

## International

# Trump impeachment trial to begin only in second week of February

## Trial delayed to conduct critical business including confirmation of cabinet nominees

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump's US Senate trial will begin in the second week of February, days after a fresh impeachment case against the former president is transmitted by the House, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said Friday.

The newly announced schedule reflects a deal struck by Senate leaders to delay the substantive portion of the trial for two weeks so that the chamber may conduct other critical business including confirmation of President Joe Biden's cabinet nominees. The House of Representatives impeached Trump for a historic second time on January 13, just one week before he left office.

Schumer said the article of impeachment will be delivered and read out to the Senate on Monday at 7:00 pm (0000 GMT Tuesday). The chamber's 100 members will be sworn in as trial jurors the next day. The House members assigned by Speaker Nancy Pelosi as impeachment managers, and members of Trump's yet-to-be-named defense team, will then be given time to draft their legal briefs.

"Once the briefs are drafted, presentation by the parties will commence the week of February 8," Schumer told colleagues on the Senate floor. During the two-week interim, the Senate will act on Biden's cabinet nominations "and the COVID relief bill which would provide relief for millions of American who are suffering during this pandemic," Schumer added.

"Healing and unity will only come if there is truth and accountability, and that is what this trial will provide." Members will deliberate whether to convict

Trump on what the US Constitution describes as "high crimes and misdemeanors."

Trump was impeached on a single charge of "incitement of insurrection" for his role in whipping up his supporters during a speech in Washington on January 6, the day a pro-Trump mob stormed Congress and threatened the lives of lawmakers and then-vice president Mike Pence. Five people died in the violence, including a police officer.

### 'Unprecedentedly fast'

The delay is the result of a deal Schumer struck with Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell. McConnell was a close congressional ally to Trump during his term, but he severely reprimanded the outgoing president for repeatedly seeking to overturn results of the election and for his incitement of protesters, and he left the door open for voting to convict Trump.

But he had sought a delay in the trial until February, arguing Trump needs time to hire lawyers and mount a defense. On Friday, McConnell appeared to express regret for the Democrats' speedy timetable. "As I understand, it must be headed our way Monday. By Senate rules, if the article arrives, we have to start a trial right then," he said on the floor. But the Senate can agree to its own parameters of the trial timeline.

McConnell spoke of the "unprecedentedly fast" process in the House, where Trump was impeached in a single day. "The sequel cannot be an insufficient Senate process that denies former president Trump



WASHINGTON, DC: In this file photo taken on February 06, 2020, US President Donald Trump holds up a newspaper that displays a headline "Acquitted," as he arrives to speak at the 68th annual National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, DC. — AFP

his due process or damages the Senate or the presidency itself," he said. Trump survived a first impeachment almost a year ago when the then Republican-controlled Senate acquitted him of abusing his office to try to get dirt on Biden's family before the presidential election.

With the Senate now comprised of 50 Democrats and 50 Republicans, and a two-thirds majority need-

ed to convict Trump, at least 17 Republicans would have to vote against the former president to secure a conviction. If that occurs, a subsequent vote would be held on whether to ban Trump from holding public office in the future. A handful of Republicans have spoken out harshly against the president but it remains unclear if there would be enough GOP senators to vote for conviction. — AFP

## Iran calls on Biden to 'unconditionally' lift US sanctions

TEHRAN: Iran on Friday called on the new US administration to "unconditionally" lift sanctions imposed by Donald Trump on the Islamic republic to salvage the 2015 nuclear deal, warning against any concessions. Just two days after US President Joe Biden took office, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif published an op-ed in the US foreign policy magazine Foreign Affairs on Tehran's view towards saving the deal.

The agreement has been largely in tatters since former president Donald Trump withdrew from it unilaterally in 2018 and reimposed harsh sanctions as part of a policy of "maximum pressure" on Iran.

Known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the deal was agreed between Iran, the United States, China, Russia, Britain, France and Germany. It offered sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on Tehran's nuclear ambitions and guarantees it would not seek an atomic bomb. Iran has maintained it has only pursued a civilian nuclear energy program. "The new administration in Washington has a fundamental choice to make," Zarif, who is considered one of the architects of the 2015 nuclear deal, wrote in the op-ed.

"It can embrace the failed policies of the Trump administration," or Biden "can choose a better path by ending Trump's failed policy of 'maximum pressure' and returning to the deal his predecessor abandoned," he added. "But if Washington instead insists on extracting concessions, then this opportunity will be lost."

### 'Collective efforts'

The sanctions targeted Iran's vital oil sales and international banking ties, plunging its economy into a deep recession. Since 2019, Iran has suspended its compliance with most of the limits set by the deal in response to Washington's abandonment of sanctions relief and what Tehran deemed as Europe's inaction to provide it with the JCPOA's economic benefits.

The Iranian government has signalled a readiness to engage with Biden, who took office on January 20 and who has expressed willingness to return to diplomacy with Tehran. Biden's pick for secretary of state, Anthony Blinken, said at a Senate confirmation hearing Tuesday that Trump's policies had made Iran "more dangerous".

Blinken confirmed Biden's desire for Washington to return to the nuclear agreement, but said that was conditional on Tehran's return to strict compliance with its commitments. But Tehran has insisted that Washington must first lift all sanctions and return to its own JCPOA obligations.

"The incoming Biden administration can still salvage the nuclear agreement, but only if it can muster the genuine political will in Washington to demonstrate that the United States is ready to be a real partner in collective efforts," Zarif wrote. "The administration should begin by unconditionally removing, with full effect, all sanctions imposed, reimposed, or relabeled since Trump took office," he added.

"In turn, Iran would reverse all the remedial measures it has taken in the wake of Trump's withdrawal from the nuclear deal." Iran has maintained it would return to full compliance with the deal if sanctions were lifted and it could benefit from the economic relief it expected under the JCPOA. — AFP

## Icelandic man recovers from double arm transplant

LYON: An Icelandic man who got the world's first double shoulder and arm transplant is recovering well after the operation, two decades after the accident that cost him both limbs, doctors said Friday. They said it was still uncertain how much mobility Felix Gretarsson, 48, will eventually recover following the operation earlier this month in the French southeastern city of Lyon.

But "giving a little to somebody who was missing so much, that's already a lot" Aram Gazarian, the lead surgeon in the operation, told a news conference.

"If he can recover the possibility to actively bend his elbow, that would be a life-changer," he said. On January 12, 1998, Gretarsson, an electrician, was working on a high-voltage power line when an 11,000-

volt surge burned his hands and flung him to the icy ground. He sustained multiple fractures and internal injuries, and went into a three-month coma during which surgeons amputated both arms.

He underwent several more operations, including a liver transplant. When hand transplant pioneer Jean-Michel Dubernard, based in Lyon, visited Reykjavik for a conference, Gretarsson asked him whether it would be possible to replace the lost limbs. The operations was "his biggest dream", Gretarsson's wife Sylvia told Friday's news conference, adding that she herself never felt that the operation was truly necessary as he "wasn't missing anything".

It took years to find suitable donors, during which some 50 med-



Felix Gretarsson was a long way from being able to move his arms, but seemed visibly pleased with the outcome.

ical staff in total became involved in the preparations for the operation. Four surgical teams were involved to minimize the transition time between donor and recipient.

Doctors said Friday the outlook for the right arm to become functional is better than for the left, which had also required a complete rebuild of the shoulder. — AFP

## Biden White House atmosphere is transformed

WASHINGTON: Camped out in bare offices, President Joe Biden's new White House team has spent its first three days scrambling for things like binder clips and IT support-oh, and trying to save the country from multiple crises. They took over leadership of the world's most powerful, wealthy and innovative nation on Wednesday. But after a nasty transition period from the Donald Trump administration, incoming staff face some of the problems an ordinary renter might face in a new apartment.

The entire premises got a deep cleaning job that CNN reported cost \$500,000 and the Oval Office has been revamped. But rows of empty shelves and walls stripped of decoration make a less than homely atmosphere in the warren of offices occupied by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and her media operation.

On her first full day, Meghan Hays, director of message planning, had to write on her cellphone because the computer didn't work. Another staffer



WASHINGTON, DC: US President Joe Biden (third right) and First Lady Jill Biden (second right), with Vice President Kamala Harris (second left) and her husband, Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff, watch the virtual Presidential Inaugural Prayer Service hosted by the Washington National Cathedral, in the State Dining Room of the White House in Washington, DC, on Friday. — AFP

asked if anyone had seen binder clips, before rummaging unsuccessfully through an assortment of office supplies in a big cardboard box. Yet even if Biden's crew haven't had time to hang pictures, they've already transformed the White House.

### Masked up

Visually, the most obvious difference is that

everyone now wears masks against COVID-19. A picture of Biden at the Resolute Desk on his first day, sporting a black mask, defined the new era. Trump almost never wore a mask in public, fearing it would send a message of weakness. He certainly never wore one publicly in the Oval Office, wondering aloud what "presidents, prime ministers, dictators, kings, queens" would think of such a thing. — AFP

## Russia detains thousands of Navalny supporters

MOSCOW: Police yesterday aggressively detained protesters in Moscow and other cities as thousands of supporters of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny took to the streets following his call to protest against President Vladimir Putin's rule.

In the Russian capital, which usually mobilizes the largest rallies, protesters planned to meet on the central Pushkin Square at 2:00 pm (1100 GMT) and march towards the Kremlin. But more than an hour before the planned rally police began detaining people, AFP journalists reported. Putin's most charismatic critic put out the mass rally call after surviving a near-fatal poisoning with a Novichok nerve agent and returning to Moscow last week-end following months of treatment in Germany. He was arrested at

Sheremetievo Airport and jailed.

Protests were held early Saturday in the Far East, Siberia and the Urals including Khabarovsk, Novosibirsk and Chita where several thousand turned out, Navalny supporters said. OVD Info, which monitors detentions at opposition rallies, said police had detained more than 200 people across the country.

Protesters told AFP they wanted to see new faces in politics and that authorities were persecuting Navalny for speaking the truth. "The country is in a state of complete lawlessness because of Putin's rule," a young protester, Maria Kirichenko, said in the Pacific port of Vladivostok.

Yesterday's rallies are expected to be a major test of the opposition's ability to mobilize despite increasing Kremlin pressure on critics and the



VILNIUS: People gather to demonstrate in support of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, who is currently jailed, in front of the Russian embassy in Vilnius, yesterday. — AFP

coronavirus pandemic.

### 'Freedom to Navalny'

Ahead of the demonstrations, Navalny's team released a video investigation into an opulent Black Sea property allegedly owned by Putin who has been in power for 20 years. The two-hour report has been viewed more than 66 million times. In

Vladivostok, demonstrators gathered in the city center, chanting "Putin is a thief" and "Freedom to Navalny!" AFP footage showed riot police running after protesters and beating them with batons. In Yakutsk south of the Arctic Circle, protesters wrapped up against the cold, rallied in temperatures of minus 50 degrees Celsius (-58 Fahrenheit). — AFP