

Trump to join Modi in mass rally

● Donald Trump to join Narendra Modi in Houston's 'Howdy, Modi!' event on September 22

● More than 50,000 Indian-Americans from across the US have registered for the event

AFP | Washington

President Donald Trump will join Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a massive gathering of Indian-Americans in Houston, the White House said Sunday, in a symbolic show of the bond between the two leaders and countries.

The September 22 rally -- dubbed, with a touch of Texan twang, "Howdy, Modi!" -- will mark a rare joint appearance between a US president and a foreign leader before an ethnic community, and be the pair's third meeting this year.

Organizers say that more than 50,000 people have registered for the event, which will take place inside the NRG Stadium of the Houston Texans football team.

The gathering is "a great opportunity to emphasize the



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump meet in Biarritz, France during a Group of Seven summit in August 2019

strong ties between the people of the United States and India, to reaffirm the strategic partnership between the world's oldest and largest democracies and to discuss ways to deepen their energy and trade relationship," the White House said.

The White House said Trump would travel the same day to Ohio to showcase an Australian-owned factory alongside Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who will be on a state visit.

The two joint appearances amount to a day-long attempt to nurture relationships with foreign leaders by Trump, whose brash style and outspoken remarks have frequently unnerved allies.

Reaching across aisle

Organizers of the event has planned a cultural performance and invited speakers including Steny Hoyer, the number-two Democrat in the House of Rep-

resentatives.

The joint event shows "the personal chemistry and friendship" between Trump and Modi, Harsh Vardhan Shringla, the Indian ambassador to the United States, told AFP.

"These are two leaders who are used to thinking outside of the box," he said, describing the joint appearance as "unconventional and unique."

"The event will also reflect the strong bipartisan support



This is for the first time in recent history that the leaders of the two largest democracies would be addressing a joint rally anywhere in the world

there has been for US-India relations," he said, describing Indian-Americans as an "organic bridge" between the world's two largest democracies.

Shringla said that Modi would also meet in Houston with energy companies before heading to New York for the UN General Assembly.

Some four million Americans trace their origins to India and the community is among the most educated and prosperous in the United States.

The average Indian-American household earned some \$100,000 in 2015, nearly double the US average, according to the Pew Research Center

Colombia plane crash kills seven: authorities



Rescuers work at the site where the plane crashed

Reuters | Bogota

A small plane crashed near the southwestern Colombian city of Popayan on Sunday, killing seven of the nine passengers aboard, the city's mayor and the country's civil aviation authority said.

The incident occurred just a few minutes after the aircraft, owned by a small local company, took off from the airport in Popayan, a city of about 270,000 surrounded by mountains. The other two passengers were injured and were being treated at a hospital, Popayan Mayor Cesar Gomez said.

Photographs on social media showed parts of the airplane scattered atop houses in the area. Gomez said he had convened a working group to assist residents who had been affected.

Dutch national missing in Spain's flooded southeast

AFP | Madrid

Rescuers were yesterday searching for a Dutch national reported missing in southeastern Spain where torrential rains and flooding have claimed six lives, police said.

The alarm was raised on Sunday afternoon after a member of the public reported seeing "a body sucked into the water in a canal" in Dolores, a town 40 kilometres (25 miles) southeast of Alicante.

The person was believed to be a 66-year-old Dutch man, a police spokesman said.

Southeastern Spain has been battered since Thursday by torrential rains, causing huge flooding and chaos on the roads in several provinces, leaving



A man stands next to the overflowed Segura river in Almoradi

many areas cut off.

Six people have died as a result of the flood and rescuers

have evacuated thousands of people from their homes with the help of some 1,300 troops.

After causing havoc in the regions of Valencia, Murcia and western Andalucia, the storm has since moved towards the central and west of the country, causing widespread flooding.

Yesterday, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez was again visiting several affected areas, this time in the southern region of Andalucia and in Castilla La Mancha in the centre.

Only several central and northern regions were on alert for intense rain yesterday, Spain's AEMET weather agency said, flagging Castilla La Mancha, Castilla y Leon, La Rioja, Aragon and Galicia in the far northwest.

Spain's king opens talks to break political impasse

AFP | Madrid

Spain's King Felipe VI began meeting parliamentary leaders yesterday in an eleventh-hour bid to form a government and head off what would be the country's fourth elections in as many years.

Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez's Socialists won elections in April, but only secured 123 of the parliament's 350 seats, leaving him dependent on support from the radical leftwing Podemos and several smaller regional parties.

Until now, Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias has refused and Sanchez only has until September 23 to be confirmed as

premier -- or face fresh elections on November 10.

In a bid to break the deadlock, the king began two days of talks with party leaders. He will meet Iglesias on Tuesday afternoon and Sanchez later that evening.

Back in July, Sanchez made two attempts to secure confirmation by the assembly but failed due to the dispute with Iglesias, which they have yet to resolve.

The Socialists had initially agreed, very reluctantly, to form a coalition with Podemos, offering it several government portfolios, but Iglesias refused, saying the posts did not carry enough political clout.

Frenchwoman was world's oldest person, researchers say

AFP | Paris

Frenchwoman Jeanne Calment, who died aged 122 two decades ago, should keep the title of the oldest person on record, researchers said yesterday, rejecting claims of fraud.

Ageing specialists Jean-Marie Robine and Michel Allard -- who declared her the longest-lived person in the 1990s -- said a review of old and new data confirmed that she "remains the oldest human whose age is well-documented."

"Recently the claim that families Calment and Billot (her in-laws) organised a conspiracy concerning tax fraud based on identity fraud between mother and daughter gained international media attention," Robine, Allard and two other researchers wrote in The Journals of Ger-

ontology.

"Here, we reference the original components of the validation as well as additional documentation to address various claims of the conspiracy theory and provide evidence for why these claims are based on inaccurate facts," they wrote.

Calment died in 1997, setting a record that is still unsurpassed. She used to joke that God must have forgotten about her.

Last December, Russian researchers claimed in a report that Calment had died in 1934 and that her daughter Yvonne took on her mother's identity to avoid paying inheritance tax.

They said the woman who died in 1997 was Yvonne, not her mother, and at a mere 99 years of age.

The Russian claims were

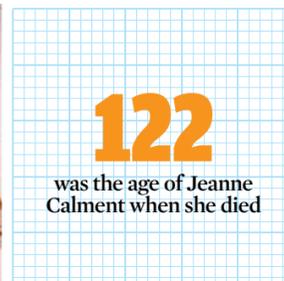


Jeanne Calment during her 119th birthday celebration

based on biographies, interviews and photos of Jeanne Calment, witness testimony, and public records of the city of Arles in southern France where she lived.

Meeting Van Gogh

The new article insists Calment's identity "has not been usurped," according to a statement from the French research institute INSERM, where Robine



works as research director.

The authors of the new article, it said, cross-checked the original data used to validate Calment's identity with newly uncovered documents, and showed "there was neither tax fraud nor falsification of Jeanne Calment's identity."

The team also turned to mathematical modelling to counter the argument that her old age

was impossible.

In every 10 million centenarians, one can reach the age of 123, they said, "a probability that is certainly small, but that is far from making Ms Calment a statistical impossibility."

"All the documents uncovered contradict the Russian thesis," Robine told AFP.

The INSERM stressed that it could not "support any requests for exhumation" of the body, on which no autopsy was performed after Calment's death.

Born on February 21, Calment became the biggest attraction of the southern French city of Arles since Vincent Van Gogh, who spent a year there in 1888.

She said she had met the artist when he came to her uncle's store to buy paints, and remembered him as "ugly as sin" and having an "awful character".