

Indian megastar **Chopra** engaged to **Nick Jonas**

Indian film superstar Priyanka Chopra is engaged to young American singer Nick Jonas after a whirlwind two months of dating, a report said Friday. People magazine, citing unnamed sources close to the pair, said Jonas, 25, proposed to Chopra in London for her 36th birthday after shutting down a Tiffany store in New York to choose a ring. Representatives for the two stars did not respond to requests for comment. But director Ali Abbas Zafar appeared to allude to the engagement when he announced that Chopra was leaving the film "Bharat," a historical drama about modern India.

"The reason is very very special," he tweeted. "She told us in the Nick of time about her decision and we are

very happy for her." Chopra, who won the Miss World pageant in 2000, has become one of Bollywood's most identifiable stars and, more recently, one of the few to achieve success in the West. She has starred in the thriller series "Quantico" on US network ABC and, in her career as a singer, has released songs with US chart-toppers including Pitbull and The Chainsmokers. Jonas first found success as a child as the frontman of The Jonas Brothers with his two siblings.

Also an actor on theater and in television, Jonas returned to music as a young adult with a new, mature image and has often been seen as a sex symbol. He has been romantically linked to a number of prominent

women including Miley Cyrus and Selena Gomez. People magazine said that, while Jonas and Chopra have known each other for some time, they began dating just two months ago and the relationship was serious enough that she introduced him to her mother in India. — AFP

In this file photo Indian Bollywood actress Priyanka Chopra (left) accompanied by US singer Nick Jonas arrive for the pre-engagement party of Akash Ambani and fiancée Shloka Mehta in Mumbai. — AFP



In this file photo fans take photographs with a mural of Prince at the Governors Ball Music Festival in New York. — AFP

Prince heirs take his copyrights lead, nix 'Purple Rain' tribute

Prince was notorious for enforcing copyright to his songs, and now his heirs have made sure that litigiousness has extended beyond the grave, demanding the removal of social media of a video of a "Purple Rain" singalong tribute. A photojournalist for the Star Tribune, the daily newspaper in Prince's hometown of Minneapolis, posted on Twitter a video of a street crowd spontaneously singing the Purple One's celebrated ballad on the day of his death in 2016. The video, which was retweeted more than 13,500 times, recently vanished.

The photographer, Aaron Lavinsky, said that the Universal Music Publishing Group, which holds rights to Prince's songs, had ordered it removed. The publisher, he said, was acting under the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, an often controversial 1998 US law that allows copyright holders to issue takedown notices to online material and exempts internet com-

panies from liability. "DCMA takedowns are an important tool for artists who need to protect their intellectual property online, but a major corporation abusing system to remove a news video shot by a newspaper photographer is inappropriate," Lavinsky tweeted.

Representatives for Universal, the largest music label conglomerate and parent of the publisher, did not immediately return a request asking for comment. Prince vigorously took aim at online postings during his life, with his team demanding that fans take down footage of live performances and their own covers of his songs. Most famously, Universal in 2007 demanded that a mother, Stephanie Lenz, remove a half-minute video from YouTube of her toddler son dancing to Prince's "Let's Go Crazy." — AFP

Carrie Fisher makes posthumous return to 'Star Wars'

"Star Wars: Episode IX" begins filming next week, Disney said Friday, in a shock announcement revealing it will feature both Carrie Fisher in a posthumous appearance and series star Mark Hamill. The final installment of the Skywalker saga—which began in 1977 with "Episode IV: A New Hope"—is due for release worldwide in December next year. It picks up the saga after the protagonist, Hamill's Luke Skywalker, appeared to have been killed off in the last episode. Fisher's Princess Leia was still alive at the end of 2017's "The Last Jedi" but the actress herself died a year earlier, in December 2016.



In this file photo US actress Carrie Fisher (right) poses with a storm trooper as she attends the opening of the European Premiere of "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" in central London. — AFP

"We desperately loved Carrie Fisher," said J.J. Abrams, who is back at the helm for "Episode IX," having directed "Episode VII: The Force Awakens" in 2015. "Finding a truly satisfying conclusion to the Skywalker saga without her eluded us. We were never going to recast, or use a CG character," he added in a statement. Disney said Fisher's role would be gleaned from previously unreleased footage from "The Force Awakens," with the blessing of her daughter, Billie Lourd. It is not the first time Fisher's likeness has featured in a "Star Wars" movie despite being absent from its filming. "Rogue One," a 2016 spin-off from the main series, directed by Gareth Edwards, had been in theaters for a couple of weeks when Fisher's death from a heart attack was announced. — AFP

Emma Thompson: I grew up with 'primitive model' males

Emma Thompson is suddenly feeling her age. The change sweeping Hollywood in the wake of the Harvey Weinstein scandal and the #MeToo movement has left the British actress and director musing on the "primitive model" males that women of her age have had to grapple with. "I feel like I was still part of a really backward generation, which was very binary in its views on males and females," said the double Oscar winner whose film performances include star roles in "Love Actually", "Nanny McPhee", "Sense and Sensibility" and the Harry Potter series. "I feel like I grew up surrounded by quite primitive, raw models," she told AFP.

But the Weinstein scandal has been a massive catalyst for change. "We've got a long way to go. But it is very interesting at the moment, there is a lot of changes occurring," said Thompson, who has long campaigned for equal rights and pay. "I think the generation below mine, and with my daughter's generation (her daughter Gaia is 18) you are going to see quite a lot of changes soon, because they are writing new stories," she added. That said, Thompson who plays a judge struggling to fight her corner in the male-dominated higher courts in her new film, "The Children Act", insisted that women are still excluded from large parts of the movie industry.

"I think I've seen (only) one woman electrician. You try to be an electrician as a woman, impossible!" she said. A human rights activist as well as a feminist, Thompson, 59, made her name playing strong and enigmatic women in the 1990s when she and former husband Kenneth Branagh were the golden couple of British cinema.

'We can't have it all'

But the feminism of that time, "that dreadful period of 'Women can have it all'" appalled her. "I screamed loudly at the top of my voice in public, 'No we can't!'" "The whole point is there's an imbalance. When men were going out to work, they didn't do the domestic work as well. When women go out to work they still have to do all of that," she added. "It's not about everybody having

everything, it's about us understanding what our priorities are, how we are going to change the world of work."

For Thompson that means first all not falling in the trap "about us being like men. Forget men. We've been talking about men for centuries, they need to come to us. It's for us to bring the feminine into the world, and to rebalance all this shit..." "Those old men, they're all going now, they're all dinosaurs. Thank God." Thompson—the daughter of "The Magic Roundabout" creator Eric Thompson and renowned actress Phyllida Law—is well aware of her own privilege.



In this file photo British actress Emma Thompson poses during a photocall for the film "The Meyerowitz Stories (New and Selected)" at the 70th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP

"I had access to a drama career, to some very great feminist literary critics and all of that. So you know, I was lucky, much luckier than my mother's generation." Outside her "small bubble of privileged, white, highly-educated women," she said there "is a long way to go for very many. For the women of color, it is very hard." And the problems women face go deeper than gender discrimination, Thompson argued. — AFP

IT'S A SMALL WORLD: IN JAPAN, MOSS WINS HEARTS



In this picture Oichi Kiyomura, a Japanese moss wholesaler, collects different types of moss near Nikko, Tochigi prefecture. — AFP photos



A Japanese tour leader shows different types of moss to tourists during a moss viewing tour at Kita-Yatsugatake forest near Sakuho town, Nagano prefecture.



A man walks through Kita-Yatsugatake forest, known for its different types of moss.

Kaori Shibo bent her head down and peered through a magnifying glass in a forest in central Japan, emitting a delighted gasp. The object of her adoration? Moss. "Oh, this baby's sporophyte is breaking out! I've never seen this before," an enchanted Shibo, 41, shouted, her head nearly close enough to kiss a fallen tree log in the forest in Yatsugatake. She was out on a stroll with around 20 other people who are part of a growing community in Japan obsessed with plants known as bryophytes, including moss, liverworts and hornworts. "When you stare at a tiny, tiny piece of green, you find a vast world expanding from there," explained fellow moss enthusiast Masami Miyazaki.

"It's like a micro universe," the 42-year-old said. The group was out exploring just days into Japan's rainy season, perfect weather for an expedition to spot some of the many mosses, liverworts, and lichens thickly coating the forest's trees and rocks. The forest, which surrounds Shirakomanoike lake and spreads across the northern Yatsugatake mountain range, is a popular spot for micro-plant enthusiasts.

More than 500 varieties can be observed in the Yatsugatake mountain range alone, according Masanobu Higuchi, Japan's leading bryology expert and the hike's leader. "I am infatuated by moss not just because of their pretty shapes and colors," Shibo said. "I am transported by the fact that you can find them anywhere around you but never realize how magnificent they are."

A staple of Japanese gardens

In recent years, moss enthusiasts have multiplied in Japan, with hikes catering to those eager to spot different



Japanese gardener Chisao Shigemori sits in front of a Japanese garden covered with different types of moss in Kyoto.



A tourist takes pictures of moss during a moss viewing tour at Kita-Yatsugatake forest.

varieties and shops selling the plants in terrariums well suited to small Japanese homes. The Northern Yatsugatake Moss Association began organizing moss viewing hikes in 2011, which attracted around 40 people over the year.

But this year, 140 people scored tickets to the association's hikes, which are held each month until October, with demand outstripping the number of spots available. Moss has been popular with traditional Japanese gardeners for centuries, and the plants grow well in the country's humid climate. "A beautiful natural landscape that is taken and compacted, that is the essence of Japanese gardens," said Chisao Shigemori, a prominent Japanese garden designer. Speaking to AFP at the carefully groomed Japanese garden at Kyoto's Tofukuji temple, he said moss is considered the best ground-covering plant for such traditional settings because it helps replicate natural landscapes in miniature. "The landscape of mountains and contrasting densities of green can be all expressed by moss," he said. At the temple, much of the garden is covered with juniper haircap, known as "sugi-goke" or cedar moss in Japanese. The spiky stems resemble miniature cedar trees and the moss is very popular with Japanese garden designers.

The 'Moss King'

While moss is a purely aesthetic pleasure for some Japanese, for others it is also big business. Nicknamed the 'Moss King', 64-year-old Oichi Kiyomura spends most days digging through wild bushes, across slopes and even up cliffs, looking for moss he can scoop into trays and sell



Oichi Kiyomura, a Japanese moss wholesaler, adjusts a basket of moss at his garden near Nikko, Tochigi prefecture.

to enthusiasts. It's a far cry from his former career, running nightclubs, but Kiyomura, who is based in the mountains of Nikko north of Tokyo, says his moss business is lucrative. He says he makes at least 30 million yen (\$270,000) a year, hinting that is a modest estimate.

His moss conversion came one day when he was out mushroom picking with a friend. "It was something I had never expected, but I found a really beautiful community of moss, clustered in the shape of small domes. It was my first encounter with moss," he said. It was a type known locally as "arahashiraga-goke", popular among bonsai farmers for its silk-like fine leaves. "I thought there was no way that people would ignore something so beautiful if I started selling it."

He purchased vast lots of land, including some along a shuttered golf course left behind when Japan's economic bubble burst, and started gathering the micro-plants. He now sells to temples, traditional garden designers, bonsai farmers and terrarium hobbyists. He has even developed a greening system that allows moss to be grown on building roofs in cities to help bring down temperatures. Kiyomura acknowledges some detractors find moss rather pedestrian and uninteresting, but he defends his obsession with the plants. "I love moss, even more than women," he joked. "I would live with it even if no one cared about it anymore." — AFP