

News in Brief

Iran Young, Urbanized, Educated

Iran is a very urbanized society with a largely educated, young Muslim population that ranks as the Middle East's second-biggest, its latest census figures, published on Sunday, show.

The snapshot, issued on the website of the presidency's Planning and Strategic Supervision Department (www.amar.org.ir), also corrected some misconceptions about the country, notably by reporting fewer than expected Jews and Internet users, AFP reported.

The census, whose data was collected in 2011 and presented in resume last week by the department's officials, gave Iran's total population as 75.2 million, 99.4 percent of whom are Muslim.

That was larger than any other country in the region, except for Egypt (81 million, according to the World Bank).

Iranians accounted for 73.5 million of the total, with 1.5 million Afghans making up the biggest minority living in the country. Other minorities included Iraqis (51,500), Pakistanis (17,700) and Turks (1,600).

An overwhelming proportion of the population—71 percent—lived in urban areas, and Tehran and its satellite towns are home to 12.2 million inhabitants.

The literacy rate for those between 10 and 49 years was 93 percent.

Most of the population is young, with 55 percent under 30 years.

The proportion of young Iranians used to be even higher, but a rapidly slowing birthrate—an average 1.29 children per couple, compared to 1.62 in the last census in 2006—has resulted in a decrease in recent years.

Even though Iran—a Shiite theocracy—is almost completely Muslim, other faiths are present.

There are 8,756 Jews in the country, according to the census. That was fewer than the 20,000 figure previously estimated.

There are also 117,704 Christians, the census said, as well as 25,271 Zoroastrians (adherents of a faith that dominated pre-Islamic Persia), and 49,101 listed as "others." A total of 265,899 people did not give a religion.

Education is an important value in Iran, as seen by a big jump in the number of people pursuing higher studies at university or in religious institutions (10.5 million, up from 6.9 million in 2006).

Men and women are split almost equally 50-50 in this category, underlining the growing number of educated Iranian women.

Iran has the biggest group of Internet users in the Middle East—although the figure of 11.2 million declaring themselves connected was far smaller than the estimate of 36 million advanced by the telecommunications ministry.

Controversial Down's Syndrome Testing Gets Swiss Go-Ahead

Switzerland has given the green light for a new prenatal test for Down's syndrome amid controversy over whether this will lead to more abortions, a Swiss newspaper reported on Sunday.

Testing will be available in the country from mid-August following a decision by Swissmedic, the national agency for therapeutic products, the Neue Zuercher Zeitung am Sonntag reported.



The test, developed by life sciences company LifeCodexx involves screening pregnant women's blood samples for the presence of fetal Down's syndrome, which is also known as trisomy 21.

The German-based firm described the procedure, marketed as PrenaTest, as a "risk-free alternative to common invasive examination methods such as amniocentesis."

Demand is high in Switzerland from doctors and expectant mothers, the company said. The test will also be marketed in Germany, Austria and Liechtenstein, according to the German-based firm's website.

The Swiss national health insurer Santesuisse and the Swiss gynecological society are happy, as the cost of the test is to be reimbursed as part of standard medical care if it proves successful, the NZZ reported.

But the International Federation of Down's Syndrome Organizations has objected to such testing at the European Court of Human Rights.

The federation, grouping 30 associations in 16 countries, said in June that the Strasbourg court should "recognize the human condition and protect the right to life of people with Down's syndrome and those handicapped."

Down's syndrome is caused by having an extra copy of chromosome 21 and the risk increases as a woman gets older.

Invasive procedures currently used for prenatal diagnosis—in the 16th week of pregnancy—pose a one percent risk of fetal loss. The diagnosis is, therefore, only made available to high-risk women, which fails to catch all cases.

Chess for School Students



Chess strengthens a child's mental clarity, fortitude, stability and overall health.



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A plan for teaching chess to first-grade students of elementary schools is presently under study, said deputy education minister for physical education and health.

Kioumars Hashemi added that that chess, as a sport involving low cost, can help strengthen the thinking skills of students, ISNA reported.

He noted that following the coordination with Chess Federation of Iran, basic movements in chess will be taught to students.

Hashemi also said promoting the

sport culture among students, especially those of elementary schools, is one of the main objectives of the Education Ministry.

He noted that swimming skills are being taught to third-grade students of elementary schools since the past two years.

Based on the sports plans drawn up by the Education Ministry for primary schools, gymnastics will be taught in the second grade, swimming in third grade, rope jumping in fourth grade, tennis in fifth grade and track and field in sixth grade from the next academic year.

The official noted that the Education Ministry tries to help change the

attitude of students, families and society toward sport, for which allocation of more space and facilities, and instruction in new branches of sport are prerequisites.

"The families of students have good cooperation with the Education Ministry in this respect," he said.

Hashemi pointed out that since elementary school is very effective in shaping the character of students, new strategies have been adopted in the field of physical education to promote sports among school students.

"Sport trainers, who are very popular among students, play a very important role in this respect," he said. The official noted that efforts are

underway to make the plan cover all elementary students of the country.

School Expansion and Renovation Organization has allocated special funds for the development of sport spaces and establishment of new gyms in schools nationwide.

Countless studies have shown over the years that chess strengthens a child's mental clarity, fortitude, stability and overall health. Many schools in the world are now finding chess as an inexpensive but essential way of helping kids grow mentally.

The plan is expected to face hurdles among sections of Muslims who follow religious authorities opposed to playing chess.

Fasting Slows Aging

Fasting contributes greatly to our physical and mental health as imposing discipline gives the body's digestive system an opportunity to rest during the month of Ramadan.

By increasing cell renewal, fasting lowers the risk of cancer, delays the signs of aging and maximizes our perception and learning capabilities.

Dr. Mehmet Yavuz from Reem Neuropsychiatry Center explains when fasting is beneficial and when it is unadvisable, Todayszaman reported.

Strengthens Perception and Memory

As we become removed from our body's physical demands while fasting, our brain focuses on the tasks that are being done. Not dealing with unnecessary metabolic activities, the body can put more energy into the better working of the memory by means of focusing on perceiving and learning.

Dr. Yavuz explains that students are advised to have a light breakfast before having an examination because blood circulation to the brain is minimized when the stomach is full.

Stating that many renowned intellectuals and philosophers in history improved their thinking abilities by keeping themselves hungry for days, Dr. Yavuz emphasized that eating less causes the brain to work more efficiently, contributes to personal development and teaches us how to control behavior.

Impact on Wellbeing

The lipid and cholesterol levels in the blood, which play a key role in causing many diseases, damage our body when

it is malnourished. The walls of blood vessels harm blood circulation by becoming coated by cholesterol and this in turn causes many diseases.

This situation, which disrupts cell renewal and delays the renovation of tissue, expedites the aging process significantly.

Mentioning that the blood vessels of people who fast in Ramadan repair themselves because fasting decreases lipid and cholesterol levels in the blood, Dr. Yavuz pointed out that blood vessels are purified and blood circulation is in-



creased as a result of fasting.

When all these are taken into account, fasting makes our body and mind healthier and delays the signs of aging significantly, as it leads to cell renewal.

Resting Digestive Organs

As the metabolism is normally occupied with digesting the food consumed during the day, our body's defenses and

its immune system weaken.

Dr. Yavuz explains that while fasting, the time allocated to digesting food decreases and that the digestive organs have time to renew themselves.

Fasting enables the liver, which is constantly working, to rest, and thereby increases resistance to disease.

Lowering Cancer Risk

Cancer starts when aggressive cells somewhere in the body attempt to destroy it. However, this destructive activity may mislead the body's defense system by pretending that it is part of the body's own tissue.

If the body is dealing constantly with metabolic activities, it may not realize what's going on.

As for those who are fasting, the body has time to check itself and intervene in such activities immediately, whereby cancer formation is prevented in the early stages.

When Fasting Is Inadvisable

According to Dr. Yavuz, fasting may be unadvisable for people who are at high risk of a stroke, diabetic patients who face the risk of hypoglycemia, people suffering from an active peptic ulcer and those suffering from renal failure.

Patients with Parkinson's disease or Alzheimer's disease and people suffering from a serious psychological disorder are also advised to abstain from fasting.

Those who need to take regular medication for an ailment may fast under the supervision of the doctor prescribing the medicine. They may forego fasting while taking the medication and resume fasting once the ailment has been treated completely.

Power Cut Hits 300m in India

A massive power cut blacked out a vast swathe of northern India on Monday, leaving an estimated 300 million people without power in the worst outage in more than a decade, officials said.

Power Minister Sushilkumar Shinde said the entire northern grid collapsed for six hours shortly after 2:00 a.m. (20:30 GMT Sunday), causing chaos in nine states, including the

capital New Delhi, Financial Times reported.

The cut severely disrupted transport networks, including trains and metro services, while traffic light systems also went down in some major cities causing snarls in the morning rush hour.

Major hospitals and airports in the region were able to function normally on emergency backup power, officials said.

"We are used to electricity going occasionally, so we have a good backup system," said a spokesman for Safdarjung Hospital in New Delhi, N. Makwana. Shinde said a system overload was probably responsible for the outage. The grid was brought back online at 8:00 a.m., but running at only 60 percent capacity. "It is an accident, a failure," the min-

ister admitted to reporters, adding that a special committee was being set up to probe the incident.

In a statement, the Power System Operation Corporation (PSOC), which manages the northern grid, said the "entire northern region", which is home to 28 percent of India's 1.2 billion population, had been affected.

Interpol Announces Wildlife Operation Results

Interpol marked Global Tiger Day on Sunday by announcing the results of an operation to help save the endangered species that saw 40 arrests and the seizure of big cat skins and other body parts.

Operation Prey, conducted across Bhutan, China, India and Nepal, has also so far led to the seizure of other wildlife goods such as rhino horns, ivory and sea horses as well as protected flora, the global policing body said, Phys.org reported.

"The range of goods recovered during an operation primarily aimed at tiger protection again shows that criminals will

target any animal and any plant to make a profit," Interpol's David Higgins said in a statement.

Interpol's Environmental Crime Program coordinated Operation Prey, which involved police, customs, environmental agencies, narcotics bureaus, forest protection authorities and prosecutors.

The operation was conducted under the umbrella of Project Predator, an initiative created by France-based Interpol that covers the 13 countries in Asia where wild tigers can still be found.

Tender Notice					
Petrochemical kala company in tends to hold the following tender for its purchases. interested parties can visit www.pkc-ir.com for further information					
No	Description	IndentNo	Permit No	Date for Receiving Documents	Phase
1	P/F "DRESSER RAND" STEAM TURBINE	WPS-9040870/B33	189242	31/05/91	Renewal
2	PARTS FOR "TOMOE" BUTTERFLY VALVE	PBS-17508/B634	189242	31/05/91	Renewal
3	RESIN	PBS-08995/B633	189242	31/05/91	Renewal

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