FATHER'S FILM ON AMY

Mitch Winehouse is planning a film on his daughter, the late singer Amy Winehouse. His film follows Asif Kapadia's *Amy*, which Mitch had objected to. "We don't want to be like Asif, we'll let people say what they want but we don't want it to be negative," he said.

SNAP SHOTS

Becks Around the World

SOCCER LEGEND David Beckham will star in a documentary film, *David Beckham: For the Love of the Game*, which has been commissioned by the BBC. The 90-minute film will see Beckham play soccer in seven continents. The film follows Beckham, 40, on a journey to the villages of Papua New Guinea, the foothills of Nepal, the streets of Buenos Aires, the desert plains of Djibouti, the manicured pitches of Miami and the frozen wastelands of Antarctica, where he will play soccer with local people, and learn about their lives.

Bronze Age Tomb Discovered

ARCHAEOLOGISTS IN Greece have discovered an intact Bronze Age warrior's tomb, dating back 3,500 years, which is filled with more than 1,400 objects, including jewels, weapons, bronze, silver and gold vessels. It was discovered in Pylos, Greece, by an international research team led by the University of Cincinnati. Among the objects found in the tomb are four gold rings, two squashed gold cups and a silver cup with a gold rim, and a unique necklace of square box-shaped golden wires, more than 30 inches long with two gold pendants decorated with ivy leaves. Bronze weapons, several pieces of carved ivory and precious stone beads were also found in the tomb.

Jon's Sanctuary

JON STEWART, the former host of comedy news programme *The Daily Show*, is opening an animal sanctuary. Stewart, 52, stepped down as host earlier this year and he and his wife Tracey have launched Bufflehead Farm in New Jersey for mistreated animals. The sanctuary currently houses four pigs and the Stewarts reveal they have a flock of sheep on the way. "Our hope is to get a lot of school groups in," Tracey said, "If everyone did a bit more, if they fell in love a little bit more, so much could happen."

Mamma Mila

MILA KUNIS, Christina Applegate and Kristen Bell are joining forces to star in an untitled comedy which was previously called *Bad Moms*. The film follows three mothers, who embark on a quest to liberate themselves from their mundane, everyday chores, and accidentally land on a collision course with their children's school's PTA president and her blindly devoted clique of "perfect" moms. The comedy comes from *The Hangover* scribes Jon Lucas and Scott Moore. Kunis, Applegate and Bell certainly can relate to their mom roles well. Kunis is mother of one-year-old Wyatt Isabelle, Applegate has a four-year-old daughter while Bell is a parent to two children.

Scene from *Thithi;* filmmaker Raam Reddy (below)

Cinema Verite

Filmmaker Raam Reddy uses non-professional actors in *Thithi*, the only Indian entry in the International Competition section of the Mumbai Film Festival

ALAKA SAHANI

FOR WRITER-director Raam Reddy, filmmaking became an obvious career option when he realised that he did not want to give up on any of his multiple interests. "In school, I was interested in maths and science. Later, I started writing poetry and experimenting with photography. While studying economics at St Stephen's College, Delhi, I started writing a novel. That apart, I was into music," says Reddy, 25.

The decision has paid off. Reddy's debut feature, *Thithi,* has won the Golden Leopard, Filmmakers of the Present Competition, and Swatch First Feature Award at the Locarno International Film Festival. The film, in Kannada, is set to have an Asian premiere in the International Competition section of the Mumbai Film Festival, 2015.

Reddy started by making short films, which became a process of self-education. After he graduated in 2010, he made *Ika* (*Feather*), a Telugu short about a boy who wants to make a film but does not have a camera. He finds an old cardboard box, sticks old VHS tapes on its side and sets out to make a film. "It's a film about the nature and perception of art. It is sort of a meta fiction and exploration of what cinema really is," says Reddy. He finished *Ika* in 2012, a year after he completed his self-published debut novel, *It's Raining in Maya.*

For a more formal education in filmmaking, he went to Prague Film School. He was always certain of one thing — he wanted to set his first feature film in a small village in the Mandya district of Karnataka. "My co-writer and collaborator, Ere Gowda, was born and raised in that village. I wanted to shoot there but did not want to force the story, which came about organically much later," he says.

After film school, Reddy spent nearly three months, which he calls "a creative exploratory period" in the village. On most days, he and Gowda would roam around -- meeting people, discussing different aspects of their life or swimming in the nearby canal with the village children. "We took notes everyday and brainstormed. We started building our stories based on that. One of the important things that happened during the period was that we cast our three key actors.

> **A few of the actors required help with their body language while others were good off camera. In the latter case, we found ways of recording their bits without making them self-conscious.**
>
> **RAAM REDDY**
> FILMMAKER

We liked them so much that we decided to make a film about them even before we wrote the story," says Reddy. So, when they got down to writing the script, they kept their traits and mannerisms in mind.

Writing the script took three months. The casting took eight. Reddy was drawn to working with non-professional actors as he considers this a genuine way of telling a story. *Thithi* needed 50 actors. Reddy and his team followed a very intuitive way of casting and spoke to thousands of villagers. "If we sensed that someone fit our requirements, then we met them. Since my co-writer is from the village, he already knew many of them," he says. Most villagers did not know what acting entails so, instead of mentioning "acting", Reddy asked them if they were interested in trying something new.

"If some of the cast were naturally good at acting, we let them be. A few of the actors required help with their body language while others were good off camera. In the latter case, we found ways of recording their bits without making them self-conscious," says Reddy. He also roped in technicians from Film and Television Institute of India, Pune, and the Prague school.

Thithi is has a strong international flavour, thanks to Reddy's cinematic sensibilities that have been honed by subtitled films from around the world. From Iranian cinema to the works of Wong Kar-wai, Michael Haneke, Wes Anderson, Ang Lee and Ethan and Joel Coen, Reddy has soaked in the stories of celebrated filmmakers.

The NFDC Film Bazaar also played a key role in bringing the film an international recognition. An early cut of *Thithi* was shown at NFDC's work-in-progress lab. There, producer Sunmin Park, a mentor at the lab, liked the film and came on board. Through the lab, the Locarno Film Festival heard about *Thithi* — and paved the way for a film from rural Karnataka to travel to the world screen.

Call to March

Eighty-five years later, it's time to embark on Dandi March once again

A miniature model displays the plan of the memorial; the statue of Gandhi
www.dandimemorial.org

DIVYA A

ON MARCH 12, 1930, Mahatma Gandhi led a group of 80 from Sabarmati Ashram in Gujarat on a 24-day and 240-mile walk to Dandi, where they broke colonial India's salt laws. Almost 85 years after the Salt Satyagraha or Dandi March, an opportunity is on its way for us to relive that era.

The Rs 200 crore Dandi Memorial Project in Gujarat's Navsari district, which is funded by the Ministry of Culture, and coordinated and implemented by IIT-Bombay, is nearing completion and will be open to the public. "The Dandi Salt Satyagraha Memorial has been conceived as an experiential journey of the *satyagraha*, allowing visitors to understand its backstory. The idea is to make it participatory, inviting artists from India and abroad to come together and recreate the event that changed the political destiny of the nation," says Shreya Guha, a Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Culture, who is in-charge of the project.

The main memorial is erected at a 15-acre plot at the site in Dandi where Gandhi and his fellow freedom fighters picked up salt from the sea beach to break the salt law. Here, a 16.5 ft statue of Gandhi is placed inside a crystal pyramid of light, followed by a cluster of life-sized stone sculptures of the 80 other participants of the march.

"The project also entails developing a road around the Dandi path, complete with 24 night shelters and 24 narrative stoneware murals, so that visitors can not only relive the experience but also understand it. Meanwhile, a satellite library in association with the Gujarat Vidyapeeth and a museum dedicated to Dandi memorabilia are also coming up," says Bandana Sharma, Director of the Dandi Memorial Project. A solar power-based salt-making set-up is also being installed to allow visitors to manufacture salt personally.

The main Gandhi statue has been developed by sculptor 90-year-old Sadashiv Sathe and was installed at Dandi recently. Sathe is already credited with creating the nine ft bronze statue of Gandhi opposite Town Hall in Delhi and the 18 ft equestrian statue of Shivaji at Mumbai's Gateway of India. The creation of the statues of 80 other participants in the march brought together 40 sculptors from India, the UK, the US, Tibet, Japan and Sri Lanka to IIT-Bombay. They crafted two statues each. The statues are being installed in Navsari."Following deliberations of various ideas on the building of the subject, we have tried to recreate the history behind the *satyagraha* that inspired the likes of Martin Luther King Jr and Nelson Mandela," said Prof KK Trivedi of IIT-Bombay, who heads the team.

Even though the Dandi March has an iconic status in the history of modern India but, apart from Gandhi, very little is known about the others who marched. A supplementary research is also underway at IIT-Bombay to identify and commemorate other marchers. "The government is also considering the upgradation of Gandhi Ashram Trust in Bangladesh, and setting up of a permanent Gandhi-related exhibit in South Africa," adds Sharma.

Loom Ahead

An exhibition of cotton weaves in Mumbai attempts to revive the craft of the Rabha community

POOJA PILLAI

IT IS not surprising that the weaving traditions of the Rabha women are little known outside the Dooar forests of West Bengal and Assam. According to Sarmistha Lahiri, Secretary of Hast Karigar Society, the Rabha community is shy and rarely engages with the outside world. "We had gone to the Buxa and Chilapata forests as a part of our work to find and revive lost or dying handicrafts and handloom traditions," she says. The weaves of the Rabhas caught the attention of the organisation, which realised that this craft needed a wider exposure. "Impressions", the Hast Karigar Society's exhibition in Mumbai, is an effort in that direction.

The traditional economy of the Rabhas is based on agriculture and forests-based activities, and it is the women who do the weaving. Using two types of looms, they weave cotton cloth that are very soft and have lively and colourful patterns. "The women mostly weave lufungs (sarongs) and maplas (stoles) for themselves, and for festivals," says Lahiri.

With the Uttar Banga Bon-Jan Shramajeevi Mancha, the Hast Karigar Society organised a group of 15 Rabha women from a village in the Buxa forests last year and provided them with the opportunity to earn a livelihood through their weaving and, at the same time, work to revive their craft. This year, the weavers from Buxa have been joined by a group from the Mendabari forest village in Chilapata forest. "When we started the revival project last year, we had included a few dupattas," says Lahiri. "We have a much wider selection now, including dupattas, stoles and sarongs, and are planning to expand into saris next year," she adds.

The Rabha women in clothes they have woven; the cotton fabric is very soft and in vibrant colours and patterns