

Saudi Crown Prince visits US after 7 years

This was his first visit since the 2018 killing of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi by Saudi agents

Trump dismisses US Intelligence that Saudi Prince was likely aware of killing

Trump approved the sale of F-35 jets and tanks also designated Saudi Arabia as major non-NATO ally

WASHINGTON, Nov 18 (AP)

PRESIDENT Donald Trump welcomed Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to Washington on Tuesday as the de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia makes his first White House visit since the 2018 killing of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi by Saudi agents.

Trump warmly received Prince Mohammed when he arrived at the White House for a pomp-filled arrival ceremony that included a military flyover and a thundering greeting from the US Marine band.

The US-Saudi relationship had been sent into a tailspin by the

operation targeting Khashoggi, a fierce critic of the kingdom, that US Intelligence agencies later determined Prince Mohammed likely directed the agents to carry out.

But seven years later, the dark clouds over the relationship have been cleared away. And Trump has tightened his embrace of the 40-year-old Crown Prince he views as an indispensable player in shaping the Middle East in the decades to come.

Prince Mohammed, for his part, denies involvement in the killing of Khashoggi, a Saudi citizen and Virginia resident.

Khashoggi was an afterthought as the two leaders unveil billions



President Donald Trump meets Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in the Oval Office in Washington. (AP/PTI)

of dollars in deals and huddle with aides to discuss the tricky path ahead in a volatile Middle East.

The President dismissed questions to the Crown Prince about the journalist's killing.

"Whether you like him or didn't like him, things happen," Trump said of the international incident.

Trump, during an Oval Office meeting with the Prince by his side, even commended the Saudi leader for strides made by the kingdom on human rights without providing any specific detail.

"I'm very proud of the job he's done," Trump said. "What's he done is incredible in terms of human rights and everything

else." President Donald Trump on Tuesday dismissed US intelligence findings that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman likely had some culpability in the 2018 killing of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi as Trump warmly welcomed the de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia on his first White House visit in seven years.

But US intelligence officials determined that the Saudi crown prince likely approved the killing by Saudi agents of US-based journalist inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, according to US findings declassified in 2021 at the start of the Biden administration. Trump officials, during his first administration, refused to release the report.

Prince Mohammed said Saudi Arabia "did all the right steps" to investigate Khashoggi's death.

Both leaders also inked a US-Saudi Strategic Defence Agreement (SDA), with Trump approving the sale of F-35 jets and tanks. Trump designates Saudi Arabia as major non-NATO ally as US administration aims to elevate military relationship.

PM Modi to visit SA on Nov 21-23 to attend G20 Leaders' Summit

NEW DELHI, Nov 19 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi will be visiting Johannesburg from November 21 to 23 to attend the 20th G20 Leaders' Summit hosted by South Africa, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Wednesday. This will be the fourth consecutive G20 Summit held in the Global South.

At the Summit, Prime Minister Modi will put forth India's perspectives on the G20 agenda. He is expected to speak in all three sessions of the Summit, it said.

"On the margins of the G20 Leaders' Summit, the Prime Minister is expected to hold bilateral meetings with some of the leaders present in Johannesburg.

The Prime Minister will also be participating in the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Leaders' Meeting being hosted by South Africa," the MEA said.

The three sessions of the Summit include "Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth Leaving No One Behind: Building our economies, the role of trade, financing for development and the debt burden".

The other two sessions are -- "A Resilient World – the G20's Contribution: Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Change, Just Energy Transitions, Food Systems"; and "A Fair and a Just Future for All: Critical Minerals; Decent Work; Artificial Intelligence".

'Trade intelligence portal to open new insights for importers, exporters, startups'

■ "The platform will help exporters better utilise the free trade agreements implemented by India so far," Goyal said

NEW DELHI, Nov 19 (PTI)

THE Trade Intelligence and Analytics (TIA) portal will open up new insights for importers, exporters, startups, and MSMEs of the country, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has said. Launching the portal here on Tuesday, he said the platform will help exporters better utilise the free trade agreements implemented by India so far.

Developed by the Department

of Commerce, the TIA Portal is a one-stop trade intelligence and analytics platform that integrates multiple global and national databases along with macro-economic indicators into a unified analytical model offering over 200 analytics.

The platform provides real-time, interactive insights on India and global trade, commodities and sectoral analytics, market intelligence, including export opportunities, and competitor analysis.

It also includes automated trade reports and tracking of trade trends for manufacturing sectors related to PLI (production linked incentive) and critical minerals.

Vanlalram Sanga, Economic Advisor in the department, said that



the portal has been designed keeping the needs of the stakeholders in mind.

"It will evolve further based on their inputs," he said.

The platform would also serve as a centralised digital hub that consolidates diverse trade databases

- both global (UN Comtrade) and bilateral - into a single integrated system.

Multiple existing analytics requirements were designed and developed into automated analytical capabilities, which now offer depth and breadth in understanding India's bilateral trade dynamics as well as global trade flows between more than 220 nations.

Trade Watch Tower of the portal would provide country and commodity-level intelligence through specialised tools and visualisations that allow users to identify global as well as bilateral trends with enhanced analytical capabilities for identifying market diversification opportunities.

Pakistan govt approves supplementary budget of PKRs 50bn for armed forces

Islamabad: Pakistan govt has approved Pakistani rupees (PKRs) 50 billion supplementary budget for the armed forces to strengthen security at international borders, upgrade naval bases, and continue protecting the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The decision was made by the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet in a meeting held on Tuesday, The Express Tribune said, quoting the finance ministry.

The paper reported that of the total, PKRs 39 billion has been allocated to the military and just under PKRs 11 billion to the navy. "The ECC approved a summary from the defence division, granting a technical supplementary grant of PKRs 50 billion for various approved defence services projects," the ministry said.

These funds are allocated annually for projects outside

Pak to build island to boost oil exploration

Pakistan Petroleum Ltd., a state-owned energy company, is reclaiming land from the sea to create a launchpad to ramp up oil and gas exploration. The artificial island will come up 300kms off the coast of the southern Sindh province, PPL's general manager Arshad Palekar, said in Islamabad. Planned with a height of six feet, the platform will prevent high tides from interrupting the exploration work, Palekar said. Pakistan's drilling efforts are gaining momentum after US president indicated an interest in the country's "massive oil reserves". BLOOMBERG

the regular defence budget. Last fiscal year, the ECC had approved PKRs 45 billion for similar initiatives. The ECC app-

proved PKRs 19 billion for the special security division south, up 19% over a year ago. The special southern division is responsible for protecting the foreign commercial interests in southern regions.

Another PKRs 8 billion was given for the special security division North that was responsible for protecting these in the northern parts. The amount was equal to last year's allocation. An amount of PKRs 2 billion was approved for managing the fencing of the international borders with Afghanistan and Iran. The ECC approved PKRs 11 billion for the navy for upgradation of two bases. Pakistan air force will get PKRs 150 million for the internal security duty allowance. The ECC also approved PKRs 841.6 million to support border control operations, internal security, and maintenance of law and order, the paper said. ۞۞

Trump designates Saudi as major non-Nato ally

Brings It On Par With Israel In Terms Of Military And Economic Privileges

Chidanand Rajghatta | TNN

Washington: US President Donald Trump wheeled in Elon Musk. Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman summoned Cristiano Ronaldo. The celebrity optics at the White House dinner on Tuesday night was eclipsed though by the US president formally designating Saudi Arabia as a "Major non-Nato Ally" (MNNA) after the Saudi prince committed to nearly \$1 trillion in investment in America as the two leaders consecrated personal ties into greater strategic alignment.

Although 20 countries have the MNNA status, Saudi Arabia's designation marks a transformational US reset in the region, bringing Riyadh on par with Israel in terms of unlocking a suite of military and economic privileges. Speaking at a black-tie dinner, Trump described the move as a leap forward in military cooperation, facilitating the sale of cutting edge US arms like the F-35, and collaboration in areas ranging from civil nuclear technology to critical minerals to AI.

Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang and OpenAI president Greg



MBS with the Trumps at White House

Brockman were among those who attended the East Room dinner. Also on the tech- and finance-heavy 140-people invitee list: Apple CEO Tim Cook, IBM CEO Arvind Krishna, Coinbase CEO Brian Armstrong, Dell CEO Michael Dell, Citigroup CEO Jane Fraser, Pershing Square Capital Management's Bill Ackman, and Blackstone CEO Stephen Schwarzman.

Although a White House factsheet cast the MNNA designation and the agreements that accompanied it as an "America First" strategy that would fill US coffers and galvanise the economy, a raft of deals, including a sweeping Strategic Defence Agreement, also rehabilitated a country long viewed with suspicion in Washington for the role of its nationals in the 9/11 attack and its mediaeval outlook. The factsheet also noted that the defence agreement secures new burden-sharing funds from Saudi Arabia to offset America's

costs, while making it easier for US defence firms to operate inside the kingdom.

Wearing the traditional Arab dishdasha (robe) and ghutra/egal (headscarf with cord), and joking that betters who wagered he'd wear a black suit would lose money, Salman responded to Trump's touchy-feely outreach that broke the royal protocol that the prince is not to be touched, pledging a trillion dollar investment that Trump lapped up.

While sceptics questioned the numbers given that Saudi Arabia's GDP itself is just \$1.1 trillion, MAGA partisans pointed to the riches of the Saudi's Public Investment Fund (PIF), one of the largest sovereign wealth funds in the world with more than \$1 trillion in assets under management. Still the \$1 trillion commitment is expected to crimp other Saudi pledges, including in India, where the Saudi PIF recently bumped up its commitment from \$10 billion to \$100 billion. Lolly aside, the US-Saudi clinch is bound to cause geopolitical reverberations beyond the Middle East, going up to India and China which have both invested in ties with the Gulf monarchies. For New Delhi, the big question will be how the infusion of cutting edge US arms and technology into Saudi Arabia will fit into Riyadh's mutual defence treaty with Islamabad, which enjoins both sides (Saudi and Pak) to defend each other if the other is attacked.

Nitish to take oath as CM for 10th time today

PM Will Attend;
20 Ministers May
Be Inducted

Kumar Rakesh &
Jai Narain Pandey | TNN

Patna/New Delhi: Nitish Kumar is set to take oath for an unprecedented 10th time as Bihar CM on Thursday after leading his party, JDU, and the governing bloc, NDA, to their second-best performance in the state, proving his resilience and popularity in an election where he was perceived as a vulnerable link in the alliance.

Nitish and his ministerial colleagues will be sworn in at

► **EDIT PG: What SIR does not get about votes, P 16**

the historic Gandhi Maidan — the sprawling venue of his inauguration in 2005, and later in 2010 and 2015, before he chose the sober precincts of the Raj Bhawan as he swung between alliances and his stock fell. PM Narendra Modi, Union ministers Amit Shah and Rajnath



CM-designate Nitish Kumar with (L to R) Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan, JDU's Rajiv Ranjan 'Lalan' Singh, BJP's Vijay Kumar Sinha and Samrat Choudhary, after being elected leader of NDA in Bihar

AIMIM won 3/5 highest women turnout seats

AIMIM walked away with three of the five seats with the highest turnout of women voters — Kochadhaman, Baisi and Amour — while JDU (Thakurganj) and BJP (Pranpur) bagged one each, reports **Bharti Jain**. NDA partners won four of the five seats that accounted for both the maximum as well as minimum deletions of ineligible electors under the special intensive revision of voter rolls in the state. Congress bagged Kishanganj, which had recorded the fifth highest voter deletions. **P 8**

Singh and several CMs, and allies such as N Chandrababu Naidu and Eknath Shinde will attend the ceremony.

Sources said around 20 le-

gislaturs may be sworn as ministers against a maximum strength of 36.

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