













IN BRIEF



**Protect Constitution, democracy: Thorat**

**MUMBAI** Maharashtra Congress President Balasaheb Thorat on Thursday said the Constitution and democracy need to be protected to save the country's independence. Addressing party workers after hoisting the national flag at Tilak Bhavan here, Mr. Thorat said the party should be prepared to fight to protect democracy. "Our ancestors fought and sacrificed their lives for freedom. We got equal rights and the country progressed. However, some people talk of changing the Constitution. Hence, the Congress should be prepared to fight such intentions," he said. PT1

**2 students electrocuted before flag hoisting**

**MAHISAGAR** Two Class X students were electrocuted on Thursday when a metal pole they were carrying for flag hoisting came in contact with a live wire at a school in Mahisagar district of Gujarat, the police said. The incident occurred at the government-run school at Kenpur village in Santrampur taluka where the flag hoisting ceremony had been organised in the morning, according to police inspector M.V. Khant. "The metal pole, to be used to hoist the Tricolour, was lying on the terrace and the two teenaged students went upstairs to bring it to the ground. But when they lifted the pole, it accidentally touched a live wire hanging over the terrace," he said. The boys, both aged 15, were identified as Dilip Rana and Ganpat Valvai. PT1

Tale of two cities



**Different shades:** (Top) Children of families affected by the floods in Kolhapur in a sombre mood while receiving clothes being distributed by different organisations; it's all smiles at Nagpur central jail during Raksha Bandhan celebrations. ■ ABHIJEET GURJAR ■ S. SUDARSHAN

**Chhattisgarh hikes quota for OBCs, SCs**

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA RAIPUR**

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Thursday announced to increase the reservation for Other Backward Classes and Scheduled Castes in government jobs and education.

During an Independence Day function here, the Chief Minister also said that an 'elephant reserve' would be set up in the State to provide the tuskers a permanent habitat and prevent human-animal conflicts. He also announced crea-

**Death toll rises to 50; situation eases; political bickering on**

329 medical teams monitoring relief centres; 6.70 lakh people evacuated to shelters; Sharad Pawar to send team of scientists to study damage

**SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE PUNE**

The total death toll in the past three weeks arising from flood or rain-related accidents across five districts in western Maharashtra has risen to 50 even as floodwaters have markedly receded in Sangli and Kolhapur.

A majority of these casualties - 34 deaths - are from Sangli and Kolhapur, said authorities. According to Pune Divisional Commissioner Dr. Deepak Mhaisekar, around 6.70 lakh people from 425 villages in Kolhapur and Sangli were evacuated to shelters, while more than 7.10 lakh people across five districts including Satara, Pune and Solapur had so far been relocated to temporary relief shelters with 329 medical teams working round-the-clock in these parts to prevent any major epidemic outbreak.

**Vikhe-Patil's jibe**

In a jibe at Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar, State Housing Minister Radhakrishna Vikhe-Patil on Thursday said some leaders were behaving as 'know-alls' despite the State government doing everything for the flood-afflicted.

"The State government is doing good work in efficiently providing relief to flood-hit areas. Yet, some Opposition leaders are behaving as if they only they are in the know of things and the State government is clueless," said Mr. Vikhe-Patil, referring to his arch rival Mr. Pawar without taking the NCP chief's name. The former Congressman was speaking in Nashik during an Independence Day function.



**Clean-up drive:** Residents clean their surroundings following receding of floodwaters at Ambewadi village in Kolhapur district on Wednesday. ■ PT1

"The floods have destroyed several acres of crop and killed thousands of livestock. Farmers and residents of Kolhapur, Sangli and Satara are the worst affected. While it is the opposition's job to criticise the ruling party, this catastrophe is not the occasion for playing politics...and I say this knowing well that I too was once Leader of Opposition [of the Legislative Assembly]," said Mr. Vikhe-Patil.

**Livestock lost**

According to authorities, more than 7,800 livestock including cattle, sheep and goats were killed by the deluge as their owners were unable to move them to safety zones in time.

Meanwhile, Mr. Pawar, who is on a tour of the worst-hit areas in Kolhapur dis-

trict, met with several flood-afflicted people in Karvir, Ambewadi and Chikhali areas. "I will personally urge the Central and the State governments to ensure complete loan waiver for farmers and financial help in rebuilding houses destroyed by the floods... I urge all of you [flood-hit citizens] to keep up your courage in these trying times. The whole of Maharashtra stands resolutely behind you all," said the NCP chief, at Ambewadi.

He further said that he would be sending a team of scientists and agriculturists from the Pune-based Vasantdada Sugar Institute to study the extensive damage to the sugarcane crop in Sangli and Kolhapur districts which constitute the prime areas of the State's sugar-producing belt. "I am concerned for the

immediate security of agricultural labourers as they will not be able to get any work for the next couple of months at least, what with farms and fields utterly ravaged. I will urge the State government to give them special financial aid in order to tide them over this crisis," said Mr. Pawar, reassuring flood-stricken populace of Chikhali. However, Minister of State for Agriculture, SADBHAU KHOT hit out at Mr. Pawar and the NCP, dubbing their "sudden concern" for the flood-ravaged people as nothing but "empty and phoney sympathy".

While the Panchganga and Krishna were now flowing below their danger levels of 45 ft. and 43 ft respectively, 60 roads and 25 bridges in these districts still remained shut for traffic.

**Bhagwat hails PM's decision on Article 370**

'People's willpower gave strength'

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NAGPUR**

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat said on Thursday that said Jammu and Kashmir's special status under Article 370 could be revoked because the entire society showed determination, and lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership and "willpower" for taking such a decision. People say about the Prime Minister that 'woh hain to mumkin hai' (if he is there, everything is possible), which is "not wrong", Mr. Bhagwat said. Even on the country's 73rd Independence Day, there is a belief that if people are determined, they "can make the impossible possible," he said.

Greeting people during the Independence Day celebrations at the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) headquarters here, he said, "Article 370 could be removed because the entire society made a resolution, so on this day we renew that to resolve again." He said, "Today is the day to remember the sacrifices made for the independence and to resolve for it again."

Later, addressing people at Dr. Hedgewar Smruti Mandir premises after hoisting the national flag there, Mr. Bhagwat, without naming Mr. Modi and Jammu & Kashmir, said it was the people's "willpower" which strengthened the country's leadership to take

the decision for that State. "People say this about the prime minister that if he is there, then everything is possible," he said.

"The willpower of the society is necessary to bolster the determination of the people who are at the helm of the country," the RSS chief said.

"We all wanted benefits of independence experienced by all our States to be experienced in that State. Our citizens of that State should also directly get equal rights under the Constitution," he said. "Such was our willpower for the cause which gave power to the leaders to work in that direction."

**'Sense of victory'**

Mr. Bhagwat said even on the first Independence Day, there was a sense of victory along with happiness among people that through their "capabilities", they defeated the empire which was believed to be undefeatable.

Earlier, RSS general secretary Bhaiyyaji Joshi hoisted the national flag at the Sangh headquarters located in Mahal area here on the occasion of the Independence Day. "The country is moving forward to realise the dream of the nation's great men. The hopes of common people will be fulfilled and India will scale new heights in the world," Mr. Joshi said.



**Pride and honour:** Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat (right) salutes the Tricolour at the 73rd Independence Day celebrations at Dr. Hedgewar Smruti Mandir in Reshmibagh, Nagpur, on Thursday. ■ S. SUDARSHAN

**For 350 worst-affected villages, the priority is cleaning: minister**

Clean-up marshals will remove carcasses, repair solar pumps

**SHARAD VYAS MUMBAI**

The government will give priority to cleaning 350 villages worst affected by the floods in Kolhapur and Sangli. Several special teams of clean-up marshals - including from Mumbai - will be dispatched to also remove carcass and waste from these villages. A sum of ₹70 crore has been set aside for the same, said Maharashtra Water Resources and Sanitation Minister Babanrao Lonikar. Of the 353 villages, 205 are located in Kolhapur, 101 in Sangli and 47 in Satara, where work will be taken up on war footing. "We will not only dispatch special teams for clean up operations in these areas but also direct them to take up other important tasks. These would include repair of solar pumps, and motors in wells on an immediate basis. The water connection in the affected areas will be restored in less than eight days," said the minister after a meeting on Thursday to review the damage caused by the floods. The Minister said hun-



**Preventive steps:** Worker spray pesticides at Ganpatipeth market in Sangli city. ■ JIGNESH MISTRY

dreds of carcasses are being removed daily with the help of Earthmoving Contractors Ltd, a private firm. "Other preventive measures including use of chemicals to ensure no infection spreads in the areas. This work is being undertaken with the help of 30 water suction pumps, four dumpers and 15 tractors," said an official.

Mr. Lonikar said sanitation work in the affected areas will also be taken up under the Swachh Bharat Mission of the Central government. The State will divert over ₹ 5

crore from the central scheme to clean the selected villages, he said. "We will disburse ₹50,000 to villages with population of 1,000 and ₹1,00,000 for villages of population over 1,000 under the Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin," he said.

The State government has also set aside ₹75 crore for health-related initiatives in affected areas. Another ₹70 crore has been allocated for cleaning, ₹30 crore to compensate for loss of livestock, and ₹27 crore for providing food and medicines.

**Full electricity supply to be restored today**

**SHARAD VYAS MUMBAI**

The State Government has managed to restore power supply to 2.73 lakh consumers affected during the floods in Kolhapur and Sangli so far, state Energy Minister Chandrashekar Bawankule has said. Connections to nearly 3.9 lakh consumers had been discontinued after floods in the region left thousands of transformers damaged. But efforts of the Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company Limited (MSEDCL) ensured 24 sub-stations in Kolhapur and 10 in Sangli were repaired by August 13, the minister said after holding a

flood assessment meet. Mr. Bawankule said 100% supply is likely to be restored by Friday morning. The credit for the commendable work goes to the MSEDCL, he said.

"The MSEDCL has followed government directives effectively and delivered results with sound planning. As many as 3,807 transformers have been repaired and supply has been restored to 2,73,817 consumers. Power to all irrigation pumps will be restored by end of today. With the help of 4,000 staff who have toiled round the clock, full supply would be restored soon," the minister said.

**Floods abate in Goa, rain continues**

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA PANAJI**

Amidst continuing rains, Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said on Thursday that the state has sought financial aid from the Centre for rehabilitation of the flood-affected people.

Several areas in Pernem, Bicholim and Thivim tehsils were inundated in the last two weeks, leading to evacuation of over 150 families. One person was washed away in Sattari tehsil. Many incidents of house collapse and roads getting washed away were also reported. With the intensity of the rains going down, floodwaters have receded.

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IN BRIEF



**Forest Range Officer Chole Anita gets award**  
ADILABAD  
The Kagaznagar Forest Range Officer, Chole Anita, who has emerged as a legend of sorts for her role in protection of forest and forest land, was awarded the prestigious K.V.S. Babu IFS, Memorial Gold Medal during the Forest Department's Independence Day celebrations at Telangana Forest Academy in Dhulapally on the outskirts of Hyderabad. The award also carries ₹15,000 as cash reward and a citation.

**Ministerial expansion likely on Monday?**  
BENGALURU  
Exactly three weeks after taking oath as Karnataka Chief Minister, the countdown for the expansion of his Ministry appears to have finally begun for B.S. Yediyurappa. He left for New Delhi on Thursday night to hold consultations with the party central leaders on the issue. The BJP State leaders feel that the Ministerial expansion is likely to be scheduled on Monday as Mr. Yediyurappa would return from Delhi only by Saturday evening or night.

**Bus services suspended in Bhadrachalam areas**  
BHADRACHALAM  
The TSRTC has suspended the night bus services to the interior areas in Bhadrachalam division bordering Chhattisgarh for the consecutive second day on Thursday in view of the Black Day called by the CPI (Maoist) outfit to protest against abrogation of Article 370. As a precautionary measure, the RTC authorities have cancelled the bus services on the Bhadrachalam-Charla route from 5 pm on Thursday to 5 am on Friday anticipating Maoist violence.

# Kerala rain toll mounts to 108

Rescue teams recover three more bodies from landslide-hit Kavalappara

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM  
Rescue teams recovered three more bodies from landslide-hit Kavalappara in Malappuram district on Thursday, even as the central and northern districts of Kerala reported significant decrease in rainfall intensity.

**34 still missing**  
The State-wide death toll in rain havoc has now risen to 108. As many as 34 people are still missing, including 26 in Malappuram, seven in landslide-ravaged Meppadi in Wayanad district and one person in Kottayam.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD), in a 4 p.m. update, indicated that rainfall activity in Kerala will go down over the next few days. Yellow alerts signalling the possibility of isolated heavy rainfall (up to 11.5 cm) have been issued for Idukki, Kannur and Kasargod for Friday. All other districts can expect light to moderate rainfall on Friday and over the next few days, IMD said. More people left relief camps for their houses with the flood waters receding. The number of camps came



**Arduous task:** Rescue workers recovering a body from a site of landslide following heavy rainfall at Kavalappara in Malappuram district. •PTI

down from 1,206 on Wednesday to 1,057 on Thursday. As many as 54,799 families (1,75,373 people) are still being accommodated in the camps, the government said. Till Thursday, 1,115 houses have been reported as destroyed in the rain fury in different districts. About 11,901 houses have been damaged. On Wednesday, the Kerala Cabinet announced an immediate assistance of ₹10,000 each to flood-affected families, ₹10 lakh to peo-

ple who lost both land and homes and an assistance of ₹4 lakh for repairing damaged houses. **Searches continue**  
Search operations continued at Kavalappara in Malappuram and Puthumala in Wayanad, where a series of landslides had wiped out two villages last week, to trace those who were feared to have been buried alive. It was comparatively a sunny day at Puthumala,

where earth-movers and sniffer dogs were engaged in tracing the missing people. Drones were engaged in search operations at Kavalappara. Northern Malappuram district accounted for most deaths with toll there rising to 43 on Thursday and 28 people still missing, followed by Kozhikode (17), Wayanad (12 deaths, 7 missing), Kannur 9 and Thrissur 9 deaths, the government said. (With PTI inputs)

# Jagan rolls out grama and ward volunteer system

Spells out priorities at the inauguration of his pet scheme

**STAFF REPORTER**  
VIJAYAWADA  
Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Thursday launched the grama and ward volunteer system – his brainchild – aimed at ensuring corruption-free governance and last-mile delivery of welfare schemes and services to every household and citizen.

Addressing the gathering of the newly appointed ward and village volunteers here, Mr. Jagan reiterated that their most important responsibilities were identification of beneficiaries, door delivery of services and hand-holding of households without resorting to corruption and showing no discrimination based on caste, religion and political affiliations. “Everyone, including



**Reaching out:** A.P. Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy launching the village volunteers system in Vijayawada.

those who didn't vote for us, should be served equally to an extent that they change their opinion. My voice and assurances should reach every person in the State through you,” he said. Mr. Reddy said the government would fulfil 80%

of the election promises in the first year and it needs the volunteer system. “If eligible beneficiaries are unaware of the schemes, you should reach out to them and deliver the service at the doorstep,” he said.

## Protect Constitution: Kerala CM

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Thursday cautioned against attempts to weaken and violate the Constitution and said the values enshrined in the Constitution should be protected.

In a veiled attack on the Centre for scrapping the special status of J&K, he said India was a country where States enjoyed special privileges and any infringement into their rights would amount to the violation of the Constitution and federal principles. Mr. Vijayan was speaking after hoisting the national flag at the Central Stadium.

## KCR sets 60-day deadline for a healthy Telangana

**N. RAHUL**  
HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao on Thursday said the government would unveil a special 60-day action plan to establish a work culture in villages and towns in the light of three new pieces of legislation in the State.

The government decided to release 15th Finance Commission grants to local bodies even before the implementation of the action plan, Mr. Rao said after unfurling the national flag to mark the Independence Day celebrations at the historic Golconda fort. As a first step in the 60-day plan, he sought implementation of a sanitation

drive in villages and towns with the slogan ‘cleanliness is godliness’. The civil society should collaborate in removal of garbage. Emphasising the importance of cleanliness in villages, he recalled present-day scenes of wild growth, debris of collapsed houses, unhygienic cattle sheds, stagnant water and abandoned wells and said all of them should be eliminated in the 60 days.

A ‘power week’ to replace rusted and outdated electric poles and hanging wires should be organised. He called for steps to ensure that the face of the villages and the towns changed after the 60-day period.

# Toll continues to go up in Karnataka

Authorities confirm that 62 persons have died in the State since August 1

**STAFF REPORTER**  
BENGALURU

The flood waters may have receded, but the death toll continues to rise in Karnataka. Disaster management authorities have confirmed that 62 persons have died since August 1, making it one of the deadliest floods in the State since 2009. Apart from this, 14 people are missing. On Thursday,

disaster management authorities increased crop loss-affected areas by over 66,000 hectares to 5.35 lakh hectares, while the number of houses damaged has touched 71,000 now. Though the Upper Krishna basin in Maharashtra and parts of Malnad received moderate rains, the inflow into rivers has reduced. On Thursday, inflows into the

State through the Krishna was at the rate of 2.26 lakh cusecs. “Inflows into the reservoirs are steadily decreasing; the flood situation has improved,” said the State Disaster Management Authority. However, water at the rate of over 5 lakh cusecs continued to be released from Almati and Narayanapur dams. While over 40,000 per-

sons have returned home from relief camps, the 943 operational camps continue to harbour around 3.5 lakh people. Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre forecasts light rain in Belagavi district, which is the worst affected, while coastal and Malnad regions are most likely to receive widespread moderate to heavy rains.

# Phone-tapping scandal gathers political steam

Congress joins chorus for probe

**STAFF REPORTER**  
BENGALURU

The alleged phone tapping of several politicians by the Bengaluru city police gathered steam on Thursday with the Congress, former ally of the JD(S) and part of the coalition government, also joining the chorus for a probe. Coordination committee president Siddaramaiah sought a probe saying, “I am not aware whether phones were tapped during the previous government's tenure. If they were, it is a serious offence. Let there be an investigation and action be taken against those responsible, if proven,” he said. AICC general secretary and senior leader Mallikarjun Kharge also demanded a probe. “We must first stop allegations and counter-allega-

tions. Let there be an enquiry and everything will be clear. Based on the findings, the government should take legal action against the offenders. Tapping of phones of political leaders is in no way justifiable. It's an insult to our Constitution that guarantees right to privacy,” he said. The JD(S) continued to deny all allegations. Party supremo H.D. Deve Gowda said the allegations were a “political conspiracy” against former Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy. Mr. Kumaraswamy, who also denied the allegations, said he would welcome a probe. However, intriguingly, the State government has been silent on the issue. BJP leaders, who clamoured for a high-level probe, also remained silent on Thursday.

## Post and past



**Fond memories:** Old post boxes being displayed during the inauguration of the Museum of Communication in Bengaluru on Thursday. •SAMPATH KUMAR G.P.

# No more joy for those who make these things of beauty

While the cultural icons of Andhra Pradesh, Kondapalli toys, are growing in popularity, their creators are a neglected lot

**TEJASWI MARTHI**  
VIJAYAWADA

Kondapalli toys – cultural icons of Andhra Pradesh – are one of the most sold handicrafts in India and abroad, across online, wholesale, and retail platforms. “The toys attract great business to the showroom. Kondapalli toys account for an earning of ₹4-₹5 lakh per month,” said a store official at the Lepakshi Handicraft Emporium. Customer response vis-a-vis the quality of the toys, on the online platforms – a relatively new addition – has been very positive so far. However, the artisans have a different story to tell. Though platforms such as Lepakshi, Amazon and

MyStateBazaar endorse the products promoting the craft, the toy makers in Kondapalli claim such a promotion has barely helped them in their sustenance. “Competition from Chinese machine-made toys is our main obstacle. We spend 10-20 hours-a-day making a dozen miniature buffaloes that are sold for a mere ₹300. We toil our lives away making these toys but sustaining ourselves in this competing age is a major challenge,” rues S. Nageswara Rao, a second generation Kondapalli toy maker. Mr. Rao is one of the few artisans living in Kondapalli's Bommala Colony that was set up by



Chinese machine-made toys give tough competition to the Kondapalli toys of Vijayawada. •V. RAJU

former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh N.T. Rama Rao in 1987 to provide these artisans a haven to promote their craft.

“Earlier, we would easily earn ₹2,000 per day. Now earnings even ₹500 per day seem to be a daunting task,” he adds.

Adding to their troubles is the scarcity of the ‘Tella Poniki’ wood, which gives the toys their unique character. No other wood can be a replacement to make these toys as Tella Poniki is malleable and can be easily shaped into the desired shape. **‘Wood Bank’**  
Keeping in mind the scarcity of the trees, the Forest Department had set up a ‘Wood Bank’ with an aim to grow the soft trees that could be legally distributed among the toy-makers. The Forest Department said it spends ₹ 2.85 lakh every year for the purpose. The trees would provide raw material for toy-making for the next 20 years. However,

the artisans complain that Tella Poniki takes a lot of time to grow. “It is not as easy to grow Tella Poniki like other plants. It requires immense nurturing. Since the wood is sweet and relatively softer in its formative years, it falls prey to many pests,” says Pushpa Latha, another artisan. “The toys have a great demand both abroad and in India. If the government sanctions us funds in a timely manner and imparts training to the younger generation, coupled with an incentive, we can work towards making the craft regain its lost glory,” she suggests, as she resumes carving a miniature figurine with intricacy.

# Jumbo fear grips several villages in Chittoor district

Elephants stray from Koundinya forests

**K. UMASHANKER**  
CHITTOOR

Tension has gripped several villages in the western belt of Chittoor district, from Palamaner to Somala, with wild elephants raiding crops and damaging huts. In the latest incident last week, a group of three elephants attacked a hut in Madhavaram village of Tavarnampalle mandal. The structure stood at the edge of the forest corridor connecting Bangarupalem with Aragonda and Somala areas. Divisional Forest Officer (Chittoor West) Sunil Kumar Reddy, speaking to *The Hindu*, confirmed that the hut was pulled down by wild elephants.

human settlements. After a fortnight, when the Forest Department was about to deploy *kumkis* (trained elephants) to drive them back into the sanctuary, the pachyderms retreated, but not before destroying crops and fields. **Raid crops**  
In June, three elephants again left the sanctuary to forage in the hillocks surrounding Punganur and Madanapalle forest ranges, raiding crops at nearby fields at night and retreating into the valleys and thickets by day. The group continued to raid crops for about a month, before returning to the sanctuary.

More recently, in the third week of July, a ten-member herd left the Koundinya and marched as far as Somala mandal located very close to the Seshachalam hills on the eastern side of Chittoor district. The herd raided crops in several villages, even as forest officials were trying to establish whether the herd was from the western Koundinya sanctuary or its eastern counterpart Seshachalam hills.

“We are seriously looking into the problem and will solve the man-animal conflict in the region,” he said. While the inmates of the hut had a providential escape, the movement of wild elephants in the agriculture fields and close to human habitations has become routine in about two dozen villages under Palamaner, V. Kota, Bangarupalem and Baireddipalle, Kuppam and Ramakuppam mandals under the Koundinya wildlife sanctuary, contiguous with Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. In mid May this year, a small herd of wild elephants broke away from the main herd in the sanctuary in Palamaner range, and moved some 70 km away to Pakala, close to

After a fortnight-long effort, forest officials managed to drive the herd close to the Koundinya sanctuary. Puthalapattu MLA M.S. Babu and other local leaders of the YSR Congress Party visited hamlet on Wednesday and assured farmers of compensation from the government.



















**GMR Infrastructure's loss widens to ₹334.85 crore**

HYDERABAD  
GMR Infrastructure reported a ₹334.85 crore loss on a consolidated basis for the quarter ended June 30, as against the ₹237.63 crore loss during the same quarter last fiscal, the firm said. Consolidated total income stood at ₹2,205.91 crore during the quarter against ₹1,867.24 crore in the same quarter of the previous financial year, it said. PTI

**Reliance Capital profit surges to ₹1,218 crore**

NEW DELHI  
Anil Ambani-led Reliance Capital has reported an over fourfold jump in its consolidated net profit to ₹1,218 crore for the first quarter of the ongoing fiscal, driven by higher income. The profit was ₹295 crore in the year-ago period. Total income rose 31% to ₹6,083 crore during the April-June quarter of 2019-20 as against ₹4,641 crore in the corresponding period a year earlier. Total assets stood at ₹79,207 crore against ₹83,973 crore a year ago. PTI

**EPFO to appoint 3 fund managers next week**

NEW DELHI  
Retirement fund manager EPFO is likely to appoint asset management firms HSBC AMC, UTI AMC and SBI Mutual Fund as its fund managers for a three-year term at its trustees' meet next week. EPFO's advisory body Finance, Audit and Investment Committee (FAIC) has finalised and recommended the names of HSBC AMC, UTI AMC and SBI Mutual Fund for appointment as fund managers of the retirement fund of the body for a three-year term beginning October 1, 2019, a source said. PTI

## Plastics industry seeks export schemes, tax benefits for MSMEs

Sector wants 25% of land in industrial corridors allotted to small firms at discount

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Plastic manufacturers, who are finding the going tough amid environmental challenges have called for export promotion schemes for Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the sector and removal of anti-dumping duty on machines not made in India.

At a recent meeting with officials, they sought allocation of 25% of the land available at all industrial corridors for MSMEs at discounted rates.

The industry also sought world-class infrastructure for MSMEs under the Public Private Partnership model comprising physical infrastructure, knowledge infras-



**Fair deal:** The industry also sought world-class infrastructure for MSMEs under the PPP model. ■ T. SINGARAVELOU

structure, incubation centres, e-platforms, B2B access and technology and innovation support for MSME.

Additionally, it appealed to the government to make lending to MSMEs more con-

venient. "There is a need to provide capital adequacy norms support through recognition of MSME credit ratings programme for plastic processing sector; rationalise interest rate and margin

requirements for MSME who adopt credit rating programme," Meela Jayadev, president, All India Plastics Manufacturers' Association (AIPMA), said in a statement.

**Help desk sought**

"There is a need for the establishment of a helpdesk for MSMEs at banks, and the current limits under the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSSE) scheme needs to increase to ₹4 crore," the statement added.

It also demanded direct tax exemption on export income and income generated directly or indirectly from indigenisation as well as import substitution exemption for a period of five years.

## Syndicate Bank to 'mind-map' its 4.9 crore customers

Public sector lender aims to boost revenue, retain clients

MINI TEJASWI  
BENGALURU

Syndicate Bank is launching a comprehensive customer mind-mapping study with a view to increase revenue from each customer and also to enhance customer stickiness.

Some 4.9-crore customers, both retail and corporate, will be part of the study whose pilot is already underway.

The bank's MD and CEO Mrutyunjay Mahapatra told *The Hindu*: "We will thoroughly analyse the account statements of our customers to understand the banking behaviour of each of our customers, to assess their current engagement with us and to check if they are showing any signs of exiting



Mrutyunjay Mahapatra

us in the future."

As per Mr. Mahapatra, in some cases, customers may be getting their salaries credited to accounts in Syndicate Bank. But, at the same time, they are also using other banks for key engagements such as home, vehicle, education loans and other payments.

"We want to get to the bottom of these behavioural

patterns of our customers to understand their specific requirements and also to find out ways to stop them from straying or going away from us," he explained.

Simultaneously, the bank is also in the process of training about 40,000 of its employees to equip them for a changed customer requirement scenario.

As a precursor to this deep data exercise, Syndicate Bank is in the process of setting up a data lake.

The platform will compare data gathered from core banking, Internet banking, e-commerce and KYC with data gathered on video, system access, social media data etc. to gain insight into the minds of customers and their product preferences.

## Johnson Lifts bags ₹210-cr. order for metro escalators

225 units will meet Bengaluru's needs

K.T. JAGANNATHAN  
CHENNAI

Johnson Lifts, a manufacturer of elevators and escalators, has landed a ₹210-crore additional order to supply 225 escalators to Bengaluru Metro for its phase II requirement.

The firm had installed over 200 heavy duty escalators during phase-I at various metro stations.

"Central government schemes in major urban infrastructure development programmes such as metro rail projects, UDAN and railway stations have given us a great opportunity for heavy duty escalators used in mass transportation systems," said Ramesh Chari, general

manager.

"Johnson Lifts is expanding its presence in Karnataka and setting up offices in tier-2 and tier-3 cities such as Mysuru, Hubballi, Kalaburagi, Davanagere, Belagavi, and Mangaluru. To cater to these markets, Johnson Lifts launched competitive models to accommodate elevators in compact lift shaft size and machine roomless elevators" said Albert Dhiraviyam, country head - marketing.

In 2009, the firm clocked a turnover of ₹419 crore with 5,200 units. In 2019, it had crossed the ₹1,850-crore mark with over 12,000 units delivered, commanding a market share of over 20%.

## Apex Coco unit commences production

The ₹220-cr. plant churns out 9 coconut-based products; eyes ₹1,000-cr. output

M. SOUNDARIYA PREETHA  
COIMBATORE

Apex Coco and Solar Energy, promoted by a group of garment exporters from Tiruppur, has commenced the commercial production of nine coconut-based products, all under one roof.

Established with an investment of ₹220 crore, the integrated coconut processing plant is said to be the first-of-its-kind in India.

**'5 lakh a day'**

Located at Ponnapuram, about 60 km from the knitwear hub, Tiruppur, Apex has the capacity to process five lakh coconuts a day.

The facility produces food and non-food products. Under the food category are coconut water, coconut milk,



**More in store:** The facility employs about 450 people and processes about 40,000 coconuts a day. ■ M. PERIASAMY

desiccated coconut, virgin coconut oil and coconut flour. The non-food products are coir pith, coir fibre, charcoal and composting medium. Non-edible coconut oil is a by-product and there are plans to make coir wood too.

Currently, the facility employs 450 people and processes about 40,000 coconuts a day. "We source from traders coconuts that are 50 to 55 days old and at present, the focus is on business-to-business contracts," says Raja M. Shanmugham, one of the nine directors of the firm. The project was initiated

in 2016 and was commissioned three months ago. "We have obtained 16 certificates for the products from Indian and international agencies," he says.

Almost all the processes are automated and the machinery are mostly imported. For some processes, the machinery is customised.

"We are looking at domestic and export markets. We hope to cross a turnover of ₹1,000 crore in two years. The main challenge is in creating awareness on the benefits of coconut products, especially in the food category," Mr. Shanmugham said.

The plant has facilities to produce variants in coconut milk and oil, as required by the customers.

## Global Healthcare to up headcount

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

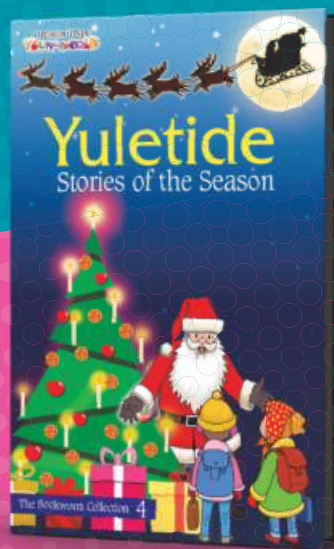
City-based Global Healthcare Billing Partners Pvt. Ltd. plans to increase its headcount by three-times in the next five-to-seven years, said a top official.

"We are a 20-year company providing extensive range of billing solutions to over 10,000 doctors and hospitals in the U.S.," said Vishal Jain, president, Global Healthcare Billing Partners Pvt. Ltd.

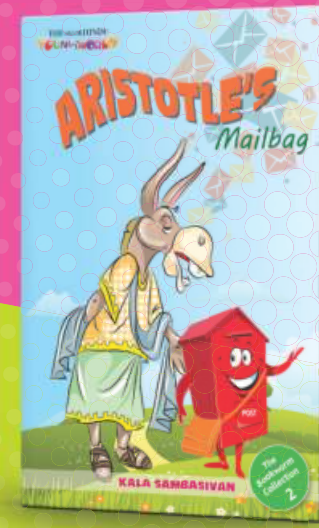
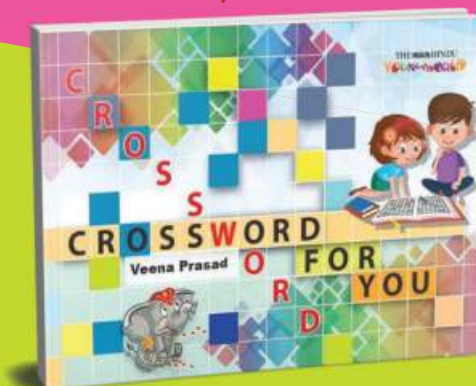
"Currently, we employ 3,300 people, of which 2,200 are in Chennai.

"Our goal is to have a total of 10,000 people in the next five to seven years and then go public," said Mr. Jain.

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# The Knight in shiny kitchens

The first Indian chef to receive France's Chevalier de l'Ordre du Mérite Agricole, chef Priyam Chatterjee, last associated with Qla and Rooh, is off to new shores

VANGMAYI PARAKALA

A conversation with chef Priyam Chatterjee always bursts at its seams with energy. When we first met, it was in April, at Rooh. Chef Sujan Sarkar's San Francisco restaurant had just opened its Indian outpost neighbouring the Qutub Minar, with Chatterjee as its head chef.

As each dish from their tasting menu arrived, he came by with it, talking passionately about its smallest, finest detail, and the hours it took to make.

Chatterjee used his (tattooed) arms, hands, eyes, and the shock of curls on his head to stress a point and delight you with his excitement for his craft. His mannerisms were befitting of the drummer he is in his free time. But now, in mid-August, his hair is just a wee bit tamer, and he's wearing glasses that make him look a little older than 31.

Today, Chatterjee is a Knight. On August 12th, the French Ambassador to India, Alexandre Ziegler conferred on him the distinction of Chevalier de l'Ordre du Mérite Agricole, or the grade of Knight, in the Order of Agricultural Merit. The award, originally instituted in 1833 by the French, recognises contributions to agriculture, the agro-food industry, or gastronomy. Chatterjee, who'd spent almost three years cooking contemporary European fare at Qla before his seven-month role at Rooh, is the first Indian chef



**Top chef** (Clockwise from top) Chatterjee's Van Gogh-inspired 'Langoustine with essence of the ocean'; 'Lady in a sari' a fruit preparation, made to taste like cheesecake; with Ambassador Ziegler after the investiture ceremony earlier this week; and the medal •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

to receive it. "Oh man, my phone has hung. I'm still getting so many messages, and people are tagging me everywhere. This is really a big deal," he says, leaving the sentence hanging a bit, almost like a question. He nods to himself, as if answering that half-question.

## The beginnings

Chatterjee, a commerce student in high school, went on to graduate from the NIPS School of Hotel Management in Kolkata. "Because I was always inclined towards art, and food is my medium of expression," he says. Despite this he was, per his admission, "a backbencher". He got his first job in 2009, with the help of a family member in the hospitality industry at a standard three-star hotel in Salem, Tamil Nadu. Here he

worked for 16 hours a day, cooking "regular hotel food", at a stipend of ₹3,000 per month. He was all of 20.

"Now I realise that as a kid, I grew up in a family of exceptional cooks...with two distinct culinary traditions," he says, as he tries out a croquette at a popular restaurant in Khan Market. His paternal side has roots in the Krishnanagar Rajbari, a palace in the Nadia district of West Bengal, while his maternal side is from Bangladesh. Plus with the "already elevated [European] food traditions in Calcutta of the Raj and post-Raj days," he says he had a melange of both worlds – there was Muri Ghonto and pudding; and Shukto, as well as puff pastries.

But he never fully understood this then. It was when

he was 13, and sent to a boarding school in Kalimpong (after his father's death), that his mind was really opened, not just to food, but also to produce. "We farmed and gardened here...I think that was our 'punishment'. I learned how to

grow peaches and strawberries, and how to pluck guavas," Chatterjee recalls.

Fast forward to 2012, and he was admitted into the opening team for Park Hyatt Hyderabad. In many ways, the four-and-a-half-years he spent here really shaped him into the French-honour-receiving chef he is today.

## The French connection

Chatterjee was almost getting kicked out of this gig when he met chef Jean-Claude Fugier, of the famed three-Michelin-starred La Maison Troisgros in Roanne, France. Fugier, who was helping open Park Hyatt Hyderabad broke ice with him over a croissant that Chatterjee was scarfing down when waiting to meet him, and kept him on. That was one of the most rigorous training periods of his life.

Fugier would sometimes push Chatterjee to the verge of tears, but once kitchen closed they'd bond over a bottle of beer. That's where he picked up French technique, but he says he'll slowly but surely bring in his roots: "not as 'fusion'," he says pausing to cringe, with both his hands and face, "but blending together memory and maybe ideology, with technique."

Since the end of June when he quit Rooh, Chatterjee has been in France, Saint-Tropez in specific, as the

head chef at Jaan Restaurant Yacht, where he's doing exactly this. The space, open only from July 8th to 31st August, describes itself as a "fusion of modern French cuisines with flavours from India, on a yacht", with a menu that changes weekly.

Here, Chatterjee took foie gras, cooked it with Indian khara masala, and liquidised that to make a butter. Pâté was too passé, so he decided to serve this with a thin saffron cracker, topped with more liquidified, warm foie gras sauce.

"Fusion would perhaps be foie gras, with chocolate sauce, finished with tamarind chutney. What I've done is to blend the best, and most delicate, of two different cultures," he says.

## Going forward

At the investiture ceremony, Ambassador Ziegler recalled the first time he tasted Chatterjee's food, adding that upon doing so, he was "astounded that I had not met you earlier."

"This will help me go a step closer in realising my dream of standing outside my own restaurant one day and welcoming you." He's boarding a flight back to France in just a couple of hours, having come back to Delhi only for the ceremony, but he's in no rush. As Chatterjee finishes up the last glass of Riesling, he looks around, for a second, oddly calm and expressionless, then: "I want to show the world I exist. I don't strive for fame, but I have many, many goals."



## EAT

### Cook like a Parsi

Zarine's Secrets does spice mixes that tone down the heat, push up the complexity of the dish, and simplify processes in the kitchen



Shelley Subawalla named her brand of spice mixes, chutneys, pickles, and *bhakras* (the Parsi version of a doughnut) after her maternal grandmother, who taught her to cook. This kitchen confidentiality ("My sisters weren't that interested," she says), also led her Mumaji to share her handed-down-over-generations recipes of spice mixes with Shelley, who used them through life.

After family and friends coaxed her into starting a venture, she did, four years ago, and is happy to be delivering world over now. "I started with four spice mixes: *dhansak*, Parsi sambhar, *dhana jeera* (Parsi allspice), a curry paste. Parsis eat curry-chawal on Saturday and drink beer and eat *dhansak* on Sunday, and then we go to sleep," she says, laughing. It's still her father's ritual, though her mum uses Shelley's spice mix now.

Shelley describes Parsis as people who eat everything, and prefer colour (which is why there's the use of Kashmiri red chillies), over heat. "And we love eggs; we'll put it over anything – potato, tomato, any vegetable. My grandmother would even put it over curry meat."

She does about 26 products today (the *patra ni machhi* paste can only be delivered in Delhi), with people from the community sending her their recipes so they're not lost. With the masalas comes recipes, so it's easy for non-Parsis to follow. Each packet will last four or five meals for a family of four. Shelley, who grew up in Delhi, feels it's a small way of reviving a part of Parsi culture. "Our kids grew up knowing very little compared to us, and our parents tell us we barely know anything compared to them," she says.

Order from Facebook.com/zarinsssecrets or email ssbawalla@hotmail.com; ₹325 for a 250g pack



SUNALINI MATHEW

## FOOD SPOT



**The prawn salad** Crunchy with nachos  
•SANJOY MUKERJI

# Project recall

The promise of the Calcutta South India Club

my friend from the city told me. The club - along with its canteen - was a part of the Kolkata's life, but, she added, the canteen had just given way to a new restaurant called the Roastery.

I heard that the Nobel Laureate, Sir Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman, used to stay in the club when he was in the city. The scientist was the club's first president (1926-28) and was followed by S. Radhakrishnan, who took over from 1928, for a year, and later went on to become the second President of India.

The club is still there, but the canteen, alas, is not. But, for old time's sake, I went with friends. The Roastery Coffee House (70 B Hindustan Park Road, Gariahat), I learnt, is a southern Indian chain which offers various kinds of coffee.

We went there one Sunday afternoon, and were enveloped by the aroma of coffee being brewed. The place was also humming with life. Truth be told, it was humming a bit too much me. I like to hear myself think when I am eating. But the Roastery - clearly a hot favourite in Kolkata now - was not just splitting at the seams with people, but I think also had a problem with its acoustics, which amplified the sounds.

We placed our orders. One friend asked for a Prawn Salad, and the other, Lamb-Meat Scotch Eggs. I asked for a piece of Chicken Breast stuffed with Prawns. The Grilled Prawn Salad with a Caesar Salad dressing was crunchy (thanks, also, to the nachos in the dish) and the friend said she enjoyed it. The fried Mince-Lamb-Coated Boiled Egg

was covered with a mushroom sauce, which was not a good idea as it took away its crunchiness. The Chicken Breast in my dish had been marinated with olive oil, garlic and basil leaves, and then baked after being stuffed with grilled prawns. Even though I had opted for it, I thought, in retrospect, the combination didn't really work. The chicken was also a bit too hard, though I enjoyed the creamy mashed potatoes that came with it.

What disappointed one of the friends - a coffee connoisseur - was the brew. It lacked punch and flavour, he complained - and went back to his favoured club in central Kolkata for a cup of hot filter coffee, which he said he really relished.

I am glad I went to the Roastery - if for nothing else the rich history of the Calcutta South India Club. I could imagine Sir Chandrasekhara, in his trademark white headgear, sipping his coffee after eating a fluffy white idli. The times have changed, but it's nice to furl the pages of history.

The writer is a seasoned food critic



RAHUL VERMA

A thought had been troubling me for a while. How was it, I asked a few friends, that Kolkata, which had a thriving population of people from southern India once, hardly had any restaur-

rants serving food from the region? I had eaten some good Kerala food at a place called Ammini several years ago, but always wondered why there were very few such eateries serving different kinds of southern Indian cuisine.

That was when I heard

about the Calcutta South India Club. Situated in the heart of the city, near Hazra, it was once a remarkably popular place for people who liked to have a bowl of piping hot sambar with their idlis or vadas - or more - after a day's shopping.

It was quite an institution,

## 5 EVENTS WORTH YOUR WHILE



### LECTURE

**Memorial**  
Natarang Pratishthan is celebrating the birth centenary of poet, theatre critic and editor Nemi Chandra Jain by hosting a memorial lecture, drama, and classical music session over three days. The lecture today is by eminent historian Dr. Romila Thapar, titled *Presence of The Other: Religion and Society in Early North India*.  
**VENUE:** Multipurpose Hall, IIC  
**TIME:** 6 p.m.



### MUSIC

**Dhrupad**  
*Arpan*, a music festival to mark the 84th birth anniversary of Dhrupad maestro Pandit Vidur Mallick will be held this evening. The event will feature two performances: the first, a Dhrupad vocal recital by Pandit Prem Kumar Mallick, followed by a flute recital by Pandit Rajendra Prasanna.  
**VENUE:** Triveni Kala Sangam, Mandi House  
**TIME:** 6:30 p.m.



### FOOD

**New menu**  
Vapour Bar Exchange, a micro-brewery and restaurant, has introduced a new menu at their outlet. In the vegetarian category, they now offer dishes like Pasta, Pav Bhaji, Enchiladas and Thai Curry. For the non-vegetarians, there's Murgmakhani, Thai Chilli Basil Fish, Kung Pao Chicken, and more.  
**VENUE:** Vipul Trade Center, Sector 48, Gurugram  
**TIME:** 12 noon - 4 p.m.



### EXHIBITION

**Digital art**  
The ongoing exhibition titled 'Fontwala: Stone to mobile, what remains?' is a digital art show by Rajeev Prakash Khare and Shubhra Prakash. It showcases the journey of the Indian letterform, specifically through the Devnagri script. The exhibit also explores the challenges experienced in transition from one medium to another.  
**VENUE:** Digital Art Gallery, Triveni Kala Sangam  
**TIME:** 10:30 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.



### PERFORMANCE

**Comic act**  
Punchliners is hosting a Hinglish stand-up comic acts by Piyush Sharma, tonight. A civil engineer from IIT Bombay, Piyush discovered that the construction of a joke fascinated him more than a bridge. He speaks on simple things like work-life, small-town mannerisms, and the hilarious dynamics of parents and teachers versus kids.  
**VENUE:** Club Tivoli, Sector 50, Gurugram  
**TIME:** 9 p.m. onwards

FILM REVIEWS

# Pastiche of the past

Quentin Tarantino's latest is long-winded but comes together in a heady climax

Rarely has a film celebrated the past with such flamboyance as *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*. But that's Quentin Tarantino: he has the audacity to revel in the violent, and celebrate the ridiculously unbelievable with exceptional flair. After all, he did kill Hitler 10 years ago in *Inglourious Basterds*. With his ninth film, *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*, Tarantino goes back in time again, taking on the Charles Manson-orchestrated murder of actor Sharon Tate and her friends. Through the character of Rick Dalton (Leonardo DiCaprio), an actor fast propelling towards has-been status, Tarantino offers an adrenaline-fuelled glimpse of

Hollywood in the '50s and '60s. It was a time, when morality ruled the roost on screen, and off it, while debauchery drove the rich and famous.

The film starts in 1969, the Vietnam War is soldiering on at full speed, hippie counter culture is on the verge of taking over and easy listening (Paul Revere & The Raiders, José Feliciano and Vanilla Fudge) is on the rise. Tarantino crafts the cusp of the '70s spectacularly with costumes, music and an overwhelming sense of nostalgia. It's a time when former star, Dalton, has resorted to playing 'the heavy' (villain) on TV shows like *Lancer*, *The F.B.I* and *The Green Hornet*. His friend, stunt



**Time travel** The film's coda is a psychedelic trip, pumped up, violent, fast and typical Tarantino  
\*SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

double and general Man Friday, Cliff Booth (Brad Pitt), chauffeurs him around. The two characters, opposite in station are equally different in personalities. Dalton, rich and successful, is alcoholic and insecure, finding stability in

the self-assuredness and calm of his friend and employee. It's their bromance that lights up *Once Upon...* frequently. Parallely, exuberant Sharon Tate (Margot Robbie) moves in next door to Dalton with her husband Roman Polanski (Rafal Zawierucha). Exuding delicate charisma, Tate floats wherever she goes.

In an attempt to give his leading men opportunities to showcase their acting chops, Tarantino offers free rein to his own imagi-

nation. It's not a complaint, but an observation: the director indulges himself and allowing his leads to do the same. More than once, Dalton's guest spots on TV shows unfurl in full, entire scenes where DiCaprio hurls in and out of character. Of note is Dalton's interaction with a little feminist child actor Trudi (Julia Butters) who schools him in using terms of endearment like 'pumpkin puss'.

In another scene, Booth, a war veteran smacks humility into a smarmy Bruce Lee (Mike Moh). In another, he's investigating the well-being of an old colleague on a ranch full of hippies, in merciless drawn-out suspense.

Clocking in at close to three hours, *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* is long-winded and oscillates wildly. But with Tarantino's mastery of craft, the film never once feels like a drag. The humour is sassy, the acting top notch and the stars, both yesterday and contemporary, alone

### Once Upon a Time in Hollywood

**DIRECTOR:** Quentin Tarantino  
**CAST:** Leonardo DiCaprio, Brad Pitt, Margot Robbie, Emile Hirsch, Timothy Olyphant, Dakota Fanning, Bruce Dern, Al Pacino, Lena Dunham, Damian Lewis, Kurt Russell, Scoot McNairy, Mike Moh

**STORYLINE:** Set in 1969, Hollywood – Rick Dalton is trying to save his acting career with stuntman, Cliff Booth's help while simultaneously, cult leader Charles Manson's followers are plotting a sinister crime.

are enough to make you stay put until the end.

Rest assured, the film's coda is a psychedelic trip: it's pumped up, violent, fast and typical Tarantino. Unfortunately, it arrives too late. *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* may not be the director's best of nine, but it's definitely a film you shouldn't miss.

# The magnificent MOM

A consummate Vidya Balan gives this fictionalised account of the space expedition a win over a patronising Akshay Kumar

NAMRATA JOSHI

Statutory warning: looking for science or facts here would be like searching for the proverbial needle in the haystack. Also, for a more detailed account of the ordinary lives of the extraordinary women scientists behind India's mission to Mars it would be advisable to turn to Minnie Vaid's book *Those Magnificent Women and Their Flying Machines: ISRO's Mission to Mars*.

With the nation's conscience keeper Akshay Kumar at the helm and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech featured in a special appearance, the idea behind *Mission Mangal* clearly is to ignite our supposedly latent nationalism. India becoming the first nation to reach the Mars orbit in its very first attempt, and at a fraction of the requisite cost is the kind of stuff that fires new India's patriotic feelings.



**All for nationalism** Vidya Balan is Mission Mangal's real star \*SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

### Mission Mangal

**DIRECTOR:** Jagan Shakti  
**CAST:** Akshay Kumar, Vidya Balan, Taapsee Pannu, Nithya Menen, Kirti Kulhari, Sonakshi Sinha, Sharman Joshi, H. G. Dattatreya, Vikram Gokhale, Dalip Tahil, Sanjay Kapoor

**STORYLINE:** A fictionalised account of the lives of the scientists at the Indian Space Research Organisation, who were the force behind Mangalyaan, India's mission to Mars

The film goes all out to celebrate the uniquely 'Indian' frugal engineering and innovative ways of fixing issues, of harnessing science for the pride of the nation. Just a small factual point to note in these times of WhatsApp forwards, is that the mission was launched when Manmohan Singh was Prime Minister in 2013, even though the

space probe started orbiting Mars in 2014.

However, the interest does not lie in such intricacies of the mission as it does with the oddball bunch of scientists behind it, with the eccentric Rakesh Dhawan (Akshay Kumar) and the *jugadu* (an expert at hacks) Tara Shinde (Vidya Balan) at the helm. It's a construct

that is instantly reminiscent of a *Lagaan* and *Chak De! India*. A lot of these characters and their lives remain half. One would, for instance, have liked to see much more of a Varsha Pillai (Nithya Menen) and a Neha Siddiqui (Kirti Kulhari).

The CGI is basic to say the least, the writing swings between good, bad and indifferent. Some tropes can get condescending.

On the flip side, the film showcases believable dynamics and negotiations of everyday chauvinism. It's also the instances of a certain self-aware goofiness and giddy light-headedness which reach out.

Ultimately though, it's a consummate Vidya Balan who rises above everything else and, thankfully, makes *Mission Mangal* all about a good-hearted matriarch instead of a patronising patriarch.

# Where the truth lies

*Batla House* is a needlessly convoluted and garbled interpretation of the 2008 encounter case, which entirely sides with the police

NAMRATA JOSHI

"*Shaque pe hai yaqeen to, yaqeen pe hai shaque mujhe, kis ka jhooth jhooth hai, kis ke sach main sach nahi.*"

These lines from Vishal Bhardwaj's *Haider*, talk about the opaqueness of a fraught situation and the inability to distinguish between truth and falsehood. They might have applied to the Kashmir issue. But the words also lie at the heart of the Batla House encounter of September 2008.

There has been the 'encounter killing of terrorists' angle of the cops, as against the charges of staged killings, false implications and human rights violation by activists, NGOs, and civil society groups. The National Human Rights Commission had given a clean chit to the police but the conjectures and distrust have not ceased.

The lack of comprehensibility could have made for a compelling thriller. However, the disclaimer from the makers clearly states that the story is from the vantage point of the special cell DCP Sanjeev Kumar Yadav (John Abraham). Having said that, it portrays its own version of truth in a needlessly convoluted manner.

There are two strands to the film – the track of a cop suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and his marriage on the brink of collapse. The former is what's interesting given its complexity and psychological dimension and the fact that it forces John Abraham to plumb the emotional depths that he normally doesn't. The means and methods of



**Good cops only** John Abraham in a scene from the film  
\*SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

### Batla House

**DIRECTOR:** Nikkhil Advani  
**CAST:** John Abraham, Mrunal Thakur, Ravi Kishan, Nora Fatehi  
**STORYLINE:** The Batla House encounter case of 2008 told from the point of view of cop Sanjeev Kumar Yadav

the police, however, seem utterly jerky and inept. It all gets neatly wrapped up in a convenient climax after an item number by Nora Fatehi. Just when we thought item numbers were passé. The binaries are reinforced. Anyone questioning the cops gets portrayed negatively, be it a nasty journalist

or an opportunist politician (did I spot a P. Chidambaram lookalike?), or a mean activist. The cops, however, are all virtuous. No wonder it's for the good Hindu cop to tell the brainwashed, strayed Muslim youth the true meaning of the *paak kitaab*, i.e. the Quran, and the tenets of Islam. That too while wearing a green shirt. Is it any surprise then that the film also underscores the emerging narrative of the times, about the supposedly short-sighted 'appeasement of the minorities' approach of yore. Neither *himayat* (taking side), nor *mukhalafat* (opposing) of the *qaum* (community) is the prescribed way out. Alright then.

### POOCH CAFE



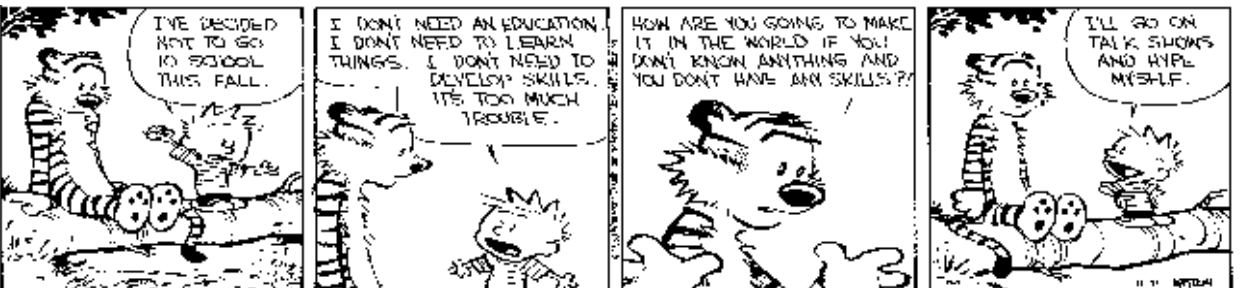
### PEANUTS



### HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



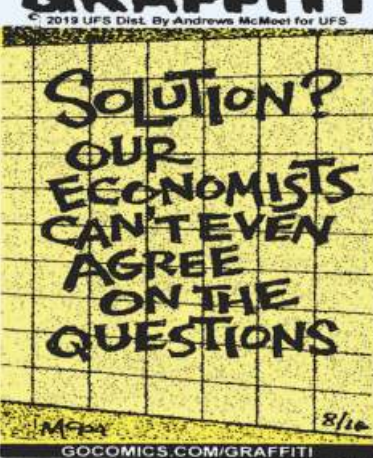
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### TIGER



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- 3 Prepared for exams (7)
- 5 Change to suit a new purpose (5)
- 6 Skin-tight garment (7)
- 7 Pact (6)
- 8 Lincolnshire seaside resort – lecher's poet (anag) (11)
- 14 Stated indirectly (7)
- 15 Freedom (7)
- 16 Gas-fired water heater (6)
- 17 Forge (6)
- 19 Evaluates the importance (of something) (5)
- 21 Killed (5)

Solution will appear in The Hindu dated August 17, 2019.

Solution No. 13149

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W	O	E	R	V	E	N				
P	E	N	N	O	N	M	A	R	V	E
L	S	S	W	E	I					
A	L	S	O	E	A	R	N	I	N	G
E	O	L	F	A	U	T				
R	A	N	G	E	F	I	N	D	E	R
A	I	S	S	E	A					
L	A	R	G	S	S	E	A	X	L	E
P	B	L	E	A	C	D	E	L		
A	Z	A	L	E	A	A	B	S	E	L
C	G	C	I	E	E					
A	S	S	E	T	A	N	N	A	L	S

### Across

- 1 Wretchedness (6)
- 4 Wooden-headed hammer (6)
- 9 Become shrunken and wrinkled (7)
- 10 Unaccompanied (5)
- 11 Scare (anag) (5)
- 12 Passage selected from a larger work (7)
- 13 Three-card trick (4,3,4)

### Down

- 18 Beethoven piano concerto, Op. 73 (7)
- 20 Breast (5)
- 22 Speedy (5)
- 23 Amelia, aviator, d. 1937 (7)
- 24 Most unrefined (6)
- 25 State capital of New South Wales (6)
- 1 Unlucky accident (6)
- 2 More certain (5)

### PEARLS BEFORE SWINE

