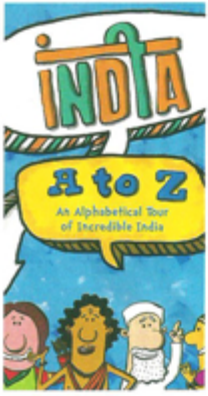
Fact check

Paul Dharamraj looks at two new kids' books with different approaches to teaching general knowledge.

Staid, leather-bound encyclopaedias that you were pressed into buying from door-to-door salesmen are now things of the past. To counter kids' growing reliance on Wikipedia as a source for school projects, two publishing houses in the country have put out India-specific fact books that make learning both fun and historically accurate.

The first of the two, India: A to Z is a treasure trove of general knowledge that looks at a specific set of topics. This Puffin book, compiled and written with an engaging style by Veena Seshadri and Vidya Mani, has about three or four topics for each letter (L for Ladakh, Lakes, Languages or Lucknow) and each subject gets a page of facts coupled with illustrations. There's a range of topics on offer, and the book draws from both historical and contemporary issues. You can read about the Ajanta Caves for instance, and flip the page back to wise up on the Aadhaar card. This book may be limited in terms of scope, since it isn't a catch-all almanac and only deals with a select list of topics. However, the idea seems to be helping children understand concepts and history, as opposed to swallowing a list of facts for regurgitation later at an entrance exam.

The second book, Hachette's Indiapedia, takes a page from the old-school Manorama Yearbook style in its presentation of general knowledge. From the first page, it launches into an exhaustive list of facts categorised by different chapters such as Indian Constitution, Indian states, languages, geography, and science technology. Researched by Rituparna Mukherjee, it's a great resource to have around the house for a quick referral. However, if you're looking for an engaging book for your seven-year-old, this is a dry read. There isn't a single illustrative diagram or picture in the entire book; you'd expect that throwing in a few maps is the best way to teach geography, instead of punishingly big blocks of text on the mountains of India. However, the book strives to maintain a high degree of accuracy and succeeds. There aren't any traces of revisionist history, or insidious saffronisation of facts by proponents of the Hindutva ideology; it's quite neutral. The book does contain patriotic overtones, but offers a balanced assessment of the country's past. For instance, it classifies the Indian struggle against the British as "tales of strength and valour, but also greed and cowardice". For the breadth of general knowledge it covers though, we'd say this would make a great foundation book for budding young quizzers.



India: A to Z, Puffin, ₹325; **Indiapedia,** Hachette, ₹175

Around Town

Events

Ongoing

Drawing course Cartoonist Vivek Thakkar will be holding "Science of Art", a six-month, scientific, step-by-step approach to learning how to draw and paint cartoons and caricatures. The focus will be on understanding shapes, making your own cartoons, portraits, figure drawing and analysing faces and caricatures. *₹2,000 for four classes in a month. 37 Nutan Laxmi Society, Suraj building, Ground Floor, Opposite Laxmikant Pyarelal Chowk, JVPD Scheme, 10th Road, Vile Parle (W).* **MR** *Vile Parle (WR & CR Harbour)* 🚌 *Dinanatha Natyagriha. To register, call 98209-88202/2628-0694 or email vivekcartoonist@gmail.com.*

Archery session Blue Bulb will be organising a two-hour session where participants will be trained in the basics of archery. *₹1,099 per person. To register, visit http://www.bluebulb.in/Archery.html or call 6196-7106.*

Golf sessions This introduction to the sport at a golf club nestled between the beautiful Yeoor Hills in Thane should have you playing like Tiger Woods in no time. *To register, visit www.bluebulb.in/Golf.html or call 6730-2917. 8, 9, 10am and 2.30pm. ₹1,699.*

Learn to sail Blue Bulb will be organising a two-hour sailing session along Mumbai's picturesque shoreline. Starting from Gateway, participants will sail past some of Mumbai's oldest lighthouses. *₹2,499 for four people. To register, email info@bluebulb.in or call 6196-7106.*

Make your own gifts The Hub by Usha will be organising sessions teaching participants to make gifts like dry flower holders, wine bottle covers, stockings, tree decorations, gift bags, and decorative stitches. Walk in between 11 am and 8 pm and their sewing experts will teach you how to make your Christmas more beautiful. Until Tue Dec 24. 11am–8pm. *G 1, 444 Corporate Lounge, Opposite Sahib Khatwara Darbar, Road No. 7, Linking Road, Khar (W).* **MR** *Khar Road (WR & CR Harbour)* 🚌 *For details, call 6127-4444.*

Paragliding A one-day session in which participants learn to paraglide on their own in Virar. *₹4,999 per person. To register, visit www.bluebulb.in/Paragliding.html or call 6196-7106.*

Splash art In this two-hour session, participants get to create a painting in a fun way – by splashing paint on a canvas. *₹3,499 for a group of four people. To register, visit www.bluebulb.in/SplashArt.html or call 6196-7106.*

How to use this section

This section consists of a round-up of the fortnight's events.
MR denotes the nearest train station.
🚌 denotes the name of the nearest bus stop.
FREE denotes no admission fee.

If you want to be listed
Submit information by mail (Time Out, Essar House, PO Box 7964, 11 KK Marg, Mahalaxmi, Mumbai 400 034), email (listings@timeoutmumbai.net) or fax (6660-1112) to Gauri Vij. Include details of event, dates, timings, address of venue, nearest train station and bus stop, telephone number and any entry fee. Time Out is a fortnightly publication, appearing on the stands every other Thursday. **Deadline for information is ten days before publication.** Listings are free, but inclusion cannot be guaranteed due to limited space.

Fri Dec 20

FREE EDITOR'S PICK Exhibition The Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (CSMVS) and the British Museum will showcase an exhibition titled "Cyrus Cylinder and Ancient Persia – A New Beginning". The Cyrus Cylinder, is a clay cylinder bearing inscriptions in Babylonian cuneiform of a declaration by King Cyrus the Great in 539 BCE. The exhibition will also showcase inscriptions in Old Persian cuneiform, gold plaque from the Oxus Treasure associated with Zoroastrianism, coins and seals. The Ashokan edict from 300 BCE, will also be on display. *Until Tue Feb 25 2014. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahaliya, MG Road, Colaba.* **MR** *Churchgate (WR), CST (CR Main & Harbour).* 🚌 *Museum. For details, call 2284-44842284-4519.*

FREE The Blackout Festival The second edition of the three-day festival that was set up to mark the end of the Mayan Calendar last year. The fest includes a midnight laugh mob, film screenings, food experiments and art shows. *Till Mon Dec 23. See www.facebook.com/BlackoutFestival3/official for details.*

Sat Dec 21

FREE EDITOR'S PICK Comic Con Comic geeks rejoice – The second edition of the Mumbai Film and Comics Convention returns. There will be workshops and sessions with comics and artists, display and sale of a wide range of comics and merchandise, special corners for creating cartoons, as well as quizzes, and dressing up contests. The highlights are a special screening of *Barka Avenger* followed by Q&A with its creator and a session with the cast and director of the movie, *Tere Bin Laden Sequel.* *Until Sun Dec 22. Bombay Exhibition Centre, Goregaon.* **MR** *Jogeshwari (WR)* 🚌 *Mahanand Dairy. 10.30am-7pm.*

Graphic design workshop Bombay Connect will be organising a