

This Day in History

(March 18)

Today is Wednesday, 28th of the Iranian month of Esfand 1398 solar hijri; corresponding to 23rd of the Islamic month of Rajab 1441 lunar hijri; and March 18, 2020, of the Christian Gregorian Calendar.

1258 lunar years ago, on this day in 183 AH, Imam Musa al-Kazem (AS), the 7th Infallible Heir of Prophet Mohammad (SAWA), was given a fatal dose of poison in his food through dates, during imprisonment in Baghdad by Sindi bin Shahak on the orders of Haroun Rashid, the 5th self-styled caliph of the usurper Abbasid regime, and achieved martyrdom three days later.

945 solar years ago, on this day in 1075 AD, the Iranian Sunni Muslim exegete of the holy Qur'an, narrator of hadith, and linguist, Abu'l-Qasim Mohammad Ibn Omar Zamakhshari, was born in the village of Zamakhshar in the ancient Iranian land of Khwarezm in Central Asia. He studied in Samarqand and Bukhara. He later lived in Baghdad for some years. He followed the rationalistic Mu'tazali doctrine and was known as "Jarallah" (Neighbour of God), since he stayed for several years in the city of Mecca, spending his time at the holy Ka'ba, the symbolic House of God Almighty. He wrote both in Persian and Arabic, and is best known for "al-Kashshaf", a commentary on the holy Qur'an, which is famous for its deep linguistic analysis of the ayahs. Another of his famous books is "Rabi al-Abraar", a voluminous reference work in which he has exposed the dubious parentage of Mu'awiya ibn Abu Sufyan. He has recorded many of the God-given merits of the Ahl al-Bayt of Prophet Mohammad (SAWA) and their superiority over all Muslims. Zamakhshari died at the age of 72 in the city of Gurganj in the ancient Iranian land of Khwarezm, which today is divided between the Central Asian republics of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

853 solar years ago, on this day in 1167, the Battle of al-Babein took place during the double invasion of Fatimid Egypt by Crusaders and the Turkic rulers of Syria, ending in a tactical draw between the two. King Amalric I of the usurper Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem was met by an army sent by Noor od-Din Zengi under command of his Kurdish general, Shirkuh, whose nephew, Salah od-Din Ayyubi (Saladin), served as his uncle's highest-ranking officer in the battle. The two opposing armies were in Egypt because of conspiracy by Vizier Shawar, who solicited the support of Noor od-Din's generals to gain control of the state. Shawar turned to Shirkuh for assistance. After Shawar found out Shirkuh's price for fighting for him was higher than he was willing to pay, Shawar turned to Amalric. Shirkuh was almost ready to establish territory of his own in Egypt when Amalric I invaded. After several months of campaigning, Shirkuh was forced to withdraw. The fate of Fatimid Egypt was, however, sealed. In the next couple of years, Salah od-Din Ayyubi, who schemed to become the vizier of the Fatimid caliph, backstabbed his master to seize power, overthrow the Fatimid Dynasty, burn the libraries and persecute Shi'ite Muslims.

779 solar years ago, on this day in 1241 AD, Mongols overwhelmed Polish armies in Krakow in the Battle of Chmielnik and sacked the city. The Mongols, led by Baidar, the son of Chaghtai and grandson of the fearsome Chengiz Khan, had invaded Poland in early 1240 as well and defeated the Poles in the Battle of Tursko. With the defeat of the Polish army, panic spread throughout Europe, but the Mongols did not advance.

510 solar years ago, on this day in 1510 AD, the region called Columbia in South America was seized by the Spanish invaders, who till the 18th century plundered this land and enslaved its people. In the early 19th century with the weakening of Spain as a result of Napoleonic wars, the Columbian people led by the famous South American freedom fighter, Simon Bolivar, ended Spanish colonial rule and established an independence republic.

376 solar years ago, on this day in 1644 AD, the third and last Anglo-Powhatan War began in Virginia in what is now the US as part of British encroachment on the territories of the Amerindians. The 2-year war ended with the capture and treacherous killing of Opechancanough by the white men. The first war had lasted from 1610 to 1614, while the second war lasted from 1622 to 1626.

205 solar years ago, on this day in 1815 AD, with the merger of Geneva canton, Switzerland took its current shape and form. Switzerland consists of 25 cantons administered in the form of a confederation. The Paris Conference, set up in France after the defeat of Napoleon, ruled that Switzerland should be neutral and not join any alliance, a status maintained till this day. Located in Central Europe it covers an area of 41,000 sq km.

162 solar years ago, on this day in 1858 AD, the German inventor, Rudolf Diesel, was born. He conducted extensive research on the driving force of engines and in 1893 managed to invent a device without electricity that uses the heat of compression to initiate ignition to burn the fuel, which is then injected into the combustion chamber. This is in contrast to spark-ignition engines such as a petrol engine, which uses a spark plug to ignite an air-fuel mixture. The diesel engine has the highest thermal efficiency of any regular internal or external combustion engine due to its very high compression ratio.

142 lunar years ago, on this day in 1299 AH, the prominent theologian and Islamic scholar, Ayatollah Seyyed Hussain Kouh-Kamarai, passed away. He was a student in holy Najaf of Ayatollah Sheikh Morteza Ansari, and in turn groomed at least 800 Ulema. He has left behind numerous books on Islamic sciences.

98 solar years ago, on this day in 1922 AD, the leader of India's independence movement, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, was arrested and sentenced to 6-year imprisonment by the British. He was, however, released after two years. By launching the non-violent movement, which he said, he learned after studying the exemplary life of the Martyr of Karbala, Imam Husain (AS), the grandson of Prophet Mohammad (SAWA), he succeeded in gaining independence for India.

80 solar years ago, on this day in 1940 AD, during the initial years of World War 2, Germany's Adolf Hitler and Italy's Benito Mussolini met at the Brenner Pass in the Alps and agreed to form an alliance of Axis powers against France and Britain.

58 solar years ago, on this day in 1962 AD, the struggles of the Algerian Muslim people for independence from France bore fruit after eight years of intense fighting that saw one million people killed by the French occupiers. Based on an agreement reached at the Evian-les-Bains Conference, France recognized Algeria's independence and withdrew its forces. Nonetheless, the terrorist operations of French secret army continued in Algeria for a while.

55 solar years ago, on this day in 1965 AD, the first spacewalk was achieved when Soviet Cosmonaut Aleksey Leonov performed an Extra Vehicular Activity, when he exited the Voskhod 2 spacecraft in orbit. The ability to work outside a space capsule was an important goal for future missions. The walk was not without problems. After ten minutes Leonov's space suit became over-pressured and basically became a non-functioning balloon. He had to greatly reduce pressure in the suit before he could re-enter the capsule.

8 solar years ago, on this day in 2012 AD, Pakistani academic, social worker and religious vocalist, Seyyed Sibte-e Ja'far Zaidi, was martyred at the age of 55 by sectarian terrorists in Karachi. Gifted with a commanding voice, he was a master reciter of elegies for the martyrs of Karbala and has trained a large number of students in the art of Sooz-Khani.

(Courtesy: IRIB English Radio - <http://parstoday.com/en>)

Chinese Actor Makes Donations to Iran's Coronavirus Fight

TEHRAN (IFILM) -- Director Xu Zheng has been named as the first international artist from China donating money to Iran's battle for containing the spread of new pandemic in the world.

China's ambassador to Iran said in a social media post the famed director donated 15 million yuan for Iran fight against the Coronavirus.

The donation includes over 500 medical devices, the ambassador's post added.

China has so far provided a large portion of financial and medical aid to Iran in a bid to help the country contain the virus spread.

The flu-like deadly Coronavirus originated in China in late 2019 and later spread to more than 100 other countries.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the virus a global pandemic.



Chinese director Xu Zheng.

Xu Zheng, born 18 April 1972, is a Chinese actor and director best known for acting in (2012) and 'Lost in Hong Kong' (2015) - two of the highest-grossing films in China.



Bronze Age Petroglyphs Found in Northeast Iran

SABZEVAR (IRNA) – The head of the office of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization in Davarzan, northeastern Iran, said on Tuesday that three sets of petroglyphs belonging to the bronze and iron ages have been found in the region.

Muhammad Abdollahzadeh said techniques used in making the pictures show that they belong to the two ages.

The pictures show humans, herbivores, carnivores, and scenes of hunting with bows and arrows, he said.

The 11th edition of the festival will be held between 24th April – 3rd May 2020.

Coronavirus Spreads Quickly, Before Symptoms

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- Infectious disease researchers at The University of Texas at Austin studying the novel coronavirus were able to identify how quickly the virus can spread, a factor that may help public health officials in their efforts at containment.

A team of scientists from the United States, France, China and Hong Kong were able to calculate what's called the serial interval of the virus. To measure serial interval, scientists look at the time it takes for symptoms to appear in two people with the virus: the person who infects another, and the infected second person.

Researchers found that the average serial interval for the novel coronavirus in China was approximately four days. This also is among the first studies to estimate the rate of asymptomatic transmission.

The speed of an epidemic depends on two things -- how many people each case infects and how long it takes for infection between people to spread. The first quantity is called the reproduction number; the second is the serial interval. The short serial interval of COVID-19 means emerging outbreaks will grow quickly and could be difficult to stop, the researchers said.

They found that time between cases in a chain of transmission is less than a week and that

more than 10% of patients are infected by somebody who has the virus but does not yet have symptoms.

Previously, researchers had some uncertainty about asymptomatic transmission with the coronavirus. This new evidence could provide guidance to public health officials on how to contain the spread of the disease.



Picture of the Day



The rainfall in the last days of winter has refreshed the central city of Yazd, which is preparing itself for the New Iranian Year in few days. (Courtesy of Mehr News Agency)