh, the healthcare system has virtually collapsed. Even primary healthcare has gone beyond the reach of the common man. Not that there are not any hospitals and primary health centres available at the accessible distances: this is only

because these are not run and managed properly. Most of these health centres remain without doctors. The doctors are either not posted or they prefer private practice to their official duties. With the emergence of the (infamous) corporate hospitals across the country, a wrong perception about the availability of better healthcare has been built up. It is anybody's guess as to how many people can afford treatment in such hospitals.

In fact, it is the crass commercialisation resorted to by such hospitals that have led to the decline in healthcare across the country. The culture of cuts and commissions has percolated right to the bottom that even the basic healthcare comes at an exorbitant price. The problem lies at the decision-making level and policy level. It is basically the vested interests and the conflict of interest of those who matter that do not allow any reform in the healthcare system. Unfortunately those who are supposed to bring in reforms to make health care accessible to all do not feel the pinch of the problem that exists today. The polity and the bureaucracy get all the benefits from the government but in practice support private investment in health care instead. It is a double whammy for the poor and the common man. While on the one hand the hospital charges are unaffordable, the

expenses on drugs are equally crucial. In the absence of a proper drug pricing policy, the prices of drugs are inhumanly exorbitant.

For example, a medicine that one should be able to get for Rs 10 is available in the market for not less than Rs 100; in certain cases many times more. Disease is a compulsion. Nobody falls ill of one's own volition. Even when the person knows that he is being cheated, he has no option to buy. It is to pay through the nose. But not everybody is lucky to be able to pay. Good health is directly related to the right to life. When the state fails to provide good healthcare to its people, it indirectly violates their right to life. And it is not something very difficult to provide to the people. There is a huge physical infrastructure available across the country from the primary to tertiary level. Every year tens of thousands of crores are allocated and spent on healthcare by the government. But it does not reach the right people. If the money is properly and judiciously spent and if responsibility is fixed, it will not be difficult to provide affordable healthcare to people. How is it that a government-run civil hospital in a district headquarters with massive infrastructure and adequate funds stands no comparison to a privately-run hospital with far less infrastructure? We need to learn the lessons. (IPA)

Facebook doesn't hire journalists, says its COO

SAN FRANCISCO, OCT 16 /-/- As people debate Facebook's role in influencing people during the US presidential elections by Russian ads and fake news on the platform, the company's COO Sheryl Sandberg has stressed that the social media giant is not a media organisation, and therefore does not hire journalists. Sandberg said that Facebook is run by technical workers and engineers and according to her, the company does not produce news content. "Theoretically it can't be a media company. In an interview with Axios-based news website Axios on Thursday, she said, "At our heart we are a tech company. We hire engineers. We don't hire reporters. No one is a journalist." "We don't cover the news. But when we say that, we're not saying we don't have a responsibility. In fact we're a new kind of platform as our size grows, we think we have more responsibility," the executive was quoted as saying. Business Insider said a firm that is a major source of news and information for people, generates billions in ad revenue and is producing its own original television shows is classified as a media company and Facebook does all of that. "We don't claim, Facebook hired former NBC anchor Campbell Brown in January to head up the company's news division and work with other journalists to maximise their use of Facebook's platform. But reportedly, Facebook does not want to harm its \$500 billion valuation by admitting it is a media company. If the company says that it is a media firm, it would open the platform up to regulatory rules in the US and other countries. Facebook would rather avoid that. Business Insider said Britain was already considering regulations on our platforms... and Facebook more like a media company. Meanwhile, on the Russian ad issue, Sandberg said the election meddling on the Facebook platform "shouldn't have happened" and she wouldn't discuss Russia or Trump. "We know we have a responsibility to prevent everything we can from this happening on our platforms... and so we told Congress and the Intelligence committees that when they are ready to release the ads, we are ready to help them," she said. Sandberg said that if the Russian-linked ads were posted by "real people" and not fake accounts, Facebook would have let their content remain on the site. "When you allow free expression, you allow free expression." "Facebook owes the American people an apology. Not just an apology, but determination for our role in enabling Russian interference during the election," she said. (PTI)



Actors Peter Dinklage, Sam Rockwell and Francis McDormand arrive for the UK premiere screening of 'Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri', on the closing night of the British Film Institute (BFI) London Film Festival at the Odeon, Leicester Square in central London, Britain.—REUTERS

Ayan wants Brahmastra to be biggest success ever

MUMBAI, OCT 16 /-/- Director Ayan Mukerji is all excited for one of his most ambitious project 'Brahmastra' and hopes the film becomes 'the biggest success of his career as well as of the film industry'. "It's the biggest project of my life. All my hopes are pinned on this film. I hope it becomes the biggest success. I am very excited about the cast but I hope the film gets even bigger than the cast." The cast - Amitabh Bachchan, Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt all come together "because of the story and theme of the film", Ayan said, speaking at the opening ceremony of the Jio MAMI 19th Mumbai Film Festival on Thursday here. Earlier tentatively titled "Dragon", "Brahmastra" was renamed and announced by producer Karan Johar only two days back on the 75th birthday of megastar Amitabh. (PTI)

Varun's wax figure to feature at Hong Kong's Madame Tussauds



MUMBAI, OCT 16 /-/- Actor Varun Dhawan is the latest Bollywood celebrity who will have his wax statue featured at Hong Kong branch of Madame Tussauds. The 30-year-old actor is the youngest Indian to have made the list and said getting his own wax idol is one of the coolest things he has done. Varun took to Instagram to make the announcement. "MADAME TUSSAUDS coming soon. This is probably one of the coolest things that I have done. Getting my own statue is something I didn't expect this early on in life. Thank you Madame Tussauds for making me the youngest Indian to make it to your elite list. #dontstopbelieving," the "Badrinath Ki Dulhania" star wrote,

alongside a picture which shows him giving his measurements for the statue. The official Twitter account of the wax museum posted an update saying, "Bollywood superstar @varun_dvn is having his world-first figure in @TussaudsHK. He will unveil his figure in Hong Kong in early 2018 too!" Next year, Varun will join other stars such as Amitabh Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Kareena Kapoor and Hrithik Roshan in the Bollywood Superstar Collection. Madame Tussauds Hong Kong also features wax figures of world leaders such as PM Narendra Modi, Mahatma Gandhi, among others. (PTI)