CREATIVE WORLD

Malaysian PM to honour Shabana Azmi

MUMBAI, NOV 29 /--/ Veteran actor Shabana Azmi is on her way to the Malayasian capital, Kuala Lumpur, where she would be honoured at a business summit by Prime Minister Najib Razak. The 67-year-old actor took to Twitter to express her gratitude. "Off to Kuala Lumpur for The Economic Times Asian Business Leaders Conclave where I'm being felicitated by Prime Minister of Malaysia. Honored," Shabana wrote.The conclave ends on Thursday.

Miley doesn't like her music most of the time

LONDON, NOV 29 /--/ Miley Cyrus said she is not a huge fan of her own pop music. The 25-year-old singer said she likes listening to different renditions of her tracks as she does not like them "most of the time", reported FemaleFirst. Miley made the revelation while appreciating her "The Voice" teammate Brooke Simpson on the talent show, after the contestant performed Pink's "What About Us" in her own style. "We always look forward to - I really, really look forward to because I get to imagine it and create it with you but - your performances. "She (Brooke) has got such an amazing year and an amazing way to interpret pop music - which, I'm the popstar sitting here and I don't even like pop music half the time, I don't even like my own pop music most of the time - but you take a song that's on the radio that I can't always relate to and, like Adam (Levine) said, make it about you," she said. Besides Miley and Adam, other jury members on the show include Jennifer Hudson and Blake Shelton.

Harvey Weinstein resigns from Directors Guild of America

LOS ANGELES, NOV 29 /--/ After two new lawsuits of sexual harassment were filed against Harvey Weinstein, the disgraced film producer has resigned from the Directors Guild of America. A spokeswoman from the guild yesterday confirmed the news in a statement Monday, reported Los Angeles Times. "Harvey Weinstein resigned his membership from the DGA, effective today," she said, although declined to elaborate. The development comes after Weinstein was accused of engaging in sex trafficking, in one of the recently filed suits, by luring actor Kadian Noble to the Cannes Film Festival in 2014 on the pretext of business but assaulted her at his room at Le Majestic Hotel. Last month, the DGA announced that charges had been brought against the producer and he was facing expulsion from the guild. (PTI)

Bengali film industry observes 'blackout' on 'Padmavati' issue

KOLKATA, NOV 29 /--/ The Bengali film industry observed a 15-minute "blackout" today, in solidarity with the makers of Bollywood film "Padmavati" and to protest against the alleged attempts by certain groups to stall its release. Shootings, pre and post-production work of films and television serials came to a halt across the city during the symbolic protest. A spokesman of the Eastern India Motion Picture Directors' Association (EIMPA) said all the actors, technicians, directors and production unit members came out of the studios, where pre and post-production work of films and serials were taking place, at 12 noon to register their protest. Actor Indrani Halder, who was shooting for a television serial at the Technicians' Studio, said, "We stopped work at 12 noon and every person of our unit came out to the open compound. Shooting at all the other floors also came to a halt. This marks our solidarity with an acclaimed director like Sanjay Leela Bhansali and our protest against any attempt to curb creative freedom."

The actors, directors and technicians in different studios, including NT 1 and Bharatlakshmi, also wore black badges during the "blackout" period. The EIMPA, the Artist Forum and the Federation of Cine Technicians and Workers had jointly called for the protest. Announcing the "blackout", noted filmmaker Goutam Ghosh had yesterday said, protests against Bhansali's film "Padmavati" were "extremely unfortunate"."Let there be a debate after the film is released to judge what is real history and what is fiction," he had said. Bengali film superstar Prosenjit Chatterjee had said, with the call for the "blackout", the Bengali film industry conveyed the message that as a part of the country's larger film industry, it stood for creative freedom. "Will the directors be required to get their scripts endorsed by certain individuals from now on by WhatsApping, even before sending the film to the CBFC (Central Board of Film Certification) for a preview?" he had wondered. On Sunday, the Indian Films and TV Directors' Association (IFTDA), along with 19 other bodies of the film and television industry from across the country, had stopped shooting for 15 minutes and participated in a similar protest called "Main Azaad Hoon?" (Am I free?) at the Film City in Mumbai. Many Rajput groups have been up in arms against "Padmavati", alleging that it distorts history by featuring a romantic dream sequence between Padmavati and Alauddin Khilji, a claim repeatedly denied by Bhansali. The makers of the film, which features Deepika Padukone, Shahid Kapoor and Ranveer Singh in the lead roles, have deferred its release from December 1 till further notice. BJP-ruled states such as Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have expressed reservations about releasing the film, while Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani has said his government will not allow "Padmavati" to be screened in the state as it hurts the sentiments of the Rajput community. (PTI)

Prince Harry says 'stars were aligned' when he met Meghan

LONDON, NOV 29 /--/ Britain's Prince Harry has said that his falling in love "so incredibly quickly" with fiance Meghan Markle on a blind date was a confirmation to him that "stars were aligned" and "everything was just perfect". In his first interview since announcing his engagement to the American actress, the 33-year-old fifth in line to Britain's throne told the BBC that he proposed Markle, three years older to him, earlier this month over a "standard, typical" dinner of roast chicken at their Nottingham Cottage home in Kensington Palace in London. "He went down on one knee," Markle said, adding that "it was just an amazing surprise. It was so sweet and natural and very romantic." Harry said "this beautiful woman just tripped and fell into my life" as he revealed how the pair got together. "She didn't even let me finish. She said 'Can I say yes'. Then there were hugs and I had the ring in my finger. I was like 'Can I give you the ring?'. It was a really nice moment.

Just the two of us," Harry recalled. "The fact that I fell in love with Markle so incredibly quickly was confirmation to me that all the stars were aligned, everything was just perfect," he said. The couple revealed that they had met on a blind date set up by a mutual friend in London last July and got to know each other camping in Botswana, South Africa. "I think about three, maybe four weeks later I managed to persuade her to come and join me in Botswana. And we camped out with each other under the stars... she came and joined me for five days out there, which was absolutely fantastic," said Harry. 36-year-old Markle, who is

already involved with humanitarian work and is a women's advocate with the United Nations (UN), confirmed that she would be moving away from her acting career to focus on her new royal role. The star of US legal drama 'Suits' said she was looking forward to focusing more energy on the causes that are important to her. "I know that she will be unbelievably good at the job part of it (royalty) as well," Harry said. The prince, who had designed Markle's engagement ring with diamonds from his late mother Prince Diana's collection, said that he feels that they would have got on very well and been "thick as thieves... best friends". The prince also revealed that he had not been aware of Markle before their first meeting as he had never watched her television show. The couple are due to get married in spring next year, with speculation that the wedding is likely to take place in May 2018 after Prince William and Kate Middleton's third child is born in April. Earlier, Clarence House, the office of Harry's father Prince Charles, had announced that the pair had sought and received the blessings of Queen Elizabeth II. Harry revealed that during their meeting, his grandmother's corgi dogs had instantly taken to his bride-to-be. (PTI)

Soumitra Chatterjee to get French honour during Kolkata Book Fair

KOLKATA NOV 29 /--/ Legendary Bengali actor Soumitra Chatterjee would be handed over France's highest civilian award Legion of Honour during the 42nd edition of the International Kolkata Book Fair in January next year. France, which would also be the focal theme of this edition of the world's most attended book fair, is planning to present the award to the octogenarian actor on the inaugural day of the event in the presence of its Minister of Culture Francoise Nyssen, a senior French official said on Tuesday. "Soumitra Chatterjee is not just an actor, he is a legend. The award was announced in June. But we waited for the perfect occasion to hand him the award. The book fair seems to be a perfect backdrop as our Minister of Culture would also be present in the city at that time," Damien Syed, Consul General of France in Kolkata, said during the announcement and logo unveiling event of the book fair here.

"It is a befitting occasion to hand him the award as a French minister would be visiting the city after seven years. We think it would be more prestigious and impactful if he is handed over the award by the minister, who herself is a writer and a noted publisher in France," he pointed out. The upcoming edition of the book fair would be inaugurated by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at a new venue in Central Park Mela Grounds in Salt Lake and would be held from January 31 to February 11.

Talking about the French connection to the Kolkata book fair, Syed said the French pavilion in this edition, entitled 'Experience: The Digital Journey of France', would focus on highlighting various aspects of Indo-French relations. "It is wonderful to see France as the main focus country in the Kolkata book fair. The French pavilion in the fair would be uniquely designed to portray different aspects of Indo-French relationships in the past, present and future," the consul general said. The ongoing 'Bonjour India Festival', organised by the cultural wing of the French Embassy in different Indian cities on the occasion of the 70th year of Indo-France diplomatic relationship, would observe its closing ceremony at the Kolkata book fair.

Meet the quintessential Bong in Sudeep Chakravarti's new book

NEW DELHI, NOV 29 /--/ No matter where you are -- in a bus, or at your workplace, in a restaurant or at a party, it is likely that you would hear murmurs in Bengali from some distant corner. Decoding the idiosyncrasies of worlds third largest ethno-linguistic group is a new non-fiction book, "The Bengalis ? A Portrait of a Community" by Sudeep Chakravarti. Chakravarti traces the genesis, growth and the continued existence of the Bengali community, that has been largely divided between the West and East Bengal (now Bangladesh) in the Indian subcontinent. "I have for long wanted to write a book on the social and political aspects of Greater Bengal ? by that, I mean West Bengal and East Bengal ? with a personalised touch," the writer told PTI. And, Chakravartis own history being rooted in both the Bengals helped him make the narrative real and enriched, contrary to the "seemingly dry history", he said.

The book, published by Aleph, is a product of a two-decade-long research about what he calls the "Banglasphere". "But the book contains a vast amount more," he said. It has everything from vigorous research into history, linguistics, culture, and politics to travel accounts and interviews in the region. "It took me eight workaholic months to write the first draft, and a couple of months more to polish the second," he said. But Chakravarti made sure there werent any biases in the writing owing to his Bengali origins.

"Perhaps, I found it easier because I carry no religious, casteist or bhodrolok bias. I am also not particularly enamoured of running down other communities or people who Bengalis have an unlovely habit of calling non-Bengali," he said. "My approach was clinical and unsentimental," he added. He said his aim in the book was merely to draw a portrait of the quintessential Bengali with "honesty, honour, some horror and a lot of humour". Launched recently, the 432-page hard bound book is available for Rs 799. (PTI)

Anees Bazmee working on social issue-based film, love story

MUMBAI, NOV 29 /--/ Anees Bazmee, known for churning out hit comedies such as "No Entry", "Welcome" and "Singh is King", is exploring other genres. The director, who's latest venture was Arjun Kapoor-Anil Kapoor starrer, "Mubarakan", is currently working on four scripts. In an interview with PTI, Bazmee says, "I am working on three-four scripts, all are different from each other. One is a comedy film which will be a multi-starrer, there is a social issue based one, there is a love story and a comedy-romance film." The director, however, says he has always made films in different genres - a suspense thriller "Deewangee" and a romance like "Pyaar To Hona Hi Tha". "Both as a writer and a director, I have made films in every genre. But in between, few of my films did not work out. And then I directed some comedy films back-to-back, so everyone thought I am good at only comedy. I am comfortable with all genres," he says. Bazmee does not reveal much but says he excited about these projects. "We are finalising things," he adds. The filmmaker has ventured into production with actor Chitrangada Singh. Their first film collaboration will be directed by Abhishek Dogra of "Dolly Ki Doli" fame.

Japan, China dominate list of world's top restaurants

PARIS, NOV 29 /--/ Japan and China have more of the world's best restaurants than anywhere else, according to the La Liste ranking, which will be published next week. Although the French-based list will declare Guy Savoy's flagship Paris riverside restaurant the best in the world for the second year running -- and French cooking dominates the top 100 -- the big trend is the climb of Chinese haute cuisine. "The rise and rise of China is the big story," said Jorg Zipprick, who crunched the numbers for the "guide of guides", which was set up as a "more scientific and reliable" rival three years ago to the British-based 50 Best Restaurants. Japan still tops the country table with 138 restaurants in the top 1,000 of the French classification -- which aggregates reviews from guides, newspapers and websites including TripAdvisor -- but China is closing the gap fast with 123. "Up to now China has been one of the most difficult countries to get data from," Zipprick told AFP, but a boom in local gastronomic guides has changed all that. "Asia has a lot more restaurants than Europe and it is only logical that La Liste will reflect that," he added.

Tokyo institution Kyubey, whose sushi is renowned for being both "extraordinary and reasonably priced", took third spot after Le Bernardin, a New York fish restaurant run by Emmy award-winning US television chef Eric Ripert. Two other restaurants in the Japanese capital made the top 20, the minuscule Kyo Aji and French chef Joel Robuchon's plush dining room in a reconstructed French chateau. They were followed

by the highest-placed Chinese restaurant, the Huai Yang Fu at Andingmen in Beijing -- whose speciality is a roast pork dish adored by Chairman Mao. While there is no dramatic change at the summit of the list, there were three newcomers to the top 10, including The French Laundry, a former saloon in California's Napa Valley which "Kitchen Confidential" author Anthony Bourdain has called "the best restaurant in the world, period". It shared an almost perfect mark of 99 out of 100 with La Vague d'Or in the French Riviera resort of Saint Tropez and Martin Berasategui's restaurant in the village of Lasarte in Spain's Basque country. Another of the big climbers was Aponiente at the other end of Spain, where diners cleanse their palates with a plankton sorbet. The Andalusian fish specialist in El Puerto de Santa Maria jumped 200 places on the back of getting a third Michelin star. For the first time a Canadian restaurant, Alo in Toronto, has entered the top 100, while the Turkish female chef Aylin Yazicioglu makes the grade for her highly-rated Istanbul restaurant, Nicole. New York's Eleven Madison Park, which was first in the 50 Best Restaurants ranking in 2017, was placed fourth on La Liste. But the two lists differ widely beyond that -- although they roughly agree that El Celler de Can Roca in Girona, Spain; Osteria Francescana in Modena, Italy, as well Alain Ducasse and Le Bernardin represent more or less the summit of the culinary arts. La Liste's aggregator of the 1,000 top-rated restaurants in the world is modelled on the world tennis rankings and the Shanghai Ranking for universities. While Japan, China, France and the United States top the league for having the highest number of best restaurants, Switzerland with 38 for a population of eight million, has the highest per capital rating.

Zipprick said its database -- which is available as a smartphone app -- now includes 16,000 eateries across the world which it classifies from haute cuisine to lower-priced "Food Gems". Superstar chef Gordon Ramsay's flagship London restaurant remained the highest-rated British table, pipping L'Enclume, which operates in a former blacksmith's forge in Cumbria, northwest England. This year's winners will be formally announced at a banquet in Paris on Monday, with 40 of the world's leading chefs also invited to meet French President Emmanuel Macron at his Elysee Palace residence. (AFP)

James Franco to star and produce an 'X-Men' spin-off

LOS ANGELES, NOV 29 /--/ James Franco has confirmed that he is attached to an "X-Men" property, both as an actor and a producer. Rumours are rife that Fox Studios has been working on a Marvel Comics movie based on Multiple Man, according to The Hollywood Reporter. Without revealing much, Franco said, "I do have a superhero that I am developing. I don't know how much I can say. But I will say I am producing and performing in it.

"It's early stages. I think probably what I can say is, like anything, there's a need to develop more." The actor, who has started a production company with actor brother Dave Franco, said he is impressed the way the "X-Men" franchise has churned out spin-offs such as "Logan" and "Deadpool".

"Our bottom line MO is, how can we push this into new ground? A little bit, but still make it entertaining? (But) what I love about what Simon Kinberg and Fox and the X-Men people have done with 'Deadpool' and 'Logan' - it took a while to get there, maybe 10 years - but they are going to go hard. "And we're going to take this superhero thing and really just push it into a new genre. So we're working with Simon Kinberg on an 'X-Men' property," he said. (PTI)

Avengers: Infinity War' will be finale of sorts

LOS ANGELES NOV 29 /--/ The fourth "Avengers" movie will be a key inflection point in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, according to producer Kevin Feige. In an interview to Vanity Fair, Feige said that "Avengers: Infinity War", due in May 2018, will "bring things you've never seen in superhero films like a finale", reports latimes.com. Does finale imply a number of dead superheroes? "There will be two distinct periods. Everything before `Avengers 4` and everything after. I know it will not be in ways people are expecting," Feige teased. Feige termed the film "the culmination of the entire Marvel Cinematic Universe as started in May of 2008" with the release of the first "Iron Man" movie.

"Avengers: Infinity War" stars Robert Downey Jr, Chris Evans, Chris Hemsworth, Scarlett Johansson, Mark Ruffalo, Anthony Mackie, Jeremy Renner, Elizabeth Olsen, Paul Bettany, Chris Pratt, Benedict Cumberbatch, Tom Holland, Chadwick Boseman, Josh Brolin, Don Cheadle, Sebastian Stan, Gwyneth Paltrow, Zoe Saldana, Dave Bautista, Karen Gillan, Pom Klementieff, Tom Hiddleston, Benicio del Toro, Idris Elba, Jon Favreau, William Hurt, Benedict Wong, Linda Cardellini, Danai Gurira, Leticia Wright, Florence Kasumba, Peter Dinklage, Bradley Cooper and Vin Diesel. Anthony and Joe Russo are directing the film, which is produced by Feige. Louis D`Esposito, Victoria Alonso, Michael Grillo and Stan Lee are the executive producers. Talking about the work slate, Feige said: "Marvel has got another 20 movies on the docket that are completely different from anything that`s come before - intentionally."