

# ‘U.S. House will draft Trump impeachment articles’

Pelosi’s announcement comes a day after 3 legal scholars said President’s action met the definition of impeachable offences

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WASHINGTON

Speaker Nancy Pelosi announced on Thursday that the House of Representatives would begin drafting impeachment articles against President Donald Trump, pushing ahead with a rapid timetable that could set the stage for a vote before Christmas to charge him with high crimes and misdemeanours.

Wrapping her announcement in the words of the Constitution and the nation’s founders, Ms. Pelosi said it had become clear over the course of two months of investigation that Mr. Trump had violated his oath of office by pressing a foreign power for help in the 2020 election. Allowing Mr. Trump to continue in office without remedy, she said, would come at “the peril of our republic.”



**More trouble:** President Trump turns to Speaker Nancy Pelosi during the State of the Union address in Washington. • AP

“His wrongdoing strikes at the very heart of our Constitution,” Ms. Pelosi said in a formal address lasting less than six minutes, delivered against a backdrop of American flags from the balcony outside her office in the Capitol. “Our democracy is what is at stake. The President

leaves us no choice but to act because he is trying to corrupt, once again, the election for his own benefit.”

Ms. Pelosi’s hastily arranged announcement came a day after the House Judiciary Committee began formal impeachment proceedings against Mr. Trump, conven-

ing a hearing where three constitutional scholars invited by Democrats said Mr. Trump had engaged in conduct that clearly met the definition of impeachable offenses under the Constitution.

The decision follows a two-month-long inquiry by Democrats on the House Intelligence Committee that concluded that Mr. Trump abused his power by pressuring President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine to announce investigations into former Vice President Joe Biden and other Democrats, while withholding a White House meeting and \$391 million in vital military assistance.

“The facts are uncontested,” Ms. Pelosi said. “The President abused his power for his own personal political benefit, at the expense of our

national security.”

She added: “Sadly, but with confidence and humility, with allegiance to our founders and a heart full of love for America, today I am asking our chairmen to proceed with articles of impeachment.”

### Sending a signal

Returning to the ceremonial speaker’s hallway where she first announced in late September that Democrats were launching the inquiry, Ms. Pelosi sent a clear signal that she was confident they would have the votes they needed to impeach Mr. Trump, making him only the third president in American history to face removal by Congress. The proceedings, unfolding less than a year before the 2020 election, will play out amid profound partisan divisions, with Demo-

crats pressing forward amid intense Republican opposition.

Before her announcement, Mr. Trump seemed to welcome the coming fight, calling Democrats “crazy” in a pair of tweets that urged them to get the process over with quickly so he could defend himself in the Republican-controlled Senate. “If you are going to impeach me, do it now, fast, so we can have a fair trial in the Senate, and so that our Country can get back to business”.

The Judiciary Committee is expected to announce a hearing in the coming days for Intelligence Committee lawyers for present their findings. People familiar with the matter believe the panel is on track to begin publicly debating and voting on articles by the end of next week. NY TIMES

# Sajith named Leader of Opposition in Sri Lanka

Parliament will convene on January 3

MEERA SRINIVASAN  
COLOMBO

United National Party (UNP) Deputy Leader Sajith Premadasa was on Thursday named the Leader of Opposition, weeks after he lost the presidential contest to Gotabaya Rajapaksa who won decisively.

The move comes after the UNP resolved internal differences, with some in the party backing leader and former Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe for the post. However, party sources said supporters of Mr. Premadasa prevailed, citing the imminent general election that they argued could be fought better with Mr. Premadasa helming the Opposition. Mr. Wickremesinghe will continue to lead the party.

Mr. Premadasa will be officially appointed as Leader of Opposition, when the Parliament convenes on January 3. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa recently prorogued the House for a month, until January 3, 2020, in a move that Opposition parties said was aimed at keeping out parliamentary opposition to his minority government until then. Following his election win, Mr. Gotabaya appointed a caretaker government until elections next year.

### Parliament prorogued

The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) on Wednesday termed the period of prorogation “excessive”. “It would’ve been legitimate for President @GotabayaR to prorogue Parliament for a week so that a new session commences with his address on government policy. One month is excessive and obviously for collateral purposes and hence anti-democratic and indeed illegal,” the TNA said from its official Twitter handle.

According to Sri Lanka’s Constitution, the President may, from time to time, by



Sajith Premadasa

proclamation summon, prorogue and dissolve Parliament. The proclamation proroguing Parliament shall fix a date for the next session, not being more than two months after the date of proclamation. However, some fear that the President may address the Parliament in January, possibly prorogue it again until he is able to dissolve the House in March – when 4.5 years of the current Parliament’s term is completed – and call snap polls.

### ‘Convention sidelined’

Further, critics of the move argue that according to parliamentary convention, prorogation must be done for the Parliament’s purposes and in consultation with the Speaker. Referring to the U.K. Supreme Court’s September ruling that Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s decision to shut down Parliament ahead of Brexit was unlawful, they say, the landmark ruling reaffirms the principle.

The Opposition Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) questioned the “intention” behind the move. JVP Parliamentarian Bimal Rathnayake said in a tweet that the President can address Parliament at any time without proroguing. The intention behind the prorogation seemed to be to “weaken” the legislature, “shut the voice of real Opposition”, prevent discussion on “undemocratic” acts witnessed post-election and dissolve a parliamentary panel on public enterprises, he said.



**Traffic hit:** A demonstration against the government’s pensions reform plan in Paris on Thursday. • REUTERS

# France shuts down amid unions-Macron face-off

They are protesting pension overhaul

REUTERS  
PARIS

French public sector workers began a nationwide strike on Thursday over President Emmanuel Macron’s plans to reform France’s generous pension system, in the biggest challenge to the President since “yellow vest” protests erupted last year.

The strike pits Mr. Macron, 41, a former investment banker who came to power in 2017 on a promise to open up France’s highly regulated economy, against powerful trade unions who say he is set on dismantling worker protections.

The outcome depends on who blinks first – the unions who risk losing public support if the disruption goes on for too long, or the government that fears voters could side with the unions and blame officials for the standoff.

“People can work around it today and tomorrow, but next week people may get annoyed,” said 56-year-old cafe owner Isabelle Guibal.

Rail workers voted to extend their strike through Friday, while labour unions

at the Paris bus and metro operator RATP said their walkout would continue until Monday.

Trade unions achieved their initial objective on Thursday, as workers at transport enterprises, schools and hospitals across France joined the strike.

Trouble erupted away from the main protest in Paris when people in masks and dressed in black ransacked a bus stop near the Place de la Republique, ripped up street furniture, smashed shop windows and threw fireworks at police. Police in riot gear responded by firing tear gas. Nearby, police used truncheons to defend themselves from black-clad protesters who rushed at them. Prosecutors said, in all, 57 people were detained.

Mr. Macron wants to simplify France’s unwieldy pension system, which comprises more than 40 different plans, many with different retirement ages and benefits. Rail workers, mariners and Paris Opera House ballet dancers can retire up to a decade earlier than the average worker.

# Maldives seeks to restructure Chinese debt: Foreign Minister

‘India first policy is an expression of a geographic reality’

MEERA SRINIVASAN  
COLOMBO

The Maldives will seek to restructure the \$1.4 billion-debt it owes China, and the island nation’s “India first” policy will not come in the way of negotiations with the Asian giant, Maldivian Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid said on Thursday.

China has been a “generous donor” to the Maldives and the relationship between the two countries “is on a stable footing”, the Minister told Colombo-based foreign journalists.

Mr. Shahid was in Colombo to convey felicitations to the newly-elected President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and newly appointed Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa.

Accusing former Presi-



Abdulla Shahid

dent Abdulla Yameen’s government of borrowing “unreasonably” from Beijing, the Maldivian Foreign Minister said Male was confident of being able to service the outstanding debt. “We are talking to the Chinese and I have confidence that we will be able to reach a diplomatic understanding in the com-

ing years,” he said, ruling out a debt to equity swap.

Observing that the Indian Ocean island nation’s “India first” policy was an expression of a geographic reality, Minister Shahid said: “It is about proximity and India has always responded to the Maldives during emergencies... So yes, it is India first.”

In his meetings with the Sri Lankan leadership, Mr. Shahid pledged closer cooperation with Sri Lanka in combating terrorism. “Even when I visited in May, soon after the Easter bombings, I brought our government and President [Ibrahim Mohamed] Solih’s commitment that we are united in confronting this evil of terrorism, of radicalism. We will not back down,” he said.

# U.S. Navy sailor kills two, then shoots himself

Incident comes three days before 78th anniversary of attack on Pearl Harbor

REUTERS  
HAWAII

A U.S. Navy sailor shot dead two civilians working at Hawaii’s historic military base of Pearl Harbor on Wednesday and wounded a third before turning his gun on himself, military officials said.

Authorities did not identify the victims or the gunman, described by a witness as wearing a U.S. Navy uniform, but local media reported they were all men. Base officials said the victims were civilians working for the Department of Defense. It was not immediately



Security forces attending to a victim outside the Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam in Honolulu. • AP

clear what the gunman’s motive was for the shooting, three days before the 78th

anniversary of the December 7, 1941 attack on the naval base that led the United

States to declare war on Japan and enter World War Two.

The gunman died of “an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound”, and the third victim was in stable condition in hospital, military officials told a news briefing.

“We have confirmed that two (victims) are deceased,” said the regional commander, Rear Admiral Robert Chadwick.

The gunman “has tentatively been identified as an active-duty sailor assigned to USS Columbia SSN 771,” he said.

# 58 migrants dead after boat sinks off Mauritania

It was headed to Europe from Gambia

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
NOUAKCHOTT

Scores of migrants who swam through rough Atlantic Ocean waters to safety from a capsized boat while 58 others drowned were receiving care on Thursday in Mauritania after one of the deadliest disasters this year among people making the perilous journey to Europe.

The boat that left Gambia a week ago had been carrying at least 150 people, including women and children. It was headed toward Spain’s Canary Islands when

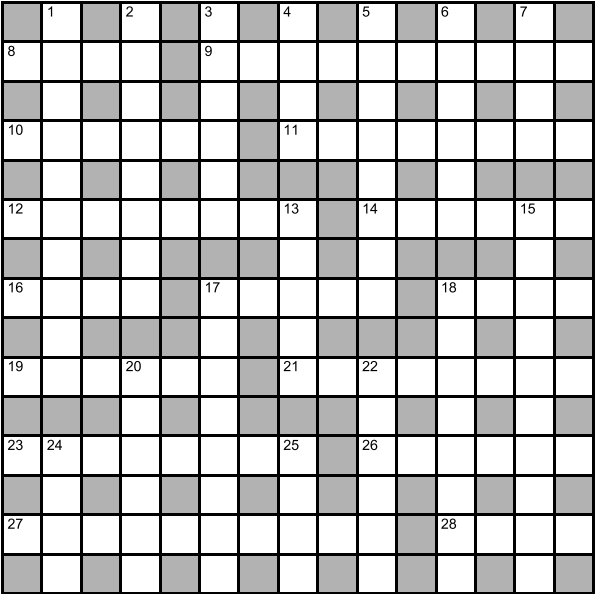
it tried to approach the Mauritanian coast to get fuel and food, Laura Lungarotti, chief of mission in the West African nation with the UN migration agency, said.

“Many drowned. The ones who survived swam up to the Mauritanian coast close to the city of Nouadhibou,” she said. “The Mauritanian authorities are very efficiently coordinating the response with the agencies currently present” in the northern city.

At least 83 people swam to shore, the agency said.

## THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12799

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### ACROSS

- 8 Rouse from sleep and wash (4)
- 9 Endlessly call holy men unbalanced – it leads to sadness (10)
- 10 A doctor’s circular letter on sex appeal’s competent (6)
- 11 It can be funny: Nero’s confused about river flowing back (3-5)

(set by Incognito)

- 12 Theodore walked around Paris confusedly; walked wearily (8)
- 14 Just exercise inside, without attempt at concealment (6)
- 16 Bladder that may be removed for impertinence (4)
- 17 She may run a brothel anyway (5)
- 18 Popular governor’s legendary ship (4)
- 19 Child has ale with model in house (6)
- 21 Heard male descendant notices solar phenomena (8)
- 23 A type of squirrel which may be much pink (8)
- 26 Ranch Romeo has plating material (6)
- 27 Spotted dogs, at mad Anil’s, running around (10)
- 28 A ton transported around for military group (4)

### DOWN

- 1 Run after less haired? Nonsense! (10)
- 2 Monument built with Gulf money deposited under small note (8)

- 3 Hits insect on board (6)
- 4 In addition, a large soda, after the lawman goes away (4)
- 5 Stake planted before Moor returns to lobby (8)
- 6 Bird’s awkward shriek (6)
- 7 Escape from auditor’s insect (4)
- 13 Bad odds – around zero – for these birds? (5)
- 15 Run for it, my friend, carrying one – it is legal (10)
- 17 Joe’s mutt badly spelt precise word for a Frenchman (3,5)
- 18 Hoping to get medicine with a little weight (8)
- 20 Mail strewn around post office may result in a cosmetic problem (6)
- 22 Best house has endless frozen water (6)
- 24 What an auditor and judge may do here on radio (4)
- 25 Zen master’s apparently illogical question for King, on a transformation (4)

## SUDOKU



### Solution to puzzle 12798



### Solution to yesterday’s Sudoku



## FAITH

# Vanquishing the demon

Saint Vallalar, in his Deivamanimalai, praises Lord Muruga of Kanda Kottam in Chennai. He hails Muruga as the One who has a flag with the emblem of a rooster. In Kandapuram, written by Kachiappa Sivachariar, there is a verse which gives the entire story of Muruga in one verse, and in this verse, there is a reference to Muruga’s flag, said M.A. Manickavelu in a discourse. Kandapuram talks of all the six abodes of Muruga. Of these, Thiruchendur is associated with the asura Soorapadman. It was at Tiruchendur that Muruga’s special flag came into being, and this was due to Muruga’s victory against the demon Soorapadman.

Soorapadman, along with his brothers, tormented the celestials. It was imperative that Soorapadman be killed. But before that task could be accomplished, his brothers Tarakasura and Krauncha had to be killed. The demon Tarakasura had an elephant face, and the demon Krauncha was in the form of a mountain. Lord Muruga destroyed the two asuras, and then fought Soorapadman. The fighting between Muruga and Soorapadman was intense, and finally Muruga used His spear (vel) to kill Soorapadman. The spear of Muruga is special and significant, because it was given to Him by none other than Goddess Parvati Herself. But Soorapadman, upon being killed, reappeared, this time in the form of a mango tree. Lord Muruga used His spear to split the tree into two halves. One half became a peacock, and served as Muruga’s vahana. The other half became a rooster, and this became the emblem on Muruga’s flag.

The vanquishing of Soorapadman is enacted every year in Tiruchendur, culminating in the slaying of Soorapadman. The Soorasamhara festival of Thiruchendur draws huge crowds every year.



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