



Uganda's 'dictator in a suit' holds power, but at what cost?

MUGABE'S LAVISH 92ND BIRTHDAY PARTY ANGERS CRITICS



CHARLESTON, South Carolina: Democratic presidential candidate former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visits Hannibal's Kitchen, a 3rd generation family owned restaurant serving southern food, on Friday. — AFP

CLINTON EYEING DECISIVE WIN

SOUTH CAROLINA VOTES IN PRIMARY ELECTIONS

COLUMBIA: Hillary Clinton is eyeing a decisive win in South Carolina's Democratic presidential nomination race, hoping to gain momentum against Bernie Sanders before the high-stakes "Super Tuesday" contest. One week after Donald Trump barreled to victory in the state's Republican vote, yesterday Democrats took center stage in South Carolina, where 55 percent of voters in the 2008 party primary were black.

Clinton is expected to win the southern state, and leads in the national delegate count at this early stage, having won two of the first three nomination contests - in Iowa, narrowly, and Nevada. Polling stations opened their doors at 7:00 am (1200 GMT) and were to close 12 hours later, at which point a winner could be announced if one candidate has a clear lead. "It would be a super send-off to do well here," Clinton told several hundred mostly African American voters, who gathered Friday for an oyster roast and fish fry at the county fairgrounds in Orangeburg.

By contrast, Sanders received a cool welcome

from the same crowd when he arrived unexpectedly at the event on the heels of the former secretary of state. "In 1963, I was there with Doctor (Martin Luther) King for the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom," he said, earning some applause. Later in Columbia, Sanders delivered his final speech to an oversized, half-empty auditorium - while in Iowa, he had easily filled an arena with 5,000 supporters.

While Sanders has the support of some high-profile African Americans such as film director Spike Lee and the rapper Killer Mike, Clinton is backed by many local elected officials and black community figures. The 68-year-old also has the support of many of the same voters who supported her husband, Bill, whose popularity as a presidential candidate rivaled even that of Barack Obama.

Both presidents are men whom Clinton knows well, and she frequently jokes about being a part of their political lineage. "I'm not running to do either one of their third terms, but I do think they really did a good job for America, and it would be foolish not

to learn from them," Clinton said. In South Carolina, Clinton's campaign has worked hard to hammer home the message that she is the only candidate who can break down barriers still preventing minorities from getting ahead.

'Super Tuesday'

Some Clinton supporters say Senator Sanders, a transplanted New Yorker and self-declared democratic socialist who now represents Vermont, is little known in the south. Although Sanders, 74, was in South Carolina Friday, his prospects in the state are poor and he has invested few resources here. Instead, he is focusing on states like Ohio and Minnesota that vote in March, when a whopping 45 percent of the delegates who will attend the nominating convention are up for grabs.

He is to spend Saturday in Texas and Minnesota, while Clinton will be back in Columbia by night. Only three percent of delegates for July's nominating convention in Philadelphia will be awarded by the end of the day. But the 11 states that hold

Democratic nominating contests just days later on Super Tuesday will send a whopping 18 percent of the delegates to Philadelphia. Clinton is ahead in most of the 11 states, but Sanders has the edge in Massachusetts and his adopted home state of Vermont. Since he entered the campaign last year, Sanders has made up some lost ground with minorities in terms of face and name recognition.

Clinton's Ups and Downs

But Clinton's supporters, minority or otherwise, invariably say she is "qualified" and "experienced". Jay Smith, a retired African American, came to the polls in Columbia yesterday with her son Roy and young grandson. Both voted for Clinton. "She's the strongest of the candidates. She's been in it her whole life," Smith said. Bernie? "No, he's too old." Retired African American teacher Elvira Kennedy, 70, also voted for Clinton. "She's the best candidate," she said. "We never had a woman president, it's about time we give a woman a chance to mess everything. Men have been doing it for 300 years."

Tessa Blackwell, 29, a white restaurant manager, said she voted for Sanders. "I really love that he's doing such a grassroots campaign, and that he's not bought by any corporation," she said. "He's more for the people by the people." A win yesterday would mark Clinton's third since Feb 1, and could silence critics who say she has led a sluggish campaign. Since entering the race last April, Clinton's campaign has had its ups and downs. One of its lowest points was the FBI investigation into Clinton's use of a private email server during her tenure as secretary of state. The issue made headlines again on Friday, when the State Department released 1,500 pages of her emails to meet a deadline to disclose all releasable portions of her electronic correspondence in its possession by Monday night. But the candidate said she was not worried. "I am, you know, personally not concerned about it, I think that there will be a resolution on the security inquiry," she told MSNBC. Polls carried out last week gave Clinton a clear advantage in South Carolina: About 56 percent compared to 28 percent for Bernie Sanders. — AFP

PALESTINIAN WANTED BY ISRAEL DIES IN BULGARIA

SOFIA: A Palestinian who escaped from Israeli custody after being convicted of a 1986 murder has died at the Palestinian embassy in Sofia, Bulgarian prosecutors said yesterday. Police sealed off the mission building in the capital as an investigation began into the death of Omar Al-Nayef, who was jailed along with two other men for killing Jewish ultra-orthodox seminary student, Eliahu Amedi, in Jerusalem.

Prosecutors said in an initial statement they had been alerted by a representative of the Palestinian mission in Bulgaria "about a man who died as a result of violence" but a spokeswoman for the prosecutors later said no signs of violence were found on his body. She said Nayef was found in the mission's back yard and prosecutors were investigating whether he was pushed or fell from a high floor, as well all other possible causes. The mission, which is not guarded by Bulgarian security forces or its own guards and does not have camera surveillance, confirmed he was Omar Al-Nayef.

"Omar (Al-Nayef) Zayed is a martyr," the Palestinian ambassador to Bulgaria, Ahmed Al-Mathbouh, told



SOFIA: In this frame made from AP video, police cars are parked outside the Palestinian Authority's embassy on Friday. — AP

reporters. "We believe that those who persecuted him could have carried out something against him." Palestinian sources said he had been shot and a Palestinian prisoners' association and the militant Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine blamed Israel for his death, while President Mahmoud Abbas condemned what he called a "crime". The head of the Islamist Palestinian movement Hamas in the Gaza Strip, Ismail Haniya, also

denounced what he described as "a new Zionist crime". An Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman said it had learned of his death in the media and was studying the information. Amedi's sister, Yaffa Pinhasi, told Israel's Channel 1 television that she believed Israeli agents were behind the killing. "Whoever did this deserves praise," she said. Nayef was sentenced to life in prison for the murder but escaped in 1990 while being moved

to hospital after he began a hunger strike. He first went to the Palestinian Territories before fleeing to an Arab country and then to Bulgaria, where he had lived since 1994.

Bulgarian authorities had sought to detain him following an extradition request by Israel in late December, prompting him to seek refuge at the Palestinian mission and leading to a country-wide search after Nayef could not be found at his Sofia address. Official Palestinian news agency Wafa said Abbas had ordered an investigation into the circumstances of Nayef's death. "The president has condemned the crime in the strongest terms possible and has ordered the members of the (investigation) committee to travel immediately to Bulgaria to discover what happened," Wafa said.

Abbas' spokesman Nabil Abu Rdainah said the presidency would pursue the issue with Bulgarian authorities. Bulgarian chief prosecutor Sotir Tsatsarov told reporters there was evidence Nayef had been living at the embassy. He also said Nayef had been alive when medics arrived at the embassy early on Friday but died shortly after. — Reuters

IS ATTACKS KURDISH-HELD TOWN ON TURKISH BORDER

BEIRUT/DIYARBAKIR: Islamic State militants launched an assault on a Kurdish-controlled town on Syria's border with Turkey yesterday, prompting air strikes by the US-led coalition to try to drive them back. The headline fighters attacked Tel Abyad, which is controlled by the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia, and the nearby town of Suluk in the early hours of yesterday, YPG spokesman Redur Xelil and Turkish security sources told Reuters.

Coalition war planes carried out 10 air strikes to try to repel the assault, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported. It said at least 45 Islamic State militants and 20 Kurdish militia fighters had been killed. The attack was launched hours after a "cessation of hostilities" came into effect under a US-Russian plan, although the temporary truce does not apply to Islamic State and Al-Qaeda affiliate the Nusra Front, meaning the Syrian government, Moscow and the coalition reserve the right to strike them. The truce appeared largely to be holding across much of Syria.

Xelil said the YPG and Syrian Kurdish internal security forces were able to "crush this attack and encircle the attackers", although he gave no casualty toll. The YPG captured Tel Abyad from Islamic State last year in an

offensive backed by US-led air strikes. The town lies north of Raqqa and had been a key supply line for the jihadi capital. The Turkish security sources said the attack was launched on two fronts and that the sound of gunfire and explosions, audible from the town of Akcakale on the Turkish side, had continued for several hours. Intermittent gunfire could still be heard. The security sources and a witness in Akcakale said war planes thought to be from the U.S.-led coalition against Islamic State struck the jihadist positions and that the Turkish army had increased patrols on its side of the border. While not directly addressing the Tel Abyad attack, 14 Turkish F-16s patrolled the Turkish-Syrian border on Friday, Turkish military said.

Xelil said some of the attackers infiltrated from the Turkish border to the north, reiterating accusations that Turkey was supporting the group. Turkey has consistently denied those accusations and the security sources said recent measures to stop illegal crossings meant it was impossible that the attackers had entered from Turkey. Other attackers infiltrated from the south, Xelil said. He said dozens of Islamic State fighters had been killed. — Reuters