Fruits of incitement - US Capitol Hill Violence

Why in news?

An armed and angry mob of US President Donald Trump's supporters stormed Capitol Hill and clashed with police just as Congress convened to validate Joe Biden's presidential win.

What happened?

- The U.S., said to be the "greatest nation on earth," became hostage to an ugly attempted coup led by a mob, with slogans of support for outgoing President Trump.
- The mob was eventually ejected, and lawmakers went on to reconvene and formally certify the election results.
- Mr. Trump too finally committed to an "orderly transition."
- However, major social media platforms locked Trump's accounts for violating their civic integrity policies.
- This includes inciting violence with months of contentious posts that made baseless allegations about electoral fraud.

What was the immediate cause?

- The mob is said to have been methodically planned online via social media.
- The immediate trigger for the mob (Republican Trump's supporters) was the surprise victory of two Democratic candidates.
    - Democratic candidates Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff won in the 5 January 2021 run-off election in Georgia.
    - That election was necessitated by the fact that no candidate won 50% of the popular vote in the 3 November 2020 general election.
- Their win gives Democrats 50 seats in the Senate, which is tantamount to control of the upper chamber of Congress.
    - The incoming Vice-President, Kamala Harris, will cast a deciding vote in a tie.

What is the larger concern?

- The January 6 [2021] mob attack exposes sheer viciousness.
- The event is an "unprecedented assault" on the very soul of democracy.
- Also, there was more than two months of hateful rage online and offline

following the 2020 election.

- This is a proof that political America is deeply polarised, brimming with anger and disenchantment at the ground realities.
- At the core is a sense of frustration that grips Middle America, including the white middle class and blue-collar workers, over the inevitable changes to the U.S. economy and society.
- There is a view that the forces of immigration and globalisation have led to this explosive combination of racial prejudice and economic insecurity.
- In reality, Mr. Trump's harsh rhetoric exploited this sense of alienation and socioeconomic dysfunction for narrow political and personal gains.

What lies ahead?

- Now, Mr. Biden has an opportunity to strike a more balanced note.
- On the one hand, he has to revive the waning spirit of bipartisan consensus and tackle the thorny issue of comprehensive immigration reform.
- On the other, he has to redress the ills of runaway free-market liberalisation and forge a post-COVID-19 economic vision that can truly deliver on the American dream.

Source: The Hindu

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