

Trump attacks Iran, China at UN General Assembly

SHOUTOUT TO INDIA Praises New Delhi's successful development efforts

Yashwant Raj

yashwant.raj@hindustantimes.com

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump gave an uncharacteristic shout out to India's development efforts in his second speech at the UN General Assembly on Tuesday even as he scaled down US expectations of cuts in Iranian oil imports under upcoming sanctions from "zero" to "substantial".

The 35-minute speech did not get off to a good start – members of the General Assembly were heard laughing loudly at his boast that his government had in less than two years achieved "more than almost any administration" in American history. "Didn't expect that reaction, but that's okay," he said.

In a speech that was described by observers as "better structured and organised" than the one last year, Trump reported progress so far on North Korea, explained and defended his decision to exit the Iran nuclear deal, launch a trade offensive against China, his tough immigration policy, relocating the US embassy to Jerusalem and opposing world bodies such as the International Criminal Court. The underlying theme remained "America First", as in 2017.

After a whistle-stop tour of all the dark and gloomy corners and problems of the world, Trump struck a cheerful note about the "dreams that fill this hall today".

"There is India, a free society (of) over a billion people, success-



■ President Donald Trump talks to US envoy to UN Nikki Haley at the UN General Assembly.

AP

fully lifting countless millions out of poverty and into the middle class," he said. Then Saudi Arabia, for its "bold new reforms, Israel, a "thriving democracy", and Poland, for standing up for its "independence, their security, and their sovereignty".

Trump's plans for Iran, as laid out in detail in the speech, should calm nerves in New Delhi following the US administration's mixed messages on expectations from importers of Iranian crude.

"Additional sanctions will resume November 5, and more will follow," Trump said.

"And we're working with countries that import Iranian crude oil to cut their purchases substantially." He did not say it should go down to "zero", as has

been the stand taken by his officials.

On Monday, Trump had told external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj he "loves India". They spoke briefly after a conference on drug trafficking that India had joined the US and two dozen other countries to co-host.

Iran and its leadership remained the focus of Trump's insults as he accused them of sowing "chaos, death and destruction" and plundering the nation to "enrich themselves and to spread mayhem across the Middle East and far beyond".

Trump also continued his tirade against China. Without naming it at first, he said some members admitted to the WTO "violate every single principle on

which the organisation is based...(they) use government-run industrial planning and state-owned enterprises to rig the system in their favour (and) engage in relentless product dumping, forced technology transfer and the theft of intellectual property".

Expressing "respect and affection for my friend" President Xi Jinping, Trump said: "I have made clear our trade imbalance is just not acceptable. China's market distortions and the way they deal cannot be tolerated."

Others in Trump's crosshairs included Venezuela and Syria, "old dogmas" and experts dealing with West Asia, and Germany, a close US ally, for its growing energy dependence on Russia.