WASHINGTON: The number of migrants illegally entering the United States from Mexico jumped more than 16 percent in October, US officials said yesterday. The US Department of Homeland Security said it detained 46,195 people in October, up from 39,501 in September and 37,048 in August. “There are currently about 41,000 individuals in our immigration detention facilities—typically, the number in immigration detention fluctuates between 31,000 and 34,000,” DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson said in a statement.

“I have authorized US Immigration and Customs Enforcement to acquire additional detention space for single adults so that those apprehended at the border can be returned to their home countries as soon as possible,” he said. Immigration officials have “engaged with a number of countries to repatriate their citizens more quickly, and they have agreed to do so,” Johnson said, noting that many of the new arrivals have been asylum seekers and young children. “Our borders cannot be open to illegal migration. We must, therefore, enforce the immigration laws consistent with our priorities,” he added. “We prioritize the deportation of undocumented immigrants who are convicted of serious crimes and those apprehended at the border attempting to enter the country illegally.”

The latest immigration figures come two days after the November 8 presidential election that closed a campaign in which immigration has loomed large. The immigration issue has been central in the candidacy of Republican President-elect Donald Trump, who has vowed to build a wall along the southwestern border and make Mexico pay for it. Trump met for an hour Thursday with the head of the US Senate Mitch McConnell, and again stressed his plans to highlight immigration during his presidency which starts in January. “We’re going to look very strongly at immigration,” the billionaire businessman said.—AFP

Spike in illegal border crossings from Mexico

WASHINGTON: Number of migrants jumped more than 16%.

How Trump bypassed hostile media to deliver his message

WASHINGTON: With the mainstream media almost uniformly hostile toward him, Donald Trump rallied supporters during the presidential campaign by delivering his message on Twitter and a loose network of alternative news sites. The President-elect’s ability to circumvent the main news channels to reach and energize his audience became a key factor in his victory, analysts say.

“Trump had a way of taking to Twitter and could literally change the narrative because he had such a large following,” said Alan Rosenblatt, a digital consultant and strategist at Lake Research Partners and Turmp’s media consultant. The real estate billionaire kept momentum even as major news organizations unethically embarrassing episodes about his past, including, Rosenblatt said. “The health of democracy depends on us following up their investigations, going so far as to call him a "liar," Trump was able to sustain a counter-narrative on social media used by conservatives, or "alt-right," news sites friendly to the Republican candidate. A network of social media supporters amplified the Trump message, not only reinforcing his vision but also actively seeking to counter and quash messages from anti-Trump forces. "It’s organized digital bullying,” Rosenblatt said. "They would focus on progressive Democratic tweeters and barrage them and abuse them to try to incite an inappropriate response.”

'Alternate reality'

The onslaught of pro-Trump messages on those platforms allowed him to survive the negative coverage, said Gabriel Kahn of the University of Southern California’s Annenberg School and a former newspaper correspondent. “It became possible for him to construct an alternate narrative. I would say an alternate reality,” he said. “In this way, you always had this push and pull that transit through our media ecosystem and became a tidal wave.”

Trump’s message echoed through the alt-right media which supported his agenda, including Breitbart News, whose chairman, Stephen Bannon served as chairman of the candidate’s campaign organization. As a result, fact-checking by traditional media—which revealed Trump’s massive penchant for exaggeration and falsehoods—had less impact than had been expected. As online media outlets on both the left and right grow increasingly ideologically driven, the social discourse democracies require becomes limited, Rosenblatt said. “There’s a growing sentiment among conserva-tives that ‘the mainstream press is left-of-center and that the conserva-tives should have their own platforms,” Rosenblatt said.

Faking on Facebook

Many Trump supporters and conservatives turned to Twitter, Facebook and other social media which they deemed their messages and counter the news in traditional outlets. But much of the news on Facebook was fake, media watchers pointed out, compromising the platform as well as confidence in the media. One local official shared news on Facebook with headlines such as “Hillary Clinton Calling for Civil War If Trump Is Elected” and “Pope Francis Shocking Ww, Endorses Donald Trump for President,” said Joshua Bentz, director of Harvard University’s Nieman Journalism Lab.—AFP

US 2016 poll results put new focus on Electoral College

WASHINGTON: The fact that Hillary Clinton most likely won the US popular vote but won’t be president has some people wondering: “Why, why do we do it this way?” Thank - or blame - the Founding Fathers for creating the possibility of a so-called “divergent election” when they set up the Electoral College. A look at how and why the US selects its presidents this way:

Origins

The Electoral College was devised at the Constitutional Convention in 1787. It was a compromise meant to strike a balance between those who wanted popular elections for president and those who wanted no public input. Alexander Hamilton wrote, “If the manner of it be not perfect, it is at least excellent.” At the time, the country had just 13 states, and the founders were worried about one state exercising outsized influence, according to a white paper from the US Election Assistance Commission. Small states were worried that states with large populations would have extra sway. Southern states with slaves who couldn’t vote worried that Northern states would have a louder voice. There were concerns that people in one state wouldn’t know much about candidates from other states. The logistics of a national election were daunting. The thinking was that if candidates had to win multiple states rather than just the popular vote, they would have to attract broader support.

How it works

The electoral system has been tweaked over the years, but the gist endures. The president is selected by a ‘col- lege’ of 538 electors from the states. Each state gets as many electoral votes as it has members of Congress, and the District of Columbia gets three. To be elected presi- dent, the winner must get at least half the total plus one - or 270 electoral votes. Most states give all their electoral votes to whichever candidate wins the state’s popular vote. So while Clinton is leading Trump in votes nation-wide with 48.7 percent to 47.5 percent, Trump’s total in the Electoral College stands at 290, with races in Michigan and New Hampshire yet to be called. In 2000, Democrat Al Gore narrowly won the popular vote but lost to Republican George W. Bush in the Electoral College 271-266. Overall, there have been four such cases of divergent elections.—AP