

In India, a food safety inspector is a rock star



MUMBAI, INDIA

Videos of surprise raids turn Tukaram Mundhe into an unlikely celebrity

BY SUHASINI RAJ
AND JONATHAN WOLFE

The early-morning raid caught the staff at a popular Mumbai restaurant by surprise.

Food safety officials swept into the kitchen, scrutinizing the tandoori ovens and expiration dates on batches of butter. They quickly uncovered a number of issues. One employee was chopping ginger while sitting on the floor; another, preparing chapatis with a rolling pin, was wearing shorts.

"Why aren't you in pants?" asked an official. But she, and New York Times journalists observing the raid, were soon distracted by a group of cockroaches scurrying past an oil canister.



Mr. Mundhe says his rigid adherence to the rules has earned him death threats.

The inspection last month at Olympia Coffee House found scores of health and safety violations and resulted in an order to close the century-old institution. It was the latest high-profile operation spearheaded by Tukaram Mundhe, the state's new top food and drug official, whose zero-tolerance campaign against

"I am scared of you," one restaurateur said to Tukaram Mundhe, the top food and drug official of Maharashtra State in India. Above, a member of his team during a raid.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ZEESHAN ALATIF FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

INDIA, PAGE 2