

O HERALDO

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Between 'Make in India' and 'America First'

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's upcoming visit to the White House to meet US President Donald Trump marks a critical moment in Indo-American relations. Trump extended this invitation during a phone call on January 27, making Modi the fourth foreign leader to meet him in his second presidential term. This meeting comes against a backdrop of economic tensions, trade disputes and evolving geopolitical alignments that will test Modi's diplomatic finesse.

One of the biggest friction points between India and the US under Trump's leadership has been trade. Trump has consistently criticised India's trade policies, branding the country a "tariff king." His administration has imposed tariffs on steel and aluminium imports—sectors where India has a significant stake. While India has not yet been directly targeted like Canada, Mexico, or China, Trump's stance remains unpredictable.

The crux of Trump's discontent lies in the US-India trade imbalance. Washington has been pushing New Delhi to lower import duties on American goods, including Harley-Davidson motorcycles and whiskey. In a strategic move, India has already reduced tariffs on Harley-Davidson bikes and is considering similar cuts on other American products. Modi's challenge will be to ensure that trade negotiations do not tilt entirely in America's favour while keeping diplomatic ties intact.

Even on sensitive issues, such as the US deporting 104 undocumented Indian immigrants—many in handcuffs—India responded with measured diplomacy rather than public outrage. This restraint signals India's intent to navigate the relationship pragmatically rather than react emotionally to Trump's often erratic policies.

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Beyond trade, India and the US are deepening their defense and security ties. India has been steadily reducing its dependence on Russian arms and increasing defense procurement from the US. This shift aligns with Washington's interests, but a potential stumbling block remains: Modi's "Make in India" policy clashes with Trump's "America First" agenda.

Trade and defense aside, India and the US have much to gain from strengthening their partnership in other sectors. American tech giants like Amazon,

Google, and OpenAI have a massive presence in India, benefiting from its vast consumer base. Unlike China, where regulatory barriers restrict American businesses, India offers a more open market, an aspect Modi could leverage in discussions with Trump.

Energy cooperation is another key area. India has been increasing its imports of American crude oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG), reducing its reliance on the Middle East. Trump, who sees energy exports as a pillar of American economic strength, may push for further expansion of this trade.

Additionally, India's recent revision of its nuclear power policy to accommodate American firms signals an openness to deeper collaboration. However, critics argue that these concessions may disproportionately benefit the U.S. rather than India's broader energy security needs.

Perhaps the greatest challenge Modi faces is Trump's unpredictability. Trump's history suggests that once a leader makes concessions, he often demands more. As international trade expert Amitendu Palit warns, trying to appease Trump could lead to endless demands, making it a risky strategy for India.

Moreover, while Trump has yet to impose direct tariffs on India, there is no guarantee this will not change in the future. India ranks 11th among countries with which the U.S. has a trade deficit, far behind China and the European Union. Yet, Trump has shown a willingness to take aggressive trade actions even when deficits are relatively minor.

Modi's White House visit will be a defining moment in India-U.S. relations. The stakes are high: balancing trade demands, strengthening defense cooperation, and ensuring India's economic interests are protected. Modi's ability to manage Trump's transactional approach while securing long-term strategic benefits for India will determine the success of this engagement.

While Trump's policies remain unpredictable, one thing is clear: India cannot afford to be on the wrong side of America's economic policies. The challenge for Modi is not just about keeping Trump's demands in check but also ensuring that India emerges from this meeting with a stronger and more balanced partnership with the U.S.

comment



JOSE MARIA MIRANDA

We simply boast of being the most populous country in the world, but do little to control it or curb unemployment and thus force people into migration and expect other countries to accept them

Standing up for truth and humaneness

Donald Trump's election, as President of the USA, evoked concerns and shivers in many countries of the world, due to his threats against immigrants. He even signed an order denying birth-right citizenship to legal immigrants, which has been struck down for the time being, after being found to be illegal.

Immigration is not a new phenomenon and along with the refugee problem, has often been caused by colonization, aggression and invasions by superpowers and bigger countries. Sadly, immigrants are generally disliked everywhere, though many countries and States, like ours, can't do without them. This aversion is unfortunate, because migration, away from one's own, is often under pressing circumstances, due to poverty or for better living conditions and prospects. The general complaint about them is that they displace locals and take away latter's livelihoods. But, at times, this is also because the immigrants are more hard-working, have better skills and sometimes are more qualified, like the Indians in many countries. At times, they are also preferred because they work for lesser wages. In a few countries, immigrants work beyond permissible hours, to earn more, and this angers locals, who stick to legal timings.



Trump got the first affront to his haughtiness, at the interfaith service, he attended, when the Episcopal Church Bishop of Washington, Maryann Budde publicly appealed to him for "mercy and compassion" towards the marginalized and vulnerable people "who put their trust in you". She emphasized that "one of the qualities of a leader is mercy", specifically mentioning the LGBTQ communities, the immigrants and refugees, "who are scared now". Braving calls for deportation and against ordination of women as pastors, she, however, refused to offer an apology even to Trump's demand,

asserting that she wouldn't, when "asking for mercy for others". Taking up for Budde, another senior Bishop said that the "plea for mercy, the recognition of the stranger in our midst is core to the faith..."

Budde found this an opportune moment to do no more than remind Trump of the core values of Christian faith, which he too professes and has vowed to defend and protect.

Some of our religious leaders in India missed opportunities at the last two Christmas receptions, attended by the Prime Minister, to express to him the apprehensions, fears and anguish of their flock over assaults on Christians and attacks on their Churches, institutions, etc and the situation in Manipur. However, in Goa, some years back, our Archbishop Filipe Neri Cardinal Ferrao did use his Christmas receptions to remind government authorities and elected representatives present, of their duties and obligations towards the citizens and to preserve the environment and ecology of the State. For obvious reasons, it may not have gone well with some, as one of them humorously remarked "Amkam apoile ani tapoile"

For Trump, the toughest slap of all, so far, came from President Gustavo Petro of Colombia, who refused landing of US military planes, repatriating Colombian citizens. Petro was angry that his countrymen were shackled, handcuffed and bundled into a military aircraft by the US and sent back to Colombia. Though economic considerations and the imperative of avoiding a trade war, with heavy tariffs, forced Colombia to accept the terms of a giant bully, and Petro had eventually to climb down in agreeing to take back their immigrants, the message to Trump was clear and unequivocal: "Our immigrants are not criminals - treat them with respect and dignity. We refuse to be colonized by America. I don't shake hands with slavers. Overthrow me ... and America and humanity will respond".

Contrast this attitude of the head of a comparatively small country of around 52 million, with the submissive and servile attitude of the Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister of a great country like ours. They did not utter a word on the similarly humiliating treatment meted out to their countrymen, though they were

admittedly illegal immigrants. The US is in its right to deport them, but they are no criminals and needed to be treated as humans with respect and dignity. However, it requires guts, which our leaders lack, to stand up to the arrogance of the President of a country which only preaches but fails to practice morality to the world. Surely, Modi who refused to see Trump during his last visit to US, to avoid displeasing Biden and without anticipating the former's re-election, is now keen in embracing "my friend Trump" on his ninth visit to US, sacrificing the self-respect of his country and countrymen. To counter China & Pakistan, Modi cannot prostrate before US, thus lowering the prestige of India. We have often compromised our dignity to draw closer to USSR, in the past, and now to USA

Modi has often commendably emphasized on "Make in India". However, he has never dared call upon his people to return to India, for he well knows that he will meet with a firm NO, as those giving up Indian citizenship are, in fact, on the rise.

Projects are a big source for corruption, bribery, cuts and commissions. Hence, our focus on building infrastructure, which is, at times, meant for the benefit of big industrialists, like the atrocious and health-threatening double track for coal in Velsao. A people centric Government ought to concentrate its attention on lifting the country out of poverty, increasing employment, eradicating illiteracy and encouraging talent, so as to minimize migration and export of intellectual resources.

We simply boast of being the most populous country in the world, but do little to control it or curb unemployment and thus force people into migration and expect other countries to accept them. Imagine the fate of lakhs of people if they need to return to India, even after having spent all their life savings in migrating, because their own country could not provide enough for them to make ends meet. It is a situation that needs to be tackled with urgency, instead of focusing on issues, which far from helping in the welfare of the people only contribute in dividing and turning people poorer.

(The author is a retired banker)

Show your love for Goa on Valentine's Day

Tomorrow, February 14, is Valentine's Day. The day, which is a widely celebrated occasion across the globe, is characterized by expressions of love and affection. However Valentine's Day is not limited to romantic relationships and is celebrated with friends, family, community members and even pets and plants. Valentine's Day is more about celebrating love in general. One does not need to be in a relationship to be loved. In fact, one of the most important forms of love is self-love.

Why not celebrate the day with our pets? They love us unconditionally. We see them as our life companions, best friends and even as family members, and most of us cannot imagine life without them. We can show love for plants, trees and even inanimate objects. This Valentine's Day, let us show our love for Goa. Our lovely state is at a crossroads. With deforestation, hill cutting going on unabated across the state, our green cover is depleting at a rapid rate, it is time to grow more trees and protect the existing trees from being chopped down. We need to clean the neighbourhood and more importantly not litter the surroundings. Our greenery, our fields, water bodies, hills, forests need to be conserved for future generations. We need to preserve vast scenic natural beauty and paddy fields and swaying palms. We need to keep our beaches clean. The time to act is now. Goaness can survive only if Goa, as we

know it, survives. Valentine's Day could be the most opportune day to take a pledge to save Goa from further destruction.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

Don't we have the right to dream big?

Every human being has the right to come up in life and when your motherland lacks those opportunities, then people start migrating for better lifestyles and opportunities. There are times that people try to migrate in illegal ways and end up getting deported. But as an Indian, when I saw my brothers and sisters chained and handcuffed, I just couldn't control my tears and wondered as to where had humanity gone? We all aspire to move to greener pastures in life. Is it illegal to chase our dreams then?

Anita Fernandes, Verna

Resignation long overdue

The adage 'better late than never' fits perfectly in describing the resignation of Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh, who finally stepped down from his post. His resignation comes after nearly two years of ethnic violence in Manipur. Far from dousing the flames of discord among two major sections of Manipuris, Singh played a partisan role in the conflict, fanning the flames by standing resolutely behind his

letterstotheeditor

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All letters must contain correct postal address and telephone number. Letters are liable to be edited for brevity.

Meitei community. The ethnic violence has claimed over 250 lives in Manipur since May 2023, with both the Central and state governments failing to handle the volatile situation.

The crucial question now is who will take charge and how they will address the ongoing conflict. Singh's resignation, however, cannot be considered as an act of closure in the context of Manipur's woes. A lot more needs to be done, be it by a new CM or the Centre in conjunction with the state administration under president's rule. True normalcy will not be achieved merely when the violence subsides, but when members of both communities can return home and live without fear or prejudice. Importantly, PM Modi, who failed to visit Manipur, must lead the way.

Gregory Fernandes, Mumbai

Power disconnection without notice, unfair

The ongoing statewide drive by the Electricity Department to recover pending power dues without any due procedure has sparked widespread concern among consumers. It should be noted that the consumer should get an advance notice of an impending shutoff.

Domestic and commercial consumers must ensure payment of their bills within the stipulated 30 days. It should bring the policy that if consumers fail to

clear dues for three consecutive months, GED should terminate agreements. The reckless snapping of power supply to consumers for default in payment of bills is unfair. The consumers should be served notices before electricity supply is snapped for default in payment of bills.

K G Vilop, Choro

Radio magic is here to stay!

On 13th February as we celebrate World Radio day it takes us back memory lane to those golden days when radio sets and radio programs filled our room space and hearts with sheer pure enjoyment. There would not be a house without a Bush, a Murphy, a Philip, or a Nelco and hundreds of other brands that ruled Radio Market.

Even when everything has been digitalised and AI rules the roost nobody - especially the generations of the pre millennium era can ever forget the way in which this magic voice through the sky has offered us everything - information, entertainment, instruction, advice and what not.

The Indian and the Akashvani are separable and who can forget those golden programs broadcasted by Vividh Bharati and Radio Ceylon. Generations of Indians grew up listening to Jaylamba, Bhule bisre geeth, Hawa Mahal, Chhaya Geeth and the famous Binaca Geetmala.

people'sedit

MODERN DIETARY PATTERNS

K S S PILLAI

Some scriptures say that God gave people every plant with seeds and every tree with fruits to eat. They also ascertain that all other living beings were created for human benefit, effectively preventing believers in their religions from raising their eyebrows in disapproval when people choose non-vegetarian food.

I often remember how we used to eat in the past. Food was cooked traditionally for the entire family by the womenfolk on hearths that used wood as fuel. When a marriage proposal came, it was confirmed that the girl could cook well as a woman was considered useless without this talent.

As most houses did not have electricity, cooking was done without mechanical help. Only a few people staying alone took food from restaurants. School or college students and those working in offices usually carried lunch boxes from home with them.

Modern technology and social media have brought the young generation closer to foreign cultures. Life without smartphones is unimaginable to them. With the entire world shrinking to a big village, they are eager to imitate foreigners, including their food habits. It has resulted in eating items previously available only in some countries. They have also become prey to several diseases like obesity and even ultimately death.

These foods are called fast foods because they can be prepared and delivered fast. Food items like pizza, manchurian, noodles, hot dogs, and hamburgers that originated in foreign countries have become the favourite food of the young in India. Though it is said that most soft drinks are harmful, they drink them at all hours.

Though tasty, fast foods are low in essential nutrients, they contain excessive calories, fat, and sugar. No wonder the physical dimensions of the new generation are much more than those of older ones, thanks to the hormones injected into some of them. Even womenfolk who want to be free of routine chores often cajole other family members to eat out in modern restaurants where all kinds of food are available. Stalls selling popular food items have come up in cities, and roadside eateries remain open till the early hours.

Every city has several fast food delivery agencies like Zomato, Swiggy, and Chowman that take orders online, get them from hotel chains, and deliver them hot within minutes. The delivery boys on motorbikes wear uniforms that display the name of the agency they belong to. The payment, including tips, can be made digitally.

Brought up on homemade traditional food, my sons are not obese, but their teenage children have become so as they regularly consume fast food. With the increase in weight, they also suffer from diseases like diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and even reproduction. While 1 in 8 people suffer from obesity worldwide, eight crore people suffer from the disease in India. The most worrying factor is that youngsters belonging to the age group of 5-19 are victims of the new diseases.

One welcome development of the new food habit is that people have become more health conscious. They go to the gymkhanas that have mushroomed in every city to do exercises on machines, and look at the weighing machines at the end of every session with bated breath.

Listening to radio no doubt rejuvenates one mentally. The happiness one derives from listening to music through radio truly is a class apart and that only radio lovers will know it. FM radios, no doubt has brought back people back to radio entertainment.

RJ's were there in the past too and who can forget Ameen Sayani and his immortal 'Binaca geeth mala' aired by Srilanka broadcasting corporation during 1970s, 80s and 90s. Radio, though the mode and form has changed a lot definitely is here to stay and will remain one of man's best companion forever.

M Pradyu, Kannur

Freedom Fighters must speak up

Goans woke up to the shocking news that about 35 armed goons allegedly broke into the house of Rajesh Sinary (Son of Goa freedom fighter the late Purushottam Sinary); and dispossessed the home of Rajesh, his wife and 6-year-old daughter! What is more shocking is the complacent attitude of the Anjuna Police in this matter.

I do not believe that the purpose of the Freedom Fighters ended in 1961 which resulted in the Portuguese being forced to leave Goa. Law abiding Goans are now threatened by goons and the establishment (including the govt machinery and the Police). Surely this is not the freedom the Freedom Fighters fought for!

Hope Freedom Fighters and their children can speak up for Goa as this could make a big impact!

Arwin Mesquita, Colva