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Programmanus av Artemis Irvine

ALANNA LESLIE:

Hi, I'm Alanna Leslie and welcome to Newsreel World.

Today we're talking about New Zealand, Scotland and Tanzania.

But first...

India is voting in a general election which will decide who the country's next Prime Minister will be.

It's the biggest election in the world with nearly a billion people taking part.

The current Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, is seeking a third term in power.

He's extraordinarily popular but his critics say that his Hindu nationalist agenda has fuelled Islamophobia in the country, directed towards India's 230 million Muslims. At the same time, there's been an apparent rise in the number of anti-Muslim films being made in Bollywood.

Ayushi Shah has this report.

AYUSHI SHAH: Lights, camera, elections! As India gears up for the world's largest elections, there's a different kind of drama unfolding on the silver screen. It's a story not of heroes and heroines but of ideologies clashing.

Over the last few years, Bollywood has witnessed a barrage of pro-government propaganda cinema.

These films can be split into two categories. The first is films that advocate for Hindutva, an ideology supported by the country's ruling party, the BJP. It calls for India to move away from secularism and establish Hinduism as a dominant religion.

Arati Jerath: There was also a biopic of the late Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who was the first BJP Prime Minister of a coalition government.

AYUSHI SHAH: That was acclaimed political scientist Arati Jerath.



Arati Jerath: And there's been a biopic on Narendra Modi himself.

AYUSHI SHAH: I ask her what exactly is the impact of films like these just before the Indian elections?

Arati Jerath: I mean, I think the BJP hopes that these films, when shown in an entertainment format, can actually influence the voter to vote for the BJP.

AYUSHI SHAH: The other category is films with an active anti-Muslim agenda. Take the example of the recently released movie 'The Kerala Story'. The entire film is about "love jihad", which means that Muslim men are courting Hindu women merely so that they can force them to convert to Islam.

These ideologically loaded films first appeared in 2019, before current prime minister Narendra Modi's second term, and they're surging now just as he eyes his third term. But what do Indians think about this shift in Bollywood?

26-year-old video producer Sneha Chakraborty deliberately stays away from these kinds of films.

Sneha Chakraborty: I don't think it adds any value to the storyline and almost always represents the Muslim community or Pakistan in a very caricature-ish way.

AYUSHI SHAH: On the other hand, 44-year-old Nidhi Mahajan says that films like these portray narratives that have played out in real life.

Nidhi Mahajan: I don't feel that these movies are a propaganda. In fact, these movies portray a lot of reality of what has happened in the past and how people have suffered.

AYUSHI SHAH: The government refuses to comment on this issue. Interestingly though, the BJP has been actively promoting this specific genre of film.

Going ahead, will these propaganda productions become big box office hits, or will they face a backlash from an audience hungry for genuine storytelling?

This is Ayushi Shah reporting for Newsreel World from Mumbai, India

ALANNA:

Thanks Ayushi.

Sting

Music bed

ALANNA:

The Scottish government will abandon its target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 75% by 2030, having failed to meet 8 of its last 12 annual targets.

The announcement came after the independent climate watchdog the CCC told the government that reaching the goal by the end of the decade was now impossible.

Scotland had previously been the first government in the world to declare a climate emergency.

ALANNA:

A lifeguard in New Zealand has become the first Kiwi to cross the Cook Strait using just a prone paddle board – a type of paddle board that you use lying on your front.

The Cook Strait is the sea that connects the north and south islands of New Zealand and is known for being one of the most dangerous areas of sea in the world.

Brittany Spencer set off at 7:30am and touched land on the other side of the Strait four hours and eight minutes later.

Her friends supported her along the way on a boat, holding up signs which said “You know you don’t have to do this” and “Is it too late to book a ferry?”

Music: Mapoz by Diamond Platnumz

ALANNA:

That was a short clip of Mapoz, by the Tanzanian artist Diamond Platnumz.

It’s an example of Bongo Flava, which has been the nickname for Tanzanian music since the 1990s.

ALANNA:

Michael Gunning is a British Jamaican former professional swimmer who's just been listed as one of Europe's 30 most influential people in sports under 30 by the business magazine Forbes.

Before he retired in 2022, Michael represented the UK and Jamaica in international swimming tournaments, and when he came out as gay in 2018 he became the first openly gay athlete on the Jamaican national team.

Michael's been telling us about his work as a champion of equality in sport.

Michael Gunning: We all have different stresses. We're always thinking of something, but swimming is quite unique because you don't really have time to think of anything else because you're working every muscle.

ALANNA LESLIE: Michael was just 12 years old when he made his first national swim team in Britain. It was something he'd realised he was good at early on, when he was spotted by a coach for a local swimming club.

Michael Gunning: When I was at school, you know, I'd swim 5 a.m. to 7 a.m. I'd then have some breakfast and head to school, and then I do the same after school. I'd kind of have some dinner on the way to swim training, and I'd swim half five to half seven, and that was every day.

ALANNA LESLIE: Michael made his debut representing Great Britain in 2010 aged just 16. Seven years later, he started swimming for the Jamaican national team, the country his dad was born in.

Michael Gunning: I know that there was still big stigmas around Jamaica being good at swimming. I know that athletics is heavily funded, and I just wanted to shine the light on swimming.

ALANNA LESLIE: It was while representing Jamaica that Michael took part in the race he feels most proud of, at the 2017 World Aquatics Championships in Budapest, Hungary.

Michael Gunning: Walking into a stadium or an arena full of thousands and thousands of people was a pinch me moment because we trained so hard. My main event is 200 [metres] butterfly. So my race only lasts two minutes. But actually, you know, it's the two minutes that I've been training for my entire life. And you know, I came 17th. I didn't win any medals, but for me it was such a massive achievement.



ALANNA LESLIE: It was not long after this, that Michael came out as gay. This made him the first openly gay athlete on the Jamaican national team, a country where sex between two men is still illegal.

Michael Gunning: It was tough at times because I think a lot of people looked at me to see how people would react to me coming out as gay. But actually, I think the response has been amazing with people that have been able to understand my story.

ALANNA LESLIE: Michael retired from competitive swimming in 2022, and now spends his time focusing on being a champion for equality in sport. His achievements led to Forbes magazine listing him as one of their 30 most influential people in sport under 30 this year.

Michael Gunning: For me, it was just quite overwhelming to be listed amongst some amazing names, but also just being kind of honoured for my achievements so far.

ALANNA LESLIE: Being a role model is especially important to him because he missed having someone around who understood what he was going through when he was younger.

Michael Gunning: Because I was fighting so many demons inside, you know I didn't really feel I could talk about it, so I think I bottled a lot of different feelings up when actually I think there probably was support, but there wasn't support who I thought could relate to me. I think you know I'd love to be that role model for people, whether it's being mixed race, whether it's identifying as LGBTQ+, I think it's just so important to see yourself represented, because if you can see it, you can be it and have that confidence.

ALANNA:

Thanks Michael! That's all from me today and for this term. Speak to you soon! Bye!