

Shooting in Pensacola: On Saudi aviation student's crime

Saudi Arabia is not doing enough to counter Islamist tendencies at home and abroad

The deadly shooting at Florida's Pensacola Naval Air Station by a Saudi aviation student that killed three and injured eight others is a fresh challenge to the Saudi authorities who are trying to remake the kingdom's image after a series of recent setbacks. U.S. federal investigators say they are yet to establish the gunman's motive, but some lawmakers have already claimed it was an act of terror. The suspect, Mohammed Alshamrani, 21, who had been training in the U.S. for two years, had watched mass shooting videos a week before Friday's assault, say investigators. A Twitter handle that is believed to have belonged to him called the U.S. a "nation of evil" and blamed it for "crimes not only against Muslims but also humanity". This is not the first time a Saudi national is attacking Americans inside the U.S. Fifteen of the 19 al-Qaeda-linked terrorists behind the September 11, 2001 attacks, were Saudi citizens. But U.S.-Saudi relations have deepened over the years despite the 9/11 attacks. U.S. President Donald Trump, in his quest to contain Iran, Saudi Arabia's main regional rival, has doubled down on America's ties with the Kingdom. But his push for stronger ties with the Saudis had faced severe resistance from U.S. lawmakers. The murder of Saudi dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018, suppression of dissent at home by the Saudi authorities, and the ongoing Saudi-led war on Yemen have all brought renewed global focus on the character of the Saudi leadership.

Riyadh was quick in condemning the "barbaric" Pensacola shooting, saying the shooter did not represent the Saudi people. The incident is unlikely to upset the U.S.-Saudi military ties immediately as both countries need each other in the larger geopolitical setting; 2,000 more American troops could be sent to the Kingdom to take on Iran. But the incident could strengthen the perception, especially among U.S. lawmakers, that the conservative Kingdom is not doing enough to flush out extremism given that the attacker was a second lieutenant in the Royal Saudi Air Force. It also raises questions about the vetting standards of both countries. More important, it is America's lax gun rules that allowed the shooter to buy the Glock 45 9-mm handgun which he used for the attack. Initial reports suggested that he used a loophole in the gun laws to buy the weapon legally. Despite repeated incidents of gun violence — most by Americans against Americans — the U.S. federal government could do little in addressing the problem. Worse, Mr. Trump and his Republican Party are opposed to stringent gun control rules. The U.S. has to first review its lax gun rules and then address issues such as vetting standards, foreign military ties and radicalism in general if it wants to prevent such incidents.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **setback** (noun) – problem, difficulty, issue.
- **suspect** (noun) – suspected person, accused.
- **deepen** (verb) – increase, intensify, escalate.
- **quest** (noun) – search, hunt, pursuit.

- **contain** (verb) – restrain, constrain, limit.
- **double down** (phrasal verb) – to be more firm & resolute on something (decided) even if that might be a risky choice.
- **dissident** (adjective) – disagreeing, opposing, nonconformist.
- **suppression** (noun) – crackdown, clampdown, repression, quelling/quashing.
- **dissent** (noun) – disagreement, disapproval, opposition.
- **condemn** (verb) – criticize, censure, rebuke/reprimand.
- **barbaric** (adjective) – brutal, vicious/cruel, inhuman.
- **unlikely** (adjective) – questionable, unconvincing; doubtful, unexpected.
- **take on** (phrasal verb) – oppose, challenge, confront/fight, compete against.
- **perception** (noun) – impression, feeling, understanding.
- **conservative** (adjective) – conventional, unchanging, orthodox.
- **flush out** (verb) – dislodge, expel, clean.
- **extremism** (noun) – radicalism, fanaticism, dogmatism.
- **lieutenant** (noun) – the junior most commissioned officer in the armed forces and other organizations of many nations.
- **vet** (verb) – evaluate, review, inspect.
- **lax** (adjective) – neglectful, inattentive, careless.
- **loophole** (noun) – an ambiguity in the law; flaw/fault, defect.
- **address** (verb) – attend to, tackle, deal with.
- **stringent** (adjective) – strict/stern, severe, tough/rigorous.
- **radicalism** (noun) – actions/beliefs having extreme political/religious views. extremism, fanaticism, dogmatism.

Brexit on fast-track: On passage of deal in UK Parliament

With Parliament approving the Brexit deal, U.K. is set to exit the EU on or before Jan. 31

With the passage of Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Brexit deal in British Parliament, it is now almost certain that the country would exit the European Union (EU) on or before the current deadline — January 31. Mr. Johnson became Prime Minister after his predecessor Theresa May's repeated attempts to get lawmakers' support for her Brexit deal failed. Mr. Johnson first reached a new agreement with the EU and then called fresh elections. With his party's resounding win in the parliamentary election and a surge in the number of Brexiteers among Conservative lawmakers, the passage of the Bill in the House of Commons was a mere formality. The deal got the support of 358 lawmakers against 234. The agreement deals with issues such as citizens' rights, the settlement amount the U.K. has agreed to pay the EU and an arrangement to avoid physical barriers between the Northern Ireland, which is part of the U.K., and the Republic of Ireland, an EU member. The accord will

be put on vote in the House of Commons once more, and then the upper chamber, the House of Lords, will vote on it. The formalities in the U.K. are expected to be over by early January and the deal will then go to the EU Parliament. Once the EU lawmakers ratify it (which is expected on January 29), the U.K. will formally exit the union.

A formal exit, however, doesn't mean that the tedious Brexit process is over. Even after January 31, the U.K. will continue to remain in the EU single market and customs union, at least for 11 months — this means trade will continue as usual. Mr. Johnson's biggest challenge is to reach another agreement with the EU on the country's future relationship with the bloc. He has ruled out extending talks beyond the December 31, 2020 deadline, which means a no-deal exit can still not be ruled out. Furthermore, Mr. Johnson faces legislative and political challenges ahead even if the current deal goes through the EU hurdle. His government has to pass a series of new legislation replacing the existing EU laws. He should also be mindful of the impact his deal may have on the delicate peace in Northern Ireland. Desperate to secure a complete break with the EU customs union while at the same avoiding a physical barrier between the two Irelands, Mr. Johnson's deal seeks to erect a customs border between Great Britain and the island of Ireland. This has already irked the unionists and strengthened the nationalists in Northern Ireland. The uncertainty over Brexit is now over. But the uncertainty on how Brexit will happen still remains. Mr. Johnson may like to wrap up Brexit at a breakneck speed, but he should be mindful of these speed-breakers. If not, the economic and political costs of Brexit could be huge.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **Brexit** (noun) – a term used for the (supposed) departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union.
- **predecessor** (noun) – previous holder of the post; forerunner, precursor, antecedent.
- **resounding** (adjective) – very great, huge, massive, emphatic.
- **surge** (noun) – sudden increase, rise.
- **Brexitteer** (noun) – a person who supports Brexit, the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union.
- **House of Commons** (noun) – the lower house of the Parliament (of the United Kingdom) ("the House of Lords" is the upper house).
- **mere** (adjective) – just, only, insignificant.
- **accord** (noun) – pact, treaty, agreement.
- **chamber** (noun) – one of the houses of a Parliament/Legislative Assembly.
- **ratify** (verb) – confirm, approve, sanction, endorse.
- **tedious** (adjective) – dull, boring, uninteresting/unexciting.
- **bloc** (noun) – alliance, association, union.
- **rule out** (phrasal verb) – exclude, eliminate, disregard, reject/dismiss.
- **furthermore** (adjective) – in addition; besides, moreover.
- **hurdle** (noun) – obstacle, difficulty, problem.
- **desperate** (adjective) – urgently requiring, in great need of.
- **erect** (verb) – create, establish, form/set up.
- **irk** (verb) – irritate/ annoy, displease, anger.
- **wrap up** (phrasal verb) – conclude, finish, complete.
- **breakneck** (adjective) – extremely fast, high-speed, speedy.
- **mindful** (adjective) – aware of, conscious of, careful of.
- **cost** (noun) – penalty, sacrifice, loss.

Jharkhand signals: On Assembly election results

BJP lost because of its inability to recognise livelihood issues and regional aspirations

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s defeat in Jharkhand at the hands of the Congress-Jharkhand Mukti Morcha-Rashtriya Janata Dal alliance, seven months after it won 51.6% votes in the Lok Sabha election, follows a now-familiar pattern. The BJP does much better in Lok Sabha elections than in Assembly elections if one goes by the outcomes in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra and Haryana over the last year. Jharkhand, like Maharashtra, is also an example of the increasing distrust between the BJP and allies. The BJP's ally, All Jharkhand Students Union, parted ways with it following the Lok Sabha election, contributing to its defeat. Its unyielding approach towards allies has a certain appeal, but many communities and interest groups find it as hubris, for good reasons. Conflicting demands of social groups are easier to overcome for the BJP when it manages to place itself as the sole torch-bearer of national interest and pride in Parliament elections. Nationalist bluster has limited appeal in State elections, and questions of livelihood and ethnic autonomy significantly influence voter choices, it appears. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's popularity and rhetorical flourish may still win elections for himself, but State elections have different dynamics. In Jharkhand, outgoing Chief Minister Raghubar Das's unpopularity made the BJP's downfall quite predictable. Mr. Modi tried to make up for the governance deficiency by making communal appeals during the campaign. He insinuated that only Muslims were behind the violence in protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. The BJP bit the dust nevertheless.

Mr. Das, the first non-tribal CM of the State that was formed with the objective of accelerating welfare for indigenous communities, ran a government that only strengthened the perception that the BJP had little sympathy for them. Simultaneously, the BJP and the Sangh Parivar also sought to deepen religious fault lines in the State, between Christian and non-Christian tribals on the one hand and against Muslims in the name of cow protection on the other. The State witnessed some abhorrent incidents of mob lynching under the BJP. To top it all, the BJP failed to keep its own house in order. Long-time party loyalist Saryu Rai resigned from the party and defeated Mr. Das. The win is a breather for the Opposition, which is struggling to formulate a nationwide and coherent strategy against the BJP on the CAA and the proposed National Register of Citizens. But it may not be accurate to interpret the outcome as the sign of any countrywide mood against the BJP. There is no proof yet that the Opposition has gained enough momentum to challenge the BJP's defining ability to build up mega campaigns on sentimental issues and eclipse material questions and diversity in aspirations.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **livelihood** (noun) – source of income, means of support, living, subsistence.
- **at the hands of** (phrase) – as a consequence of actions (suffer, get hurt & be treated badly by someone).
- **distrust** (noun) – suspicion, wariness, lack of trust.
- **part ways with** (phrase) – to separate, to depart, to end a relationship.
- **ally** (noun) – partner, supporter, accomplice/confederate.
- **unyielding** (noun) – resolute, inflexible, uncompromising.
- **interest group** (noun) – any association of individuals or organizations, usually formally organized, that, on the basis of one or more shared concerns, attempts to influence public policy in its favour.

- **hubris** (noun) – excessive pride, feeling of superiority/arrogance, self-confidence.
- **torch-bearer** (noun) – advocate, proponent, promoter.
- **bluster** (noun) – threats, domineering, aggressive talk (with little effect).
- **ethnic** (adjective) – relating to a population subgroup (cultural, national, traditional/folk) with a common national or cultural tradition.
- **autonomy** (noun) – independence, freedom, self-government/sovereignty.
- **rhetorical** (adjective) – bombastic, oratorical, overblown/extravagant.
- **flourish** (noun) – extravagant gesture; bold action (to attract attention).
- **dynamics** (noun) – basic/fundamental cause or force which triggers change within a system.
- **downfall** (noun) – loss of status, collapse/failure, fall.
- **make up for** (phrasal verb) – offset, counterbalance; make amends for, compensate for.
- **insinuate** (verb) – imply, suggest, hint.
- **bite the dust** (phrase) – fail, be unsuccessful, be defeated.
- **nevertheless** (adverb) – in spite of that, even so, however.
- **objective** (noun) – aim, intention, purpose.
- **indigenous** (adjective) – native/local, original, domestic.
- **perception** (noun) – impression, feeling, understanding.
- **deepen** (verb) – increase, intensify, escalate.
- **fault line** (noun) – a divisive issue; a difference of opinion.
- **abhorrent** (adjective) – offensive, horrible, contemptible.
- **mob** (noun) – a large, disorganized, and often violent crowd of people.
- **lynching** (noun) – an act of punishing/killing someone by hanging for claimed offence by the group of people without legal trail.
- **to top it all** (phrase) – to describe a final worst thing in a series of bad/unpleasant things had happened.
- **keep/put one's house in order** (phrase) – to find a solution for one's own problems before going and trying to solve others' problems.
- **breather** (noun) – break, rest/pause, interval after a period of activity.
- **coherent** (adjective) – logical, reasonable, rational.
- **eclipse** (verb) – block, cover, obscure, veil, hide.
- **material** (adjective) – significant, major, important.

..... **Significant reversal: On NCLAT decision on**

Mistry

NCLAT decision to reverse the removal of Mr. Mistry is a setback to Tata Sons

Three years after Tata Sons Limited voted to remove Cyrus P. Mistry from his post as the Executive Chairman of the Tata Group's main holding company, the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) last week declared his removal "illegal" and ordered his reinstatement. The appellate body's decision to reverse the National Company Law Tribunal's ruling dismissing Mr. Mistry's challenge to his ouster, in October 2016, has far-reaching implications. For a start, the NCLAT has in no uncertain terms held that Tata Sons' "affairs have been or are being conducted in a manner 'prejudicial' and 'oppressive' to members" including Mr. Mistry as also 'prejudicial' to the interests of the company and its group companies. By upholding the appellants' contention that the minority group of shareholders — the 'Shapoorji Pallonji (SP) Group' — had been a victim of 'prejudicial' and 'oppressive' actions

undertaken by the majority shareholders of Tata Sons, the NCLAT has struck a blow on behalf of the rights of all minority shareholders. Terming the company effectively a “quasi-partnership-company” — the Tata Group through the Tata Trusts and other Tata entities and family members holds 81% of Tata Sons’ effective shareholding while the SP Group owns 18% — the appellate body stressed the need for the Tata holding firm to operate as a “two-group company” that could provide checks and balances in the running of the businesses.

The NCLAT’s findings lay emphasis on greater transparency and adherence to governance norms especially in the conduct of affairs at the controlling company of a large diversified conglomerate. Throughout its 172-page ruling, the appellate body has relied extensively on the correspondence between Mr. Mistry and the respondents including his predecessor and interim replacement Ratan Tata, and its findings are hard to fault on facts. That the NCLAT had in its ruling dismissing Mr. Mistry’s plea made several “disparaging” and “wholly unsubstantiated” remarks against him also attracted censure from the appellate body, which expunged them entirely. The tribunal’s language reflecting a predisposition to view the Tata Group in a favourable light points to the pressing need for a more dispassionate judiciary while dealing with corporate misdemeanours. With the Tata Group clear that it plans to challenge the NCLAT verdict, it will be left to the Supreme Court to have the final say on the conclusions of the NCLAT, particularly on the question of whether Tata Sons is in effect a “quasi-partnership”. This construct was, after all, the basis for the NCLAT’s reasoning that the company had always been run on mutual trust and understanding between the Tata and SP groups — a trust that the appellate body would like to see restored post its ruling.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **reversal** (noun) – turnaround, change, swing/shift.
- **reverse** (verb) – rule against, revoke, cancel.
- **reinstatement** (noun) – restoration, return to a former position, return to power.
- **appellate** (noun) – (of a court) dealing with cases on appeal to review the decision of a lower court.
- **ouster** (noun) – removal, dismissal, unseating.
- **far-reaching** (adjective) – important, major, significant.
- **implications** (noun) – consequence/outcome, ramification, repercussion.
- **affairs** (noun) – matters, activities, dealings.
- **prejudicial** (adjective) – disadvantageous, unfavourable, detrimental.
- **oppressive** (adjective) – dictatorial, autocratic, undemocratic.
- **uphold** (verb) – justify, vindicate, validate.
- **appellant** (noun) – applicant, claimant, petitioner.
- **contention** (noun) – disagreement, dispute argument.
- **undertake** (verb) – begin, start, embark on, launch into.
- **strike a blow** for (phrase) – do something to support for.
- **quasi-** (combining form) – seemingly, apparently; partly/somewhat.
- **hold firm** (phrase) – continue to support something despite opposition.
- **checks and balances** (plural noun) – a system in which all departments of a government organization have right to amend/limit the powers of the other departments in order to avoid dominance of one department.
- **adherence to** (noun) – commitment to, attachment to.
- **diversified** (adjective) – having a variety of businesses.
- **conglomerate** (noun) – corporation, group, consortium/merged companies.
- **rely on** (phrasal verb) – depend on; resort to, bank on.
- **correspondence** (noun) – mails, letters, written communication.
- **respondent** (noun) – litigator, opponent, disputant.

- **predecessor** (noun) – previous holder of the post; forerunner, precursor, antecedent.
- **interim** (adjective) – provisional, transitional, temporary.
- **fault** (verb) – find fault with.
- **disparaging** (adjective) – derogatory, belittling, diminishing.
- **unsubstantiated** (adjective) – unconfirmed, unsupported, not validated.
- **censure** (noun) – condemnation, criticism, disapproval.
- **expunge** (verb) – erase, remove, delete.
- **predisposition** (noun) – inclination, tendency, propensity.
- **pressing** (adjective) – urgent, important, high-priority.
- **dispassionate** (adjective) – detached, disinterested, uninvolved.
- **misdemeanour** (noun) – wrongdoing, evil deed, crime act.
- **construct** (noun) – idea

Undoing harms: about criticism on Citizenship Amendment Act

Making the CAA non-discriminatory is the only way to dispel fears

As the Centre tries to fend off criticism that its Citizenship (Amendment) Act excludes Muslims from its beneficial provisions and quell strident protests, it must look for ways to undo the incalculable harm caused by fears set off by the law. Indications that it is open to suggestions on the rules to implement the CAA are welcome. However, these should not be confined to the proposed rules. The government must heed the call for meaningful changes that would dispel fears gripping the country, especially minorities. The stated objective is the fast-tracking of applications from minorities from three Muslim-majority neighbourhood countries for citizenship by naturalisation. Can't this be achieved without violating the Constitution or its secular ideals? A first step would be to further amend the Act, even by an ordinance, to drop its religion-specific wording, and make it explicit that the benefit would be open to all undocumented migrants who can prove persecution in their home countries. For allowing a Hindu, Sikh, Christian, Jain, Buddhist or Parsi to apply for citizenship after staying in the country for six years, there is no need to bar Muslims from making a similar claim. It is only an enabling law and does not oblige the government to grant citizenship to anyone. And Muslims and atheists have been persecuted in these and other countries by authorities and dominant sections.

Regarding others such as Sri Lankan refugees, the legal bar on their applying for citizenship stands out. A 2004 amendment to the citizenship law introduced a clause that 'illegal migrants' will not be eligible to apply for citizenship. The definition of 'illegal migrants' as those who arrived without valid travel documents includes refugees. A provision of the present CAA is to remove this 'illegal' tag from non-Muslim minorities from Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Dropping the reference to 'illegal migrants' will automatically enable any refugee to apply for citizenship, subject to the residential requirement. Therefore, a general enabling provision to allow a relaxation of the minimum residency requirement will serve the purpose of considering citizenship to any persecuted people. This would be non-discriminatory, without obligation to grant citizenship. Finally, India should enact a refugee law wherein the right to live a life without fear or confinement can be protected. If the fear is that people may seek permanent asylum, the UNHCR can work with them officially for their voluntary repatriation, and without rendering long-term refugees ineligible for applying for citizenship. Finally, the government must end the process once the National Population Register is updated. It must give up the notion of a

citizenship register. No good will come out of setting off a clamour for inclusion and panic over possible exclusion. That is a pain Indians of all persuasions can do without.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **non-discriminatory** (adjective) – fair, judicial, unbiased.
- **dispel** (verb) – banish, eliminate/remove, dismiss.
- **fend off** (verb) – hold off, resist, block.
- **provision** (noun) – term, clause, requirement/condition.
- **quell** (verb) – crush, stifle, suppress, end.
- **strident** (adjective) – in an excessively forceful way; high-pitched, loud & harsh.
- **undo** (verb) – reverse, cancel, invalidate/annul.
- **incalculable** (adjective) – inestimable, indeterminable, immeasurable.
- **set off** (phrasal verb) – cause, lead to, start/trigger.
- **heed** (verb) – pay attention to, take into account, consider.
- **call (for)** (noun) – appeal, request, plea, demand.
- **grip** (verb) – afflict, affect, take over, torment.
- **objective** (noun) – aim, intention, purpose.
- **naturalisation** (noun) – the admittance of a foreigner to the citizenship of a country.
- **secular** (adjective) – non-religious, worldly, earthly.
- **wording** (noun) – mode of expression, words, language.
- **explicit** (adverb) – clear, unequivocal, obvious.
- **undocumented** (adjective) – not having the proper legal document.
- **persecution** (noun) – oppression, victimization, ill treatment/abuse.
- **bar** (verb) – block, ban, forbid/prohibit.
- **oblige** (verb) – require, compel, bind/force.
- **atheist** (noun) – unbeliever, doubter, irreligious person.
- **persecuted** (adjective) – oppressed, victimized; troubled/suffering.
- **refugee** (noun) – displaced person, asylum seeker, escapee/exile.
- **stand out** (phrasal verb) – be more significant; be noticeable, be visible, be obvious.
- **tag** (noun) – identity, label, name.
- **obligation** (noun) – necessary condition/necessity, requirement; duty/responsibility.
- **confinement** (noun) – restraint, custody, captivity.
- **asylum** (noun) – protection, security, refuge.
- **repatriation** (noun) – the act of sending people/something to their own country.
- **render** (verb) – announce, pronounce, proclaim.
- **give up** (phrasal verb) – forgo, abandon, renounce.
- **notion** (noun) – idea, belief, concept.
- **come out** (phrasal verb) – happen, emerge, transpire, develop.
- **clamour** (noun) – protest, complaint, outcry/commotion.
- **persuasion** (noun) – coercion, inducement, prompting

☞“DON'T WASTE YOUR TIME WITH EXPLANATIONS. PEOPLE ONLY HEAR WHAT THEY WANT TO HEAR.”☞