

Democratic race opens with Iowa caucuses

The voting will render the first verdict on who among dozens of candidates will take on Trump in Nov.

REUTERS
DES MOINES, IOWA
Iowa Democrats kick off what could be a bruising nominating process when they gather at caucus sites around the State on Monday to begin choosing a challenger to President Donald Trump.

At more than 1,600 schools, community centres and other public locations, voters will render judgment on a field of 11 Democratic contenders, led by front-runners Senator Bernie Sanders and former Vice-President Joe Biden, who have battled for the top in recent Iowa polls.

The caucuses will begin on Monday at 7 p.m. CST (6:30 a.m. on Tuesday), and results are expected to begin rolling in within a few hours. Because voters may register as late as Monday, the caucuses could draw a late surge of attendance, particularly among independent voters or Republicans turned off by Mr. Trump.

By day's end, tens of thousands of Democrats will have participated in the Iowa caucuses, the premiere of more



Tight race: Former U.S. Vice-President Joe Biden, Senators Amy Klobuchar, Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders in Columbia, South Carolina, in this file photo. •REUTERS

than 50 contests that will unfold over the next five months. After more than a year of campaigning and more than \$800 million in spending, the caucuses will render the first verdict on who among dozens of candidates is best positioned to take on Mr. Trump in the November 3 presidential election, whom Democratic voters are desperate to beat this fall.

Do voters want someone with appeal to centrists, independents and disaffected Republicans, like moderates

Mr. Biden, Pete Buttigieg, the former Mayor of South Bend, Indiana, and Senator Amy Klobuchar? Or should the party choose a candidate who energises its liberal base and could bring out new voters, like progressives Mr. Sanders and fellow Senator Elizabeth Warren?

Impeachment trial
The race has been overshadowed in recent weeks, with Mr. Sanders, Ms. Warren and Ms. Klobuchar relegated to part-time campaigning in Iowa as they stayed in Wash-

ington for the impeachment trial of Mr. Trump.

Even if one candidate wins by a commanding margin in Iowa, Democrats may still lack clear answers as the race moves on to the other three early-voting States of New Hampshire, Nevada and South Carolina later in February. And whoever remains in the race by Super Tuesday, when 15 States and territories vote on March 3, will also confront billionaire former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who is skipping the early States in

favour of focusing on delegate-rich States.

Mr. Sanders, who finished in a virtual dead heat with Hillary Clinton in Iowa during his first presidential run in 2016, surged recently in many Iowa polls to move just ahead of Mr. Biden. But Ms. Warren and Mr. Buttigieg remain in striking distance. Many polls show a big bloc of undecided Iowa voters, creating the potential for upsets and late surges.

Record turnout
Iowa State party officials are expecting a record turnout, exceeding the nearly 2,40,000 voter attendance in caucuses in 2008 amid the excitement over Barack Obama's first candidacy.

A poor showing in Iowa could cause a front-runner's fundraising to slow and support in later States to dwindle, while a strong result can give a candidate much needed momentum that propels him or her to the nomination. Several Democrats who won the Iowa caucuses went on to clinch the party's nomination.

(With AP inputs)

China says it urgently needs protective suits and masks

It blamed the U.S. for 'panic' and not doing enough to help

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING

China said on Monday it urgently needed medical equipment and surgical masks as the death toll from a new coronavirus jumped above 360, making it more deadly than the SARS crisis nearly two decades ago.

The 57 new deaths confirmed on Monday was the single-biggest daily increase since the virus was detected late last year in the central city of Wuhan, where it is believed to have jumped from animals at a market into humans.

Reported in 24 countries
The virus has since spread to more than 24 countries despite many governments imposing unprecedented travel bans on arrivals coming from China.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the crisis a global health emergency, and the first foreign death from the virus was confirmed in the Philippines on Sunday.

"What China urgently needs at present are medical masks, protective suits, and safety goggles," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told reporters.

Factories capable of producing around 20 million masks a day are only operating at between 60 and 70% of capacity, industry department spokesman Tian Yulong said, adding that supply and demand remained in "tight equilibrium" owing to the Lunar New Year break.

Mr. Tian said authorities were taking steps to bring in masks from Europe, Japan and the U.S., while the Foreign Ministry said countries including South Korea, Ja-



Thorough checks: Indonesians arriving from Wuhan being sprayed with disinfectants at Hang Nadim Airport, Batam. •AP

Shortcomings in our virus response: China

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING

China's top leadership body on Monday admitted "shortcomings and difficulties" in its response to a coronavirus outbreak, state media reported.

The elite Politburo Standing Committee called for "improvements to the national emergency management system," according to

Xinhua news agency. "It is necessary to strengthen market supervision, resolutely ban and severely crack down on illegal wildlife markets and trade," it added.

Officials in Wuhan have been criticised for withholding information about the outbreak until the end of last year, despite knowing about the illness weeks earlier.

Trump impeachment trial to resume for final arguments

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump's impeachment trial resumes for final arguments on Monday before an expected acquittal later in the week that Democrats have said will be invalid because no witnesses testified.

The President was impeached in December for abuse of power over pressure on U.S. ally Ukraine to

announce investigations that would have helped him politically, including into Joe Biden, a leading challenger for this year's presidential ballot.

At only the third impeachment trial of a U.S. President, Mr. Trump is all but assured of being acquitted on Wednesday, the day after his annual "State of the Union".

Republicans hold 53 seats in the Senate to 47 for the

Democrats, but a two-thirds majority, or 67 senators, is needed to remove him from office.

Adam Schiff, the leader of the House prosecutors, known as impeachment managers, told CBS on Sunday that it was "pretty remarkable" that Senators on both sides had acknowledged that Democrats proved their case against the President.

Denmark arrests three Iranians on spying charges

ASSOCIATED PRESS
COPENHAGEN

Denmark said on Monday it had arrested three leading members of an Iranian Arab opposition group on suspicion of spying for Saudi Arabia.

Danish security service chief Finn Borch Andersen said on Monday that the suspected spying took place for six years from 2012.

Mr. Andersen said the three individuals had spied

on people and companies and that the information was sent to an unnamed Saudi intelligence service.

An unnamed Norwegian citizen of Iranian descent was arrested on October 21, 2018 on suspicion of helping an unspecified Iranian intelligence service "to act in Denmark" and of alleged involvement in the assassination plot. That suspect has denied wrongdoing and is being held in custody.

U.K. to review terrorism laws

Islamic State claims responsibility for London stabbing attack

REUTERS
LONDON

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson vowed to end the early release of convicted terrorists after an Islamist attacker stabbed two people days after he was set free half way through his prison term.

Sudesh Amman, jailed in 2018 for possession of terrorist documents and disseminating terrorist publications, went on the rampage after strapping a fake bomb to his body and wielding a stolen knife on a busy London street on Sunday. He was shot dead by police.

He had previously praised the Islamic State, shared an online al-Qaeda magazine and encouraged his girl-



Sudesh Amman

friend to behead her parents.

Mr. Johnson said the government would announce fundamental changes in dealing with people convicted of terrorism offences, saying he had come "to the end of my patience" with freeing offenders before they had completed their sentences

and without any scrutiny.

"I think the idea of automatic early release for people who obviously continue to pose a threat to the public has come to the end of its useful life," he said.

Mr. Johnson said the instances of deradicalising and rehabilitating Islamists was hard and the instances of success were few.

Amman's mother, Haleema Faraz Khan, told Sky News that he was a "nice, polite boy", who was radicalised online and in prison. "He became more religious inside prison, that's where I think he became radicalised," she said.

Meanwhile, the Islamic State has claimed responsibility for the stabbing attack.

German court nixes school niqab ban

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BERLIN

A court in Germany ruled on Monday against an attempt by authorities in Hamburg to forbid a 16-year-old schoolgirl from wearing a niqab during lessons.

The ruling, which cannot be appealed, has fuelled debate in Germany over whether schools should allow the niqab, a facial veil worn by Muslims which leaves only the wearer's eyes visible.

Hamburg education officials had ordered the girl's mother to ensure that her daughter did not wear the veil at school, a decision which the court overturned.

Britain, EU talk tough on trade

Johnson rejects full alignment with the bloc's regulations

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Britain and the EU laid down on Monday their red lines for post-Brexit trade talks, offering contrasting visions for their future relationship that raise the prospect of clashes to come.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson pledged not to "undermine EU standards", after the U.K. finally went its own way on Friday after nearly half a century in the bloc and an 11-month transition period began.

But he envisioned his country as a global champion of free trade, emphatically rejecting EU insistence on full alignment with Brussels.

"I see no need to bind our-



Boris Johnson

elves to an agreement with the EU," Mr. Johnson said in a speech at the Old Royal Naval College, which chronicles Britain's past as a maritime superpower. "We will restore full sovereign controls over our borders, immigration, competition, subsi-

dy rules, procurement (and data protection)."

"We are not leaving the EU to undermine European standards. We will not engage in any kind of dumping, whether commercial, social or environmental."

Fair trade top priority
In Brussels, EU's chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier formally offered a deep future relationship but only as long as Britain makes guarantees to trade fairly.

Mr. Barnier said fisheries and fair trade would be his top priorities in the talks.

Brussels will offer a close trading relationship - but will demand tough terms on fisheries and a level playing field for businesses, he said.

ELSEWHERE



OIC rejects Trump's West Asia peace plan

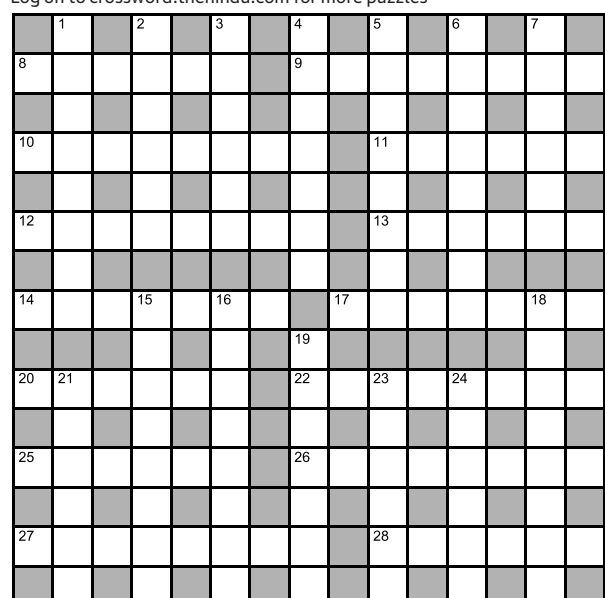
DUBAI
The 57-member Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) said on Monday it rejects U.S. President Donald Trump's West Asia peace plan. At a summit in Jeddah, the OIC called on member states "not to engage or cooperate with the U.S. in implementing it in any form". •REUTERS

6 Turkish and 13 Syrian soldiers killed in Syria

ANKARA
Turkey hit targets in northern Syria, responding to shelling by Syrian forces that killed at least six Turkish soldiers. A war monitor said 13 Syrian troops were also killed. •AP

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12849

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(set by Hypatia)

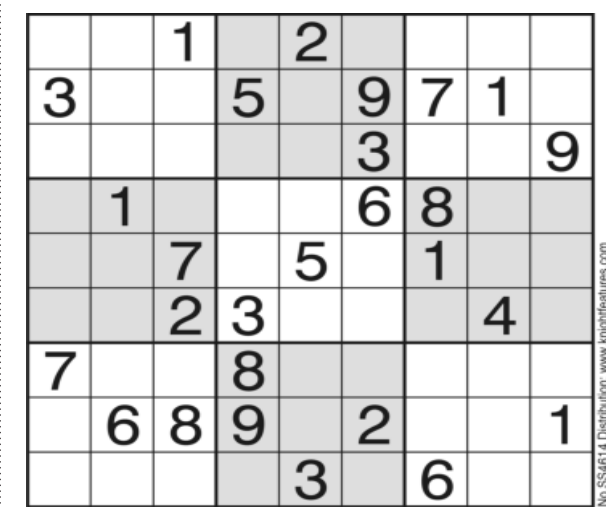
ACROSS

- Amount of grain the woman fed to tailless animal (6)
- Special passport collected at the last minute (8)
- Ask firmly - "Cannot sis nicely return covers?" (6, 2)
- For starters, Keralites extract real nimb, excluding lemon seed (6)
- Design, say Kung Fu Panda act in pep talk (5, 3)
- Wise like pharaoh and leader of Egypt (6)
- Shell out, earning it back in salary (7)
- Married female killed by imperfect, careless delivery (7)
- Adopt dog (6)
- Missing a golfing accessory, say one that's not there (8)
- Someone translating English for a minister (6)
- Referee takes time to deliberate (8)
- Joining in US to work in Nestlé is harsh (8)
- Can watch dog without leads (6)

DOWN

- Brunt of being tired (5, 3)
- One might pierce your ear? (6)
- Ecstatic when bowled out from behind (6)
- Standing and tidying all over the place (7)
- Prepare poor Spooner for novel shelf (8)
- Force target outside or choke (8)
- Including the man in top command (6)
- Thickly spread around one column (8)
- Partly bored now only, after retirement? Not surprising! (2, 6)
- Pick a bit of rind, etc. chewing through fruit (8)
- She's handy at reading between the lines? (7)
- Old student lost badge and became dull (6)
- Tax riding gear (6)
- Mark and Bill (6)

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 12848

S	P	R	I	N	G	R	H	A	N	G	E	R			
U	A	A	J	R	R	E									
D	R	A	B	S	C	U	T	T	L	E	O	F			
N	B	C	M	E	E	R									
S	A	T	I	R	E	P	A	R	E	N	T	A	L		
M	I	N	S	Y	F	B	I								
D	E	V	A	S	T	A	T	E	F	E	R	N			
T	A	P	B	E	D	W	E	T	T	E	R				
O	E	E	O	H	I	L	M								
S	W	I	N	E	F	L	O	A	D	I	N	R	O	A	D
A	D	F	E	P	U	N									
G	R	E	A	S	E	G	U	N	S	L	E	A	P		
D	G	T	E	A	E	T									
S	H	E	K	E	L	S	W	E	R	V	E				

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

8	7	6	2	9	3	1	4	5
2	5	9	4	8	1	3	7	6
1	3	4	6	7	5	8	9	2
3	9	5	7	6	2	4	1	8
4	8	1	5	3	9	6	2	7
6	2	7	8	1	4	9	5	3
5	4	8	1	2	6	7	3	9
9	6	2	3	4	7	5	8	1
7	1	3	9	5	8	2	6	4

FAITH

Lessons to learn

Generally purana stories speak in simple ways to awaken the human mind towards the eternal truths that the sastras and the Upanishads teach. But to access the richness in them that may not be available at surface level, one has to listen to expositions of the stories by those well versed in them, pointed out Sri Ramanujam in a discourse. Listening has to be followed by mulling over what has been heard to imbibe the full value of the nuances of Sanatana dharma which these stories reflect.

Some stories in the Bhagavata Purana are imaginary, as for instance the story of Puranjana; but it is an allegory of the essence and value of life, and of the journey of the embodied soul. Some are philosophical and teach sastra jnana; some others express scientific truths relevant for all times; and some such as Krishna leela stories are noted for the predominant bhakti rasa that one can enjoy and experience. Likewise, the story of Dhruva has many lessons to teach. Dhruva is the son of king Uttanapada, born of Suniti, the first wife. But the king's second wife Suruchi is favoured by the king and she denies Suniti and Dhruva all royal privileges. Niti in Su-Niti suggests righteousness while Ruchi in Su-Ruchi signifies taste and hence a materialistic bias.

Dhruva is unable to understand why he cannot sit on his father's lap. After all, is it not his birthright, he wonders. But Suruchi tells Dhruva for the fulfilment of that desire he has to gain the boon from Vasudeva. Though spoken with undue possessiveness, her harsh words become auspicious as far as Dhruva is concerned, for he is led to achieve what continues to be elusive for many. It also establishes the subtle workings of the Lord's Sankalpa in the life of individuals.