GS-II: Impeachment of a US President.

News

The speaker of US House of Representatives announced that it would launch an impeachment inquiry against President Trump.

Trump is accused for his efforts to pressure Ukraine to investigate Joe Biden, Trump’s potential rival in the 2020 elections.

Impeachment in US:

- Impeachment is a provision that allows Congress to remove the President of the United States.
- Under the US Constitution, the House of Representatives (Lower House) has the “the sole power of impeachment” while the Senate (Upper House) has “the sole power to try all impeachments”.
- The Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court has the duty of presiding over impeachment trials in the Senate.

Grounds for impeachment:

- The President can be removed from office for “treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors”.
- What constitutes these “high crimes” and “misdemeanors” (misdemeanors), however, is not clearly spelt out.
- Essentially, it means an abuse of power by a high-level public official. This does not necessarily have to be a violation of an ordinary criminal statute.
- Historically, in the US, it has encompassed corruption and other abuses, including trying to obstruct judicial proceedings.

The Process:

House Vote:

- It begins with an investigation by a House committee.
- In the Nixon and Clinton cases, the House Judiciary Committee held that investigation and recommended articles of impeachment to the full House.
- In Trump’s case, six committees are investigating him on impeachable offences.

Senate Trial and Vote:

- The Senate holds a trial, overseen by the chief justice of the Supreme Court.
- A team of lawmakers from the House, known as managers, play the role of prosecutors.
- The President has defence lawyers, and the Senate serves as the jury.
- If at least two-thirds of the Senators present find the President guilty, he is removed and the Vice President takes over as President.