

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

NORTH AMERICA

USA :

Donald Trump Elected as the 45th President of the USA

On November 8, 2016, Donald J. Trump, Republican Party nominee, was declared the President-elect of United States of America. Donald J. Trump secured 306 electoral votes as against 270 the required majority out of total 538 electoral votes, whereas the Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton secured 232 electoral votes. However, Hillary Clinton has secured 65,855,954 popular votes (48.2 %) which is 2.9 million more than that of Donald J. Trump who secured 62,979,879 votes (46.1%). In the USA, securing majority in electoral votes leads to the election of the President of the U S A, not in popular vote.

The factors that contributed for the victory of Donald Trump are

1. Promise of jobs for Americans through make in America by Americans by withdrawing the USA from TPP (Trans Pacific Partnership), renegotiating or withdrawing from NAFTA (North American Free Trade agreement) and imposing tariffs on products manufactured in other countries,
2. Promise of deporting illegal / undocumented immigrants and construction of a wall along the USA and Mexico border to check illegal immigration from Mexico,
3. Promise to limit legal immigration by restricting it to highly talented foreigners,
4. Promise of Tax cuts,
5. Promise of uprooting the ISIS which is behind many terrorist activities, and
6. FBI director James Comey's announcement regarding reopening Hillary Clinton's private email server case.

Donald Trump gave commitment for generating jobs for Americans by producing goods and services within the USA, and in that direction he promised withdrawal from TPP (Trans Pacific Partnership) and he also proposed to renegotiate or withdraw from North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) among Canada, the United States, and Mexico that came into force on

January 1, 1994 for creating a trilateral trade bloc in North America.

TPP (Trans Pacific Partnership) is a trade agreement among twelve countries, which border the Pacific Ocean, namely Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and the United States and Vietnam, signed on 4 February 2016. The agreement aimed at strengthening economic ties among these nations, slashing tariffs and fostering trade to boost growth and to eventually create a new single market similar to that of the EU. An argument was that the agreement facilitated the jobs that offer good salaries are outsourced to the low-wage nations among TPP countries making Americans to loose jobs. In addition, Donald Trump also promised for imposing tariffs on products manufactured outside the USA. These promises attracted working class voters, particularly from the states i.e., Michigan, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania that suffered economic decline due to de-industrialization. These states voted for Democratic Presidential candidates for decades, but voted for Donald Trump in 2016 election. Thereby, Donald Trump has got 46 electoral votes from these three States 16, 10 and 20 respectively.

It is to be noted that the US withdrew, on January 23, 2017, TPP (Trans Pacific Partnership) by issuing an executive order to the effect and with regard to NAFTA (North American Free Trade agreement) the U.S. President Donald Trump announced his intention to begin renegotiating the terms of NAFTA, and on that Canada and Mexico have indicated their willingness to work with the Trump administration, but the exact terms were not announced.

Donald Trump promised to build a wall at the USA and Mexico border to keep out any one entering illegally into the country from Mexico. He also promised to deport illegal/ undocumented immigrants. Because of these promises, Americans who felt that illegal immigrants were taking away their jobs voted for Donald Trump.

During the last week of the election campaign James Comey, the Director of FBI of America, released a letter stating that the investigation of Hillary Clinton's private email server that she used as the Secretary of State was being reopened. FBI director James Comey's announcement

regarding Hillary Clinton's private email server issue also affected her election. The issue is that during March 2015, it became publicly known that Hillary Clinton had used her family's private email server for official communications rather than official State Department email accounts maintained on federal servers during her tenure as United States Secretary of State. Thus, it is alleged that using private messaging system software and a private server is against State Department protocols and procedures, as well as federal laws and regulations. After allegations were raised that some of the emails in question contained classified information as 'secret', 'top secret', the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) initiated an investigation. On July 5, 2016, James Comey the Director of FBI announced the findings of investigation that Clinton was "extremely careless" in handling her email system but recommended that no charges be filed against her, and the investigation was concluded.

Trump sworn in as President on January 20, 2017:

On being elected, Donald Trump was sworn in as the 45th President of the United States by the Chief Justice John Roberts on January 20, 2017 for a four-year term of office. Michael Richard, the vice presidential running mate of Donald Trump, was also sworn in as the Vice President of the United States on January 20, 2017.

In his first speech as President, Mr. Trump promised the American people that he would put them first, and hand back the power to the citizens. Some of the other promises Trump made during his inaugural address are ending terrorism, outlined his vision of "America-first", where decisions on trade, tax, immigration and foreign affairs will be made "to benefit American workers and American families".

Donald Trump was born on June 14, 1946 in Queens, New York, the fourth of five children of Frederick C. and Mary MacLeod Trump. He did graduation in economics from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and later became a successful business man owning real estate and construction firm. He was also a former reality TV star.

President Trump's Decisions

Ban on Entry of Persons from Six Muslim-Majority Countries :

On January 27, 2017 an Executive Order, titled ' Protecting the Nation from Entry of Foreign Terrorists into the United States' was issued by the President of the USA, Mr Donald Trump. The

order blocked entry of persons, both immigrants who come for a permanent living in the USA and visa holders for 90 days from seven Muslim-majority countries i.e., Iran, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Libya, Somalia and Sudan. The order also suspended entry of refugees for 120 days from six out of the mentioned seven countries, and barred refugees from Syria indefinitely. It appears that the stipulation of 90 & 120 days for ordinary citizens of these countries and refugees respectively was for revising the list of countries after 90 days and to have thorough scrutiny of pending applications of any Christian minorities from the above mentioned 7 countries. Diplomats and members of international organizations are exempted from the restrictions of this order. By this order, U.S immigration authorities are empowered to detain travellers and refugees from the above mentioned countries except those who were already in transit.

The order was criticised by democrats, human rights organisations, etc. in and out of the USA on the grounds that such a policy is against the principles of human values and democratic principles followed by the USA. The critics also felt that the order cannot provide an explicit exemption for religious minorities in such way that Christians from the barred seven countries to get into the United States while excluding Muslims.

Further, the sudden promulgation also resulted in massive confusion in airports across the country and the world because many visas were cancelled and travellers with such cancelled visas were prevented from boarding aeroplanes bound to the United States or denied entry on arrival, and some travellers were detained.

Petitions were filed before the Courts in America by different parties aggrieved of the order. Acting on such a petition Federal Judge of the US District Court for the Western District of Washington suspended some of the important provisions of the executive order nationwide on February 3, 2017. The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals which is the US Federal Court with appellate jurisdiction over the district courts upheld the decision of the District Court moved on the petition of the Government for staying the order of the Federal Judge of the District Court.

In consequence of the order from the Court, on March 6, 2017, a revised executive order on ban was issued. The original executive order applied to persons currently living in the US on visas from blacklisted countries and even to green card holders. But the new order applied only to persons who have not yet been issued visas. Thus, the

new order will avoid the problems that the initial executive order created at airports in the US and also around the world. The new order dropped Iraq from the list seven countries and thereby the ban applies to six countries namely Iran, Syria, Yemen, Libya, Somalia and Sudan. The reason for exempting Iraq could be the request from the Department of State for reconsidering the decision keeping in view the role of Iraq in fighting the Islamic groups.

The 120-day ban on refugees has been streamlined as well. In the new executive order, indefinite ban on admitting refugees from Syria.

is changed and they will be allowed to enter the US after 120 days if they pass the screening mechanisms that will presumably be ready by that time.

Further, in consequent to the restrictions initiated by the Donald Trump regime the people that come to the US will be asked to produce more information than they have in the past and that information is going to be scrutinized more heavily. The number of refugees to be admitted into the USA will be reduced drastically.

The main reason for such a ban on persons of Muslim majority countries is that those countries were identified by Barack Obama's administration as sources of terror.

President Donald Trump has clarified that the order was not a ban of Muslims or against Islam, but for keeping the America safe from terror.

Trump Tightens H1B Visa Rules :

Trump signed an executive order to review H1 B Visa rules so that only high skilled technocrats, innovators, talented scientists and well paid at least one lakh and twenty thousand dollars get H1B visas, and not those with ordinary computer skills like programmers. This is a part of his Hire American policy. This order has come in the ways many Indian youth with ordinary computer skills.

As a part of his Buy American goods, he directed government procurement of goods produced in America.

Trump's New Executive Order to Revise Obama's Climate Policies :

The US Presidential Executive Order titled 'Promoting Energy Independence and Economic Growth' dated March 28, 2017 has drastically changed the former President Barak Obama's climate policy in the US that came into force by an order namely 'Preparing the United States

for the Impacts of Climate Change' issued on November 1, 2013. Some of the important features of the new policy are as follows

The rule that stipulates the US power plants cut their emissions 32 percent below 2005 levels from the existing levels by 2030 will be suspended till Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reviews and revises it with a more modest version that only requires incremental cuts.

The CO2 (carbon dioxide) standards for new power plants also revised as the standard stipulated during Obama-era made it impossible to build a new coal based power plant unless it absorbs all its carbon emissions and sequester them underground through a costly and still-nascent technology.

The rule of reducing methane emissions 40 percent below 2012 levels by 2025 will be revised.

The "social cost of carbon", which is the process of assessment and assigning a dollar value to the cost of emitting a ton of carbon dioxide, will be revised. To that effect, ways to lower the SCC estimate will be explored taking into account only the damages that are caused in the United States, instead of the damage globally. That would produce a smaller SCC.

All federal agencies will be instructed to review their rules & policies that may be inhibiting energy production.

The analysts have opined that Trump's order did not mention anything about whether the US stays in or withdraws from the Paris Agreement, an agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) dealing with mitigation of greenhouse gases emissions, the key international treaty on global warming. Although Trump vowed to pull out of the accord during the presidential campaign but on being warned by the advisors of possible diplomatic backlash, there was no mention on the same.

American Health Care Bill

On March 24, 2017, American Health Care Bill was withdrawn from the US House of Representatives after it failed to gain sufficient support to pass it. Despite Donald Trump belonging to Republican Party which has majority in the Congress the required support in the form of number of members could not be mustered as some moderate Republicans opposed the bill stating that the bill affects lower-income Americans as the new bill does not provide subsidies based on incomes of the people, the insurers can charge

older people 5 times the premiums they charge on younger people instead of 3 times earlier, etc.

The failed American Health Care Bill was meant for replacing the existing statute i.e., the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) on health care in America. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, shortened to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) often called as Obamacare, is a United States federal statute enacted by United States Congress and signed into law by President Barack Obama on March 23, 2010.

It is to be noted that health care and insurance are major concerns of Americans. As such, any government in power will try to bring the best system to benefit Americans. But, the priorities will change basing on the overall ideology of the party in power, and based on the promises and commitments made at the presidential elections.

This development is significant for the reason that it has established the independence of the legislature vis-à-vis the executive which is good for democracy as it checks arbitrary functioning of Executive.

However, a modified bill that addressed the concerns of moderate Republican members was later passed.

Racial Attack in Kansas Kills Srinivas Kuchibhotla

Srinivas Kuchibhotla (32 years), an Indian engineer was shot dead in Kansas City bar, the USA on February 22, 2017 by Adam Puriton (51 years), a former US Navy veteran. Alok Madasani (32 years), a colleague of Srinivas, who was with there also sustained injuries in the attack. The incident is considered as racially motivated as the shooter was heard shouting "get out of my country" by the eye witnesses at the time of attack. Ian Grillot (24 years), a white man who was also there in the bar also injured in the shooting as he reportedly put his life at risk to save these two Indians.

Srinivas Kuchibhotla studied B. Tech in electrical and electronics engineering in Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Hyderabad. He completed his master's degree in the University of Texas, El Paso and was employed with the Garmin Ltd., an American multinational technology company in Olathe city, Kansas, United States of America. Alok Madasani graduated from Vasavi College of Engineering, Hyderabad in 2006, and did his Master's at the University of Missouri, Kansas City. Srinivas was survived by his wife Sunayana Dumala and the couple had no children.

SOUTH AMERICA

USA Blacklists Tareck El Aissami, Vice President of Venezuela, for Drug Trafficking

On February 14, 2017 the United States blacklisted Tareck El Aissami, the Vice President of Venezuela, for narcotic drug trafficking. As a result of the blacklisting and consequent sanctions, Americans are prohibited from engaging in any kind of trade or transactions with Tareck El Aissami and all types of assets, which are estimated to be huge, of him in the U.S. jurisdiction are frozen. Further, Samark Jose Lopez Bello, who was identified as the associate in the alleged activities of Tareck El Aissami, and his companies that have international operations were also brought under sanctions. This decision is significant as the sanctions were imposed by the USA on a person of vice president position of an another country.

The US Government derives the powers of imposing this sort of sanctions from the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act of the USA

which authorises the US President to take action when he determines that a foreigner plays a significant role in international narcotics trafficking.

Reacting to the sanctions, Mr. Nicolas Maduro, the President of Venezuela, demanded a public apology from the United States terming the charges against the vice president as defaming allegations. Tareck El Aissami has denied the allegations made against him.

El Aissami grew up from a poor economic background from Andean, one of the 10 administrative regions of Venezuela. He studied law and criminology, and became Vice President in January 2017. Previously, he was Minister of the Interior and Justice from 2008 to 2012 and Governor of Aragua from 2012 to 2017. El Aissami has been alleged by the opposition parties in Venezuela for money laundering, drug trafficking, relations with terrorist organisation, etc. His father, Zaidan El Amin El Aissami, was an immigrant from Jabal al-Druze in Syria. El Aissami's uncle El Aissami is related to Arab Socialist Ba'ath and El Aissami's mother is of Lebanese origin.

Demonitisation of 100-Bolivar Currency Notes in Venezuela

Venezuela (the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) is a federal republic located on the northern coast of South America. It is bordered by Colombia on the west, Brazil on the south, Guyana on the east, and the islands of Trinidad and Tobago to the north-east. Venezuela has around 3 crores population with Spanish as its official language.

Despite that Venezuela has the largest oil reserves in the world, the country has been suffering from serious economic problems. The reasons for such a peculiar situation are many which are associated with its rich oil resources. Venezuelan economy has been heavily dependent on the revenues from oil resources. It is estimated that the revenue from petroleum exports accounts for more than 50% of the country's GDP and around 95% of total exports. Thus, the country relied very heavily on oil exports for its growth and did not invest much in domestic production. Most of the basic consumer goods and services are imported. Further, with sufficient funds available, the Governments also spent heavily on social welfare schemes related to education, health, and anti-poverty. Thereby, whenever oil prices plunged, the economy of Venezuela got affected. It led to lower imports as people used their money to chase a fewer products. Thereby, to ease out the situation the government printed more money to ensure people had enough money in their pockets. But, the combination of the huge increase in the money supply and the sluggish rate of imports have fuelled inflation further pushing the country into economic doldrums. This type of a situation of booms and busts are being experienced by Venezuela since 1980 corresponding to the rise and drop of oil prices, and since 2014 Venezuela is continuously facing economic crisis. Due to world's highest inflation, 100-bolivar, the highest denomination of Venezuela has gone down equalling to the two U.S. cents (\$0.2) in 2016.

To come out of such bad conditions, on December

11, 2016, Nicolas Maduro the president of Venezuela has withdrawn 100-bolivar currency notes from circulation and introduced new higher-value notes. A 72 hours time was given to Venezuelans for exchanging the banned notes with six new denomination notes the largest of which was worth 20,000 bolivars and three new coins.

This measure was taken up as criminal gangs operating at the Venezuela-Colombia border buy Venezuelan notes and hold higher denomination notes to buy subsidised Venezuelan goods and sell for vast profits in Columbia. With high inflation in Venezuela paying in cash became difficult for Venezuelans. However, the time limit for exchanging the banned notes was extended till February 20, 2017 after criticism that the same was not sufficient to exchange the banned 100-bolivar that accounted for 48 percent of total Venezuelan cash.

A Brief Note on United States-Venezuela Relations :

Concerning to the United States-Venezuela relations, the observers opine that the relations were smooth when the latter had been under conservative governments but tensions started after Hugo Chávez was elected in 1999 as president from United Socialist Party of Venezuela, and the same kind of strained relations are continuing after Nicolás Maduro Moros became the president from the same socialist political party succeeding Hugo Chavez. Tensions between the countries increased after Venezuela accused the administration of George W. Bush the then president of the USA of supporting the Venezuelan failed coup attempt on April 11, 2002 against Chavez who was ousted from office for 47 hours, before being restored by a combination of military loyalists and support from the poor strata of Venezuelan population. In February 2014, the Venezuelan government ordered three American diplomats to leave the country on charges of promoting violence. It is also to be noted that during March 2015 the U.S. declared Venezuela a national security threat.

EUROPE

Brexit :

U.K. Opts for Exit from EU in a Referendum

In a referendum held on June 23, 2016, on whether to leave the European Union or not, 52% voted to leave and 48% voted to remain. 30 million voters participated which amounted to the 71.8% turn out of voters. This process is often called

as "Brexit".

(In 1973, Britain joined the the European Union, often called as the EU. It is an economic and political partnership involving 28 European countries)

The British Parliament confirmed the result of the referendum by passing, with clear majorities in both of its Houses ,the European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill. on March 13, 2017. The bill received Royal Assent of Her Majesty the Queen

and became an Act of Parliament on March 16, 2017.

On March 27, 2017, UK Prime Minister Theresa May submitted notice to the president of the European Council, Donald Tusk, that her country would be departing the European Union under Article 50 of the EU's Lisbon Treaty. This marks the formal beginning of EU and UK negotiations over what the British and EU relationship will look like after Britain leaves.

Why is UK leaving the European Union?

Majority of citizens and politicians of the UK maintain that they have no control on their country's borders leading to massive immigration from member countries causing unemployment in Britain. EU laws have precedence over UK laws. Moreover, a lot of public money is getting wasted on contribution to the Union.

What is the significance of Article 50 of EU's Lisbon Treaty?

Article 50 is a plan for any country that wishes to exit the EU. It was created as a part of the Treaty of Lisbon - an agreement signed by all 28 EU states which became a law in 2009.

Who is going to negotiate Britain's exit from the EU?

Prime Minister Theresa May has set up a government department, headed by veteran Conservative MP and Leave campaigner, Mr. David Davis, to take responsibility of Brexit. Former Defence Secretary, Liam Fox, who also campaigned for leaving the EU, was given the new job of International Trade Secretary, and Boris Johnson, a leader of the official Leave campaign, Foreign Secretary. These men have important roles in negotiations with the EU and in arriving at new international agreements on immigration, trade, and sovereignty.

When will the UK leave the EU?

Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty gives the two sides two years to agree to the terms of the split. Theresa May triggered this process on March 29, 2017 meaning the UK is scheduled to leave on March 29, 2019. It can be extended if all 28 EU members do not agree.

Why will Brexit take so long?

Once Article 50 is triggered, the UK has two years to negotiate its withdrawal. Article 50 was only created in late 2009 and it has never been used. The terms of Britain's exit will have to be agreed by 27 national parliaments. The post-Brexit trade deal is likely to be the most complex part of the

negotiation because it needs the unanimous approval of national and regional parliaments across Europe, some of whom may want to hold referendum. Hence, UK urged EU in its withdrawal petition that the process could be as soft as possible.

What is the 'Great Repeal Bill'?

The Government of UK has announced that it will repeal the 1972 European Communities Act in a move that will end the legislation that gives European Union law supremacy in Britain. In its place, a new "Great Repeal Bill" will be introduced in Parliament as early as next year and put power for the nation's laws back into the hands of British legislators. Prime Minister Theresa May says the Bill when passed will make the U.K "an independent sovereign nation".

What is the 1972 European Communities Act?

A year before joining what was then the European Economic Community in 1973, the UK Government paved the way with the 1972 Act. It is the crucial piece of legislation that makes European Union law automatically binding in the UK. If there is a clash with British law, EU law takes precedence. EU law still stands in the UK until it ceases to be a member. The UK will continue to abide by EU treaties and laws, but UK will not take part in any decision-making during this period.

Scottish Parliament Votes for Second Independence Referendum

On March 28, 2017, Scotland's Parliament in Holyrood, Edinburgh, voted by 69 votes in favour and 59 against for the proposal for second referendum on independence, thereby enabling Ms. Nicola Sturgeon, the First Minister of Scotland, to initiate steps for second referendum on independence of Scotland. However, for making a formal request for a referendum, approval of the British government and parliament in London is required.

It is to be noted that both Scotland and Northern Ireland voted to remain in the E.U., but they were outnumbered by voters in England and Wales who backed Brexit from the European Union in the referendum held on June 23, 2016. Thus, in this referendum Scotland supported Britain's continuance in the European Union. In wake of Brexit, the Parliament of Scotland preferred for second referendum on its independence of Britain. Earlier, in the national referendum on September 18, 2014 on independence of Scotland, the Scottish did not prefer independence from Britain.

Terrorist Attack Near the Palace of Westminster in London

On March 22, 2017 terrorist attack took place in the vicinity of the Palace of Westminster in London, the seat of the British Parliament. The attacker, 52-year-old British citizen Khalid Masood, deliberately drove a car into pedestrians along the south side of Westminster Bridge, a road-and-foot-traffic bridge over the River Thames and Bridge Street. After the car crashed into the perimeter fence of the Palace grounds, the terrorist abandoned it and ran into New Palace Yard, an open courtyard of Palace of Westminster, where he fatally stabbed an unarmed police officer. The attacker was then shot dead by armed forces. In the attack, five people, including a police officer and the terrorist, died and around 50 others were injured, some of them severely.

Parliament's House of Commons, which was in session at that time, was suspended and parliamentarians were asked to stay inside the building for several hours. Authorities believed that the attacker was operating alone and could have been inspired by Islamist-related terrorism. Subsequently, there was news that ISIS claimed the responsibility for the attack.

Bernard Cazeneuve Appointed as New Prime Minister of France

On December 6, 2016 Bernard Cazeneuve was appointed as the new Prime Minister of France by François Hollande, the President of France. Bernard Cazeneuve succeeded Manuel Valls who resigned for contesting in the French presidential elections in May 2017 as the candidate of French Socialist Party. Manuel Valls has been the Prime Minister of France since March 31, 2014 and Bernard Cazeneuve has been Interior Minister in the Government of Manuel Valls. Bernard Cazeneuve will be serving as prime minister till general election for National Assembly in June 2017 which will be held after the Presidential Elections.

In France a semi-presidential or dual-executive system exists wherein powers between a prime minister as head of government and a president as head of state are divided. The president is directly elected by the French people for every five years. As per the French Constitution, President is the head of state with powers over foreign policy and defence. For the National Assembly (Lower House of the Parliament of France) also elections are held for every five years and the President appoints the Prime Minister who has approval of

Parliament. Hence, the PM of France usually comes from the party that has majority in the National Assembly. The prime minister serves as head of government and is in charge of domestic policy and day-to-day governance. He also recommends the other members of his Cabinet for presidential approval.

General Elections in the Netherlands

The People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD as per Dutch acronym) a conservative-liberal party, headed by the present Prime Minister Mark Rutte has again stood in the lead winning 33 seats in the general elections held on March 15, 2017 in the Netherlands for all 150 seats in the lower house (House of Representatives). 28 political parties contested in the elections which are scheduled for every 4 years.

The Party for Freedom (PVV, Dutch acronym) is a Dutch nationalist and right-wing party headed by Geert Wilders with his anti-immigrants, anti-Islam and anti-European Union ideology secured 20 seats. The Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) and Democrats-66 (D-66) parties have won 19 seats each.

In the Netherlands usually coalition governments are formed because of its proportional representation system with 28 political parties and no one party will be in a position to get absolute majority on its own. This time also a coalition will be formed among nearly 15 parties, which takes months to arrive at, to reach the absolute majority of 76 members in the house.

There were predictions that Party for Freedom (PVV) of Geert Wilders could emerge as the largest party for its anti-Islam, anti-EU, anti-migrant and pro-native policy in the scenario wherein, it is felt that the feeling of nationalism is widespread in European countries after Brexit i.e., vote to leave from the European Union (EU) and the election of Donald Trump as the US President with 'America first' policy. The observers opined that the elections results in the Netherlands gave a sigh of relief to the proponents of a strong European Union (EU) after battering from Brexit referendum in 2016 for an important reason that Party for Freedom (PVV) did not gain in the elections as expected, and two main pro-EU parties i.e., D66 and GreenLeft have fared well. However, it is to be noted that People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) won 33 which is less by 8 and Party for Freedom (PVV) won 20 that is 5 seats more compared to the last election in the year 2012. Thereby, the analysts opined

that the anti-Islam, anti-EU, anti -migrant and pro-native policy of Geert Wilders (PVV) is still to stay.

The Netherlands is a constitutional monarchy and the king (or queen) is the official head of state. The Dutch Parliament is called "the States General". It is bicameral with the Senate (Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal) and the House of Representatives (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal).

The Senate has 75 members who are elected for every four years by the members of legislative assemblies (States-Provincial /Provinciale Staten in Dutch) of twelve provinces of the Netherlands.

The House of Representatives is elected by proportional representation in a single, nationwide constituency - which means that any party that wins 0.67% of the national vote is assured of a seat. The figure is calculated by dividing the overall number of votes cast by 150. Thus, it is to be noted that in the Netherlands, no single party ever manages this and the Netherlands has been governed by coalitions for more than a century.

Paolo Gentiloni Silveri Sworn in as New Prime Minister of Italy

On December 11, 2016, Paolo Gentiloni Silveri was sworn in as the new Prime Minister of Italy by Sergio Mattarella, the President of Italy. Paolo Gentiloni Silveri succeeded Matteo Renzi who resigned after the defeat of Italian constitutional referendum held on December 4, 2016 meant for constitutional reforms as Matteo Renzi owed that he would resign if the referendum was defeated. Both, Paolo Gentiloni and Matteo Renzi belong to

Democratic Party (PD as per Italian acronym) that has majority seats in the Chamber of Deputies (House of Representatives), and the former was serving as the foreign minister in the cabinet of Matteo Renzi, a loyalist. Matteo Renzi became the Prime Minister of Italy in February 2014 after his Democratic Party won majority seats in the General Elections 2013.

The referendum on constitutional law was meant to amend a major portion of the Italian Constitution by changing the composition and powers of the Parliament of Italy, as well as the division of powers between the State, the Regions, and administrative entities. As per the present system, which was created under Italy's 1948 constitution, there are two chambers of parliament with Chamber of Deputies comprising of directly elected members and the Senate comprising of variable number of members, of which 309 are elected from representatives of Regions (provinces), 6 from Italian citizens living abroad, some nominated, etc. Both chambers have equal powers and both must agree on legislation before it is passed.

Under the proposed reforms, the Senate would lose its power and the number of senators would also be reduced. The proponents of the reforms contend that making of any legislation is delayed in the present setup. On the other hand, the reforms were opposed as they affect the balance of power and make the Prime Minister powerful. Though the Bill on reforms was approved by a simple majority of the Italian Parliament, but did not get two thirds majority. Hence, a referendum was necessary, as per Article 138 of the Italian Constitution.

ASIA

First Freight Train from Yiwu (China) Reached London

The first freight train carrying different Chinese goods like clothes, shoes, suitcases, etc., all worth about of £4m kept in 68 containers travelled 12,000 kilometres through the 7 countries i.e., Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Poland, Germany, Belgium and France for 18 days and reached London, UK, on January 18, 2017. This freight train commenced its journey from the industrial city Yiwu on January 1, 2017.

The train named as East Wind with 34 wagons will run as a weekly service and the rail network has been developed by China Railway Corporation. With this China is hoping that its exports to

Europe will improve further and consequently boost its revenues in addition to strengthening connectivity with Europe. The advantages of freight transport are that rail freight is half the cost of air freight and takes half the time of sea freight. The disadvantage is that during the trip, the train's locomotives have to be changed due to different railway gauges in the countries it passes through.

It is to be noted China already operates train services to different cities in Spain, Poland, the Netherlands and Germany, and now London becomes the 15th European city to have train service from China. The Yiwu (China)-Madrid (Spain) route is currently the longest rail journey in the world, and Yiwu - London route is the second longest.

It is to be noted further that this kind of rail connectivity was taken up by China as a part of its initiative namely the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB), also known as 'Belt and Road' (B&R) or 'One Belt, One Road' (OBOR) that was proposed by the People's Republic of China focussing on connectivity, cooperation and improving trade among countries primarily in Europe, Africa and Asia. This initiative has strong backing of Xi Jinping, the President of China. It may be noted that once known as the Silk Road or Silk Route, the route along which trade first flourished between China and Europe during ancient times, bringing silks, spices, Chinese porcelain and even gunpowder from the east.

China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

CPEC is China's grand plan to connect its country with Pakistan by building road and rail networks along with constructing several infrastructure projects in Pakistan to strengthen its economy. CPEC projects include construction of transportation networks, energy projects and SEZs. A vast network of highways and railways will connect Central and western China with Pakistan's seaports in Gwadar and Karachi. A 1100 kilometre long road will be built between the cities of Karachi and Lahore as a part of CPEC. Pakistan's railway network will also be connected to China's Xinxiang railway station in Kashgar.

Since November 2016, CPEC has become operational by carrying Chinese cargo by road to Gwadar port. This road is meant to serve China's political, strategic, economic and energy needs. China has declared to invest 46 billion dollars in this gigantic project. The road will pass through the Xinxiang (Sinkiang) northwestern province of China, Pak -occupied Kashmir (POK), Baluchistan and finally end up at the Gwadar port of Pakistan.

The main objectives of CPEC are

1. to enable China transport its exports to Pakistan and the gulf countries,
2. to carry China's energy imports from Gulf countries to meet its oil requirements, (At present, china is shipping its oil from gulf countries and Africa through Indian and Pacific Oceans. It is a very long and costly route. CPEC will help transport China's oil imports through shortest route and cheapest cost)
3. to extend China's political and strategic influence in South Asia and the Gulf countries, and
4. to consolidate its relations with its close ally Pakistan. China is helping Pakistan to become

militarily and economically stronger to counter India's power in the region. Sino-Pak (China-Pakistan) alliance has anti-Indian objective to check India's political and strategic power and influence in Asia and the Indian Ocean regions.

China has invited India to join CPEC. But India has not yet joined because CPEC passes through POK which is claimed by India as a part of Kashmir state. If India joins CPEC, it will indirectly recognise Pakistan's sovereign control over POK.

Carrie Lam Becomes the First Female Chief Executive of Hong Kong

Carrie Lam was elected the first women Chief Executive of Hong Kong on March 26, 2017. In Hong Kong, the Chief Executive is elected among several contestants by an electoral college consisting of 1200 members, but not directly by the people. Carrie Lam won 777 votes compared to 365 won by her closest rival, John Tsang, former Finance Secretary. Woo Kwok-hing, a retired judge, got 21 and the rest of the votes were invalid.

The Chief Executive (CE) holds the title "The Honourable", and ranks first in the Hong Kong order of precedence, and he or she is the head and representative of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. The Chief executive has powers for conducting foreign relations, appointing judges and other public officers, giving consent to legislation passed by the Legislative Council which is a semi-democratically elected body comprises of 70 members, 35 of which are directly elected through geographical constituencies (GCs) under the proportional representation system, 30 are indirectly elected through trade-based functional constituencies (FCs) with limited electorates and five are from District Councils.

Hong Kong is a special administration region of China which rules Hong Kong under the "one country, two systems" under which Hong Kong has a separate political and economic system from that of China. Under the said system, Hong Kong enjoys a degree of autonomy and rights not seen in the mainland of China. 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration paved way for the transfer of sovereignty of Hong Kong in 1997 when it became a special administrative region (SAR) of the Peoples Republic of China with a high degree of autonomy.

Hong Kong with a total land area of 1,106 square kilometres has a population of over 7.3 million comprising of various nationalities and it ranks as the world's fourth most densely populated territory.

China has Tested a Missile that can Carry upto 10 Nuclear Warheads

China tested the latest variant of Dongfeng-5C (DF-5C), an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) from the Taiyuan Space Launch Centre in Shanxi province, as per the information released on February 2, 2017 by the Pentagon, the headquarters of the United States Department of Defence. This missile carried 10 nuclear warheads (dummy) to a range of 10,000-km by using multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles, (MIRVs) each capable of hitting one target in contrast to the unitary warhead which will have a single warhead on a single missile and hitting at single target. At present,

United States, United Kingdom, Russia, France, and China are known to possess MIRV missiles capability.

The Dongfeng (literally meaning : "East Wind") series, abbreviated as "DF missiles", are a family of short, medium, intermediate-range and intercontinental ballistic missiles operated by the Chinese People's Liberation Army Rocket Force. There are different variants of these with different ranges and other capabilities developed from around the year 1960. DF-5 is a variant of Dongfeng primarily designed for nuclear weapons delivery with around a length of 32.6 m and a diameter of 3.35 m, weight 183,000 kilograms and with ranges of 12,000 to 15,000 kilometres. The first flight test of DF-5 was conducted in 1971 and Dongfeng-5C (DF-5C) is the latest of these variants.

This test is important as it establishes the capability of the missile technology of China with nuclear warheads. However, China follows defensive nuclear strategy and "no first use" (NFU) policy.

South China Sea (SCS) Dispute

South China Sea (SCS) is in the Pacific Ocean to the South of China abutting Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Philippines.

In recent years, China is encroaching into the islands in SCS belonging to many countries like Vietnam, Philippines and Indonesia. China has been illegally expanding into the SCS, forcibly occupying islands and maritime areas of other coastal countries of SCS. It occupied Parcels Islands and Mischief Reef belonging to Vietnam and also a few islands of Philippines. In July 2016 international court of arbitration declared that China's claim for islands belonging to Philippines

was illegal and that China had no right on these islands. But, China does not want to abide by this award (judgement) and is continuing with its expansionism. It has also created some artificial islands in the SCS by dumping soil and has stationed its military planes and missiles on these islands.

Why China wants to extend its power throughout the Pacific and Asian regions (Asia-Pacific)?

China thinks SCS is geographically close to its mainland and historically this region was a part of the Chinese rule and influence. USA and its allies like Australia, Japan, Philippines and South Korea have been politically and militarily active in SCS and the Pacific Ocean. China thinks their presence is a threat to its security.

Why is India Concerned ?

1. India's trade routes pass through SCS.
2. India has close and regular trade and investment relations with many countries belonging to Pacific Ocean and East Asia like Japan, South Korea, Australia, Taiwan, Vietnam and Indonesia.
3. India also imports oil from Russia through this region.
4. If China stops movement of Indian ships and oil tankers (called freedom of navigation) passing through SCS, it will seriously affect Indian economy.
5. Chinese domination of the SCS will further increase its political and strategic power in Asia. China is already increasing its power and presence in Indian Ocean (IO) through its 'string of pearls' doctrine since 1990s. So, a powerful China in Pacific and IO will be a threat to India's geo-political and economic interests. It will come in the way of India becoming an Asian power. Powerful China will checkmate India's power and interests in the Asia-Pacific region.

What has been done by India to check China in SCS ?

To prevent the growing Chinese aggressive behaviour in SCS, India is

- maintaining good relations with Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, and ASEAN,
- aligned with the U.S.A to contain China in the Asia-Pacific region., (Modi -Obama agreement of 2016 declares that both countries together will jointly act to maintain freedom of navigation and stability in SCS. This agreement is directly aimed at checkmating (hedging) China's expansionist actions in the region), and joined

naval exercises with the US, Japan, Vietnam and other regional countries.

What should be done by India to check China in South China Sea ?

India should actively support and join the US and other regional powers like ASEAN, Australia and Japan to checkmate the growing political and military expansion of China in the Asia-Pacific region.

Rising Tensions in Korean Peninsula

On March 6, 2017 North Korea fired four ballistic missiles into the sea of Japan, three of which landed within 200 miles of Japan's coastline in Japan's exclusive economic zone.

On March 14, 2017 the US along with South Korea, and Japan responded to North Korea's missile tests by dispatching high tech missile defence Aegis warships to the sea where missiles were fired by North Korea.

On March 19, 2017 North Korea tested a powerful new rocket engine that can be used to put a geostationary satellite in orbit. A geostationary satellite must be propelled to an altitude of 36,000 km. It is to be noted that North Korea is also developing long-range inter-continental ballistic missiles that can reach the US east coast. The test gained importance as rocket engines can easily be modified for use in missiles.

On April 2, 2017 President Trump declared that US would go ahead to restrain North Korea if China fails to stop North Korea's nuclear programme.

By May 1, 2017 THAAD missile defence system was deployed by the USA in South Korea.

South Korea's President Park Geun-hye Impeached and Arrested

South Korea's first woman President Park Geun-hye (65) was arrested on March 31, 2017 on the order of the Seoul Court after a marathon hearing. Earlier, she was dismissed from office by the country's constitutional court on March 9, 2017, on charges of bribery, abuse of authority, coercion, and leaking of government secrets. Prior to that in December, 2016 she was impeached by the Parliament of South Korea.

Ms. Park is the third top leader to be arrested on corruption charges in South Korea where politics and big business have long been closely aligned. Millions of people took to the streets in protest against her corruption in 2016.

It is to be noted that Choi Soon-sil, Park's secret confidante at the heart of the scandal, is already on trial for forcing top local firms including tech giant Samsung to "donate" nearly \$70 million to non-profit foundations which she allegedly used for personal gain. Samsung Electronics vice-chairman Lee Jae-Yong was also arrested in connection with the same scandal.

Iran Successfully Test-fires Ballistic Missile

On January 29, 2017, Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), a branch Armed Forces of Iran, have successfully test-fired a domestically built Khorramshahr medium-range ballistic missile that flew 1,000 km, from Semnan, a test site located at about 140 miles east of Tehran.

The test was criticised as it violated the United Nations Security Council Resolution that was adopted on June 9, 2010, under which Iran was prohibited from investing in uranium mining and nuclear activities like uranium enrichment and reprocessing, acquiring nuclear technology and know-how as well as activities involving ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons.

However, after the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was signed on July 14, 2015, there have been a series of missile tests conducted by Iran. The JCPOA known commonly as the Iran nuclear deal, is an international agreement on the nuclear program of Iran reached in Vienna on July 14, 2015 between Iran and the P5+1 (the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council-China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States-plus Germany). According to the agreement, Iran agreed to eliminate its stockpile of medium-enriched uranium and accepted other restrictions on uranium-enrichments activities, and allowing the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to monitor Iranian nuclear facilities. Under the agreement, Iran can receive relief from U.S., European Union, and United Nations Security Council nuclear-related economic sanctions. In that scenario, it can be observed that Iran is taking the advantage of relief from economic sanctions as per JCPOA as the ballistic missile tests are not violation of UN Resolution because they were not designed to carry a nuclear warhead.

Further, on March 9, 2017 Iran successfully test-fired a Hormuz-2 naval ballistic missile destroying a floating target from about 250 km. The test has caused additional tensions between Iran and the U.S.A because President Donald Trump has been taking a much harder line against Iran.

South Asian Speakers' Summit on Achieving Sustainable Development Goals

The meeting of South Asian Speakers' Summit on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), held at Indore, Madhya Pradesh from February 18 to February 20, 2017, was inaugurated by Sumitra Mahajan, the Speaker by Lok Sabha, India. It was organised jointly by the Parliament of India and Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), which is a global inter-parliamentary institution established in 1889 for political multilateral discussions. The presiding officers of the parliaments from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka attended the summit apart from India. Pakistan and Myanmar were also invited for the summit but Pakistan did not attend due to differences with Indian Government and Myanmar expressed its inability to take part in view of the Budget Session.

In this summit, deliberations were held on opportunities and challenges that the parliaments in South Asia face in making their contribution to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to evolve appropriate strategies to achieve the SDGs. It is to be noted that in September 2015, the United Nations Member States adopted a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for a period of 15 years. The SDGs consist of 17 goals and 169 targets that include ending poverty and hunger, achieving food security promoting sustainable agriculture, achieving gender equality, etc.

In furtherance of United Nations goals and targets for Sustainable Development, which is aimed at an economic development without depletion of natural resources, the first meeting of Speakers of Parliament from South Asia was held in Dhaka in January 2016 where in it was decided to hold such meetings every year to assess the progress, accordingly the present meeting was held and the next meeting will be held in Sri Lanka. The Parliaments are involved in these efforts to proactively support their respective Governments to give an added impetus to the implementation of its policies and programmes in consonance with the SDGs. The South Asian region, being the most densely populated region of the world with less than four per cent of the world's land, having about 25 per cent of the world's population, thereby these summits provide an international platform to the parliamentarians of the South Asian Region to collectively discuss the developmental concerns specific to the Region.

Indo-Pak Discussion on Indus Waters Treaty

In a major shift in India's position on talks with Pakistan on the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), Indian experts began discussions with Pakistani experts on Indus Waters Dispute on March 25, 2017. This is a shift in India's stand as India suspended all talks with Pakistan after the attack on army camp at Uri in which 19 Indian soldiers were killed. The move came after two months of diplomatic negotiations, with World Bank officials playing the mediator's role in encouraging Pakistan to extend an invitation and India in accepting it.

Indus Waters Treaty:

The Indus Waters Treaty was signed on September 19, 1960 by the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Pakistan's President Ayub Khan.

It was brokered by the World Bank.

According to the treaty, Ravi, Beas and Sutlej are to be governed by India, while Indus, Chenab and Jhelum by Pakistan.

However, since Indus flows from India, the country is allowed to use 20 per cent of its water for irrigation, power generation and transport purposes.

A Permanent Indus Commission was set up as a bilateral commission to implement and manage the Treaty. The Commission facilitates solving disputes arising over water sharing.

The Treaty also provides arbitration mechanism to solve disputes amicably.

It may be noted that both India and Pakistan are still at loggerheads over various issues since Partition, but there has been no fight over water after the Treaty was ratified. Thus, for 56 years, both India and Pakistan are peacefully sharing the water of Indus and its tributaries, thanks to The Indus Water Treaty.

United Nations Delists Hekmatyar from Designated Terrorists

On February 3, 2017, the United Nations delisted Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (67 years), an Afghan warlord, from its list of designated terrorists as per the recommendation of al-Qaeda sanctions committee of Security Council, thereby travel ban and assets freeze were also lifted on him. This development came following the peace agreement Gulbuddin Hekmatyar had on September 22, 2016 with the Government of Afghanistan. As a result of peace agreement, Hekmatyar was allowed to enter into Afghanistan after almost 20 years in exile.

Gulbuddin Hekmatyar is head of Hezb-i-Islami political party in Afghanistan, which was earlier considered a terrorist organization, and was a former Prime Minister of Afghanistan for two terms in 1993-94 and 1996 - 97. He was a prominent anti-Soviet fighter in 1980s. Hekmatyar was included in the list of designated terrorists on February 20, 2003 after the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in the year 2001 and fall of the Taliban. The US State Department designated him a terrorist on the charges of taking part in and supporting the terrorist activities of al-Qaeda.

This decision of the UN delisting Hekmatyar on the ground that he entered agreement with Afghan Government was criticised as unfair because Hekmatyar was termed a "Butcher of Kabul" as he was allegedly responsible for the civilian deaths in Kabul during early 1990s.

March 25th to be Observed as Genocide Day in Bangladesh

On March 12, 2017, the Parliament of Bangladesh unanimously adopted a resolution declaring March 25th as Genocide Day, in remembrance of the atrocities carried out by the Pakistani Army on the night of March 25, 1971.

It was on the night of March 25, 1971, the Pakistan Army swooped on unarmed civilians in an operation termed as 'Operation Searchlight' to crush a rebellion following refusal by the military leadership at helm by then to accept results of general elections in 1970 in which the Awami League, the Bengali nationalist party, got thumping majority.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre Believed to be Jesus's Tomb Unveiled

On March 22, 2017 the newly restored Church of the Holy Sepulchre which is believed to be the Jesus's tomb was unveiled at a ceremony in Jerusalem. The shrine was restored by the specialists from the National Technical University of Athens, overseen by the World Monuments Fund (WMF) for over the past nine months. Religious leaders in traditional robes addressed the ceremony at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, built at the site where Christians believe Jesus was crucified and buried. Dignitaries including Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, Greek Orthodox Patriarch Theophilos III of Jerusalem and other church leaders have attended the ceremony.

The shrine, which is thought to encase Jesus' 2,000-year-old burial cave, stands at the heart of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre which itself is a 12th-century edifice built atop 4th century remains. The structure was restored through a very delicate work of reinforcement, conservation, sewage, etc. If such intervention had not happened there was a very great risk of collapse of the structure. In 2015, Israeli police briefly shut down the building after Israel's Antiquities Authority deemed it unsafe, and repairs began in June 2016.

The restoration work was funded (around \$3.72 million) by the three main Christian denominations i.e., Greek Orthodox, Franciscans and Armenians -- as well as from public and private contributions.

Bill English Sworn in as the New Prime Minister of New Zealand

Mr. Bill English was sworn in as the new Prime Minister of New Zealand on December 12, 2016 at a ceremony presided by the Governor General following the resignation of his predecessor Mr John Key due to personal reasons. John Key served as prime minister for eight years since 2008 and the present is the third term, and 10 years as the leader of the New Zealand National party. Further, Key is widely regarded as one of the most popular prime ministers in New Zealand's history. Bill English is also from the New Zealand National party and was previously Deputy Prime Minister from 2008 looking after Finance portfolio. The next general elections in New Zealand are scheduled to be held on September 23, 2017

New Zealand is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system of government with the head of State being the Queen (currently Queen Elizabeth II) represented in NZ by Governor-General. The New Zealand House of Representatives is a democratically elected body for every three years and whose members are known as Members of Parliament (MPs). It consists of 120 MPs, and out of them 70 MPs are elected directly in electorate seats and the remainder are filled up based on each party's share of the party vote, known as proportional representation.

Pravind Jugnauth Appointed as New Prime Minister of Mauritius

On Jan 23, 2017, Pravind Jugnauth (55) was appointed as the new Prime Minister of Mauritius by President Ameenah Gurib-Fakim after Prime Minister Anerood Jugnauth (86 years) had resigned. It is to be noted that Anerood Jugnauth resigned in favour of his son Pravind Jugnauth stating that

the country needed young leadership. It is also to be noted that Anerood Jugnauth has been indicating the present transition since September 2016.

Anerood Jugnauth was appointed as the Prime Minister in December 2014 after the Alliance Lepep (Alliance of the People) composed of three parties namely Mouvement Socialiste Militant (MSM) led by Pravind Jugnauth, Parti Mauricien Social Démocrate (PMSD) led by Xavier Luc Duva and the Muvman Liberater (ML) led by Ivan Collendavelloo, won three-quarter of the seats under the leadership of Anerood Jugnauth in the National Assembly with a strength of 62 elected members. Further, Pravind Jugnauth was serving as Finance Minister in his father Anerood Jugnauth's cabinet and he is the leader of the main political party Militant Socialist Movement (MSM) in the three party alliance and enjoyed the support of majority in the National Assembly.

The country's main opposition Labour Party protested against the appointment which it termed as a "Father-Son Deal", further criticised the transition of power as a great treason in history as the people never voted for this dynastic arrangement. However, the move was supported

on the ground that according to the Mauritius constitution, the President appoints a member of the National Assembly as Prime Minister who will have the support of the majority of members. Pravind Jugnauth's party is in the majority on its own in the National Assembly with 33 members.

With a population of around a million people, the Indian Ocean island nation of Mauritius is famous for its white sand beaches and luxury spas. Tourism, real estate, sugar and textile industries, offshore banking i.e., operations of foreign banks like HSBC in Mauritius are the major components of its economy.

Commonwealth Trade Meet

A two day, March 09th & 10th, 2017, inaugural Commonwealth Trade Meet was held in London. In the meet, a series of roundtable discussions were organised among representatives of over 30 countries before the Commonwealth Heads of Government summit, which is scheduled to be held in the UK in 2018. These meetings are aimed at strengthening trade within the Commonwealth Countries and thereby increasing the trade to \$1 trillion by 2020, from \$750 billion at present.