

Sanders, Buttigieg In Virtual Tie After 100 Percent Of Iowa Dem Caucus Votes Called

Agencies

Washington: U.S. Democratic presidential candidates Bernie Sanders and Pete Buttigieg were in a virtual tie as results from 100 percent of the Iowa precincts were called late Thursday, but no winner declared in the state's caucuses after technical problems snarled the process.

Earlier in the day Democratic Party chairman Tom Perez demanded a review of the results from the state, which has the time-honoured role of being the first in the nation to

nor major US media outlets declared a winner.

"Enough is enough," Perez said on Twitter earlier in the day. "In order to assure public confidence in the results, I am calling on the Iowa Democratic Party to immediately begin a recanvass."

Perez said it would involve an examination of the results from each caucus site rather than a full recount.

According to final results, Massachusetts progressive Senator Elizabeth Warren was in third with 18 percent, followed by former vice president



pick presidential candidates.

According to final results from the Monday caucuses, Buttigieg, the 38-year-old former mayor of a small town in Indiana, leads with 26.2 percent followed by Sanders, the 78-year-old self-described democratic socialist, with 26.1 percent.

However, neither the party

Joe Biden with 15.8 percent and Minnesota Senator Amy Klobuchar with 12.3 percent.

The technology problems which prevented a complete vote count were founded on what experts described as a poorly-tested, poorly performing vote reporting smartphone app.

Indian Cities Now Urban Heat Islands

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI - A team of researchers from IIT Kharagpur has found that most cities in the country are turning into urban heat islands in all seasons during day and night, officials said.

In their study, researchers from the Centre for Oceans, Rivers, Atmosphere and Land Sciences (CORAL) of IIT-Kharagpur and its architecture and regional planning department showed that most big cities in the country with population more than one million have recorded a rise in mercury level during daytime while showing an increasing trend in the night hours.

The study, 'Anthropogenic forcing exacerbating the urban heat islands in India', noted that the relatively warmer temperatures in urban areas, compared to suburbs, have potential health hazards due to heat waves apart from pollution, an IIT KGP statement said on Friday.

"Our research is a detailed and careful analysis of urban

heat islands of India, which is the difference between urban and surrounding rural land surface temperatures, across all seasons in 44 major cities from 2001 to 2017," Professor Arun Chakraborty, one of the researchers, said.

He further said, "For the first time, we have found evidence of mean daytime temperature of Surface Urban Heat Island (UHI Intensity) going up to 2C for most cities, as analysed from satellite temperature measurements in monsoon and post-monsoon periods."

In Kolkata, Pune and Guwahati where the urban areas are surrounded by large green cover in suburban regions, there is "an enhanced cooling effect on surface" in suburban areas during daytime as against cities in arid regions, the researchers said.

"Evidence from our study suggests that more green spaces within the city and its boundary could reduce the temperature in the city and its neighbourhood," co-author of the paper Prof. Jayanarayanan Kuttippurath said.



Netanyahu plans Saudi visit before March 2 poll: Report

AGENCIES

JERUSALM: Israeli authorities are reportedly working hard to arrange a meeting between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in the kingdom, as the Tel Aviv regime is bringing out in the open its relations with several Arab countries after years of clandestine contacts.

The Hebrew-language Israel Defense magazine, citing sources requesting not to be named, reported on Thursday that efforts are underway for such a meeting to happen in the Saudi capital city of Riyadh before Israeli legislative elections, which are set for March 2.

The report added that the expected meeting falls within the Israeli regime's attempts to normalize relations with Arab states, which commenced in Oman and then spread to Morocco and Sudan. The attempts are apparently backed by the White House.

Israel Defense further

highlighted that Washington wants to advance President Donald Trump's so-called deal of the century on the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which could greatly help him in the US presidential race.

The magazine went on to say that there is a desire among Israeli officials to promote a round of communications with Arab countries, which may help Netanyahu's election campaign.

The report comes as General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the head of Sudan's ruling council, and Netanyahu recently met in Entebbe, Uganda. The meeting had reportedly been arranged by the United Arab Emirates.

Israel says it has reached an agreement with Sudan to jointly work towards normalization of ties, after leaders of the two sides held a secret meeting in Uganda.

It was only made public when the Israeli premier took to Twitter to claim that an agreement had been reached with Sudan to "begin cooperation that will lead to the normalization of relations."

However, the Sovereign Council of Sudan — a joint civilian-military cabinet running state affairs since September 2019 — said the cabinet had not been informed in advance about the meeting and only learned of it through media reports.

Sudan's ruling council chief says Khartoum's stance on the Palestine issue will "remain firm" despite his secret meeting with the Israeli PM, which has triggered widespread anger at home.

Last month, senior Saudi cleric and former justice minister, Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdul Karim bin Abdulaziz al-Issa, paid an official visit to the former Nazi concentration camp, Auschwitz, in Poland. A delegation of American Jewish Committee (AJC) officials was in the company as well.

The CEO of the AJC, David Harris, described Issa's visit to the site as highly significant, claiming that the trip represented "the most senior delegation" of Muslim scholars to visit Auschwitz ever.

Israel uses civilian flight as shield to raid Damascus

Agencies

Jerusalem: An Israeli airstrike, carried out as Syria troops were liberating the terrorist-held town of Saraqib in northwestern Idlib province, has endangered a civilian flight carrying 172 passengers, according to the Russian Defense Ministry.

Defense Ministry spokesman Major General Igor Konashenkov said Friday the civil Airbus-320 was heading to Damascus from the Iranian capital early Thursday when it was forced to divert its route as the Syrian capital's air defenses were intercepting Israeli

missiles.

The plane made an emergency landing in the Hmeymim air base in Syria's western coastal province of Latakia.

"Only due to timely actions of the Damascus airport dispatchers and the efficient operation of the automated air traffic control system, the Airbus-320 managed to... successfully land at the closest alternative airfield," Konashenkov said.

'Israel using passenger jets as shields'

The spokesman stressed that Israel was well aware of civilian flights around Damascus

and that such missions demonstrated the regime's reckless disregard for human lives.

"The Israeli general staff's use of passenger jets as a cover for its military operations or as a shield from Syrian missile system fire is becoming a typical trait of Israeli air force," he said.

Russia had previously warned that Israeli airstrikes against Damascus were endangering civilian jets.

Lebanese officials have also stated that Israeli jets illegally conducting operations against Syria from the country's airspace pose a danger to civilian aircraft in Lebanon.

China Virus Crisis Deepens As Whistleblower Doctor Dies

Agencies

Beijing: An ophthalmologist who first blew the whistle on the coronavirus, and was punished for doing so, died from the virus on Friday. The death triggered an outpouring of grief and anger at the authorities in China.

The coronavirus outbreak has now killed more than 630 people and infected at least 31,000 people worldwide.

Li Wenliang, 34, died early Friday, the Wuhan Central Hospital said in a post on China's Weibo platform. The announcement brought forth grief on social media over a doctor is seen as a national hero and anger over the government's handling of the crisis.

"He is a hero who warned others with his life," a fellow

240 cases have emerged in two dozen countries.

A quarantined cruise ship in Japan now has 61 confirmed cases.

Chinese president Xi Jinping and U.S. president Donald Trump, whose countries have tussled over trade and human rights, spoke on the phone about the health emergency on Friday.

Xi urged "the U.S. side to respond reasonably to the novel coronavirus outbreak", according to the official Xinhua news agency.

Li's death highlights the enormous risks that frontline doctors have taken to treat patients in overwhelmed and under-equipped hospitals in Wuhan, the quarantined city of 11 million people where the virus emerged in December.



Wuhan doctor wrote on Weibo.

"Those fat officials who live on public money, may you die from a snowstorm," wrote another angry Weibo user in a comment that has since been censored.

The coronavirus disease has spread across China, prompting the government to lock down cities of tens of millions of people, while global panic has risen as more than

Medical staff are overstretched and lack sufficient protective gear, the deputy governor of Hubei province admitted Thursday.

Li sent out a message about the new coronavirus to colleagues on December 30 in Wuhan — the central city at the epicentre of the crisis — but was later among eight whistleblowers summoned by police for 'rumour-mongering'.

'India used British pilots in fight against LTTE'

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI - British mercenary pilots helped Indian troops in their battle against the Liberation Tigers for Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rebels in Sri Lanka in the 1980s, a new book reveals for the first time.

The Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) received air support for these for-hire British pilots despite Indian diplomats publicly condemning the presence of UK mercenaries in Sri Lanka, according to the book, 'KeenieMeenie: The British Mercenaries Who Got Away With War Crimes', authored by UK-based investigative journalist Phil Miller.

"Despite India publicly opposing the presence of British mercenaries in Sri Lanka, my research reveals that by 1987 the Indian military were using white pilots to provide air cover for their operations in Jaffna in what appears to have

been a case of my enemy's enemy is my friend," said Miller.

India's secret use of British mercenaries lasted for four months after the Indo-Lanka accord was signed between former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi and then Sri Lankan president Junius Jayewardene in 1987.

The book also traces the involvement of British mercenaries in atrocities against Tamil civilians that occurred prior to the arrival of the IPKF.

'KeenieMeenie', from the title of the book, is thought to be a Arabic slang for covert activities and was run by a retired colonel, Jim Johnson, a former Special Air Services (SAS) commander who had conducted secret missions in Yemen and Oman.

Johnson's counter-insurgency experience came to the attention of Jayewardene at the start of Sri Lanka's civil war in 1983, when the Anglophile leader was looking for British aid to defeat the Tamil Tigers.

NEWSMAKERS

Nigeria's Muslim cleric Sheikh Ibrahim al-Zakzaky and his wife are in critical health condition, their lawyer has said after their trial was postponed due to their deteriorating health.

According to a report by the London-based Islamic Human Rights Commission, Femi Falana said on Thursday that his clients - jailed Sheikh Zakzaky and his wife MallimahZinat - could not appear in the high court in Kaduna, the capital of an eponymous province in northwestern Nigeria, for trial due to their critical health conditions.

He added that prison officials also prevented any physician from out of the prison to see his clients, who are desperately in need of medical attention and care.

Falana, who is also a human rights activist, also noted that the court finally agreed to order the prison officials to allow the top cleric and his wife,



Nigerian Muslim leader Zakzaky, wife in critical health condition: Lawyer

who can barely walk with clutches, see a physician.

The lawyer added that his clients' case was also adjourned to February 24 as their extremely poor health condition barred them from

being present in the hearing session on Thursday.

Zakzaky, who is in his mid-60s, has been in detention since December 2015 after his residence in the city of Zaria was raided by Nigeria's

forces, during which he was beaten and lost vision in his left eye.

During the brutal arrest, three of his sons were also killed, his wife sustained serious wounds, and more than 300 of his followers were killed.

Last July, Sheikh Zakzaky's son, Mohammad, said he was shocked by his father's worsening medical condition after visiting him, stressing that he needed to be immediately hospitalized as "large and dangerous quantities of lead and cadmium have been found in his blood."

A month later, the couple was transferred to India to receive medical care. However, they were forced to leave India after a few days in protest against the Nigerian government's "obstruction" of his medical treatment and after they had "lost all faith" in the prospect of receiving proper treatment there.

Zakzaky, who is the lead-

Nobel laureate Yunus facing over 100 lawsuits



DHAKA: Bangladeshi Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus is facing more than 100 lawsuits from disgruntled employees at the telecoms unit of his poverty-busting microfinance Grameen Bank, lawyers said on Thursday.

The cases filed against him and other senior managers in a Dhaka court relate to claims from Grameen Telecom (GT)

employees for a share of profits, their lawyer Jafrul Hasan Sharif said.

Yunus has faced mounting legal problems in recent years. In 2011 he was sacked as head of Grameen Bank in a move his supporters said was orchestrated by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

"According to Bangladesh's Worker's Profit Participation law, Yunus's Grameen Telecom

was bound to share five per cent of the company's profit with the workers," lawyer Hasan said. "But for the last 10 years, the GT didn't do so."

Grameen Telecom operates a service called "Village Phone" dedicated to getting cellphones to the rural poor in the South Asian nation of 165 million people.

The company also owns a 34.2-per-cent stake in Grameen-Phone, Bangladesh's largest mobile phone operator with some 75 million subscribers.

Yunus, 79, who founded Grameen Bank in the 1980s and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006, could not be reached on Thursday.

He has been at odds with premier Hasina since a brief and unsuccessful foray into Bangladesh's fiery, high-risk political scene in 2007.