

Trump and Hillary prevail – For now

ASHFAQUE SWAPAN

THE good people of South Carolina and Nevada have spoken, and now we have a better idea of where the Republican and Democratic race for US president is headed.

Donald Trump, the provocative real-estate tycoon who strikes fear in the Republican Party establishment, has romped to victory in the South Carolina Republican primary with nearly a third of the votes, while former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has eked out a narrow victory over Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders in the Nevada Democratic primary.

The results provide a respite for Clinton, who has been smarting from a surprisingly powerful challenge from Sanders. The iconoclastic democratic socialist senator's charge that the present system serves the interests of the privileged has deeply resonated with many Democratic voters.

The Republican primary battle, however, remains a confusing muddle. Trump has completely thrown conventional political calculations out the window. Besides, there are still too many candidates, so the electoral math gets fuzzy. Take South Carolina, where Trump was the comfortable winner with only a plurality of the vote, around 32 percent. His nearest contestants, Florida Senator Marco Rubio and Texas Senator Ted Cruz, barely won more than 20 percent. The rest of the vote was divided by also-ran candidates.

Trump continues to confound political analysts and rile Republican elders as he goes about his merry way. His recent antics include an argument with Pope Francis (admittedly triggered by the Pope's remarks), support for a false historical story of a US general dipping bullets in pig's blood and shooting Muslims, and criticism of former President George W. Bush's Iraq war and his role during the 9-11 attacks.

Trump's attacks on the former president stunned political analysts. Surely, Trump had crossed a line. Well, predictions of Trump's political demise have always been risky, and so it proved again. Trump emerged essentially unscathed.

The same cannot be said of Florida Governor Jeb Bush. Last year, he started with



a \$100 million war chest, and overwhelming Republican establishment and donor support. Yet, even a last-ditch effort by former President George W. Bush failed to revive his campaign. He made a tearful exit.

The news isn't so good for firebrand conservative Ted Cruz either. The Texas senator has attempted to ride the wave of anti-establishment fury and expected to do well in South Carolina. However, it turns out that Trump has done better, leaving a disquieting question for Cruz: If he can't win here, where can he win?

This must be a matter of some solace for Republican Party leaders, as they have watched in horror while Trump and Cruz have been making waves. Party leaders consider either candidate a disaster for a general election, but until now, they had failed to unite in support of a candidate.

This may change with Jeb Bush's exit, and Florida Senator Marco Rubio is likely to be the beneficiary. His second-place finish is a morale booster, and donors are likely to flock to him. Nevertheless, he did finish a poor second to Trump, and he has



PHOTO: AFP

yet to win in any state.

On the Democratic side, supporters of Hillary Clinton are heaving a huge sigh of relief. Sanders' crushing victory in New Hampshire doesn't appear to have changed the general dynamics of the Democratic contest, and Clinton's strong support among minorities, particularly African-Americans, should stand her in good stead in the coming primaries.

Things will get pretty hectic on March 1, with Republican contests in 12 states and Democratic contests in 10 states. This

includes many Southern states with large African-American populations, and Clinton can expect to benefit.

Having said that, there is no question that Senator Bernie Sanders has changed the political conversation in the Democratic party. Sanders never tires of pointing out that the system is gamed in favour of the rich.

Nicholas Kristof, a columnist with The New York Times, agrees.

"America's political system is rigged. The deck is stacked against ordinary people," he writes. "That's the frustration that has fuelled, in very different ways, the anti-establishment campaigns of Donald Trump, Ted Cruz and Bernie Sanders in particular."

Kristof offers two examples. "One glimpse of the structural unfairness in America is this: A dumb rich kid is now more likely to graduate from college than a smart poor kid, according to Robert Putnam of Harvard University."

"Another: The 20 wealthiest Americans... are worth more than the poorer half of the American population, according to a recent report from the Institute for Policy Studies."

While many dismiss Sanders' policy prescriptions as too radical for US politics, sometimes ideas that appear radical can catch on. Social Security, a mainstay of retiree security in the US today, was first dismissed out of hand when suggested by socialist activist Norman Thomas.

"It's fair for Democrats to press Sanders on how, exactly, he intends to achieve his 'political revolution,'" writes Yoav Fromer in The Washington Post. "What is unfair is to dismiss his policies outright because they seem too far from the mainstream... Sanders' push to fix a rigged economy and curtail campaign cash may shape the future Democratic agenda, regardless of whether he gets the nomination... There is little doubt that Clinton's pragmatic sensibility is invaluable for getting things done. But the revolutionary tradition in which Sanders stands can make sure they get done for the right reasons."

The writer is a reporter and an editor of India-West weekly newspaper, based in California, USA.

Is literacy rate a sufficient indicator of quality of education?

AZWA NAYEEM

EDUCATION is a never-ending learning process that shapes and reshapes an individual to develop beneficial qualities. However, the education provided by the teachers in schools is an institutionalised process that caters to the students. The kind of education provided in schools takes up a major chunk of our learning process. So it is necessary that this education possess certain attributes in order to have a significant enough impact on a person. It cannot be translated into just a number, percentage or a low-slung benchmark.

Unfortunately, the kind of education that reaches out to the mass in our country has become merely a number or publicity stunt to flaunt the growing literacy rate or the rising enrolment rate. The quality aspect of education, which looks at cognitive, social and moral skills that are essential for constructing a highly skilled workforce, is hardly ever scrutinised and evaluated.

As far as quality of education is concerned, there are two ways of looking at it as per a report by the research programme consortium EdQual: "The 'economist' view of education uses quantitative measurable outputs as a measure of quality, for example enrolment ratios and retention rates, rates of return on investment in education in terms of earnings and cognitive achievement as measured in national or international tests." Thus, both quantitative and qualitative indicators are necessary in evaluating good quality edu-

cation. Firstly, looking at the quantitative measurable outputs of quality, it can be said that we have championed in terms of literacy rate, which according to a UN report in 2015 is 91 percent in contrast to 83 percent in 2000. There has been an improvement in the dropout rate from 21.4 percent in 2014 to 20.9 percent in 2015 (BANBIES-Education Database). At the same time, the enrolment rate has also recovered significantly from 87.2 percent in 2005 to 97.7 percent in 2014, according to BANBIES.

However, the return on the money spent in education, which shows how the skills achieved by the students are paying off as they enter the workforce, has still not been explored widely. The higher the level of skill, the higher will be the efficiency level contributing to the economy. Also, with higher skills and efficiency, the productivity level will also be higher. Increased productivity will result in higher profitability and thus greater return from the skills of the workforce will be ensured. However, despite the existing flamboyant literacy rate, it may be derived that the return on investment in education is not desirable given the lower middle income status of our country and a poor standard of living for the greater portion of the population.

Now looking at the qualitative aspect, according to a report by the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) in March 2015, a great number of the students completing primary school are still unable to read or write properly, or perform basic mathematical calculations. Although the literacy rate is going up, the question of defi-

ciency in the outcome of primary education still remains pertinent. The poor quality of education and the lack of proper teaching methods can be attributed as reasons for this crisis. Due to lack of proper training and development, teachers have a poor understanding of creative teaching methods. They tend to stay limited to orthodox methods of learning. According to a report by RACE, a non-

students are then asked to memorise and reproduce in their exams. As far as class discussion is concerned, teachers are reluctant to apply interactive learning methods and stay limited to 'yes' or 'no' questions. This learning method does not actually contribute to any life, social or cognitive knowledge of students. This limits the ability of students to gain skills that are necessary in practical life.

factors that are essential in a holistic development of a child. These include: the health of the students, their families and communities; the environment within and outside classrooms; awareness regarding gender and health, among other social issues; and training and assessment of teachers and the materials used by them. The paper provides a detailed understanding of each of the factors that can be beneficial in addressing the problem of lack of quality in education provided in the schools.

However, students get stuck in the vicious circle of swallowing the limited bookish knowledge taught in class, then reproducing the same thing in their exam scripts without even retaining much of what their 'learned'. Cognitive skills are linked to the ability to think critically and deeply on subject matters and connecting them with other relevant information to make better sense of it. It enhances one's ability to create new things and resolve problems better and faster. However, not high-lighting these skills in our current curriculum leaves deficiencies among children that result in an ill-equipped generation.

From the current context it can be seen that a significant part of the workforce in our country migrates for work; their salary then comes back to our economy in the form of remittance. Remittance is the biggest driver of growth in our country. However, if the workers remain unskilled and poorly educated, their income abroad will not increase and they will only

be assigned with blue-collar jobs that are highly risky and low paying. These workers, due to lack of education and skills, don't only have a very poor living standard abroad, but are also unable to protect their rights in a foreign country. Several cases of abuse and ill treatment against Bangladeshi workers abroad have been reported; this cannot only be addressed through policy reforms but also by providing quality education to low-income groups which will enable them to seek better jobs with higher pay and better working conditions. It is time to improve our image from being known as a nation that churns out an unskilled and uneducated labour force in only heavy, industrial jobs to one that produces knowledge-based, skilful employees.

The changing trends of the market requires students to be more and more tech savvy, and thus the curriculum and education methods need to be designed in a manner that prepares young students to compete in the constantly changing market. In order to become innovators, inventors, entrepreneurs and creators, students must have a wider range of skill sets. Schools need to give them the space to think outside the box. We need an education system that empowers the future generation of our country to dream big and an education method that enables them with the right strength, courage, morals and intellect to chase that dream.

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governmental research organisation, titled "Ambiguity in understanding among teachers and students render creative method ineffective - a study on primary school in Bangladesh", more than 50 percent teachers still do not have a clear idea about the creative method of teaching. They are more comfortable using guidebooks and notes, which the

In order to assess the qualitative or cognitive aspect of the education provided in schools in our country, it is important to first set a benchmark. In a paper presented by UNICEF in 2000, some basic guidelines were given on the quality of education, which took into account various internal (cognitive, social, moral skills, for example) and external

QUOTABLE Quote



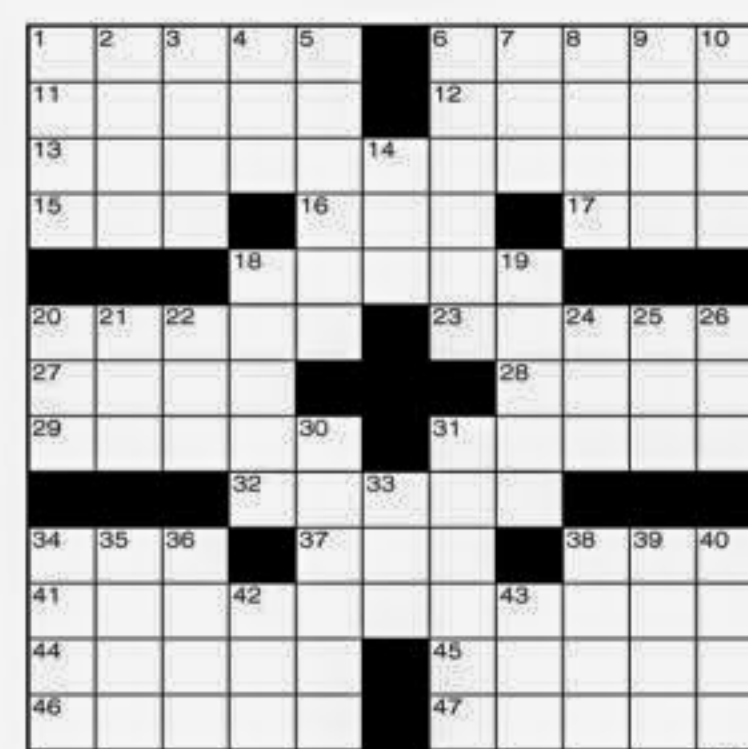
ROSA LUXEMBURG

Marxist theorist, philosopher, and revolutionary socialist

Shamed, dishonoured, wading in blood and dripping with filth, thus capitalist society stands. Not as we usually see it, ethically—but as a roaring beast, as an orgy of chaos, as a pestilential breath, devastating culture and humanity—so it appears in all its hideous

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS
- 1 West Point student
 - 6 English county
 - 11 Sports setting
 - 12 Trite
 - 13 Seer's specialty
 - 15 Touch lightly
 - 16 Joke
 - 17 Pig's place
 - 18 Floppy cap
 - 20 Jeweler's unit
 - 23 Hang loosely
 - 27 Wildly eager
 - 28 Pennsylvania port
 - 29 Pisa sight
 - 31 Prepare to propose
 - 32 Clear
 - 34 Commotion
 - 37 Coffee, slangily
 - 38 Court
 - 41 Astounding
 - 44 Potpourri bit
 - 45 Boring tool
 - 46 Sculpting medium
 - 47 Sheriff's group
- DOWN
- 1 Summer spot for some
 - 2 Opera song
 - 3 Carscar
 - 4 Conclusion
 - 5 Goal
 - 6 Produced, as a play
 - 7 Stashed
 - 8 Fancy flower
 - 9 Monthly bill
 - 10 Nervous
 - 14 Com unit
 - 18 Doughy ring
 - 19 Market direction
 - 20 Manx, for one
 - 21 In the past
 - 22 Squabble
 - 24 Common verb
 - 25 Diner dessert
 - 26 Twisty fish
 - 30 Thunder sound
 - 31 Abduct
 - 33 Stage signal
 - 34 Band boosters
 - 35 Slimming plan
 - 36 Not fooled by
 - 38 Costume store offerings
 - 39 Small bills
 - 40 Shrek, for one
 - 42 Dapper fellow
 - 43 Twosome



YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

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

BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



BABY BLUES

by Kirkman & Scott

