



5 Record US virus cases; millions in Asia enter new lockdowns



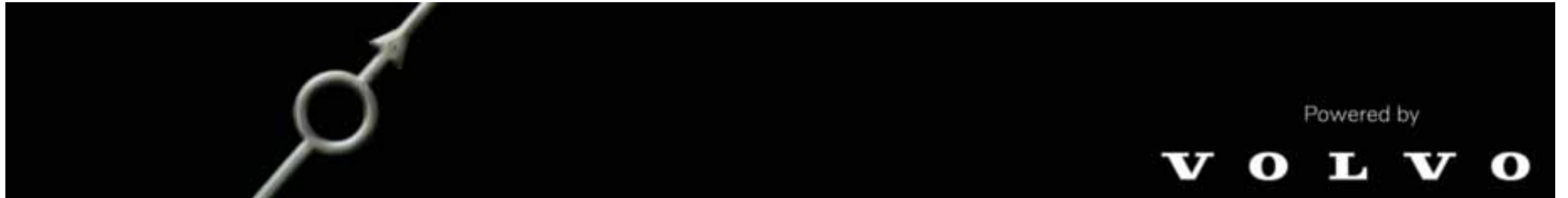
6 Mob attack to haunt Biden on world stage



8 Murdoch calls time on Trump, tries to keep his base onside

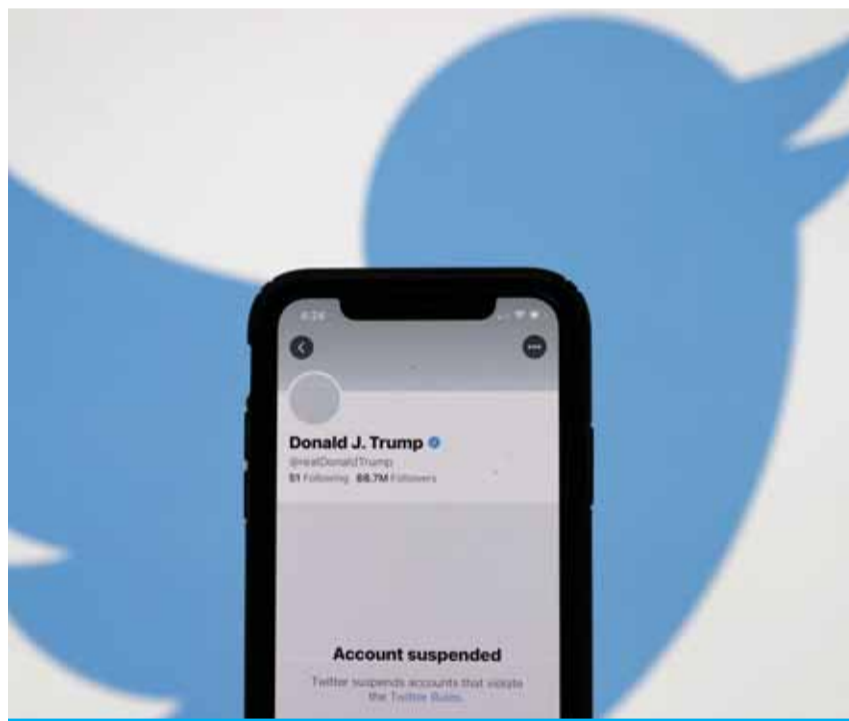


16 Curry sizzles as Warriors rally past Clippers, Jazz trip Bucks



Twitter permanently suspends Trump as presidency crumbles

Trump to skip inauguration amid calls for resignation, impeachment



SAN ANSELMO, California: The suspended Twitter account of US President Donald Trump appears on an iPhone screen. — AFP

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump, already facing mounting calls to step down or risk impeachment, suffered further ignominy when Twitter permanently suspended his account, saying the US leader is too dangerous to use the platform. After a "close review" of tweets from the @realDonaldTrump account, "we have permanently suspended the account due to the risk of further incitement of violence," Twitter said.

The unprecedented move, which severs Trump from his 88.7 million followers, is an astounding setback for the president in the chaotic waning days of his administration. It could also prove an insurmountable hurdle should the brash Republican choose to mount a political comeback in 2024, as he has hinted he could do on multiple occasions.

With his presidency imploding, Trump signaled a final, unrepentant display of division by announcing - in his final tweet before the ban - that he will skip the inauguration of Joe Biden on Jan 20. "To all of those who have asked, I will not be going," he tweeted. Biden responded this was "a good thing", branding Trump an "embarrassment".

However, Biden showed how wary he is of the growing rush to impeach Trump - and deepen the nation's political divisions - over his incitement of crowds who stormed Congress on Wednesday. "That is a judgment for the Congress to make," Biden said, adding that the "quickest" way to get Trump out was for him and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris to take over in 12 days. "I am focused now on us taking control as president and vice president on the 20th and to get our agenda moving as quickly as we can."

Two days after Trump sent a mob of followers to march on Congress, his presidency is in free fall, with allies walking away and opponents sharpening their teeth. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi warned that Democrats will launch impeachment proceedings unless Trump resigns or Vice President Mike Pence invokes the 25th Amendment, where the cabinet removes the president. "If the President does not leave office imminently and willingly, the Congress will proceed with our action," Pelosi wrote.

In a jaw-dropping moment, Pelosi revealed she had spoken Friday with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark

Millie about "preventing an unstable president from initiating military hostilities or accessing the launch codes and ordering a nuclear strike". "The situation of this unhinged President could not be more dangerous, and we must do everything that we can to protect the American people," Pelosi wrote.

House Democrats, who already impeached Trump in a traumatic, partisan vote in 2019, said the unprecedented second impeachment of a president could be ready next week. "We can act very quickly when we want to," Representative Katherine Clark told CNN. A draft impeachment resolution being circulated would charge Trump with a single article: "Incitement of insurrection."

Whether Republican leaders of the Senate would then agree to hold a lightning-fast impeachment trial before the transition is another matter. But Republican Senator Ben Sasse told CBS News he would "definitely consider" articles of impeachment if and when they are introduced, while Senator Lisa Murkowski became the chamber's first Republican to openly call for Trump's resignation.

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News in brief



RIYADH: Saudi King Salman receives his first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. — AFP

Saudi king gets COVID jab

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's King Salman on Thursday received a COVID-19 vaccine jab, more than three weeks after the kingdom kicked off a three-phase inoculation program, official media said. King Salman, 85, "received the first dose of the coronavirus vaccine" in the futuristic Red Sea city of Neom, the Saudi Press Agency said. Official media published pictures and videos showing the king receiving the injection. — AFP



ISTANBUL: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan meets Lebanese former Prime Minister Saad Hariri. — AFP

Hariri pays visit to Erdogan

ISTANBUL: Lebanon's Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri paid an unannounced visit Friday to Turkey for talks with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The two-hour "private" meeting at Erdogan's Istanbul residence focused on regional security issues and "deepening and strengthening" ties, the Turkish presidency said. Hariri's office said he and Erdogan also discussed "ways to support the efforts to stop the collapse and rebuild Beirut as soon as the new government is formed in Lebanon". — AFP

Qatar-Saudi border reopens after thaw

ABU SAMRAH, Qatar: Qatar and Saudi Arabia reopened their land border yesterday, AFP correspondents saw, as they restore ties following a landmark deal to end a three and a half year rift.

Saudi shut its side of Qatar's only land border in June 2017 as part of a package of sanctions it said was a response to Doha's backing radical Islamist groups and closeness to Iran. Qatar always denied the charges.

A Qatari source told AFP that traffic at the Abu Samrah crossing, 120 km south of Doha, resumed around 0700 GMT. Saudi Arabia, along with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt, all of which also imposed an embargo on travel and trade, agreed to lift the restrictions at a Gulf Cooperation Council summit in the kingdom on Tuesday.

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ABU SAMRAH, Qatar: Cars cross the Qatari side of the Abu Samrah border into Saudi Arabia following the opening of crossings between the two countries yesterday. — AFP

6 months on, at least one COVID symptom lingers

PARIS: More than three quarters of people hospitalized with COVID-19 still suffered from at least one symptom after six months, according to a study published

yesterday that scientists said shows the need for further investigation into lingering coronavirus effects. The research, which was published in the Lancet medical journal and involved hundreds of patients in the Chinese city of Wuhan, is among the few to trace the long-term symptoms of COVID-19 infection.

It found that fatigue or muscle weakness were the most common symptoms, while people also reported sleeping difficulties. "Because COVID-19 is such a new disease, we are only beginning to understand some of its long-term effects on

patients' health," said lead author Bin Cao, of the National Center for Respiratory Medicine.

The professor said the research highlighted the need for ongoing care for patients after they have been discharged from hospital, particularly those who have had severe infections. "Our work also underscores the importance of conducting longer follow-up studies in larger populations in order to understand the full spectrum of effects that COVID-19 can have on people," he added.

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Indonesia jet loses contact, crash feared

JAKARTA: An Indonesian budget airline plane with 62 people on board is suspected to have crashed into the sea shortly after the Boeing 737 took off from Jakarta airport yesterday, authorities said. Flight tracking data showed the Sriwijaya Air Boeing 737-500 plunged into a steep dive about

four minutes after it left Soekarno-Hatta international airport.

Sixty-two passengers and crew were on board, including 10 children, the nation's transport minister, Budi Karya Sumadi, told reporters. The suspected crash site is near tourist islands just off the coast of Indonesia's sprawling capital, Sriwijaya Air flight SJ182 was bound for Pontianak on Indonesia's section of Borneo island, about 90 minutes flying time over the Java Sea.

Distraught relatives waited nervously for news at the city's airport.

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PONTIANAK, Indonesia: Relatives of passengers onboard missing Sriwijaya Air flight SJY182 wait for news at Supadio airport on Borneo island yesterday. — AFP