

From Front page...

Donald Trump Announces \$3 Billion

state-of-the-art military helicopters and other equipment to the Indian armed forces." Ahead of Trump's visit to India, the Cabinet Committee on Security headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 19 cleared the two deals to acquire 24 MH-60 "Romeo" naval multi-mission helicopters for \$2.12 billion and six AH-64E Apache attack choppers for \$796 million from the US. The first batch of six MH-60R helicopters, equipped with multi-mode radars and night-vision capabilities as well as Hellfire missiles, MK-54 torpedoes and precision-kill rockets for potent anti-submarine warfare, would be delivered within a year. The remaining 18 will be delivered within four years.

India, Us Working To Defend People

at the airport, said his administration is working in a "very positive" way with Pakistan to crackdown on the militant organisations and militants that operate there. While the chemistry between Modi and Trump was fully evident as the two leaders shared many hugs and heaped praise on each other in front of nearly 1,00,000-strong enthusiastic crowd at the new-look Motera stadium in the Prime Minister's home state, the traditional and colourful welcome left the US President impressive.

"Five months ago, the US welcomed your PM at a giant football stadium, and you welcomed us at the world's largest cricket stadium. Thank you for spectacular welcome. We will always remember this remarkable hospitality forever", Trump said. Known for his fondness to tweet, Trump also took to Twitter and tweeted messages in Hindi, including one expressing eagerness to visit India, to which Modi responded by tweeting the Sanskrit phrase, "Atithi Devo Bhava (guest is god)".

During the first leg of his two-day trip, Trump talked about India's rich culture and extraordinary diversity repeatedly. India is always admired around the earth as the place where millions of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Christians and Jews worship side by side in harmony as it has great tradition of embracing individual freedom, rule of law, dignity of every human being, Trump said.

"The first Lady and I have travelled 8000 mile around the globe to deliver the message to all citizens across this nation -- America loves India, America respects India, and America will always be a faithful and loyal friend to the Indian people," Trump said at the "Namaste Trump" event in the presence of Modi, Melania, daughter Ivanka and son-in-law Jared Kushner besides top officials of the US administration. During his nearly 30 minutes long speech, Trump also said, "while our nations have many differences, they are both defined and propelled by a fundamental truth -- the truth that all of us are blessed with divine light and every person is endowed with a sacred soul" and quoted Swami Vivekanand.

Earlier, thousands of people greeted Trump and his family as the presidential cavalcade criss-crossed the city roads leading first to Sabarmati Ashram and from there to Motera stadium. In his address, the US president heaped praises on Modi, saying the Prime Minister is a "living proof" of what an Indian can achieve with hard work as Trump referred to his humble background as a tea-seller. Referring to the threat of terrorism, the US president said every nation has the right to secure and control its borders and that the US and India are committed to work together to stop terrorists and to fight their ideology.

"For this reason, since taking office, my administration is working in a very positive way with Pakistan to crackdown on the militant organisations and militants that operate on the Pakistani border," he added. "Our relationship with Pakistan is a very good one. Thanks to these efforts, we are beginning to see signs of big progress with Pakistan and we are hopeful for reduced tensions, greater stability and the future of harmony for all of the nations of South Asia," the US president said.

He said India has an important role to play for shaping a better future as it takes on greater responsibility for solving problems and promote peace throughout this "incredible region". "The US and India are also firmly united in our iron-clad resolve to defend our citizens from the threat of radical Islamic terrorism. Both of our countries have been hurt by the pain and turmoil of terrorism and that terrorism brings," said Trump. "Under my administration we unleashed the full power of the military on blood-thirsty killers of ISIS in Iraq and in Syria. Today the ISIS territorial caliphate has been 100 per cent been destroyed and the monster known as Al-Baghdadi, the founder and leader of ISIS, is dead. Without naming any country, Trump said both the US and India will work towards a free and open Indo-Pacific region, and even mentioned about first ever tri-services exercises. "As we continue to build our defence cooperation, the US looks forward to providing India the best and feared equipment on the planet," he said. "India and US have natural and enduring friendship," Trump said, adding, "We are quickly realising our alliances all around world."

On the issue of immigration, Trump said the US has made it clear that while his country will always welcome newcomers who share its values and love its people, its borders will always be closed to terrorists, terrorism and to any form of extremism. "That is why we have taken historic steps to improve screening and vetting applications for entry and we are working to ensure that anyone who threatens the security of our citizens are denied admission and will play a very very big price," he said.

On his part, Modi welcomed Trump to "world's largest democracy" and said a "new history" was being created. Modi said ties between India and the US are no longer just another partnership but have touched far greater heights. Visit of President Trump to India with his family shows strong ties between India and the US, the

prime minister added. Modi also praised Trump's leadership in containing terrorism. Trump said as the world's largest economy, India gives hope to all humanity and has become an economic giant. "There is a difference between a nation that rises by coercion and one that rises by setting its people free -- that is India. India and the US have natural and enduring friendship," he said. Trump also touched on India's cultural diversity and riches as he highlighted the success of its blockbuster movies like DDLJ (Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge) and Sholay, and its sporting icons like Sachin Tendulkar and Virat Kohli.

The US president also compliment the Indian government for its achievement in diverse areas including in laying of roads, providing cooking fuel to over 70 million households and lifting 12 Indians out of extreme poverty every single day. "In single decade, India has lifted 270 million people out of poverty. Under Prime Minister Modi, for the first time in history, every village in India now has access to electricity," said Trump. He said India will soon have the biggest middle class anywhere in the world and within less than 10 years extreme poverty in the country is projected to completely disappear.

"The potential for India is absolutely incredible. India's rise as a prosperous and independent nation is an example for every nation all over the world and one of the most outstanding achievements of our century. "It is all the more inspiring because you have done it as a democratic country, you have done it as a peaceful country, you have done it as a tolerant country," he said.

In a tweet after the event Trump said: "Our two national constitutions both begin with the same three beautiful words: 'We the people.' That means that in America and India alike, we honour, respect, trust, empower, and fight for the citizens we proudly serve!" Later, Trump and Melania visited the Taj Mahal in Agra before arriving in New Delhi. "The Taj Mahal inspires awe. A timeless testament to the rich and diverse beauty of Indian culture! Thank you India," Trump wrote in the message book.

And Trumps Ate No Gujarati Food

in the midst of their roadshow from the Ahmedabad International airport to the cricket stadium in Motera. They were welcomed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the ashram. "Some food items were arranged for the members of the visiting delegation, but neither the US President nor the First Lady had anything during their visit to the Ashram," said Sabarmati Ashram trustee Kartikeya Sarabhai. Apart from "Khaman", a famous Gujarati delicacy, items like broccoli and corn samosa, apple pie, kaju katli and a variety of teas were part of the menu of the high tea for the Trumps.

"We saw the list of food items which might have been arranged for the officials who were part of the visiting delegation. But none of the dignitaries ate them," Sarabhai said.

After visiting the Ashram, the US President, the First Lady and the PM proceeded to the cricket stadium at Motera for the "Namaste Trump" event that was held around 2 pm.

'India, US Share Relationship

Ivanka and son-in-law Jared Kushner as well as senior officials of his administration, landed in Ahmedabad on the first leg of his two-day visit to India.

"Anti-Muslim sentiment permeates the policies of both US, and Indian leaders. For decades, the U.S.-India relationship was anchored by claims of shared values of human rights and human dignity. Now, those shared values are discrimination, bigotry, and hostility towards refugees and asylum seekers, Margaret Huang, Amnesty International USA's executive director, was quoted as saying in the statement.

It was a reference to the anti-CAA protests in India, the internet lockdown in Jammu and Kashmir and the Muslim ban expansion by President Trump affecting Nigeria, Eritrea, Myanmar, Kyrgyzstan, Sudan and Tanzania, the statement said.

It added that Amnesty International USA's researchers travelled to Lebanon and Jordan to conduct nearly 50 interviews with refugees that as a result of the previous version of the ban have been stranded in countries where they face restrictive policies, increasingly hostile environments, and lack the same rights as permanent residents or citizens.

The statement also came down hard on the Indian government, hitting out at the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) 2019 and saying it legitimises discrimination based on religious grounds.

It criticised statements such as identify them (the protestors) by their clothes or shoot the traitors by Prime Minister Modi and his party workers. Such remarks "peddled the narrative of fear and division that has fuelled further violence", it said.

The internet and political lockdown in Kashmir has lasted for months and the enactment of CAA and the crackdown on protests has shown a leadership that is lacking empathy and a willingness to engage. We call on President Trump and Prime Minister Modi to work with the international community and address our concerns in their bilateral conversations, Avinash Kumar, executive director, Amnesty International India said in the statement.

Siddaramaiah Dares BJP To Hold Trump

to restore normalcy in Jammu and Kashmir which faced months of restrictions after its special status under Article 370 was scrapped in August last year.

Siddaramaiah, who is Leader of Opposition in Karnataka Assembly, in another tweet hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the long wall built near the airport in Ahmedabad allegedly to block view of a slum, ahead of Trumps visit. It is time for @realDonaldTrump to get inspired from @narendramodi.

Inspiration to build decorative walls to hide not so decorative life!! he tweeted. The opposition Congress in Gujarat had accused the BJP-ruled vic

body in Ahmedabad of building the 500-metre long wall to block view of a slum colony.

Refuting the allegations, AMC officials had said the construction of the wall, around four feet in height, was approved much before Trump's Gujarat visit was finalised. Trump, accompanied by First Lady Melania Trump and a high-level delegation, arrived in Ahmedabad around noon on Monday for a little less than 36-hour-long trip.

Army Chief To Visit Kashmir Today

foiling the infiltration bids from across the border. "Ceasefire violations from Pakistan side have increased, however, we have been successful in foiling their infiltration bids. Still, some succeed in their infiltration attempt. These militants are neutralised during operations," Singh told media in Kathua.

He said there are about 240-250 militants in the Jammu and Kashmir and operations are underway to eliminate them.

Security Beefed Up In Kashmir

ensure that militants are not able to carry out any attacks. Surveillance and area domination exercises have been intensified in some areas, he said.

Mobile vehicle check points have been set up at several places for curbing the movement of people who provide logistical support to militants, the official said.

He said security arrangements have been beefed up as a precautionary measure. The All Parties Sikh Coordination Committee (APSCC) has appealed to the community members to maintain vigil.

"The visit of a high profile foreign personality, especially that from the US, leads to fear psychosis and panic among the Sikhs living in the Kashmir Valley. The Sikhs are feeling insecure and they fear that something untoward might happen," APSCC chairman Jagmohan Singh Raina said in a statement on Saturday, while referring to the 2000 incident.

Govt Working On Kashmiri Pandits

their contribution to the community. "The situation in the Valley has improved, especially after the abrogation of Article 370 last year. The Kashmiri pandits have to go back with honour and dignity," said Koul, himself a Kashmiri pandit.

Lauding the efforts of APMCC for the reopening and upkeep of temples in the Valley, the BJP leader told the audience that the government would support reconstruction and renovation of important temples and shrines in the Valley.

APMCC also launched a campaign for the reconstruction of ancient Sun temple Martand in South Kashmir, said APMCC spokesperson King C Bharati, adding that the organisation will conduct 'Maha Yagya' and exhibitions in Kashmir at the 'Martand' Temple and will organise conferences across the country to fulfil this mission.

The BJP leader along with former minister Priya Sethi, Deputy Mayor Purnima Sharma of Jammu Municipal Corporation, Board of School Education's Chairperson Veena Pandita and Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner T K Bhat released APMCC's documentary on 'Sharada Peeth', an ancient temple of the goddess of learning Saraswati in Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

An impressive slideshow and Gangbal Song on activities of APMCC and HGGT was also displayed on the occasion.

APMCC chairman Vinod Pandit spoke about plans of his group, particularly its movement to rebuild ancient Martand Surya Temple at Kehribal in Anantnag district of south Kashmir.

Prominent personalities who were honoured with various awards on the occasion included J N Sagar (Pandit Kalhan Award), Prof B L Zutshi (Lalitaditya Muktapada Award), Sunil Raina Rajanak (Abhinav Gupt Award), Core Sharada Group (Lalleshwari Award), Dr Neeru Khuru (Kota Rani Award) etc.

The other awardees were Sharika Diagnostic Centre Pvt Ltd (Shriya Bhat Award), businessman Ajay Takoo (Harmukh Gangabal Award), government officer Rakesh Bhat (Pt Kashyap Bandhu Award) and Rinkoo Raj (posthumously) (Martyr Principal Ashok Raina Award).

An employee of J&K Tourism department, Rinkoo had saved two people from drowning in Kashmir, but lost his life.

The awards are given away annually in recognition of the contribution of prominent community members towards upliftment of the community and their contribution to the nation as a whole, said King Bharati.

Students Return To Schools In Kashmir

many months, a smiling Ziya Javed, student of Class 6 at a private school here, said. Javed said the students felt bored at home and it was exciting to be among friends and classmates once again.

There was not much to do at the home. It was boring to sit, not do much all these months and wait for the schools to re-open. Finally, there is some excitement, he said.

The only time the students or their parents had visited the schools in the last few months was to either collect or submit their home assignments in the absence of any classes. I had gone to the school a few times in these past months to collect assignments, but there were no classes. I wanted to attend the classes because I want to study and become a doctor, Numaan, a class 4 student, said.

Teachers expressed hope of a good year ahead so that students get uninterrupted education, saying the education of the children suffered last year due to the situation in the valley.

Without getting into the politics, I want to say that children's education suffered last year. I want regular, uninterrupted education for students this year and hope there are no disruptions this year, a teacher at a private school in the city here said, wishing not to be identified.

While the government had made several efforts last year to re-open schools in a phased

manner following the Centre's decision to do away with Jammu and Kashmir's special provisions, its attempts failed to bear any fruit as parents kept their wards at home due to apprehensions about their safety.

Towards the end of the year, few schools opened, but asked students to attend their classes without wearing school uniforms. Director School Education Kashmir, Mohammad Younis Malik has urged teachers to work with dedication for building capacities of students for their better future.

It is our responsibility to extend our support to them and redouble efforts to get their syllabus completed well in time, the director said.

He has instructed field officers to visit schools regularly to monitor the follow up of academic planner for timely accomplishment of set targets.

BSNL Can Run Broadband Services

service for all its users, including common people. Some local service providers have started the service to selected customers after getting undertaking that the internet will not be misused to access social media though VPN apps.

Asserting that the Union Territory administration and security forces are well aware about people using VPN apps to access social media sites despite a ban by Home department, J&K police chief Dilbag Singh had last week said that police is currently concerting on miscreants who are misusing Facebook and WhatsApp to spread rumours in the valley.

He also hinted at taking action against people, who are not misusing social media, but accessing it though VPN apps once they have dealt with miscreants who are spreading rumours to instigate violence.

The DGP has also appealed general public not to use social media via VPN apps. "Our main priority is the deal with people who are misusing social media and spreading rumours. Our second priority is to deal with the rest of the people who are accessing social media through VPN despite a ban. Currently we are concentrating only on the first priority," Mr Singh had said.

The Jammu and Kashmir police last week lodged an FIR against locals for using social media platforms on Virtual Private Networks (VPNs).

Mobile internet and broadband service of all Cellular companies was suspended in the Kashmir valley on August 5, 2019, when centre scrapped Article 370 and 35 A besides divided the state into two Union Territories (UTs).

However, 2G mobile internet service was resumed on January 25 while high speed internet and broadband remained suspended. The social media sites also remained banned and government had directed people to assess only whitelisted sites.

Lawyers of Kashmiri Students Heckled

Inspection Bungalow from the court. Lawyers' groups held a demonstration against them near the court, while local right-wing activists shouted slogans of 'Go Back' and 'Bharat Mata ki Jai'.

The report also adds that the vehicles of lawyers were also damaged when they reached the court. The lawyers had to return to Bengaluru as they were not able to file the bail applications on behalf of their clients after disruptions inside and outside the court, the report adds.

A lawyer, who was part of the team, told News 18 that they went to Hubli to collect the FIR and other documents, which they were able to do. They also met the president and secretary of the Hubli Bar Association to give their representation about a boycott call by the association and their stand on that.

"When they went to the Dharwad court where they had to file for bail for their clients, there were major disruptions that forced them to return empty-handed," the report adds.

The incident happened despite heavy security being deployed to protect the lawyers from such attacks -- the Karnataka High Court had issued the order in this regard. The HC had also slammed the Hubli Bar Association for passing a resolution that none of its members would represent or defend the students in court.

Right To Dissent Is Essential

must be open to criticism, and the judiciary is not above criticism. "If judges of the superior courts were to take note of all the contemptuous communications received by them, there would be no work other than the contempt proceedings. In fact, I welcome criticism of the judiciary because only if there is criticism, will there be improvement," he said.

Justice Gupta said there must be also introspection as "when we introspect, we will find that many decisions taken by us need to be corrected". "Criticism of the executive, the judiciary, the bureaucracy or the Armed Forces cannot be termed 'anti-national'. In case we attempt to stifle criticism of the institutions whether it be the legislature, the executive or the judiciary or other bodies of the State, we shall become a police State instead of a democracy and this the founding fathers never expected this country to be", he said.

Justice Gupta, who is set to retire on May 6, said: "To question, to challenge, to verify, to ask for accountability from the government is the right of every citizen under the Constitution. "These rights should never be taken away otherwise. We will become an unquestioning moribund society, which will not be able to deliver any further".

He disapproved of calls often made by various bar associations refusing to represent accused in various cases and said it is against legal ethics and an obstruction of justice. "I chose this topic because I am troubled with certain recent events especially concerning lawyers and Bar Associations where forgetting the duty cast upon the lawyers under the Advocates Act, 1961 and the right of every person to have free legal aid, some Bar Associations in different parts of the country

are passing resolutions that none of their members will appear in certain causes. This is something which worries me immensely," he said.

Highlighting the importance of dissent in a democracy, he said, "If a country has to grow in a holistic manner where not only the economic rights but also the civil rights of the citizen are to be protected, dissent and disagreement have to be permitted, and in fact, should be encouraged".

He said that rule of majority is an integral part of democracy but "majoritarianism is the antithesis of democracy" and in a democracy like India, the government in most cases does not represent the majority of the population, and often not even the voting electorate.

"Therefore, when those in power claim that they represent the will of all the people that is more often than not a totally baseless claim. They may be the elected government voted on the first past the post system by a large number of voters, but it cannot be said that they represent the entire will of the people," he said.

Justice Gupta, however, said that dissenting views must be expressed in a "peaceful manner" and citizens have a right to get together and protest when they feel that actions taken by the government are not proper.

"Their cause may not always be right. At the same time, the Government may also not be right. Merely because certain groups oppose those in power cannot take away their right to oppose what is proposed by the Government or to oppose any actions of the Government as long as the protest is peaceful. The Government has no right to stifle or quell protest as long as the protests are peaceful," he pointed out.

Justice Gupta said that the bedrock of our democracy is the rule of law and this necessitates that there must be an independent fearless judiciary.

"There can be rule of law only when we have judges who can take decisions independent of political influence, totally uninfluenced by media or any other extraneous considerations," he added.

He referred to several historic dissenting judgements including the famous opinion penned by Justice H R Khanna in the ADM Jabalpur case and said that Justice Khanna knew that he was putting his future as Chief Justice of India at stake.

In the ADM Jabalpur case of 1976, the five-judge bench by a majority verdict 4:1 had arrived at the conclusion that Article 21 is the sole repository of all rights to life and personal liberty, and, when suspended, takes away those rights altogether.

Emergency was imposed in the country for a period of 21 months -- from 1975 to 1977. Justice HR Khanna was lone dissenting judge who had held that "the suspension of the right to move any Court for the enforcement of the right under Article 21, upon a proclamation of emergency, would not affect the enforcement of the basic right to life and liberty"

Sc Collegium Approves 3 Judicial

as a Judge of the Tripura High Court. Besides, it approved the proposal for elevation of advocate Ananthan Bimol Singh as a Judge of the Manipur High Court.

Apart from CJ Bobde, justices N V Ramana, Arun Mishra, R F Nariman and R Banumathi are part of the new 5-judge

MeT Predicts Wet Spell Across Valley

Against minus 0.1 degree recorded on Sunday, the mercury in Srinagar improved and settled at 0.3 degree, which is still below normal. The maximum temperature recorded on Sunday was over 7 degree above normal.

World famous health resort of Pahalgam, about 100 km from here in south Kashmir, was the only place in the valley where the night temperature dipped and settled at minus 4.8 degree, which is about a degree below normal.

The mercury at world famous ski resort of Gulmarg improved about 2 degree from Sunday and settled at minus 3 degree, which is about 4 degree above normal. "After witnessing above normal night temperature, the weather during the day witnessed improvement as sun came out from behind the clouds on Monday afternoon in Gulmarg, which is famous for its ski slopes and quality of snow.

The mercury during the night at Qazigund, gateway to the valley, Kupwara in north Kashmir and tourist resort of Kokernag settled at 0.4 degree, minus 1.4 degree and 3.8 degree, respectively.

There was slight respite for people from chilly weather conditions in Ladakh, where water-bodies -- including lakes and streams -- remained frozen due to several degrees' below freezing point temperature. The people in the newly created Union Territory (UT) of Ladakh are mostly dependent on hot water springs during winter. The border town of Leh was the coldest place in the region after the mercury dipped about 2 degree from Sunday and settled at minus 9.5 degree.

Jammu Lawyer Found Murdered

His body also bore visible injury marks, the official said.

He said the CCTV at the house was found damaged and the private car and some other valuables were reportedly taken away, indicating theft as the motive behind the murder.

The family servant, hailing from Bihar, is suspected to be the prime accused, he said adding a murder case was registered and further investigation is on to bring the culprit to book.

Buchh's wife is abroad, while his son had gone to Mumbai, a relative of the slain lawyer said, adding the family had engaged the domestic help only a few months back.

Unknown Men Thrash BJP Worker

regarding the incident, but will ascertain the facts.