

VN automen take people for a ride

Smera Juneja

The Viman Nagar (VN) area has become notorious due to overcharging by auto-rickshaw drivers. The most affected are the students who form a predominant section of the population in this area. This overcharging contributes significantly to the already high cost of living in Viman Nagar. The auto-rickshaw drivers simply refuse to ply by the meter and charge in accordance with the prescribed tariff card. While the prescribed minimum charge is Rs 18 for the first 1.5 kms, the automen invariably charge Rs 30 for short distances. For instance, the distance from the B and C wings of the Symbiosis girls' hostel to the Phoenix Market City mall is less than 1.5 kms, but no automan will agree to ply for less than Rs 30. They simply refuse to ply by meter.

In fact, the demand for the same distance could go up to Rs 40 or even Rs 50 if it is late in the evening, or just before movie timings, or if it is raining.

"The job of the RTO is to regulate the auto meters. We will be able to take action only in case there is a specific complaint against an individual autorickshaw driver."

ACP PATIL, VIMAN NAGAR TRAFFIC BRANCH



"I have paid Rs 60 for two persons for this distance. The automen sensed our need and anxiety. Not one of them were willing to ply for less," recounted Vasanthi Awasthi, a student living in the area.

The automen operate in cartels. There is pressure on individual automen not to ply in accordance with stipulated fares. "This is just how it is," admits Sayyed Ejaz, who has been a autorickshaw driver for the past 30 years. He justifies the overcharging by saying that the business is not sufficient to ensure profitability. "There are not enough passengers in Viman Nagar," he claims.

"We do fear the authorities," he admits. "If caught overcharging, they are empowered to seize our vehicles and suspend our licenses. But this rarely happens," he adds.

Other automen, who did not want to be identified, said that there is a "tacit understanding between the automen and the authorities". They did not explain any further.

Meanwhile, ACP Patil of Viman Nagar Traffic branch simply denied any knowledge of such rampant illegality. "The job of the RTO is to 'regulate' the rickshaw meters. We will be able

to take action only in case there is a specific complaint against an individual autorickshaw driver", he said.

However, one of the leaders of the automen's union put the issue in perspective by saying, "When passengers are willing to shell out extra, why should the cops oppose it?"

"People can easily opt for the application-based autorickshaw services which charge in accordance with rules. But they are not willing to wait for a few minutes for the rickshaw. They want instant service for which they are willing to pay," he pointed out.

SCMC: a safe space for the queer community

Current students speak about liberation and openness on campus, in contrast with the outside world

Niharika Rastogi

Keeping up with the university's motto of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' ('the world is one family'), Symbiosis Centre for Media & Communication (SCMC) has always been welcoming and accepting of students from all over the world irrespective of their caste, colour and sexual preferences.

Homosexuality has been a taboo in India for a long period of time. Anyone who did not identify as heterosexual was considered unusual, immoral and was labelled a criminal for their sexual acts under Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code. However, this changed on September 6, 2018, when the Supreme Court of India decriminalised parts of Section 377, making gay sex legal.

Being an institute that trains aspiring media professionals, SCMC develops a sense of acceptance and respect amongst its students, thereby creating a safe space for the LGBTQA+ community.

"I dreaded starting college as I am someone who has always been out of the closet and been myself, so I would always be targeted by haters during my school days. However, SCMC had a good environment that was nurturing and accepting", said Aroush Kumar, a third-year student. "When I go out now and dress according to my choice, people



PHOTO / GLAAD.ORG

stare. I am not used to that stare here. But I've realized that it is all about being yourself", he added.

Parth, a Mass Communication student from the second year, agrees that he has always felt acknowledged and validated at SCMC. "It is a place where I found undeniable support and love", he says. "Not just my peers and friends, but the faculty is also so welcoming and progressive."

However, a student who insisted on being anonymous had a different view. "I feel like the outside world is somewhat safer, but I say this because I come from a very privileged circle of people."

Imana Bhattacharya, a third-year

Journalism student, explains her scenario: "I am not really out in any sphere other than my college. I have not faced any severe discrimination, but I make it a point to not be too forthcoming about my sexuality." She says that it is the result of her living in fear of backlash and discrimination.

Yogyata Joshi, another third year, identifies as bisexual. "I do not know if it is for the fact that it is a media school or because of intolerance towards biased behaviour", she says, "but SCMC definitely helped me through three years of mustering up the courage to be free in my mind and body about my sexuality even outside the college premises."

Pune granted hefty budget for 2018-19

Yash Agarwal

On March 9, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis approved an annual budget of Rs 2,591 crore towards the Pune Metropolitan Region Development Authority (PMRDA).

On first glance, it appears to have an emphasis on infrastructure development and transport, with provisions of Rs 888 crore for the Shivajinagar-Hinjewadi Metro; Rs 1,235 crore for the 128km ring road; Rs 152 crore for Mhalunge-Maan Township, and Rs 99 crore for construction of roads and bridges.

Speaking to *The SCMC Chronicle*, former PMC standing committee chairman Nilesh Nikam feels this is an election-year budget. "It is almost unreal. The figures are massively inflated." Nikam also stated that small projects with large impact for Viman Nagar have long been ignored. "I got the international skating ring constructed here. However, not a single washroom has been constructed inside, despite international-level players using the facility. It harms our image and reputation as a country, and Viman Nagar surely deserves better."

Over half of this "election-year" budget will go to the Metro and the ring road. Interestingly, it is Rs 225 crore more than that of the current fiscal (2018-19). The PMRDA budget for 2018-19 initially contained allocations worth Rs 2,591 crore, which was later scaled down.

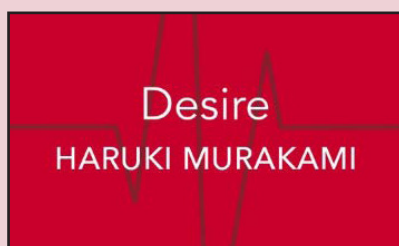
TOP PICKS



Green Book

Imana Bhattacharya

This year's 'Best Picture' Academy award winner, 'Green Book' follows a relationship between a parochial, racist white man and a well-to-do african-american. Set in the year 1962 it is when the latter- a musician and a pioneer in his time, decides to hire the former as his driver for his concert tour is that they meet. Their journey across the southern US explores the deplorable condition of the african-americans in the country at that time, as well as exposes how hypocritical and shallow people were then- no matter their education or class. The movie is a good watch, embellished further by Maher-shala Ali's Oscar winning performance.



Desire

Guneet Kaur

Haruki Murakami walks his readers through desires of different kinds through five short stories; hunger, infatuation and longing are a few of the desires that grip his protagonists. These desires rise, then plateau. They quell only when fulfilled or expressed. Protagonists' actions and decisions and their quandaries are dictated by the need to satiate desire. They live with what comes after it's gratified. Haruki weaves a deeply compelling narrative and helps the reader understand desires they contain within themselves. This is achieved with sharp storytelling and narration which cuts deep.



Tea Villa Cafe

Anushka Jain

The Tea Villa Cafe in Viman Nagar catches your eye first because of the festive lanterns that adorn its exteriors and the picturesque sight it creates with its glass walls and dining booths. Though the cafe stands on the higher end when it comes to its pricing, the delicious food and great ambience justify themselves. I tried the Ratatouille along with the Cottage Cheese Sizzler, followed up later by two of the cafe's many premium teas, namely - 'Apple Almond Crisp' and 'Espit De Noel'. Even in the presentation, the Tea Villa Cafe scored highly. Though the restaurant is vegetarian only, my non-vegetarian friend and I both enjoyed the dining experience thoroughly.

Digital sector most coveted for placements

Prakriti Arya

As the sixth semester commences and students begin their journey of becoming graduates, there's one word which is heard commonly across corridors and classrooms - placements. Every year, the placement season begins in full swing with professors and placement coordinators literally shedding sweat and tears trying to place students in their preferred organizations.

However, every year, there are new trends to be observed in the way students are approaching placements and what kind of talent are companies looking for. 2019 has been the year marking digital sector as the most preferred sector by the students. Given that it is the sector, among all specialisations, which seems to have the brightest future and provides most scope for their growth as professionals, it is only natural that the youngest and the freshest minds are flocking to the sector.

"I feel the digital space is a less structured space, hence young talent is far more welcome. It's the small and mid sized agencies that are okay with undergraduate students entering their space, learning for a few years and then moving on. They want fresher minds

"Organizations have come to realize that undergraduates are equally well equipped with skills as postgraduate students."



for the younger brands as well as to revitalise old brands", says Johanna Israni, placement coordinator for the Advertising Batch of 2019. From the recruiters' point of view, "Companies are looking for clarity and will to learn. They're also looking for a multi skilled individuals, they want the best they can get", adds Johanna. Organizations have come to realize that undergraduates are equally well equipped with skills as postgraduate students. Hence, they aren't differentiating between the two when it comes to their hiring plans.

Students are approaching placements keeping in mind a larger picture, which combines their interests in a particular field and their desire to start becoming independent in terms of monetary allowances and thus seeking out higher pay packages.

One aspect which I've learnt about while working for placements is that I accurately reflect emerging trends in the industry at large, and more importantly, how students perceive and react to them. It's been a fun ride and I just hope everyone gets the jobs they've always wanted to.

Docu, drama, comedy: degree films have it all

Aroshi Handu

The much awaited degree film season has finally concluded with a bang. The AV batch of 2019 has worked tirelessly these past few months writing, scripting, shooting, editing and a lot more. The genres of the films range from dramas to documentaries and from coming of age films to comedies.

Ritika Kapoor, is the director of Maitreyi, a film which is about two sisters finding refuge and restoration in their bond. "It is a family drama that presents the essence of my relationship with my younger sister" she says. Having a crew that believes in your story is very important and Ritika agrees. "I have grown leaps and bounds in the course of this project and I am glad to have had the team that I did to hold my hand through it all."

They say real life influences art and this is true in Bhavna Kankaria's case. Her film Love, Kush is a classic coming of age film



which revolves around a young cinephile who lives with his mother. The film explores the relationship of the mother and son, as they cope with the inevitable changes that come with adulthood. "This project is extremely close to my heart. Seeing my vision translate into screen was one of the most rewarding experiences I have ever had."

Meanwhile Krittika Kannoja set out to do something different. Zeher Hai Tu is a dance documentary based on the lives of people in Dehradun. "Since it was a documentary we met so many different people and to understand their struggle and their growth so closely was very overwhelming. People in college are very inclined towards fiction and what I wanted to show through this documentary was there is a whole new world of non-fiction out there waiting to be explored."

All the films were recently screened at the campus to all to see and it was an emotional moment for many. "It was really overwhelming to see my film being screened in front of so many people. I had to constantly keep looking around in the dark to see how they are reacting to the film. To have my audience telling me how much they connected with the film they felt my film made just all the blood, sweat and tears, absolutely worth it." Says Swetha Pillai, director of Atharaam.

SCMC girls cook up a deal-icious storm

Vishab Thappa

Guneet Kaur Bedi and Raunak Daswani, two third-year students from SCMC have taken it upon them to satisfy the hunger pangs of students by cooking delicious meals and savory foods for the students in and around the Symbiosis Viman Nagar campus in Pune.

"Cooking for me is relaxing, engaging", says Guneet Kaur who learned the art of cooking from her father. "I felt that the people around me need homemade food. It struck me that through the food that I cook for my family, the students here can be reminded of their homes," added Guneet. She beautifully balances college and catering, by working on the orders she receives the night before. She had partnered up with a fellow student



Raunak Daswani (left) and Guneet Kaur

Malvika Sharma, who helps her out with larger party orders. Guneet and Malvika call their kitchen as 'Sizzle - Home, Hearth and Heart', which provides homemade

food for students right from delicious parathas to pastas. Malvika now works independently.

"I used to bake irregularly for my family, but whenever I did I used to give it to my friends...it got to a point where people started to tell me to start this professionally", says Raunak Daswani. She started her enterprise, 'Raunak's Rachet Kitchen' after lots of encouragement from her mother. "It's really overwhelming to see people believe in my cooking. The response has been amazing with random texts and lots of orders." added Raunak. She provides customers with a variety of bakery products like cakes, brownies and cookies.

Photographs by Vishab Thappa

"A person is a fool to become a writer. His only compensation is absolute freedom. He has no master except his own soul, and that, I am sure, is why he does it. ROALD DAHL"

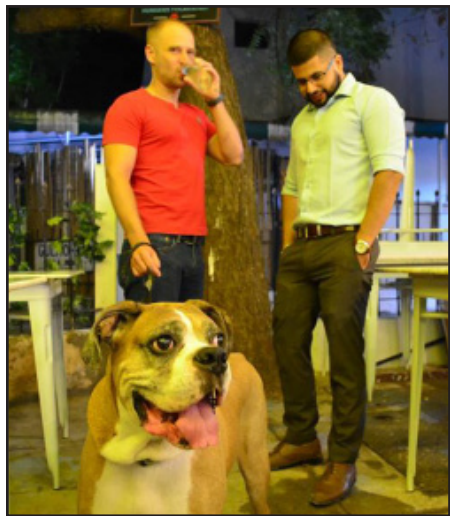
Wanna have breakfast with your pooch ?

— Aprajita Chandelkar —

The idea of leaving one's pet home alone, while one goes out for a good time can be saddening to many pet owners. Pune has been kind to such people. There are many restaurants and cafes where one can walk in with their pet and enjoy a delicious meal. Although these cafes are slowly coming into the limelight, they have never been very difficult to find. Places like Viman Nagar, Kalyani Nagar, and Koregaon Park have cafes which welcome humans and their furry friends with open arms.

Where else Café, located in Viman Nagar, is one such outlet which is very popular amongst people for its breakfast menu. Initially, situated at Datta Mandir Chauk, the café found a new home last year as it shifted near Gulmohar Galaxy, Opp Kailash Supermarket, Viman Nagar. It has its own signature theme and a beautiful ambiance. It has a special menu for pets and many other exciting offers if one wants to celebrate their pets' birthday at the cafe.

The Flour Works is another such cafe in Kalyani Nagar which welcomes dogs. One can often find one or sometimes two Labradors enjoying the smell of food from the kitchen. Mr. Montgomery (Monty) oversees all the dog business in the cafe. If one visits the cafe once, they are more than likely to visit again because



Clockwise from the top: Cats being fed at Where Else cafe; two cats resting at Where Else cafe; Dogs feel at home here; A customer makes friends with a dog



of its pet-friendly environment. Pets can roam in the outdoor section as the indoor decisions closed for them. The cafe does not have a set menu for pets but serves dry and wet food as per the pets' choice. Fat Cat's cafe is a quaint cafe, not very far from Koregaon Park which welcomes two and four-legged friends alike. With cozy outdoor seating, it makes for a great place for one to venture out with their pets. Not only do they welcome pets, but they also dish out treats like "pup-cakes" and "chew sticks" for dogs. The cafe takes orders and prepares food in bulk for pets on demand too.

Located on the main road in Koregaon Park, Prem's is yet another pet-friendly dining place where one can take their furry friends along. If you and your date are both pet lovers, you can take your pets also for a date here. With a nice and romantic aura, this restaurant is the perfect place for love to bloom.

Photographs from Facebook.com/WhereElsePune

A zero waste organic store for a green Pune



The store provides organic goods and people can use dispensers to take the items with them in a container they bring from home

— Aashna Kaul —

A lot of residents in Pune have been actively participating to adopt a waste and plastic free approach after the plastic ban that took place in Maharashtra last year. One of the results of that effort is Adrish, a zero waste organic store. Adrish is not like any usual store. The concept of this store is fairly simple though. One needs to bring their own bag or container to this shop, fill up those containers with whatever they need while carefully noting down the product ID, weighing it and then pay for it. Every product in this store is organic. This store

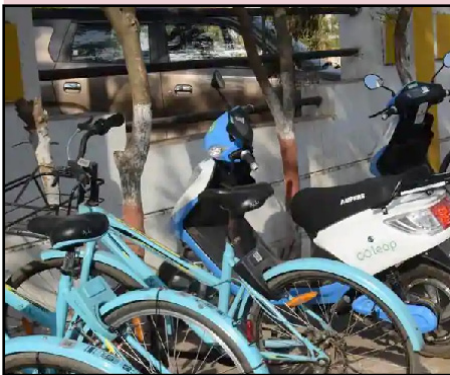
has already established itself as the city's first waste-free and organic store. Stemming out of the popular brand—Siddhagiri's Satvyk: The Health reStore by Akshay Agarwal and Gajendra Choudhary—Adrish's uniqueness lies in the fact that every product sold here is sourced from the farmers and artisans directly. There is no hindrance from middlemen involved, explains store owner, Sourabh. Every product sold at Adrish is unadulterated to the core. Just like the unprocessed honey which is sourced from the lesser known tribes of Sahyadri and Jaipur. The store is currently selling

grocery items like pesticide-free-fruits and vegetables, salt, spices, oils, black rice, olive oils, desi ghee, amla powder, rose water, and much more. Apart from all of this Adrish also sells natural products such as toothbrush made from bamboo, steel straw, wooden table top decor, toys, banana stem wallets, kurtis made from khadi and so on, to help Pune-kars go green. This store contributes to the trend of sustainable living that the urban population has been adopting consciously in the past few years.

Photograph from Sourabh Salunkhe

PCMC speeds into a better tomorrow

— Jivraj Karande —



Lead e-scooter on a two-wheeler stand

The Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) has launched an e-scooter sharing scheme, shortly after the rapid success of the bicycle sharing scheme implemented a few months ago. These schemes were launched under the area-based development scheme of Smart City project. As a pilot project, PCMC has introduced 20 e-scooters in various parts of the city. An addition of 60 scooters will be made after checking the initial response of the residents.

Currently, the scheme has been implemented in Pimple Saudagar and Pimple Gurav areas by Leap Bike Technologies, a Bengaluru based company. The first 15 minutes of the ride will be free, following which a nominal fee of Rs 1.50 will be charged. Officials state that the e-scooter can run for 60 kilometers on a full charge. The civic body has made charging points available for the scooters near the bus rapid transit system (BRTS) bus station in Pimple Saudagar. An app called LEAP - Keyless Electric Scooter Rentals has been launched by Leap Bike Technologies to ease users into the renting process.

PYC Gymkhana hosts matches for stalwarts

These championship matches are named after the former president of the Club Shashi Vaidya in his memory



Rahul Mantri and Nitin Khaire of Law Chargers in action at the PYC Gymkhana Inter-Club Tennis Championship for people over 30 .

— Shivansh Gupta —

PYC Gymkhana in Pune hosted the eighth edition of the Shashi Vaidya Memorial Inter-Club Tennis Championship from February 11 to 25. Held every February, the tournament was conceptualized to be on the grounds of an inter-club tournament for people above 30, who have played earlier and want to stay in touch with the game. The championship is named after the former president of the club, Mr. Shashi Vaidya, who started these tennis courts together. He was an avid tennis player and this event is held in his memory. This is a district-level tournament which follows a unique format and carries out an unusual selection criterion for the clubs and the

players. Firstly, each player participating cannot be younger than 30-years-old. Secondly, clubs participating in the tournament need to have a mix of the young players and the old players as there is a concept of a 90-plus match and a 100-plus match. This means that the combined age of the pair must add up to at least 90 and 100 respectively. The SCMC Chronicle spoke to the organizing secretary of the tournament, Mr. Abhishek Tamhane who emphasized on the format of the tournament. "When two teams play against each other, it is called a 'Tie'. Each tie comprises of four matches, which include one 90-plus match, one 100-plus match and two doubles. The teams play a regular tennis set, but the tie-breaker is played at 5-all,

instead of 6-all. Interestingly, the winner is decided based on the number of games won and not the matches. There could be a situation where a team has lost three of the four matches in a tie but still ended up winning as it had won a higher number of games." This year saw a massive increase in the participation of clubs and players. 26 clubs and over 250 players took part in the 2019 edition, which is twice the number compared to a few years back. "When we say club, we mean a regular tennis club, an academy or anywhere tennis is played where people come together to book courts and play and form a team and participate," he added while clarifying on the concept of a club's eligibility. Speaking about the contribution of the Maharashtra

State Lawn Tennis Association's (MSLTA) in the tournament, he explained that the tournament is played within the framework of the governing body and moreover, the rules and regulations are set by MSLTA. "The winners and the runners-up of the tournament not only get a cash prize, but they also qualify for the state-level tournament, which is organized by the MSLTA," he explained. In the last eight years, this tournament has got the entire tennis fraternity in Pune together at both, the recreational and the competitive level. The organizers now have a database of more than 400 such players, and every year this tournament is growing.

Photo credit: PYC Gymkhana

SSLA Batch 2020 wins inter-batch sports

— Srishti Pattnaik —

It was an eventful weekend for the students of Symbiosis School for Liberal Arts (SSLA) as they conducted an Inter Batch sports weekend from March 7 to March 9, at the Symbiosis International School ground. The event was a blend of cultural and sports activities and competitions. Cultural events included a dance competition called 'Dance Off', a solo singing competition, a film quiz, 'Guess The Song', a competition testing the song knowledge of the students, the classic Dumb Charades, where participants need not have a way with words but must have a way with gestures, a debate competition and finally, stand-up comedy performances to add a touch of wit and humor. Almost all cultural events were won by Batch 2020 except for the solo singing and stand-up comedy events which were won by Batch 2022. Participants pulled up their socks to ace the multiple sports events that were held at the SIS ground. A mix of agility and alertness led Batch 2021 to victory at the Kho-Kho event while Batch 2020 grabbed the winning titles for Badminton, Basketball and Volleyball. Every batch gave it their best shot and Batch 2020 emerged as the overall winners.

Aisi Taisi Democracy show on March 31

— Snigdha Jain —

Aisi Taisi Democracy (ATD) – a comedy-political-satire group can be described as part stand-up comedy, part musical and part biting diatribe on social issues. The show is back with a second season with an ingenious trio group featuring artists from different backgrounds. Rahul Ram, the lead guitarist and singer for India's premier rock-band - Indian Ocean performs alongside two stand-up artists. One of them is Sanjay Rajoura, also a social-satirist & recipient of The Hindi Academy Award (for Contribution towards Hindi Satire). The latter is comedian and writer Varun Grover infamous for writing scripts such as Masaan, and Sacred Games and lyrics for Gangs Of Wasseyapur. Since their inception in 2014, the trio gradually became known for its unique brand of satire incorporating music and comedy. A few titles of their original music tracks from their previous tour include – "Juicer ka Subatomic Particle", "The history song", "The Rafale song" and "The gaiyya" amongst many others. A lot of content performed by them has been perceived as controversial. In one of their earlier shows, during a performance at (MNNIT) in Allahabad, Varun began talking about how Indians are hypocrites



Members of Aisi Taisi Democracy .

when it comes to sex and about the lack of sex education. The mere mention of the 3 letter word made a few members of the faculty uncomfortable and they not only walked out of the show, but also shut down the performer's mic and asked the ATD team to leave. While writing about one of his experiences from that show, Sanjay Rajoura shared, "Apparently, we had offended a professor in the audience. Universities are the last places where you expect intolerance or to encounter thin-skinned people who are quick to take offence. Just before our

mics went dead, Varun was talking about the hypocrisy of Indians when it comes to sex education, how we beat about the bush, so to speak. A learned professor in the audience apparently objected to this. He said: How can you talk about sex when there are girls in the audience? He'd just proven Varun's point." They are to perform in Nehru Memorial Hall on 31st March in Pune as they tour the entire country. It's a juicy time to catch them live especially before the general election. What will be interesting would be to watch is what they bring to platter during the pre-election frenzy.