

This Day in History

January 10

Today is Sunday, 20th of the Iranian month of Dey 1394 solar hijri; corresponding to 29th of the Islamic month of Rabi al-Awwal 1437 lunar hijri; and January 10, 2016, of the Christian Gregorian Calendar.

944 solar years ago, on this day in 1072 AD, Muslim rule ended on the island of Sicily, with the surrender of the capital, Palermo to the Norman invader Robert Guiscard, although Islamic culture and Arabic language continued to linger in Sicily for over a century-and-a-half, influencing arts and sciences. The first Muslims to arrive in Sicily were Syrians in 652. In 827, the Aghlabids, the Abbasid governors of the Province of Ifriqiyya, took control of Sicily, and in 902, Taormina, the last Byzantine stronghold on the island surrendered to the Muslims. In 909 the Aghlabids were overthrown by the popular Ismaili Shi'ite Muslim movement that established the Fatimid Dynasty in North Africa. Sicily passed into Fatimid hands, and Taormina was renamed "al-Mu'ezziya" in honour of the Fatimid caliph, al-Mu'ez le-Dinillah, whose famous Greek Muslim general from Sicily, Jowhar as-Saqali, went on to take control of Egypt from the Abbasid caliphate, and build the city of Cairo as the new capital of the Fatimids. After the fall of the last Muslim enclave on Sicily to the Normans in 1078 Guiscard's son, Count Roger I, kept the Arab administration intact and had Muslims among his advisers and court scholars, including the famous geographer, Seyyed Mohammad al-Idrisi al-Hassani – a descendant of Imam Hasan Mojtaba (AS), the elder grandson of Prophet Mohammad (SAWA). Muslim influence and Arabic language continued in Sicily till the 1240s when the last of the Muslims were deported from the island and mosques turned into churches.

922 solar years ago, on this day in 1094 AD, the 8th self-styled caliph of the Fatimid Ismaili Shi'ite Muslim Dynasty of Egypt-North-Africa-Syria-Hijaz, Abu Tamim Ma'ad al-Mustansir-Billah, passed away in his capital Cairo, at the age of 65, after a reign of 58 years, having succeeded his father, Abu'l-Hassan Ali az-Zahir as a 7-year boy. During the early years of his rule, his mother administered state affairs. The Iranian philosopher-poet, Hibatullah ibn Musa Mu'ayyad fi'd-Din ash-Shirazi, served him as the "da'i" (missionary), eventually attaining the highest rank of "Bab al-Abwab" (Gate of Gateways). Son of Musa Ibn Dawoud, the chief Ismaili missionary in the Fars region of Iran, he was the main ideologue and was also in charge of the "Dar al-Ilm" (House of Knowledge) in Cairo, where missionaries from both inside and outside the Fatimid Empire were trained. In the last twenty years of his reign, following the death of Mu'ayyad Shirazi in 1078, the caliph's Grand Vizier and head of the armed forces, the Armenian Muslim, Badr al-Jamali, became the supreme temporal authority, and succeeded in taming the turbulent Turkic Mamluks, who through constant infighting, had drained the treasury and destroyed the famous library of the Fatimids, scattering precious books and even using them to light fires. Many Iranians served in various capacities in the Fatimid court in Cairo, including the Arabic Grammarian Ibn Babshad.

853 lunar years ago, on this day in 584 AH, the Iranian scholar Taj od-Din Mohammad bin Abdur-Rahman Khorasani, passed away in Damascus. He was an authority on Hadith and Arabic lexicography. Among his works is a commentary on the famous literary masterpiece "Maqamat Hariiri".

755 lunar years ago, on this day in 682 AH, the Spanish Muslim scientist, Mohammad Mohiuddin Maghrebi, passed away. He learned jurisprudence in Andalusia or Islamic Spain, and mastered astronomy and mathematics as well. He travelled widely and spent some years at the Maragheh Observatory in northwestern Iran under the supervision of the famous Iranian Islamic genius, Khwajah Naseer od-Din Tousi. "Shakl al-Qate" and "Tahrir Usool Oqlidas fi'l-Ashkaal al-Hindesa" can be mentioned as his prominent works.

541 solar years ago, on this day in 1475 AD, in the Battle of Vaslui (also known as the Battle of Racova), Stephen III of Moldavia in alliance with other Christian powers, inflicted a defeat on Suleiman Pasha, the Ottoman Governor of Rumelia, in what is now Romania. The defeat angered Sultan Mohammad II, the Conqueror of Constantinople, who resolved to personally lead the next campaign, while it brought Stephen the title "Athleta Christi" (Champion of Christ) from Pope Sixtus IV. The cause of the battle was the refusal of the Moldovan ruler, who was initially a vassal of the Ottomans, to hand over some of the liberated territories to the Turks, in addition to Stephen's ambition to seize the principality of Radu Beg or Radu the Handsome, the Muslim brother of the notorious Dracula. The Ottomans were also distracted by the growing power of the Aq Qoyunlu leader, Uzun Hassan, on their east (in Anatolia, Iraq and Iran), and viewed it as a more serious threat to them than any army the Christians of Europe could muster. Thus, Sultan Mohammad's ultimatum to Stephen to forfeit Chilia, to abolish his aggressive policy in Wallachia, and to come to Constantinople with his delayed homage, brought no results. In 1484, however, his son and successor, Bayezid II avenged the defeat by conquering all of Chilia and leaving Moldova landlocked.

363 solar years ago, on this day in 1653 AD, the world's first newspaper, named "Gazeta", was published in Venice, Italy. Since the price of each copy was one Gazeta, the Venetian currency, the daily was given the same name, which was later used for papers published in other countries. In English became "Gazette".

192 solar years ago, on this day in 1824 AD, cement was made for the first time by the English chemist, Joseph Aspdin, and in this manner a major development took place in construction and development operations. This chemist studied and researched for a long time to prepare a material which would reinforce buildings. After several tests, he managed to make cement.

96 solar years ago, on this day in 1920 AD, The League of Nations formally started its work in Geneva, Switzerland, following its formation after World War I on the basis of a 16-article charter. Initially, the newly formed Soviet Union did not join it, while the France and Britain only supported it from outside. The charter of The League called on member states to build relations on mutual respect toward each other, and to take measures against violation of their independence and territorial integrity. Punishments were also specified for member states violating the charter, but the inability of the League to practically implement its decisions was the main problem and the main reason behind its dissolution. This was the main factor that made major European powers such as Germany and Italy to ignore this body during the years leading to World War II. After World War II, the United Nations replaced The League of Nations in April 1946, but also inherited some of the structural problems of its predecessor.

44 solar years ago, on this day in 1972 AD, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman returned to the newly independent Bangladesh as president after spending over nine months in prison in Pakistan. As a Bengali Muslim activist, he spear-headed the campaign for independence of East Pakistan from the domination of West Pakistan, which lay over a thousand miles away across the vast expanse of India. Mujib, as leader of the Awami Party, won the 1970 general elections, but was deprived from becoming prime minister of the whole of Pakistan by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who demanded that his People's Party be included in the government. Talks failed and the demand for independence intensified, resulting in a brutal crackdown in East Pakistan by military ruler, President Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan. Mujib was arrested and taken to West Pakistan as political prisoner. Pakistan's defeat by India in the December 1971 war resulted in the collapse of Yahya Khan's government in the wake of the surrender of East Pakistan to the Indian military and its emergence as independent Bangladesh. Mujib was released and returned home via London and New Delhi as Bangabandhu (Father of the Nation). During Mujib's tenure as leader, Muslim religious leaders and politicians in Bangladesh intensely criticized his adoption of state secularism. He alienated nationalists and those in the military who feared Bangladesh would become too dependent upon India. They worried about becoming a satellite state by taking extensive aid from the Indian government and allying with that country on many foreign and regional affairs. Mujib's imposition of one-party rule and suppression of political opposition also alienated large segments of the population. On August 15, 1975, a group of army officers invaded the presidential residence with tanks, killed Mujib and overthrew his government for what they perceived as treachery. His daughter Sheikh Hasina Wajed who was visiting West Germany, survived. She is the current head of state of Bangladesh.

5 solar years ago, on this day in 2011 AD, 10, Iran's intelligence services announced the arrest of culprits who carried out the assassination a year earlier of nuclear physicist Masoud Ali Mohammadi, in a months-long covert operation that also led them to penetrate the notorious Mossad spy agency of the illegal Zionist entity.

(Courtesy: IRIB English Radio – <http://english.irib.ir>)

Iranian art on Display in South Korea



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SEOUL (IRIB) - An art exhibition, handicrafts, opened on January 8 in 37th anniversary of the victory of the South Korea to mark the upcoming 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Organized by Iran's Embassy in South Korea and Seoul Metropolitan Library, the exhibition will run until February 8.

On the sidelines of the opening ceremonies of the exhibition, Iran's Ambassador to South Korea Hassan Taherian said that holding such exhibitions will pave the way for more cultural cooperation.

"The art exhibitions will help get South Korean people and elites familiar with Iranian culture, art, history and literature," he said.

Lee Yong-hoon, the Director of the Seoul Metropolitan Library also mentioned Iran-Korea cultural commonalities and voiced his readiness to expand bilateral cooperation.

The opening ceremonies were also attended by South Korean diplomatic members including ambassadors of Afghanistan, Bolivia and Tajikistan as well as diplomats of Jordan and Algeria.

Ashouradeh Assessment Complete

TEHRAN (CHN) - Environmental assessment of a project to develop Ashouradeh Island into a tourism resort will be complete in a month, according to a senior provincial official.

"Drawing on the island's ecotourism potential is what the people want," Reza Morovati, deputy for construction affairs at Golestan Governorate, was quoted as saying by Mehr News Agency.

The province's comprehensive tourism and ecotourism project is in place and once Ashouradeh's environmental assessment is finalized, it will be presented to the government for review and final approval.

The official said because "some camps perpetually stirred the pot" and raised environmental concerns, the assessment, which took almost a year, has been done thoroughly.

Ashouradeh is an island in the Caspian Sea, off the easternmost

end of Miyankaleh Peninsula to the northeast of Gorgan Bay. It is the only Iranian Island in the region.

Following reports that the government was planning to transform the ecologically-rich island into a tourist resort, environmentalists and NGOs staged peaceful protests and took to the social media to oppose the plan, citing irreversible environmental damage to the region should the plan go ahead.

Critics, including Esmaeil Kahrom, a senior advisor to Department of Environment chief Massoumeh Ebtekar, insist that as long as a sense of belonging and responsibility toward nature and the environment has not been instilled in the masses, tourist flows into protected zones can lead to more destruction of ecosystems.

"If the plan is to turn Ashouradeh into a tourist hotspot, then many facilities need to be constructed,

such as amusement parks, hotels, restaurants, maybe even race tracks. It needs infrastructure," Kahrom said in August.

Turning a profit is the main reason behind developing the region into a tourist resort, he charged, and stressed that any type of tourism activity will inevitably harm the environment.

"Tourists are not going to spend money just to stare at hotel walls," he thundered.

Kahrom, an outspoken university instructor, said despite Ashouradeh's ecological importance, it is devoid of tourism value, which further necessitates the need for efficient infrastructure.

This is while proponents of the project believe developing the region's ecotourism, such as birdwatching, is feasible.

Strong NGO Opposition

Over 170 NGOs and prominent experts have voiced opposition to plans calling for opening

Ashouradeh to tourism.

However, Farhad Dabiri believes the island has tourism potential.

"The issue of Ashouradeh Island has been blown out of proportion," said Dabiri, deputy for biodiversity affairs at the DOE.

Labeling critics as "irresponsible" for misleading the people, he said speaking about Ashouradeh has become "taboo".

"As long as tourists respect environmental rules, no harm will come to the area," he was quoted as saying.

Referring to the DOE's strict stance against hotel construction in Ashouradeh, the official said, "Unfounded claims such as building lodging facilities in the area have made this issue drag on for so long."

"If the Swiss failed to protect their wildlife sanctuaries-turned-tourist attractions, what chance do we have?" Kahrom asked as a matter of fact.

100-Second International Film Festival to Show Danish Films

TEHRAN (MNA) - A select group of Danish very short films (60-second) will be reportedly screened in side-event of International 100-Second Film Festival held in Tehran.

More than 100 Danish very short films which had been specially selected will be screened in the side-event. The side-event has been negotiated between Iranian authorities of very short film festival and Danish 60-second festival. Danish films will be mainly screened in city public spaces and films where the sound contributes little to the subject matter will enjoy special priority.

The first round of International 100-Second Film Festival had been held more than a decade ago in 2003. The deadline for sending short films has been set as January 15.

Picture of the Day



Arg-e Tabriz (Tabriz Citadel), also known as 'Arg-e Alishah', is a remnant of a mosque in the center of Tabriz, East Azarbaijan Province, which was built during Ilkhanid era.

Courtesy: IRNA