

## Indians arrested for Facebook post on Mumbai shutdown

MUMBAI: Indian police said on Monday, 19 November 2012, they had arrested a woman for criticising on Facebook the total shutdown of Mumbai after the death of politician Bal Thackeray as well as a friend who "liked" the comment.



The pair were due to appear in court later in the day charged under the Indian Penal Code and the Information Technology Act, said Police Inspector Shrikant Pingle in the town of Palghar north of Mumbai.

"The two women will be produced in a local court later this afternoon. They are being charged for hurting religious sentiments," he told AFP.

They were arrested on Sunday, when a huge funeral procession attended by hundreds of thousands of supporters was held in Mumbai for Thackeray, the divisive founder of the rightwing Shiv Sena party.

News of his death on Saturday afternoon brought the city to a virtual standstill for the weekend, with businesses shutting and taxis going off the roads, amid fears of violence by Thackeray's supporters.

While his followers mourned, others were angered at the hold Shiv Sena exerted over India's financial capital. The 21-year-old arrested for her Facebook post was among many who aired opinions on social networking sites.

"Her comment said people like Thackeray are born and die daily and one should not observe a 'bandh' (city shutdown) for that," Police Inspector Uttam Sonawane told the Mumbai Mirror.

Despite widespread concerns, there were no reports of unrest in Mumbai itself on the day of the funeral of Thackeray, one of India's most polarising party leaders who was widely accused of stoking ethnic and religious violence.

India in recent months has shown sensitivity to criticism of its politicians, sparking criticism in turn from freedom of speech campaigners.

In September campaigners were outraged by the arrest in Mumbai on charges of sedition of a cartoonist for his anti-corruption drawings. The charges were later dropped.

*Source: AFP*