

Impeachment proceedings unveiled

House to open up enquiry into President Trump with public hearings; White House calls it a ‘scam’

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

House Democrats unveiled plans on Tuesday to open up the impeachment inquiry into President Donald Trump with public hearings, after criticism from Republicans that the process has been overly secretive.

The White House responded that it still considers the proceedings a “scam,” signalling no let-up in Mr. Trump’s strategy of trying to prevent the investigation from going ahead.

Democrats deny that they have been secretive, arguing that five weeks of closed hearings – in which Republican lawmakers participated – were necessary for evidence-gathering, ahead of the public portion of the inquiry into the accusation that Mr. Trump pressured Ukraine to investigate a political rival.

On Tuesday, Democrats

proposed legislation for the next stages of the process, giving Republicans the right to call their own witnesses and subpoena records.

The House Intelligence Committee will then govern the process of firming up evidence from testimony and documents, with both sides equally able to question witnesses in a public setting.

The third stage will see the evidence against Mr. Trump forwarded to the Judiciary Committee to draw up articles of impeachment, which would be voted on by the entire House.

Direct role

The rules give Mr. Trump and his lawyers their first opportunity to take a direct role and argue their case before the Judiciary Committee, calling for more testimony or evidence and cross-examining witnesses, the House Rules Committee



More testimonies: Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Vindman testified in the impeachment inquiry on Tuesday. • AP

said. However, it added, if the White House rejects subpoenas for testimony and documents from the probe – as it has done so far – it could be denied some of the promised role in the hearings. That clash does look set to continue.

The “Democrats’ impeachment has been an illeg-

itimate sham from the start as it lacked any proper authorisation by a House vote,” Mr. Trump’s spokeswoman Stephanie Grisham said in a statement after the Democrats’ plans were announced.

The revamped procedures do “nothing to change the fundamental fact that

House Democrats refuse to provide basic due process rights,” she said.

The new rules are slated to be voted on by the Democratic-majority House on Thursday.

“The House impeachment inquiry has collected extensive evidence and testimony, and soon the American people will hear from witnesses in an open setting,” senior House Democrats said in a statement.

The impeachment plan was released as a senior White House official presented damning testimony against Mr. Trump in Congress on Tuesday.

National Security Council’s Ukraine expert Lt. Colonel Alexander Vindman said in prepared testimony that he had personally witnessed a senior U.S. diplomat pressure Ukraine to open investigations designed to help Mr. Trump politically.

Chile pulls out from hosting climate and trade summits

Rocked by protests, govt. says its focus is on restoring order

ERNESTO LONDOÑO
SOMINI SENGUPTA

President Sebastián Piñera of Chile said on Wednesday that his country, which has been rocked by a wave of recent protests, was not in a position to host a key UN climate change meeting and major Asia-Pacific trade summit later this year.

The announcements underscored how destabilising the recent wave of protests and acts of vandalism have been for the country, which has long been regarded as an exemplar of stability in a tumultuous region.

In a speech at the presidential palace on Wednesday, Mr. Piñera cited the “difficult circumstances that our country has experienced” to explain why Chile would not be able to host the events.

“Our first priority as a go-



Domestic crisis: A riot police vehicle releasing tear gas during a protest against Chile’s government in Valparaíso. • REUTERS

vernment is to focus first and foremost on fully restoring public order and social peace,” he added.

Cancelling the climate meeting, which had been scheduled for December, leaves organisers with a very tight window to find a new venue. Chile stepped up to host the Climate Change Conference after the initial host, Brazil, pulled out last

year. Brazil’s decision came soon after the election of President Jair Bolsonaro.

Patricia Espinosa, head of the UN climate change agency in Bonn, said her office had heard from Chilean presidency about the cancellation.

“We are currently exploring alternative hosting options,” she said in a statement. NY TIMES

Epstein was murdered, says pathologist

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
NEW YORK

A forensic pathologist hired by Jeffrey Epstein’s brother said on Wednesday that evidence suggested the disgraced financier had not died by suicide in his jail cell but had been murdered.

Michael Baden contradicted the official verdict of suicide by hanging given by officials in August, saying Epstein’s injuries were “more indicative of homicidal strangulation.”

“I think that the evidence points toward homicide rather than suicide,” Mr. Baden told Fox News.

Will Hariri’s resignation end Lebanon’s crisis?

What began as a protest against a monthly tax on WhatsApp users has snowballed into a mass movement for systemic change

STANLEY JOHNY

Lebanon’s Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri announced his resignation on Tuesday following two weeks of street protests that brought the capital Beirut to a standstill and led to violence between rival political factions. Mr. Hariri said he had hit “a dead end” and hence quit.

Why protests?

The trigger was a government proposal to impose a \$6 monthly tax on WhatsApp users to raise funds. The government immediately withdrew the proposal after the October 17 protests, but the protesters never left the

streets. They demanded an end to “corruption” and the resignation of the country’s powerful elite with more and more people joining them. The Lebanese pound has slipped steadily in recent weeks against the dollar amid a currency crunch. The pound has been officially pegged at 1,500 to a dollar, but in the black market, its value fell up to 1,750.

Many Lebanese were also angry with the government’s handling of the recent wildfires that burned thousands of acres. The country is also facing electricity and water shortages. So there was mounting public resentment



Saad al-Hariri

against Lebanon’s ruling elite. The WhatsApp tax unleashed this anger, leading to mass protests.

What do they want?

What began as a protest against a tax has snowballed

into a movement for systemic change. The protesters see Mr. Hariri’s resignation as a victory, but they want more leaders to follow suit. Lebanon has a confessional system, which was introduced after the 1975-1990 civil war, in which a Christian will be President, a Sunni will be Prime Minister and a Shia Parliament Speaker. Roughly 54% of Lebanon population are Muslims (Shias and Sunnis make up 27% each), 40.5% Christians and 5% Druze.

The complex religious dynamics turned Lebanon into a geopolitical theatre for foreign players. France retains

some influence through the Maronite Christians, while Saudi Arabia has leverage over Sunni political parties and Iran backs the Shia parties, Hezbollah and Amal. The protesters believe the leaders are more concerned about their patrons abroad than addressing more pressing civic and administrative issues at home.

EXPLAINER

They want both President Michel Aoun and Speaker Nabih Berry to resign along with the Prime Minister and the confessional system to be overhauled for a new secu-

lar, democratic political order.

What next?

President Aoun could reject the resignation of Mr. Hariri and ask him to form a new Cabinet. Or he could ask him to continue as a caretaker Prime Minister until fresh elections are held. Even forming a new Cabinet would not be easy in Lebanon’s sectarian system. It took nine months for Mr. Hariri to form his coalition government that was sworn in in January. And it’s not clear whether a new government or even fresh elections would placate the protesters,

as under the current system, the establishment parties would secure more or less the same number of seats.

The protesters’ calls for systemic reforms will be met with strong resistance from the main parties, which have built sectarian political constituencies over the past two decades and would not like their influence to be swept away. Hezbollah, the powerful Shia party-cum-militia, has already said the protests were instigated by foreigners. So it’s a dead end, not just for Prime Minister Hariri but also for the country’s established elite as well as the street revolutionaries.

U.S. House recognises ‘Armenian genocide’

Ankara slams the move, says Turks too died during the war

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

Armenia rejoiced but Turkey was furious on Wednesday after the U.S. House of Representatives passed a historic resolution recognising mass killings of Armenians a century ago as genocide.

With tensions already high over Turkey’s assault on Kurdish-controlled areas of northern Syria, U.S. lawmakers voted 405 to 11 on Tuesday in support of the measure to “commemorate the Armenian Genocide through official recognition and remembrance.”

The resolution says the



Recep Tayyip Erdogan

killing of 1.5 million Armenians by the Ottoman Empire between 1915 and 1923 amounted to genocide, a claim recognised by some 30 countries.

Turkey strongly denies the accusation of genocide

and says that both Armenians and Turks died as a result of the First World War. It puts the death toll in the hundreds of thousands.

Ankara was swift to condemn the measure, summoning the U.S. Ambassador and calling the vote a “meaningless political step”.

“This step which was taken is worthless and we do not recognise it,” Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said in a televised speech. “A country whose history is full of the stain of genocide and slavery neither has the right to say anything nor to lecture Turkey,” he said.

Over 22,000 Indians seek asylum in U.S.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON

Over 22,000 Indians, including nearly 7,000 women, have applied for asylum in the U.S. since 2014, according to the latest official figures.

The reason behind Indians seeking asylum in the U.S. can be “unemployment or intolerance or both in India”, Satnam Singh Chahal, executive director of North American Punjabi Association (NAPA), said in a statement.

As many as 22,371 Indians have sought asylum in America since 2014, according to the information obtained by the NAPA through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

WhatsApp sues Israeli firm for ‘hacking’ 1,400 users

NSO program targeted activists, journalists and their families

NICOLE PERLROTH
SAN FRANCISCO

WhatsApp sued Israeli cyber-surveillance firm NSO Group in federal court on Tuesday, claiming the company’s spy technology was used on the popular messaging service in a wide-ranging campaign targeting journalists and human-rights activists.

WhatsApp, which is owned by Facebook, claimed in the lawsuit that an NSO Group program that was intended to piggyback on WhatsApp was used to spy on more than 1,400 people in 20 countries.

The lawsuit did not say



who was using the technology to target WhatsApp users. But the area codes for a number of phones that had been attacked indicated a focus on people in Mexico, Bahrain and the UAE.

The filing of the lawsuit, believed to be the first by a

tech company against a for-profit digital surveillance company, could be the “beginning of the end” of the rapid and largely unregulated adoption of these surveillance technologies, said John Scott-Railton, a senior researcher at Citizen Lab.

WhatsApp worked closely with Citizen Lab, a research group, in its investigation of the attacks, which took place from April to May.

The messaging service said the victims included 100 journalists, prominent female leaders, political dissidents and human rights activists – as well as their families. NY TIMES

ELSEWHERE



17 killed in police shootout in Brazil

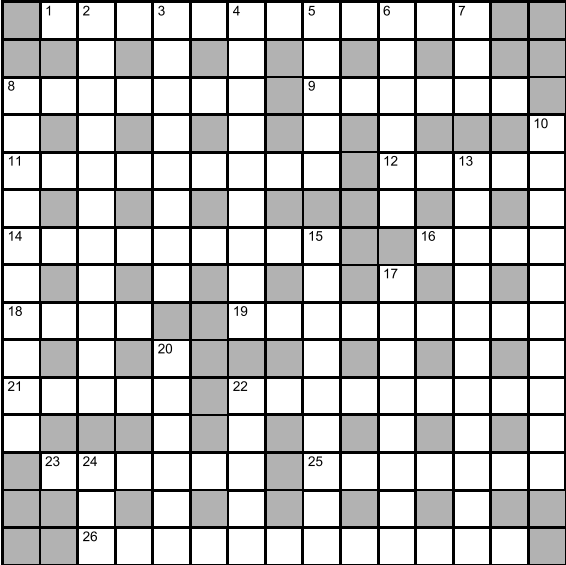
RIO DE JANEIRO
A shoot-out in the northern Brazilian city of Manaus between police and suspected drug traffickers left 17 people dead, local authorities said on Wednesday. AFP

Pak. court bars regulator from penalising anchors

LAHORE
The Lahore High Court on Wednesday stopped Pakistan’s electronic media regulator from taking any adverse action against TV anchors who challenged a directive, which barred them from giving their opinions during talk shows.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12768

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ACROSS

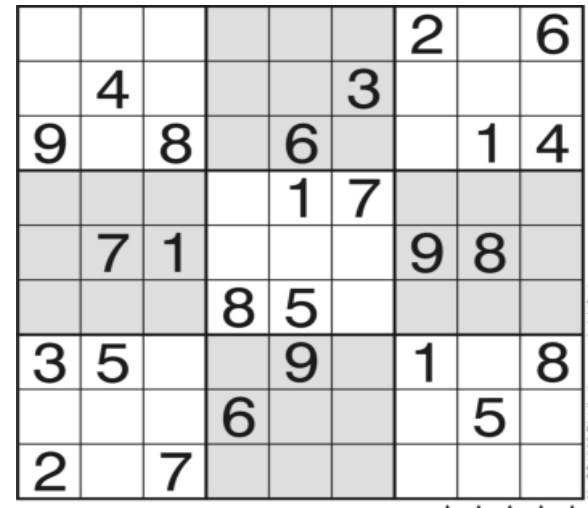
- 1 Clipping from ‘The Art of Flying’ caught live outside Brazil (12)
- 8 Daughter takes phosphorus out of an open vessel with an excavating machine (7)
- 9 I’m missing the irregular diamonds in the optional components (3-3)
- 11 Ivory use management by a

- male showing morbid interest in sordid sights (9)
- 12 Letters from Mount Pinatubo attached to an underwater vessel (1-4)
- 14 Uncle Lou’s synthesized a body of protein (9)
- 16 Uneven walk resulting from being out of energy (4)
- 18 Dances to jazz after I bid goodbye to some clergymen suffering loss of quiet (4)
- 19 Coach going west with a soldier on a ship to get an underwater vessel (9)
- 21 Vassal, leaping in excitement, goads enthusiastic leaders (5)
- 22 Receding ones may lead to less work for barbers (9)
- 23 Greek character returns after an initially confusing day with a model of the inner sanctum (6)
- 25 Hanoi in ruins after the lawyer’s entry with an American resident (7)
- 26 Gods on the silver screen? (7,5)
- DOWN
- 2 Beat shy chap at sea in an underwater vessel (11)
- 3 Family welcomed by the communist is given new quarters (8)
- 4 Short poems about self-service

(set by Neyartha)

- at fault after the furniture’s edges get scraped (9)
- 5 Retreating Mala goes around the castle and gets a shock (5)
- 6 Uranium evacuated after a country nearly got to the rare metal (6)
- 7 Hebrew alphabet noticed in an afternoon church service, reportedly (3)
- 8 Striking isn’t right with the charming young woman caught below in an underwater vessel (6,4)
- 10 Railway pioneer’s relative by marriage has managed to conceal a bird (10)
- 13 An unscientific survey? (7,4)
- 15 Pay part of the cost for Peter out to cross the island (9)
- 17 Fare-reducing British pass upsets the storyteller in front of the funny person (8)
- 20 Group of six softly getting rid of the cross in a musical composition (6)
- 22 Sindhu managed to hide a biped (5)
- 24 Blind and dumb? (3)

SUDOKU



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|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Solution to puzzle 12767 | | | | | | | | |
| C | A | S | T | A | S | P | E | L |
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| D | I | E | S | O | I | E | | |
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|--------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Solution to yesterday’s Sudoku | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | 2 | 7 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 1 | 6 | 9 |
| 6 | 1 | 5 | 7 | 9 | 4 | 2 | 8 | 3 |
| 8 | 3 | 9 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 5 |
| 3 | 8 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 9 | 7 | 6 |
| 1 | 9 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 8 |
| 5 | 7 | 6 | 9 | 8 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| 9 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 8 | 3 | 7 |
| 2 | 5 | 8 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 6 | 9 | 1 |
| 7 | 6 | 3 | 8 | 1 | 9 | 4 | 5 | 2 |

FAITH

Game-changing event

Rama’s avatara mission seems to be lost in the peaceful and calm life in Panchavati. As Sita had pointed out to Rama earlier, it would not be fair on Rama’s part to harm anyone who had not wronged Him. So, the Soorpanaka episode paves the way for Ravana to commit a grave sin against Rama, thereby providing a valid reason for a confrontation, said Dharma Sri Ramakrishnan and Srimate Perundevi in a discourse. Valmiki chooses the term ‘yadruchaya,’ which means accidentally, when introducing the two very important events that bring about a dramatic change in the story, namely, the entrance of Manthara in the Ayodhya Kanda and of Soorpanaka in the Aranya Kanda for ironical effect.

When Soorpanaka enters, she first tries to woo Rama and then Lakshmana. The brothers have a little fun but when they see that Soorpanaka attacks Sita, Lakshmana is asked to deal with her suitably. The humiliated and disfigured Soorpanaka seeks Khara and when he is defeated, she seeks out Ravana. She exploits Ravana’s weakness and instigates him to abduct Sita as a measure of revenge. She first presents a well crafted version of the happenings in Janasthana. Rama’s historic fight that devastates the entire gallant 14,000 strong rakshasa force of Khara is described with the analogy of ripe crops being destroyed by a terrible storm. Such is the power and might of Rama’s arrows.

Ravana is now keen to know more about the brothers. Then she begins to describe Sita’s beauty in such a way that rouses his envy and instigates a desire to possess her. In fact, she says, she met with such humiliation when she tried to carry Sita and bring her to him. If now Ravana takes Sita from Rama, he would not only avenge the death of Khara, but also give a fitting reply for the insult meted out to her.