

IN BRIEF


Kohli named PETA India's Person of the Year

NEW DELHI
Cricket captain Virat Kohli was on Wednesday named People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India's 'Person of the Year for 2019' for his animal rights advocacy. Kohli's efforts to improve conditions for animals include sending a letter to officials calling for the release of Malti, an elephant used for rides at Amer Fort in Jaipur. PTI


Props from Friends to be auctioned for charity

LOS ANGELES
Iconic props from television hit show *Friends* are about to go up for auction with the earnings going towards an LGBTQ+ charity. Up for sale is Hugsy, Joey's much-loved stuffed penguin. Monica and Chandler's wedding invitation is also going under the hammer. IANS


Rap star Lizzo leads Grammy nominations

NEW YORK
Singer and rapper Lizzo scored eight Grammy nominations on Wednesday to lead a field packed with newcomers, including bold pop iconoclast Billie Eilish and overnight sensation Lil Nas X, for music's biggest honours. The newbies will square up against some superstar challengers. AFP

Rajinikanth is like family, says Bachchan

The two stars exchange warm praise at the 50th edition of the International Film Festival of India

KENNETH ROSARIO
PANAJI

Amidst a standing ovation in a packed indoor stadium, three veteran actors – Rajinikanth, Amitabh Bachchan and Isabelle Huppert – were felicitated at the 50th edition of the International Film Festival of India in Panaji on Wednesday.

Describing Mr. Bachchan as an "inspiration", Mr. Rajinikanth honoured him with a shawl. Mr. Bachchan, who has a retrospective dedicated to him at the festival, said Mr. Rajinikanth was part of his family. "There is always this bickering between us... There are times when I give him some advice and then there are days, when he suggests something to me. Though, we never follow each other's advice.... I feel that relationships are about all of this," Mr. Bachchan said.

Dubbing Mr. Rajinikanth the "god of South Indian cinema", filmmaker Karan Johar, who hosted the event, presented the Icon of Golden Jubilee award to the actor, celebrating his 44-year-long career. "I want to dedicate this to my directors, produc-



Show stoppers: Actor Amitabh Bachchan being felicitated by actor Rajinikanth, as Minister for Information and Broadcasting Prakash Javadekar applauds at IFFI. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ers, technicians and my fans," said Mr. Rajinikanth, as the crowd cheered.

Huppert honoured
Renowned French actor Isabelle Huppert, who started her career with *Le Prussien* in 1971 and has acted in over 120 films, was bestowed the lifetime achievement award.

She said she was thankful to the audience for "being as

much of a cinema lover as she is".

The jubilee celebration also witnessed some drama when three protesters, sitting in the stadium stands, heckled the Minister of Information and Broadcasting Prakash Javadekar over the Kalasa-Bhandura project, a drinking water project in Karnataka. Mr. Javadekar is also the Minister of Environ-

ment and Forest. Taken aback by the disruption, Mr. Javadekar stopped his speech for a few seconds and then continued till the protesters were ousted by security guards.

Minister interrupted

After the disruption, the Union Minister announced a single-window clearance for domestic and international

filmmakers to shoot in India. "From Goa to Leh to Andaman, they will all benefit from this scheme," said Mr. Javadekar. He also released a postage stamp dedicated to 50 years of IFFI.

Two-time Palme d'Or winning British filmmaker Ken Loach, who has a retrospective dedicated to him at the festival, addressed the audience through a video message. "We have a particular problem that we share today, which is the rise of the political far-right, where people are set against each other and what we have to assert in our country and yours, through writing and certainly films, is that we are far better united than we are divided," Mr. Loach said.

The ceremony also featured two performances by singer-composer Shankar Mahadevan and jazz artiste Louis Banks. The opening film of IFFI this year was Goran Paskaljevic's *Despite the Fog (Nonostante la Nebbia)*. In an interaction with the media earlier on Wednesday, Mr. Paskaljevic said that he made the film in response to the "xenophobia and growing fascism in Italy".

Film training programme seeks to boost diversity

Dalit and Adivasi candidates invited

NAMRATA JOSHI
MUMBAI

A three-month internship programme in film direction and production for the Dalit, Bahujan and Adivasi (DBA) community from across India is getting launched by Mumbai-based Future East Film. A stipend of ₹8,000 per month would be paid to candidates.

The Diversity Film Training programme will continue through the year with the candidates being selected every three months. They will get the opportunity to be a part of research, development, production, post production and other aspects of filmmaking and get to work with and be mentored by directors and producers working in filmmaking and advertising.

"My experiences in the Hindi film industry made me question the idea of Bollywood, celebrity culture and the role of savarna culture-makers," says managing director of Future East Film Niharika Singh, who noticed that there weren't many DBA voices in the business when she started



Niharika Singh

working as an actor over 20 years ago.

On a sabbatical from acting, she started getting engaged with different kinds of cinema, reading Ambedkar and anti-caste literature. The idea of DFT came about after discussions with producer Hemang Chheda and director and founder of the company Ashim Ahluwalia, also the director of critically acclaimed films like *Miss Lovely* and *Daddy*.

To apply

Applications are being sought from graduates from the DBA community, with a love for cinema. Those interested may write to niharika@futureeast.com. Shortlisted candidates would be called for an interview.

ISRO uses satellite data to gauge N. Korea's 2017 nuclear test impact

'Equal to 17 times that of Hiroshima explosion'

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

Scientists at the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) have used a novel mathematical technique and analysed satellite images to estimate the strength of North Korea's underground nuclear test of September 2017. Those tests are consi-

dered the most powerful thermonuclear devices to have been exploded by the country.

In the normal course, the detection and estimation of nuclear device explosions is based on the reading of earthquake monitoring sensors. However, North Korea's relative isolation has meant that there were no accessible seismic stations near the test site at Mount Mantap, Punggye-ri, to accurately gauge the intensity of the explosion, and how deep into the

earth the device was detonated. Such information is also important for determining the type of bomb, and consequently, the degree of knowledge the detonating country possesses.

Test site

"We inferred the location of the source as 129.0764°E, 41.0324°N at a depth of about 540 m below Mt. Mantap. The explosive yield estimated (245-271 kt) is about 17 times that of the Hiroshima explosion," the authors not-

ed in a paper. "We inferred that the uncertainties in yield and source depth estimated using the Bayesian modelling of InSAR data were significantly less than that of seismic methods."

The findings were published in the *Geophysical Journal International*. For the analysis, researchers K.M. Sreejith, Ritesh Agrawal and A.S. Rajawat used images of the location after the explosion, sourced from the ALOS-2, a Japanese satellite, and Sentinel 1B, a European

radar imaging satellite. InSAR refers to the interferometric synthetic aperture radar and is a radar technique used to generate maps of how a place would look after an earthquake, or a detonation.

While other groups have also used InSAR based approaches to estimate impact from a detonation, the ISRO group claims to have used a mathematical technique called Bayesian inversion that can correct for errors associated with InSAR data.

These estimates, of a yield of 250 kiloton, are in line with an assessment this June by U.S. scientists, who said that the 2017 test was about 10 times more powerful than the tests first conducted by North Korea in 2016.

Sound waves

"North Korea detonated a nuclear device in 2017 equivalent to about 250 kilotons of TNT, creating an explosion 16 times the size of the bomb the United States detonated over Hiroshima, Japan, in

1945," noted the American scientists' paper published in the *Journal of Geophysical Research*. Their approach, however, relied on studying the signature of sound waves from an explosion when it travels through rock at the test site, and how it affected sensors around the world.

"...The Bayesian modelling of the InSAR data reduced the uncertainties in the yield and depth by 25-85% and 40-97%, [respectively]" the ISRO team underlined.

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