

## Tharoor tweets on Kabul, beats others to it

Minister of State for External Affairs Shashi Tharoor appears to be putting bad publicity over his 'cattle class' tweets far behind. He has now become the only Indian minister to comment on the Kabul attack - thanks to Twitter, of course!

'India will not be intimidated by these criminal killers' - Tharoor tweeted from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) during an official visit there.

He also put out a vivid account of his recent visit to Bahrain and the UAE in pithy tweets much before the external affairs ministry said anything of value on its website. Incidentally, there was no statement or comment from External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna on it even two days after the Kabul incident.

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### The Timothy Roemer show

When the new US envoy to India, Timothy J. Roemer, met captains of Indian industry recently, his speech had the flavour of an American campaign. 'I know this is not the Oprah Winfrey show,' Roemer told top business honchos sitting under the crystal chandeliers of a luxury hotel in Lutyen's Delhi.

But the flamboyant six-time US Congressman from Indiana could not resist the flourishes of a politico. Instead of standing at the podium, he stepped down and launched into an eloquent speech on the entire gamut of India-US relations, walking across the room, all the time making an eye contact with the audience.

'I have seen a lot of US ambassadors, but I have not seen anybody make a speech like you have done,' said a slightly bemused Tarun Das, CII's chief mentor.

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### Soni, no less, on American journo's case

Information and Broadcasting Minister Ambika Soni is believed to be extremely upset about the brutal thrashing of American journalist John Elliott by policemen in Delhi. The conflicting versions about the incident are as bizarre as it gets, but the minister is now after the truth.

Police have doggedly stuck to their version that Elliott was found drunk past midnight and caught in an attempt to steal a car. The victim has, however, maintained that he got caught in the middle of a brawl between Delhi Police officers and was beaten black and blue.

Soni feels police could have taken some time to find out the truth instead of hammering and thrashing him left, right and centre. She has asked her officials to find out more and report back to her even as Elliott has left for the US demanding a compensation of \$500,000 for 'the pain, the suffering and the mental anguish'.

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Backslapping, from one icon to another

Shashi Tharoor looked a bit tired after returning home from the UAE Friday but he took out 30 minutes from his packed schedule to release author Chetan Bhagat's new book.

An author himself, Tharoor said: 'If I am the country's political icon, Chetan is the country's youth icon. Bhagat has been able to put together a language that sparkles with immediacy - he has been able to put a finger on the pulse. He knows the kind of people he is writing for.'

Tharoor says Bhagat's books 'are by an Indian, about Indians and for Indians'. He has managed to read the prologue of the book though he is carrying a copy of it to read in between international halts.

Needless to say, for Bhagat, 'Tharoor is the most connected Indian'!

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Varun Gandhi's stars dimming

He became the poster boy of Hindutva ahead of the general election, but Varun Gandhi appears to have fallen from grace. His Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has found no use for him even as the election campaign in Maharashtra, Haryana and Arunachal Pradesh is peaking.

Varun Gandhi is missing from the list of star campaigners of the party, said a source. The decision to drop him has been prompted by sobering introspection following the humiliating drubbing the BJP got in the April-May Lok Sabha polls.

His anti-Muslim hate speeches, the party's top bosses realised, were one of the reasons for the defeat of the party. Varun Gandhi may have won the Pilibhit seat from Uttar Pradesh, but he has evidently lost more than meets the eye.

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IAF no teeny-weeny force

There seems to be no end to comparisons between the military capability of India and China, with Indian Air Force (IAF) chief Air Chief Marshal P.V. Naik making a rather patriotic assertion last week.

On Air Force Day, Naik proclaimed that the IAF was no 'chunnu-munnu' (teeny-weeny) air force, triggering peels of laughter from assembled officers. Only a few days ago though, he had said the IAF's strength was merely one-third of China's air force.

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