

US Supreme Court nominee storm fans #MeToo flames

WASHINGTON: When US President Donald Trump demanded to know why his Supreme Court nominee's sexual assault accuser did not come forward sooner, he sought to cast doubt over her claims. His argument? If her story were true, Christine Blasey Ford would have spoken out back in the 1980s, when she says Brett Kavanaugh pinned her down and muffled her cries as he tried to pull off her clothes at a high school party. Nonsense, replied his detractors, from women in his own party to thousands of ordinary women who flooded the internet to tell the stories of trauma, under a viral hashtag: #WhyIDidntReport.

"Because I was 18" and "I was scared" and "I didn't want to be defined by someone else's violent criminal act," Gretchen Whitmer, who is running for governor of the US state of Michigan, tweeted using the hashtag. Ford, a California professor, initially made the accusation in a confidential letter and only came out publicly because she felt her "civic responsibility" was "outweighing my anguish and terror about retaliation," she told The Washington Post. But Republicans have alleged the last-minute allegation was a deliberate bid to prevent conservative Kavanaugh's appointment before crucial midterm elections in November.

After days of relative restraint, Trump - himself the

subject of groping and other sexual harassment allegations by multiple women, launched an all-out attack on Ford's credibility. "I have no doubt that, if the attack on Dr Ford was as bad as she says, charges would have been immediately filed," he tweeted Friday. The US women's movement, simmering since worldwide anti-Trump marches the day after his inauguration, has already mobilized against Kavanaugh's conservative stances on abortion and birth control - and is firmly behind Ford.

The Women's March organizers and other groups coordinated protesters to disrupt Kavanaugh's confirmation hearings, which began in early September. Ford's lawyers allege she has received death threats since her identity became public, and one crowdfunding effort to cover her security costs raised more than \$200,000 in three days. Nearly 1,200 women who attended her all-girls high school signed a public letter of support. But the president's skepticism unleashed a fresh wave of social media outrage, echoing that of last year's #MeToo movement.

Stories shared

A phrase of solidarity through empathy first used by activist Tarana Burke in 2006, #MeToo spread virally

warehouse and is full to bursting point. Not a single plastic chair is free, nor a space on the pallets piled up into makeshift seating. Many of the 300 people crammed inside are forced to stand. "What are you going to do to stop us missing class because of shoot-outs?" asks 14-year-old Ellen. Her question, though, is not directed at the right people.

Only three of the 12 gubernatorial candidates bothered to turn up for the debate, all from leftwing parties and two of whom were polling less than one percent of the vote in opinion surveys. Four candidates cancelled at the last minute, while one was represented by his running mate. Even World Cup winning former football star Romario, himself born in a Rio slum, hasn't made an appearance.

'Disappointed'

"Where are the candidates? I don't know anyone here," says Daniel Lima, a 21-year-old who was hoping to see the big-hitters such as Romario and former Rio mayor Eduardo Paes. Karla Rodrigues, 35, who like most of those living in Mare is black, adds: "I'm disappointed. This says a lot about the candidates. It's important that they can go into the favelas, to make contact with the population so they can get a different idea to what you see on television."

Every day, politicians highlight the numerous shoot-outs in favelas, and not without reason. The Mare debate is interrupted for a few seconds by the sound

and other allies decided in late 2016 to reduce supply by some 1.8 million bpd.

In June this year, however, after months of cutting by more than their pact had called for amid involuntary reductions from Venezuela and other producers, they agreed to boost output by returning to 100 percent compliance. That equates to an increase of about 1 million bpd, but the latest figures show they are some way from achieving that target. Oil reached \$80 a barrel this month, prompting Trump to demand again that OPEC bring down prices.

"We protect the countries of the Middle East, they would not be safe for very long without us, and yet they continue to push for higher and higher oil prices! We will remember. The OPEC monopoly must get prices down now!" he wrote on Twitter. Higher gasoline prices for US consumers could create a political headache for Trump before November mid-term congressional elections. OPEC sources said any official action to raise output would require OPEC to hold what it calls an extraordinary meeting - a proposal that is not on the table yet. But the joint OPEC and non-OPEC ministerial committee known as the JMMC, which meets today, can still recommend a further increase in output if needed, the sources said. — Reuters

French Govt had any say in the commercial decision."

Reliance did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Dassault denied the report, saying it had picked Reliance as a partner for industrial reasons. "This is Dassault Aviation's choice, as (Dassault) CEO Eric Trappier explained in an interview published in MINT newspaper on April 17," the company, which also makes Falcon business planes, said in a statement. "Dassault Aviation and Reliance have built a plant in Nagpur for manufacturing parts for Falcon and Rafale aircraft. The Nagpur site was chosen because of the availability of land with direct access to an airport runway, an essential condition (for) aeronautic activities."

The French foreign ministry published a statement saying French authorities were not involved in the choice of Indian industrial partners involved in the Rafale deal. "The French government is in no way involved in the choice of the Indian industrial partners which have been, are or will be, chosen by French companies," the statement said. "In accordance with the Indian procedure, French companies have full freedom to choose the Indian industrial partners they consider to be most pertinent and then to propose to the Indian government for approval the offset projects they want to carry out in India with local partners to respect their obligations," it added.

The deal with Dassault was expected to deepen strategic ties with France and the company itself has hoped it would lead to a larger order for combat jets that the Indian air force says it needs to face a perceived twin threat from China and Pakistan. India picked the Rafale plane to replace its ageing fleet of Russian aircraft from a field that included Lockheed Martin's F-16, Saab's Gripen, the Eurofighter Typhoon, Boeing's F/A-18E/F Super Hornet and the Russian MiG-35.

Hollande also denied any conflict of interest with Reliance, which partially financed a film by his partner Julie Gayet in 2016. "That is why, moreover, this group (Reliance) did not have to give me any thanks for anything. I could not even imagine that there was any connection to a film by Julie Gayet," Hollande said. — Agencies

as a hashtag when a flood of allegations against Hollywood movie mogul Harvey Weinstein forced a global reckoning on sexual misconduct in the workplace and beyond. This time, it was solidarity through attempted education, as sexual assault survivors furiously hit back at Trump and Ford's other detractors with the reasons why they, like Ford, kept their trauma to themselves for so long.

Within the #WhyIDidntReport tweets, themes jumped out: fears of not being believed, or of repercussions for speaking out; feelings of shame or embarrassment. And for all the stories shared, there were no doubt countless others still left untold. "Because I didn't want people to think I made it up for attention. Because I didn't want my boyfriend to look at me differently. Because I just wanted to make it go away. Because I was ashamed. #WhyIDidntReport," wrote Andi Hoyt, whose Twitter profile identifies her as a law student. "I was 8 and he was the 'cool guy' in the neighborhood. I didn't tell anyone until I was 17. Also, guys can't be sexually assaulted #WhyIDidntReport," tweeted Andy McNeese.

In an op-ed for The Washington Post, late president Ronald Reagan's daughter, Patti Davis, said she told nobody "for decades" about her rape by a music execu-

gunfire, chilling the blood of those present. Nonetheless, residents feel they are often viewed as criminals rather than the victims of favela violence, simply because that's where they live. Arthur Viana de Andrade, 21, is getting ready to vote for the first time. While he hasn't made up his mind yet, he knows who won't be getting his vote. "When I hear someone saying: 'The only good bandit is a dead bandit,' that scares me because as a black man living in a favela, I know I'll be a target," he says, in reference to frontrunner Bolsonaro, an ex-army captain.

'No shame'

Debate organizers chose "security" as the central theme for the meeting, but that's not what locals most want to discuss. Their interest is more in health and education. "They need to build a big hospital here, in this neighborhood," says Lucia Gomes, 49, who was selling cakes at the entrance to the cultural center. "This business of public safety in favelas doesn't exist. Health is what is most important."

Political disillusionment is rife right across Brazil where voting is obligatory but where recent opinion polls have suggested as many as a quarter of voters will either abstain or spoil their ballot papers. "Here, people have lost all faith in politicians and complain that they're all corrupt, they're all thieves. But me, I want to listen to the candidates' proposals. Abstention is not a solution," says Sheyla Amaral, 42. Another problem,

Over the boundary! Cricket-loving...

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Pakistan and South Africa in the UAE, where Pakistan hosts games owing to the risk of terror attacks on home soil. "I went to watch a match between Pakistan and South Africa in 2014 where I met Ghazala's father which became the first step towards our proposal," said Kasim, a former college-level fast bowler in Mumbai. "I would not have imagined watching Pakistani cricketers like Shahid Afridi, Abdul Razaq and Mohammad Amir before my own eyes but it became possible since UAE became a neutral venue for the Pakistan team."

Ghazala, who works in human resources, said watching India and Pakistan play made her think of home. India thrashed Pakistan by eight wickets in the group stage and

Iran vows 'crushing response'...

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Ahvaz lies in Khuzestan, a province bordering Iraq that has a large ethnic Arab community and has seen separatist violence in the past that Iran has blamed on its regional rivals. IS militants said via their propaganda mouthpiece Amaq that "Islamic State fighters attacked a gathering of Iranian forces" in Ahvaz. State television gave a casualty toll of 29 dead and 57 wounded, while the official news agency IRNA said those killed included women and children who were spectators at the rally. Many of the wounded were in critical condition. Zarif did not specify which regional government he held responsible for the shooting.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei also blamed Iran's pro-US rivals, saying the attack was part of "the conspiracy of regional governments that are American lackeys and who aim to create insecurity in our dear country". Armed forces spokesman Brigadier General Abolfazl Shekarchi said the dead included a young girl and a former serviceman in a wheelchair. He told state television three attackers were killed at the scene and the fourth died later of his injuries. Khuzestan deputy governor Ali-Hossein Hosseinzadeh told ISNA that "eight to nine" troops were among those killed, as well as a journalist.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corp (IRGC) has been the sword and shield of Shiite clerical rule in Iran since its 1979 Islamic Revolution. The Guards have a big say in Iran's regional interests and a vast stake worth billions of dollars in Iran's economy. A video distributed to Iranian media showed soldiers crawling to escape gunfire. One picked up a gun and scrambled to his feet as women and children fled for their lives. A video on state television's website showed confused soldiers. Standing in front of the stand, one asked: "Where did they come from?" Another responded: "From behind us." Activists said the Revolutionary Guards had arrested several people in Ahvaz after the attack.

In a message of condolence to Russia's close regional ally, President Vladimir Putin said he was "appalled by this bloody crime" which was a reminder of the "necessity of an



SPRINGFIELD, Missouri: US President Donald Trump arrives onstage to speak at a rally at JQH Arena on Friday. — AFP

utive, Davis also addressed accusations that Ford's story lacks key details. Your memory "blacks out other parts of the story that really don't matter much," she wrote. It "snaps photos of the details that will haunt you forever, that will change your life and live under your skin". — AFP



RIO DE JANEIRO: Candidate of the United Socialist Workers Party (PSTU) Dayse Oliveira for the governorship of the state of Rio de Janeiro talks to the attendees during a debate organized by an NGO with the candidates at the Cultural Centre Bela Mare in the Mare favela on Sept 13, 2018. — AFP

according to Eliana Sousa Silva, a director of the Mare Network that organized the debate, is that favela voters can be too easily manipulated. Drug gangs also hold undue sway and sometimes candidates must ask their permission or even pay for the right to campaign in certain neighborhoods. "Recently, I saw candidates handing out half-rotten fish to people or offering free haircuts. They have no shame," adds Shyrlei Rosendo, another charity worker. — AFP

they are set to meet again in the Super Fours today. "Now with India and Pakistan playing in UAE for the Asian title it has given us double joy as we get to see players from both the countries which gives us a nostalgic feeling," said Ghazala. India is playing in the Emirates for the first time since 2006, sparking huge interest among the country's large number of Indian expats. Club-level cricketer Naveed Siraj hails from Srinagar in Indian-administered Kashmir, while his wife, Nida, is from the Pakistani capital Islamabad. "My uncle and aunty lived in Kuwait and Nida's family were their neighbors so they initiated the talk for our marriage," said Naveed. "UAE is a neutral venue for all the expats from Pakistan and India so everyone lives here in comfort and enjoys everything including cricket."

Dubai taxi driver Sunil Manohar, from India's Karnataka state, married Nunda from Pakistan's Sindh province after their families met in the UAE. "UAE is a nice place for cross-border families," he said. "In the past, a few couples were stuck in Pakistan because they were not getting an Indian visa." — AFP

uncompromising battle against terrorism". Syria, another ally, said it stood in "full sympathy and solidarity with the Islamic Republic of Iran", while neighboring Turkey expressed "great sorrow" at what it called "a heinous terrorist attack".

Khuzestan was a major battleground of the 1980s war with Iraq and the province saw unrest in 2005 and 2011, but has since been largely quiet. Attacks by Kurdish rebels on military patrols are relatively common along the border further north. But attacks on regime targets inside major cities are far more rare. On June 7, 2017, 17 people were killed and dozens wounded in simultaneous attacks in Tehran on the parliament and on the tomb of revolutionary leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini - the first inside Iran claimed by IS. In April, 26 alleged members of the Sunni extremist group went on trial on charges connected with that twin attack.

The attack in Ahvaz came as Rouhani and other dignitaries attended the main anniversary parade in Tehran. In a keynote speech, he vowed to boost Iran's ballistic missile capabilities, despite Western concerns that were cited by his US counterpart Donald Trump in May when he abandoned a landmark nuclear deal with Tehran. "We will never decrease our defensive capabilities... we will increase them day by day," Rouhani said at a military parade. "The fact that the missiles anger (the West) shows they are our most effective weapons," he said.

The United States re-imposed crippling sanctions on Iran last month, and a new round of even harsher sanctions targeting Iran's vital oil sector is set to go back into effect on Nov 5. Washington has said it is ready to open talks on a new agreement to replace the July 2015 accord, but Tehran has repeatedly said it cannot negotiate under pressure from sanctions.

Rouhani leaves today for New York to attend next week's United Nations General Assembly along with Trump, but Iran has repeatedly ruled out any meeting. "Rouhani will use the terrorist attack to justify Iran's presence in the Middle East...The attack will strengthen the IRGC's position inside Iran and in the region," Tehran-based political analyst Hamid Farahvashian said. Iran will face pressure to respond to the high-profile attack, which has hurt the security establishment's prestige. "The attacks are doubtlessly meant to tarnish the prestige of the IRGC, but I believe the terrorist incidents will strengthen the IRGC's standing and even mobilize some public support," said Ali Afshar, senior fellow at the Gulf Arab States Institute in Washington. — Agencies

Brazil's favelas: Overlooked election hunting grounds

RIO DE JANEIRO: A quarter of Rio de Janeiro's population lives in slums, or favelas, yet too often those very people are left feeling marginalized. Wracked by drug and gang-related violence and stricken with poverty, favelas are more often considered part of the problem than woven into a political solution. On October 7, Brazil will go to the polls to choose a new president - a race led by rightwing candidate Jair Bolsonaro - along with all members of the lower chamber of Congress, two-thirds of the Senate and governors and legislators in the 26 states and the federal district home to the capital Brasilia.

To attract voters, politicians blame favelas for rising crime but rarely do they set foot in one to listen to the inhabitants' own concerns. A case in point is the densely populated Mare favela, home to 140,000 people, where in June a 14-year-old boy called Marcos Vinicius was gunned down on his way to school during a police operation. Ahead of the elections, local charities have organized a candidate debate in Mare.

The cultural center where it is held resembles a

OPEC, allies struggle to pump more oil...

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"If an increase in production is proposed there will be plenty of market counter-argument that it reduces even further the available spare capacity," Olivier Jakob from consultancy Petromatrix said. "Saudi Arabia has made the mistake of trying to compensate for the loss of Iranian supplies with just-in-time replacement; but the oil market is looking for greater supply security than that. As a result, the strength of oil prices is now putting oil demand growth at risk," he added.

An OPEC and non-OPEC monitoring committee gathering in the Algerian capital this weekend found that oil producers' compliance with a supply-reduction agreement reached 129 percent in August, two committee delegates said. This compares with a compliance level of 109 percent for July, indicating that the group over-achieved on its agreed cut. Seeking to reverse a downturn in oil prices that began in 2014, OPEC, Russia

Modi faces calls for resignation...

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The comments were front-page news in Indian newspapers yesterday and was the top trending topic on Twitter. "An ex-president of France is calling him (the prime minister of India) a thief. It's a question of the dignity of the office of the prime minister," he told a news conference in New Delhi. "The PM personally negotiated and changed the Rafale deal behind closed doors. Thanks to Francois Hollande, we now know he personally delivered a deal worth billions of dollars to ...Anil Ambani. The PM has betrayed India. He has dishonored the blood of our soldiers," Gandhi, scion of India's Gandhi-Nehru political dynasty, added on Twitter.

Ravi Shankar Prasad, a close Modi ally and minister, hit back at Gandhi, accusing him playing into the hands of India's rivals Pakistan and China. "Never before in the history of independent India has a party president used such words for a PM," he told a news conference yesterday. "We can't expect anything else from Rahul Gandhi. He has no quality or ability."

Modi, who stormed to power in 2014 promising to rid India of deep-seated corruption, had no "moral right" to remain in power after the revelations from Hollande, senior Congress leader Anand Sharma said. Smaller parties also joined the attack on Modi who is already under pressure to shore up his political base ahead of a series of state elections this year followed by a national election in 2019.

Modi's office did not respond to a request for comment. The defense ministry said in a tweet that neither the French nor Indian government had had a say in the matter. "The report referring to fmr French president Mr Hollande's statement that Gol (government of India) insisted upon a particular firm as offset partner for the Dassault Aviation in Rafale is being verified. It is reiterated that neither Gol nor