

**“Really, there was only one sensible thing to do. Stay the course. Pray it through, day by day, minute by minute. The Lord had an answer and it would surely come.” Janice Hanna**

**INTERNATIONAL****TRUMP ORDERS CURBS ON CHINESE GOODS, INVESTMENTS**

President Donald Trump directed imposition of tariffs on Chinese products, and restrictions on Chinese investments in America in a move that officials described as historic and is meant to push back against “economic aggression”.

These measures mark a fundamental change in the current American approach towards Beijing that started with the Richard Nixon-Henry Kissinger era.

That approach of trying to get China into the global market as a fair partner has failed.

He said previous Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama failed in their initiatives with China, and so did Mr. Trump’s early overtures towards China.

President Trump tried to resolve these issues through dialogue but China has a different approach.

The measures follow the completion of a special assessment of Chinese trade and investment practices that give Chinese companies “unfair advantage” and “forced U.S. companies to transfer technologies.”

The review under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 was ordered by Mr. Trump last year.

The President has now directed the U.S Trade Representative (USTR) that conducted the review to design measures, including tariffs, to mitigate the losses being faced by American corporations on account of such forced intellectual property acquisition.

Senior administration officials talking on background ahead of the President signing the directive said these measures were in line with the National Security Strategy announced last year that identified China as a “strategic competitor.” The measures that will come into effect within the next two months could target 1,300 different products totaling tariffs up to \$50 billion.

- Tariff wall: The President has asked the USTR to start the process towards erecting a tariff wall, while the Treasury Department has been directed to device restrictions on Chinese investments that officials said were taking over American technologies for military and strategic purposes.

- These investments are not meant for earning the best returns on investments, but designed to serve China’s strategic and military objectives.

- We are moving to strategically defend America against this economic aggression.

**PAKISTAN SETS POWERFUL MISSILE TRACKING SYSTEM FROM CHINA**

In an unprecedented deal China has sold Pakistan a powerful tracking system which could speed up the development of multi-warhead missiles by its all-weather ally.

Pakistan had bought a highly sophisticated large scale optical tracking and measurement system from China. We simply gave them a pair of eyes. They can use them to look at whatever they want to see, even the Moon.

Mr. Zheng said he could not elaborate on the technology or where in Pakistan it was being used as it involved the country’s defence interests.

He, however, said that the Pakistani military recently deployed the system “at a firing range” for use in testing and developing new missiles.

China was the first country to export such sensitive equipment to Pakistan.

The Post report attributed the sale of the equipment to Pakistan to India testing the most advanced nuclear-ready intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) Agni-V with a range long enough to hit Beijing or Shanghai.

**MALDIVES PRESIDENT LIFTS STATE OF EMERGENCY**

Maldives President Abdulla Yameen lifted a 45-day state of emergency, a day after the

government charged senior political dissidents of trying to topple the President.

The announcement of a state of emergency was precipitated by a constitutional crisis created by two Justices of the Supreme Court who conspired with political actors to violate both the Constitution and standard legal norms and practices in order to illegally overthrow a lawful government, and whose actions constituted an imminent threat to national security.

President Yameen imposed the state of emergency on February 5 for 15 days following a Supreme Court ruling that overturned convictions against nine opposition leaders, including exiled former President Mohamed Nasheed. He extended it by 30 more days with Parliament's approval.

The move drew severe criticism from the opposition and from countries including India and the U.S.

#### **AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA (AfCFTA)**

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) has been signed by 44 African countries at a summit of the African Union in Kigali, Rwanda. If successful, it will be the biggest trade agreement since the formation of the World Trade Organization in 1995. Nigeria, Africa's largest economy and most populous country, as well as a host of others did not sign the agreement.

#### **AfCFTA**

African heads of government agreed to establish a continental free trade area in 2012 and started negotiations in 2015.

The draft agreement commits countries to removing tariffs on 90% of goods, with 10% of "sensitive items" to be phased in later.

The agreement will also liberalize services and aims to tackle so-called "non-tariff barriers" which hamper trade between African countries, such as long delays at the border.

Eventually, free movement of people and even a single currency could become part of the free trade area.

The AfCFTA has the potential to bring over 1.2bn people together into the same market. The bloc of 55 nations would be the largest in the world by member states.

The AfCFTA could improve trade between African countries, which in 2016 estimates stated accounted for only 10%. By reducing barriers to trade, such as removing import duties and non-tariff barriers, African countries hope to boost intra-continental business.

#### **Objectives of the AfCFTA:**

Create a single continental market for goods and services, with free movement of business persons and investments, and thus pave the way for accelerating the establishment of the Continental Customs Union and the African customs union.

Expand intra African trade through better harmonization and coordination of trade liberalization and facilitation regimes and instruments across RECs and across Africa in general.

Resolve the challenges of multiple and overlapping memberships and expedite the regional and continental integration processes.

Enhance competitiveness at the industry and enterprise level through exploiting opportunities for scale production, continental market access and better reallocation of resources.

#### **NATIONAL**

#### **NOT EQUIPPED TO DETECT DEEP MAOIST MINES: HOME MINISTRY**

The Home Ministry has told a parliamentary panel that forces were "unable to detect deep planted mines" with the technology presently available in the areas affected by Left Wing Extremism (LWE).

On March 13, nine CRPF jawans were killed in Chhattisgarh Sukma district when a mine protected vehicle they were travelling in was blown up by triggering an Improvised Explosive Device (IED). The IED was planted deep under the road and security forces could

not detect the explosives with the search devices available with them.

The Committee of Estimates headed by senior BJP leader Murli Manohar Joshi tabled the report, 'Central armed police forces and internal security challenges - evaluation and response mechanism', in Parliament.

**Changing plans:** A representative of the Home Ministry, while presenting evidence before the Estimates Committee on violence in LWE-affected States, told the panel that presently, security forces are unable to detect deep planted mines through technology.

They extremists also keep changing their modus operandi but despite that considerable recoveries are made with intelligence and technical help.

The committee said that it had been informed about the biggest challenge in LWE areas. Besides, a lot of casualty of security forces in LWE affected areas are taking place due to non-availability of technology to detect the deeply planted mines.

The committee said, "The committee desires to take up the matter with the research organisations concerned like DRDO to counter the threats posed by Maoists,"

The Home Ministry informed the Lok Sabha that it had sanctioned 157 MPVs for Central armed police forces (CAPF) to be procured from the Ordnance Factory Board in three years.

#### **Steps taken to remedy the situation:**

Out of the 157 sanctioned MPVs, 13 have been supplied by OFB to CAPFs so far.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has requested the Defence Ministry and OFB to expedite the supply.

#### **UIDAI CHIEF DEFENDS SAFETY OF AADHAAR DATA BEFORE SC**

It would take more than the age of the universe for the fastest computer on earth, or any super-computer, to break one key" of Aadhaar encryption. CEO of the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) Ajay Bhushan Pandey assured the Supreme Court.

Mr. Pandey, who steered the Aadhaar from its beginnings in 2010, was given the unique opportunity to conduct a PowerPoint presentation in a courtroom of the five-judge Constitution Bench, led by Chief Justice of India.

#### **Data forever**

In an hour-long presentation, which will continue on March 27, Mr. Pandey said Aadhaar data were protected by a 2048-bit encryption and "once biometrics comes to us, it will never go away."

#### **'Face ID' from July 1 for Aadhaar authentication**

- The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) informed the Supreme Court that it will introduce 'Face ID' on July 1 to enable Aadhaar holders to authenticate their identity to access services, benefits and subsidies.
- The Face ID would help people without biometrics or those with poor biometrics to avoid authentication failures and financial exclusion.
- The court has repeatedly been referring to how biometric authentication failures had deprived citizens of their rightful entitlements like pension and provident fund. It has highlighted that people with physical disabilities and the mentally challenged may face the danger of financial exclusion.

#### **Accessing benefits**

- In a PowerPoint presentation to the Supreme Court UIDAI CEO showed photographs of persons with leprosy, senior citizens with poor biometrics and those with physical disabilities accessing benefits through Aadhaar.
- He said a complete exemption from biometric authentication was provided to persons with leprosy and those whose biometrics were non-existent due to disability or other reasons.

#### **Authentication modes**

Mr. Pandey drew the court's attention to Regulation 4 of the Aadhaar (Authentication) Regulations of 2016 which detailed the various modes of authentication.

One was verifying demographic details of the Aadhaar holder, like name, gender and date of birth.

Secondly, there was the One Time Pin (OTP) based authentication with limited time validity. The PIN was sent to the registered mobile number and/or e-mail address of the Aadhaar number-holder.

Then, there was the multi-factor authentication, which was a combination of two or more of the modes — biometric or OTP or demographic for authentication.

The Regulation allows individuals the right to choose a suitable mode(s) of authentication for a particular service or business function to enhance security.

However, for the avoidance of doubt e-KYC authentication should only be carried out using OTP and/or biometric authentication.

**100% AUTHENTICATION NOT ALWAYS POSSIBLE**

The CEO of the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), told the five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court that UIDAI could not promise 100% authentication every time.

There may be connectivity or other technological issues across India, especially when the scheme covers over 1.2 billion people.

He said that UIDAI has instructed our officers to check the Aadhaar card and see that the case is genuine. A person should not be denied benefits because there is failure in authentication,” Mr. Pandey said.

Mr. Pandey however, said the Aadhaar is not the solution for a shopkeeper who refuses a woman her ration under the PDS despite the successful authentication of her biometrics.

**‘So you say that failure of service because of failure of authentication can be addressed. But failure of service despite authentication needs to be addressed separately?’** Justice Chandrachud asked the UIDAI.

Additional Solicitor General, for UIDAI, answered the judge’s question, saying the

conduct of the shopkeeper in question was the “failure of honesty”.

**NITI AAYOG INITIATED IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGY ON RESOURCE EFFICIENCY**

Niti aayog has initiated implementation of strategy on Resource efficiency. After detailed discussion, a road map for implementation of the RE in the country has also been evolved.

Following measures related to implementation of strategy on resource efficiency was announced by the NITI Aayog:

NITI Aayog will facilitate the RE strategy implementation. Implementation however will be the responsibility of the line ministries/departments.

A baseline survey on RE could be considered for better targeting.

A Status paper on RE and Four sectoral strategy papers on RE are to be prepared.

SWACH Bharat also means a clean production/mining environment; therefore resource efficiency and circular economy are also a part of this initiative.

One pilot study on Ease of Doing RE Business in collaboration with DIPP could be considered.

Finally, RE is a potential instrument for generating wealth from waste. Measures for promoting effective recycling of scrap generated in the country could be explored.

**Strategy on Resource Efficiency:**

NITI Aayog in collaboration with the European Union delegation to India have released the Strategy on Resource Efficiency. The strategy aims to promote resource efficiency in India.

This strategy is the first policy document to emphasize resource productivity in the country. The Strategy emphasizes on Sustainable Public Procurement (SSP) as an action agenda which will be the market transformation tool to transform to a resource efficient economy.

It is developed with the recommendations from the Indian Resource Efficiency Programme (IREP), launched by the Indian

Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and Indian Resource Panel (InRP) in April 2017.

Resource efficiency very simply put is making more with fewer materials. In practice, through a life-cycle approach, it leads to minimizing impact on environment & the associated societal burdens, transforming 'waste' into 'resources' fostering circular economy, and strengthening resource security.

Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy are important goals and central principles for achieving sustainable development. Sustainability is a global priority and SDGs commitment and 11th Five year plan also clearly enunciate importance of Resource efficiency (RE).

#### **InRP:**

The new Indian Resource Panel (InRP) was officially unveiled in 2016, making India one of the first emerging economies to set up a national advisory body on resource efficiency.

The InRP was created with support from the International Climate Initiative as part of the project 'Resource efficiency and secondary raw materials management as a contribution to climate change mitigation'. The InRP will issue recommendations to Indian businesses and policy-makers on improving the general conditions for resource efficiency.

#### **SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

#### **BRAHMOS TEST FIRED SUCCESSFULLY WITH INDIGENOUS SEEKER**

The BrahMos supersonic cruise missile was successfully test-fired with an indigenous seeker for the first time. So far the seeker, a critical technology in missiles, came from Russia.

BrahMos, the formidable supersonic cruise missile with indigenous seeker was successfully flight tested at the Pokhran test range in Rajasthan.

The precision strike weapon with indigenous seeker flew in its designated trajectory and hit the pre-set target.

The seeker was jointly developed by the Defence Research and Development Laboratory (DRDL), Hyderabad, and BrahMos Aerospace.

Seeker technology, which determines the accuracy of a missile, is a closely guarded secret. Mastering it is a significant milestone in missile technology and would reduce import dependence.

BrahMos is joint collaboration between India and Russia and is capable of being launched from land, sea, sub-sea and air against surface and sea-based targets.

The range of the supersonic missile was initially capped at 290 km as per the obligations of the Missile Technology Control Regime.

Since India's entry into the club, the range has been extended to 450 km and the plan is to hit 600km.

#### **FLUORIMETER**

An instrument to measure traces of uranium in water has been developed by a unit of the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE).

The instrument, "Fluorimeter", has been developed by the Raja Ramanna Centre for Advanced Technology (RRCAT), an Indore-based unit of the DAE.

The device, costing Rs 1 lakh, would help in detecting traces of uranium in water.

The instrument is capable of examining traces of uranium in a sample of water from 0.1 PPB (Parts-per-billion) unit to 100 PPB.

Uranium is a radioactive element. If in any source of water its quantity is more than the permissible limit, then use of such water may cause thyroid cancer, blood cancer, depression and other serious ailments. Notably, the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board has fixed the permissible radiological limit to 60 PPB of uranium concentration for drinking water.

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