



We Wish Readers a **Happy 4th of July**



Let freedom never perish in your hands. - Joseph Addison

Ekhnath Shinde sworn in as Maharashtra's new CM with Fadnavis as Deputy CM



Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde (left) and his Deputy Devendra Fadnavis (right) flank Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari during their oath-taking ceremony at the Raj Bhavan in Mumbai on June 30, 2022. Screen grab

MUMBAI (TIP): In what could be termed one of the biggest political surprises in the history of Maharashtra politics, the BJP on Thursday, June 30 announced that it will support rebel Shiv Sena leader Eknath Shinde as the new Chief Minister, who took oath in a simple ceremony in the Raj Bhavan on Thursday evening, officiated by Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari. Former Chief Minister and BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis, who all believed was set to become Chief Minister for the third time, joined him as Deputy Chief Minister.

The trust vote of the new government will be held on Saturday. At a press conference prior to the swearing-in

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Gov. Hochul Wins Democratic Primary in New York



Ms. Hochul's victory sets the stage for a grueling general election contest against Representative Lee Zeldin

NEW YORK (TIP): Gov. Kathy Hochul of New York took a crucial step toward winning a full term on Tuesday, easily fending off a pair of spirited primary challengers and cementing her status as the state's top Democrat less than a year after she unexpectedly took office, says a New York Times report.

The runaway victory by Ms. Hochul, the state's first female governor, sets the stage for what could be a grueling general election contest against Representative Lee Zeldin, a conservative congressional ally of former President Donald J. Trump who

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Dr. Vishwa P Adluri and Shri Rajiv Malhotra conferred the ICCR Distinguished Indologist Award



Dr. Vishwa P. Adluri and Shri Rajiv Malhotra were conferred the ICCR Distinguished Indologist Award for 2019 and 2020 respectively by Dr. Vinay Saharsabudde, President of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) on June 28 at the Indian Consulate in New York. Seen in the picture, from L to R: Dr. Vishwa P Adluri, Dr. Saharsabudde, Shri Rajiv Malhotra, and Consul General Randhir Kumar Jaiswal

NEW YORK (TIP): President of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) Dr. Vinay Saharsabudde conferred the ICCR Distinguished Indologist Award for 2019 on Dr. Vishwa P. Adluri and for 2020 on Shri Rajiv Malhotra at the Consulate General of India in New York. The ICCR Distinguished Indologist Award was set

up in 2015 by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations to recognize and honor scholarly works on India undertaken abroad, one that illuminates her civilizational wealth and knowledge. The Awards for 2019 and 2020 were declared but could not be conferred due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

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KETANJI BROWN JACKSON SWORN IN AS FIRST BLACK WOMAN ON THE SUPREME COURT



WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): Ketanji Brown Jackson has been sworn in as the 116th Supreme Court justice and the first Black woman to serve on the high court. She was sworn in on Thursday, June 30. *contd on page 46*

Justice Stephen G. Breyer (Retired) administers the judicial oath to Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson in the West Conference Room at the Supreme Court Building. Her left-hand rests on two Bibles held by her husband, Dr. Patrick Jackson.

Photo / Fred Schilling, Collection of the Supreme Court of the United States



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Murli Menon

In 2005 December, I undertook a journey to the only home of the Asiatic Lion in the Gir National Park and Sanctuary, located in Junagadh District of Gujarat State. Located 60 km. away from Junagadh town, the Gir National Park is a protected sanctuary stretching across 2400 square kilometre. The terrain is hilly and covered with thick, dry deciduous forests. The forest is home to several species of birds and animals. The most unbelievable fact about Gir is the existence of a village named Shirwan inside the sanctuary, which is populated by African tribals who were brought to India by the theNawab of Junagadh, four hundred years ago.

These tribes are known as SiddiBadshah by the locals and trace their ancestry to Kenya, as they speak remnants of Swahili, to this date. The base camp for entering into these forests is SasanGir, which is located on the outskirts. The Siddi settlement of Shirwan is a 12 km. trek from Sasan through a dirt road which winds its way between thick forests.

The trek to Shirwan from Sasan is fraught with risks. Panthers, leopards and cheetahs abound in the forests and could attack wayfarers. Wild monkeys, snakes and wild boar are also commonly seen and represent mild danger. More often than not, one could also come face to face with the lion, whose population in Gir is around 400.

The Siddis have lived in this village since 1600 A.D., when they were brought to India as slaves by the Nawab of Junagadh, to convert the thick forests at that time into tillable land. 3000 Siddis continue to live in the forest, existing in the same circumstances as their ancestors, following the same traditions and existing in self imposed isolation. Almost 100% of Siddis have married amongst themselves and maintained their ethnic purity over 400 years.

The Siddis respect the law of the forest and do not indulge in hunting though they live adjacent to several hundred spotted deer. Addiction to alcohol is rare as Gujarat is a prohibited state and brewing or sale of alcohol is illegal. Siddis are forced to live off the land, in extremely inhospitable conditions. Wild fruits and berries are available in plenty. Fresh water is available in plenty, as the Hiran river flows through Gir. In addition to this, there are several watering holes across the forest.

The Government of Gujarat has offered theseSiddismodern houses outside the park, but so far, none of the 100 Siddi families of Shirwan have accepted the generous offer of the Government. They continue to exist inside the forests, cheerful and facing the harsh realities of life. Music and dance are a way of life for the Siddis. They continue to sing their ancient tribal songs in Swahili and away to the beat of their ancestral drums. This tribal trance dance is known as "dhamal"(boisterous dance) in Gujarati. Siddis have also preserved their ancestral costumes, and every family has preserved one set oftheor ancestral tribal costumes which they don during ceremonial occasions, marriage or other festivities. The tribal drums, tribal flute and other musical instruments played during this trance dancing have also been maintained in working condition.

The beat of the drums and the swaying steps of the dancetransport the viewer

Gir - Home of Asiatic Lion and African tribes



Asiatic lioness inside Gir National Park.



Sidi women and children at Shirwan village inside Gir National Park.

into a bygone era. The dancers move in synchronicity, men, women and children dance together in reverie and camaraderie

in a community gathering. One of the important aspects of Siddi culture is their existence in the present moment.

They think only about the here and now. They do not dwell on the past or contemplate the future. They are always aware of the present. If they get a meal they are happy, but they continue to remain cheerful, even if forced to go hungry to bed. During monsoon, most of the Siddi tribal houses are swept away by the rains. However, the Siddis remain extremely stress free and rebuild their huts after every monsoon. They continue to live inside the forest during the rains and do not migrate to higher ground. It would be an understatement to say that the Siddis are free from mental stress or worries. Smiling children, laughter, music, boisterous chatter, trance dancing and cheerful faces are the highlights of a visit to this inaccessible Siddi village in the heart of lion country.

One of the most important lessons one can learn from the Siddis is to shut out the past and forget about the future and continue to exist in the present. The learning experience from the Siddi tribe is aptly conveyed by this ancient Swahili Siddi proverb:

*"Do not pursue the past,
Do not lose yourself in the future;
The past no longer is,
The future has not yet come;
Looking deeply at life,
As it is;
In the very here and now,
The Siddi lives in stability and freedom"*

How to get there?

The nearest international Airport is at Ahmedabad. Junagadh is a 390 km. drive from Ahmedabad. Sasan is located 60 km. away from Junagadh on the Junagadh-Veraval Highway. Non-stop driving from Ahmedabad to Sasan should not exceed eight hours.

Where to stay?

The forest guest house at Sasan is an affordable and comfortable place to stay. "SinhSadan" the official guest house of the forest department needs to be booked in advance for visitors and costs Rs. 10 US\$/- per night. The accommodation is comfortable, with hot water and the food is basic.

Where to eat?

Lots of small restaurants serving North Indian and Gujarati cuisine dotSasan. All restaurants offer simple but delicious vegetarian fare. Vegans can get fresh fruits including mangoes, papayas, pineapples and berries at the Siddi settlements.

(Murli Menon, is a travel writer, stress management consultant and author-based at Ahmedabad, India. He is the author of "ZeNLP-Learning through stories" published by The Written Word Publications, "ZeNLP-the power to succeed" published by Sage publications and "ZeNLP-the power to relax" by New Dawn Press. He can be reached at zenlp@rediffmail.com)