



Baldwin compares Farrow to 'To Kill a Mockingbird' accuser

LOS ANGELES, JAN 30 /-/-/ Alec Baldwin has compared Woody Allen accuser Dylan Farrow to "To Kill a Mockingbird" character Mayella Ewell, who falsely accused an African-American man of rape. In wake of the massive sexual harassment involving Harvey Weinstein, many celebrities have regretted working with Allen, who has been accused of sexual abuse by Dylan Farrow, his adopted daughter and former partner Mia Farrow. Baldwin, who had expressed support to Allen earlier as well, tweeted, "One of the most effective things Dylan Farrow has in her arsenal is the 'persistence of emotion'. Like Mayella in 'To Kill a Mockingbird', her tears/exhortations are meant to shame you into belief in her story."

"But I need more than that before I destroy someone, regardless of their fame. I need a lot more," he added. Baldwin, who has collaborated with Allen on three projects also referred to Moses Farrow, another adopted child by Mia and Allen, who claims the abuse allegations are false. "To say that Dylan Farrow is telling the truth is to say that Moses Farrow is lying. Which of Mia's kids is the honest one and which did not? Baldwin tweeted. In a statement to The Hollywood Reporter, Dylan responded to Baldwin, "It's interesting that Baldwin chooses to dismiss the judgments of Justice Wilk and Prosecutor Frank Maco, who reviewed all of the evidence instead of just selected bits and pieces," Dylan said. Dylan accused the director of sexually abusing her in the early 1990s while she was a child. She reiterated her allegations in a 2014 New York Times op-ed and other articles. She has often criticised Hollywood actors for not taking her claims seriously. Dylan's allegations have picked up steam in wake of the #MeToo movement following her brother Roman Farrow's expose of Harvey Weinstein. Roman is Allen and Mia's biological child. (PTI)

Big B sends handwritten note to Ranveer

MUMBAI, JAN 30 /-/-/ Megastar Amitabh Bachchan sent a handwritten note to Ranveer Singh praising him for his performance in his latest release "Padmaavat". Calling the letter his "award", an overwhelmed Ranveer took to Twitter to share the picture of the note and a bouquet. Bachchan sent him after watching the Sanjay Leela Bhansali period drama. "Mujhe mera award mil gaya (I have got my award)" @SBachchan, the actor, who is receiving rave reviews for his portrayal of Sultan Alauddin Khilji in the magnum opus, captioned the tweet. Ranveer, 32, also received a handwritten note in 2015, after Bachchan had watched "Bajirao Mastani". Featuring Deepika Padukone in the lead, "Padmaavat" also stars Shahid Kapoor, Jim Sarbh, Aditi Rao Hydari and Raza Murad. (PTI)

Desert Fest: A melting pot of Jaisalmer's pride

JAISALMER, JAN 30 /-/-/ Shimmering ghagras, colourful turbans, gravity defying moustaches and majestically decorated camels defined the opening day of the annual Desert Festival being held here. The three-day festival which began yesterday and is organised by Rajasthan Tourism, and District Administration of Jaisalmer attracted thousands of tourists from all over the country and the world to the Golden City. The festival brought forth a paraphernalia of the artistic and cultural riches of the desert amidst a crowd that immersed itself into the vibrant mood of the festival, despite the scorching heat. "There are 8,000 to 9,000 people at the venue at any given time, and the entire festival has over 40,000 people visiting," district administrator Bhagirath Singh told PTI. The festival kicked off with the Shobha Yatra - a procession of folk dancers, musicians playing dhol and shehnais, and ornately decorated camels mounted by men handsomely dressed in the traditional Rajasthani attire. The procession began from the

picturesque Gadisar lake and skirted through the narrow, winding lanes of the Jaisalmer city to the Shahid Poonam Singh Stadium. Bystanders and foreign tourists were seen enthusiastically joining in the celebrations, trying to match steps with the dancers. The festival has become an annual winter event since 1979, since the local administration first started organising it with the hope of attracting tourists to the barren desert of Jaisalmer. The National Film Award winning Bengali movie Shonar Kella in 1974 first captured the interest of tourists, who began to visit the city in order to see the 12th century fort of Jaisalmer, which is built in yellow sandstone. The Golden Fort - which appears to rise out of the desert - provided the perfect backdrop for the various cultural events and competitions. The events included a turban tying competition for Indians and foreigners. While most local participants deftly wrapped colourful turbans around their head in under a minute, foreign tourists were seen struggling with the length of the cloth, entangling themselves

in the nine yards of the colourful fabric, drawing peals of laughter from the onlookers. Rob Carter, a 35-year-old UK resident managed to tie a near-perfect turban in under three minutes. "This is my second visit to India. My wife found out about the Desert Festival while planning this trip, and we decided to give it a go," said Carter. "I love that they gave us the turban after the competition," he said. Other events, including the moustache competition, Mr Desert competition, and a beauty pageant competition provided tourists a chance to immerse themselves in the vibrant culture of Rajasthan. "All the events at the festival are being judged by district level government officers instead of elected local political representatives to ensure that there is no bias," Singh said. Folk dances of different parts of India, including Kashmir, Punjab and Gujarat, performed with the illuminated Jaisalmer Fort glowing against the night sky, and a thin cloud of dust hanging over the audience, marked the end of the first day of the Desert Festival, which closes on January 31. (PTI)



Centre Stage Creations present 'Stories in a Song' - A collage of music, theatre & literature on 3rd & 4th February Saturday & Sunday from 6.30 pm onwards the musical play directed by Sanil Shanbag and written by Anam Parvez, Ashan Pervez, Ashok Mishra, Vikram Phukan, Anil Deshmukh, Parva Naresh. Artists starring: Subrajyoti Barot, Gopal Tiwari, Ketki Thattai, Namit Das, Santosh Tiwari, Mansi Multani, Nishi Doshi, Trupri Khamkar, Makarand Deshpande, Shailesh Hojmadhi, Gagan Riar, Saurabh Nayyar, Anantika Ganguly, Jim Sarbh, Trisha Kale, Ajitesh Gupta. Music composed by Shubha Mudgal and Aneesh Pradhan in both Hindi and English languages at GD Birla Sabhagar. Stories in a Song features vignettes laced with humour and wit, that tell stories of music and music making from history, literature, and theatre. The canvases of stories is rich and varied; a little known musical footnote from the freedom struggle; an exuberant satire on colonialism in the nautanki style; a poignant tale of a family of working musicians struggling to adapt to changing tastes; the story of a street smart modern day film composer who pinches an exquisite handish by a classical singer, are only some of the gems performed LIVE by a group of enormously talented actor-singers. For booking click now at <https://in.bookmyshow.com/kolkata/plays/stories-in-a-song/E700069060>. Ticket Price ranging from Rs. (750-3000) (EOIC)

Asia's oldest arch dam to screen laser show on history

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JAN 30 /-/-/ The wall of a 555 foot high arch dam in Kerala, the oldest such one in Asia, will soon turn as the screen of a laser show depicting the eventful history of the southern state. The magnificent arch dam in high-range Idukki, the second such dam in the world, is getting ready to turn a tourist hotspot by hosting the laser show on its sprawling wall. If the project becomes a reality, it will be

the biggest screen in the world to host such a laser show, official sources said. Located between the huge "Kuravan" and "Kurathi" hills across the river Periyar, the 555 foot high and 650 foot wide Idukki dam is considered as a technological marvel. The commercial operations of the power house was commissioned in 1976 by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. The Hydel Tourism Department, under the Kerala State

Electricity Board, has submitted a detailed project report to the state Tourism Department for "Kuravan" and "Kurathi" development of the dam area, including commencing of the laser show. The report of the Rs 26 crore project would be submitted to the Centre soon for the funds, a senior official said. "The laser show is planned to be screened on the dam wall surface, which is 500 feet high and 600 feet wide. It

Not being fit is limiting for an actor: Parineeti

MUMBAI, JAN 30 /-/-/ Actor Parineeti Chopra says she is happy that the variety of roles being offered to her has increased since she underwent weight loss two years ago. Taking a break from films in 2016, Chopra spent most of her time working on her physical fitness, and the actor said it paid off as she got Rohit Shetty's "Golmaal Again" only because she "looked fitter" than before. Asked if filmmakers began viewing her differently after her weight loss, she said, "I think yes. It is not necessary in a typical way that 'Now, she is looking sexy so, we will look at her in a different way.' Not at all. 'It is not like that. Our directors are looking at her beyond all of this. They just saw that I could do something different,' she said. Chopra said staying fit gives filmmakers a chance to visualise an actor in various roles. "When you look a certain way, your expectations from your person are of a particular type, that may be she can only do these many roles," she said. "But when you give them a shock like this, they see you in a different way, which is why I got 'Golmaal Again', because the girl had to do a lot of action in the film. I don't think I would have gotten it had I not been fit," the actor said. Chopra was speaking at the launch of this month's edition of Grazia magazine, with her on cover. The actor will next be seen in "Sandep Aur Pinky Paraar" co-starring Arjun Kapoor, and also has Karan Johar's production, "Kesari", opposite Akshay Kumar. The film will go on floors next month. (PTI)

CREATIVE WORLD

I choose gap between films over non-exciting work, says Pooja



MUMBAI, JAN 30 /-/-/ Pooja Chopra is back on the big screen after a gap of two years and the actor says she prefers a long wait over featuring in films she does not believe in. The Miss India-turned-actor, who will next be seen in Neeraj Pandey's "Aiyaa", made her Bollywood debut opposite Vidyt Janwalkar in "Commando" four years ago. "I don't enjoy the gap but good script, cast and crew are not easy to get. It is difficult for me to put myself into something I don't want to be in. The films that came my way weren't the ones I wanted to be a part of. That's why there were more 'nos' to scripts than 'yes's", Pooja told PTI in an interview.

The actor was last seen in the forgettable film, "Yea Toh Two Much Ho Gaya" in 2016. Pooja said that breaks between films bother her but she is ready to take on the challenge and wait for good content to come her way. "I am going to be lying if I say the gap doesn't bother. But I don't like to force myself to do something I am not up for. I'd rather don't do anything at all. I am rather okay with the gap than do films I don't find exciting enough." She also starred in Neeraj's short film, "Ouchh", featuring with her "Aiyaa" co-star Manoj Bajpayee. Pooja said things did not turn up after the short and the full reminded her of the times like "Commando". "I again wondered that if people like my work so much, why am I not getting offers that I want? After 'Ouchh' also, I spent a month thinking where am I lacking."

The actor, who plays an Army officer in the film, said "Aiyaa" came her way at the last minute as a "shocker". "I got the call from the casting director, who said Neeraj is keen to have me on board. Then Neeraj and I had a small conversation on phone. He explained the role to me and we were good to go. I didn't have the time to get excited about it because I just had one day to sign the contract, do my fittings with my designer and then fly to Kashmir because the next day was our shoot. It was quick," she said. Also featuring Sidharth Malhotra and Rakul Preet Singh, the film will clash with Akshay Kumar's "Padman" on February 9. (PTI)

Writers must weave tales to enthuse young readers: Ramendra Kumar



BHUBANESWAR, JAN 30 /-/-/ Children take keen interest in stories and writers or story tellers must churn out tales which can entertain and enthuse young ones, says noted writer Ramendra Kumar. This will mean away the young minds from the distractions of the virtual world, said the well-known award winning children's writer. "The notion that children are not interested in stories is incorrect," Kumar said while narrating his experience at Jaipur Literature Festival, where he was invited to participate. Author of at least 33 books, Kumar said he conducted story telling sessions in several schools as part of the Jaipur Literature Festival Outreach. Kumar, who happens to be the Chief of Communications of Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP), visited a number of schools and interacted with the students in the age group 7 to 14 years and in numbers ranging from 100 to more than 400.

The students were from various backgrounds and were comfortable in different languages, the author said adding for the first time he even took a session in Urdu. "But one thing that seemed common was their love for unadorned, mastic and pristine madness," he said. "Apart from telling tales I also discussed the various aspects of writing fiction," said Kumar adding he showcased his three most popular books Paplu the Giant, A Perfect Match from Pratham and Against All Odds. Ramendra is the only children's writer and performance storyteller from Odisha to have been invited to JLF, a statement from RSP said. The writer has so far won 31 prizes in the competition for writers of children's literature organised by Children's Book Trust (CBT), the highest by any author. His writings have been translated into 27 languages and published in school text books and anthologies, both in India and abroad, it said. (PTI)

Myanmar LGBT fest goes public for first time

YANGON, JAN 30 /-/-/ Fluorescent wigs askew and leaving broken stiletto heels and a cloud of glitter in their wake, Myanmar drag queens pounded across the finish line and crashed into a waiting coterie of photographers at the groundbreaking festival. The race and other games including handbag throwing were some of the highlights of the "68 Proud" festival, which took place in public for the first time in a country where same-sex relations are still officially illegal. "Some people don't know about LGBT people," said 20-year-old Thaw Zin, who attended the weekend event at a Yangon park sporting a bright pink T-shirt, dyed strawberry blond hair and big contact lenses. "You get people who are LGBT but they don't know what that is. They don't

understand. So that's why it's difficult for other people to understand as well." Myanmar's notorious Section 377, a remnant of British rule, criminalises so-called "unnatural" sex and has been used to target LGBT people in the socially conservative nation. Political reforms have broadened the space for free expression and civil society, but rights groups decry entrenched homophobic attitudes and widespread discrimination against the community. Organisers said they were therefore amazed to receive the green light to hold the festival in public rather than the more discreet garden of the French Institute as they had in the past. The widening acceptance boosted numbers with some 6,000 people coming along on the first day

alone, compared with 2-3,000 over the whole festival in previous years. "I would say this is not just for the LGBT community. This is for the whole country, acknowledging equality and basic human rights," said 38-year-old festival co-director Hla Myat Tun. The aim of the event, which runs over two consecutive weekends, is to educate as well as to entertain. LGBT volunteers were on hand at a "human library" to discuss their personal stories while a series of LGBT-focused documentaries are also being screened. "A Simple Love Story" tells the touching tale of the relationship between a trans-man in Yangon and his part-time lover and trans-woman in Mandalay. Another film, "This Kind of Love", charts the life of veteran LGBT activist Aung Myo Min,

from student protester in the 1988 uprising to armed rebel in the jungle as he fought against military rule for five years. He hopes his story will help break down stereotypes. "People were really surprised to see gay men like me on stage, giving a political speech," the 52-year-old told AFP before introducing his film on stage. "I went to the jungle which is totally dominated by macho men and very restrictive military rules. So I survived." As DJs rounded off the weekend's festivities by playing community classics like "YMCA" to revellers, organisers were already eyeing up the next stage of their campaign to rid the country of the discriminatory law. The festival will take the road to this year to proudly spread the word, the partying and the glitter across the country. (AFP)