

This Day in History

(February 23)

Today is Tuesday; 5th of the Iranian month of Esfand 1399 solar hijri; corresponding to 11th of the Islamic month of Rajab 1442 lunar hijri; and February 23, 2021, of the Christian Gregorian Calendar.

1718 solar years ago, on this day in 303 AD, Roman Emperor Diocletian ordered the destruction of the newly built Christian church in Nicomedia in what is now Turkey, and the burning of all scriptures. Although he resigned two years later and was no longer the Emperor, the persecution of Trinitarian Christians as well as the monotheistic followers of Prophet Jesus (AS), lasted a total of 8 years, ending in 311 with the death of his successor, Galerius, who was also an obstinate pagan.

1489 solar years ago, on this day in 532 AD, Emperor Justinian I of Byzantine or Eastern Roman Empire ordered the building of a new Christian basilica in Constantinople – the Hagia Sophia, which is Greek for “Holy Wisdom” – shortly after concluding the “Eternal Peace” with Khosrow Anushirvan of the Sassanid Empire of Iran at a cost of 11,000 pounds of gold, following Roman defeats in Syria and what is now Turkey by the Persians. From the date its construction finished in 537 until 1453, this majestic building served as seat of the Greek Orthodox Church, except between 1204 and 1261, when it was converted to a Roman Catholic cathedral under the usurper Latin Empire of the Crusaders. When Ottoman Turks conquered Constantinople in 1453 and renamed it Islambol (Istanbul), it was added with the mihrab (prayer niche), mimbar (pulpit) and four minarets to serve as an imperial mosque until 1931, when Kamal Atatürk changed it into a museum. The Hagia Sophia served as inspiration for many other Ottoman mosques, such as the Blue Mosque, the Shahzade Mosque, the Suleymaniye Mosque, the Rustam Pasha Mosque and the Ali Pasha Mosque.

1306 solar years ago, on this day in 715 AD, Walid ibn Abd al-Malik, the 6th self-styled caliph of the usurper Omayyad regime, died in Damascus at the age of 47 after a 10-year reign, during which Arab armies conquered the Iberian Peninsula in the West and penetrated deeper into Central Asia and India, in addition to gaining territory against the Byzantines in Anatolia (modern day Turkey). He gave free rein to the tyrant Hajjaj Thaqafi, his governor of Iraq, to terrorize the people of Khorasan, Sindh and Transoxiana. Walid discouraged the conquered people to become Muslims since this would deprive him of collecting jizya and fill up his coffers. Fearful of the influence of the Persian language in the east and of the Coptic language in Egypt, he forbade the use of any other language except Arabic. In violation of the letter and spirit of the holy Qur’an, he promoted obscene music, singing and dancing. Walid I has earned lasting notoriety for martyring through poison, the Prophet’s great-grandson and 4th Infallible Heir, Imam Zain al-Abidin (AS) – the son of Imam Husain (AS), the Immortal Martyr of Karbala.

1171 lunar years ago, on this day in 271 AH, the lexicographer, and exegete of Holy Qur’an, Mohammad Ibn Qassim al-Anbari was born in Baghdad. He had a powerful and photographic memory and was very modest in teaching. In his book “*al-Musahhaf*” he has mentioned the “*tawatur*” (continuously unbroken chain of narration) of the famous “*Hadith Thaqalayn*” in which Prophet Mohammad (SAWA) has explicitly stated: “*I am leaving behind among you Two Weighty Things; the Book of Allah (Qur’an) and my progeny, the Ahl al-Bayt. Hold fast to them and you will never go astray, for the two never part with each other even when they return to me at the Fountain (of Kowsar in the Hereafter).*” Among his other works, mention can be made of “*Adaab al-Kateb*”. He passed away in 328 AH.

871 lunar years ago, on this day in 571 AH, the prominent historian and hadith scholar, Hafez Ali ibn al-Hassan ibn Hebatollah, known popularly as Ibn Asaker, was born in Damascus. He has left behind 134 books, among which mention can be made of the voluminous “*Tarikh Madinat ad-Dameshq*”. He was follower of the Shaferi school of Sunni jurisprudence, and has mentioned at least 400 ayahs of the holy Qur’an revealed by God on the unrivalled merits of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali ibn Abi Taleb (AS).

388 solar years ago, on this day in 1633 AD, British naval administrator and Member of Parliament, Samuel Pepys, who is now most famous for the detailed diary of important events he kept for a decade, was born in London.

222 solar years ago, on this day in 1799 AD, the French Emperor, Napoleon Bonaparte who had occupied Egypt to prevent it from turning into a British colonial base, attacked the Ottoman province of Shaam (made up of present day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine including the illegal entity called Israel). In response, the Ottoman Sultan declared war on France, and though Napoleon had some initial success, the French forces were forced to withdraw from Shaam because of British and Russian support for the Ottoman Turks.

200 solar years ago, on this day in 1821 AD, English poet, John Keats, died of tuberculosis at the young age of 26 in Rome. Born in London, he was one of the main figures of the second generation of Romantic poets, along with Byron and Percy Shelley. Today his poems and letters are some of the most popular and most analysed in English literature.

153 solar years ago, on this day in 1868 AD, William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, the first African-American to earn a doctorate from Harvard University, was born in Barrington, Massachusetts.

135 solar years ago, on this day in 1886 AD, American chemist, Charles Martin Hall, discovered aluminum. Aluminum is a white and light metal. It is very hard and is lighter than iron. It currently has numerous applications in industrial and non-industrial activities.

77 solar years ago, on this day in 1944 AD, Soviet dictator, Joseph Stalin, ordered the mass deportation of Caucasian Muslim nations. Chechens and Ingush were deported to Kazakhstan for resisting Soviet rule on the allegations of abetting the Germans. Around a million persons were evicted and loaded onto special railway cars. More than a third of the population died on the way. Also deported were the Karachays, Balkars, and Meskhetian Turks. Stalin, an ethnic Georgian, was an avowed enemy of Muslims despite being an atheist.

51 solar years ago, on this day in 1970 AD, Guyana declared itself a republic, following independence from British rule, four years earlier. Guyana was occupied by the Spanish in late 15th century and seized by Britain in the 17th century. Situated in South America with a coastline on the Atlantic Ocean, Guyana has a population of 10 percent Muslims, while a slight majority of the national population is made up of Guyanese of Indian origin.

25 solar years ago, on this day in 1996 AD, Ba’thist dictator Saddam had his two defecting sons-in-law killed by their own clansmen after luring them back to Iraq on promises of pardon. Minister of Military Industries Lieutenant-General Hussein Kamel al-Majid and his brother former head of the Republican Guards, Saddam Kamel al-Majid, along with their wives – Raghad and Rana – had fled on 7th August 1995 to Jordan, where they disclosed to the CIA and the British MI6, military and chemical weapons secrets. Saddam gave false promises of pardon, but on their return to Iraq on February 20 he ordered them to divorce his daughters, and three days later killed them on charges of treason. The two brothers, as senior members of the repressive Ba’th minority regime, were partners in Saddam’s crimes against the Iraqi people as well as against Iran during the 8-year imposed war. Hussein Kamel al-Majid was in charge of the brutal attack on Karbala in 1991 and the massacre of its people. He openly desecrated the holy shrine of the Prophet’s grandson, Imam Husain (AS), in which he gruesomely hanged countless Iraqi Muslims, boasting all the time that today he was the person in power and the Immortal Martyr of Karbala can do nothing.

Today, 5th of the Iranian month of Esfand is the day for commemoration of the famous Iranian Islamic polymath and theologian, Allamah Mohammad ibn Hassan, known as Khwaja Naseer od-Din Tusi. He wrote some 80 books in both Arabic and Persian on various subjects including “*Tajrid al-E teqad*” on theology, “*Akhlaq-e Naseri*” on ethics, “*Sharh al-Isharaat Ibn Sina*” on philosophy, and “*Kitab ash-Shakl al-Qatta*” on mathematics, etc. It is to be noted that a 60-km diameter lunar crater located on the southern hemisphere of the moon is named after him as “*Naseeruddin*”. A minor planet discovered by Soviet astronomer Nikolai Stepanovich Chernykh in 1979 is named after him “*10269 Tusi*”. Naseer od-Din Tusi died in Iraq and was laid to rest in the holy mausoleum of Imam Musa al-Kazem (AS), the 7th Infallible Heir of Prophet Mohammad (SAWA).

Iranian University Granted UNESCO Membership

TEHRAN (FNA) - Semnan University, in Northern Iran, inked a letter of understanding with UNESCO to get the UN body’s membership, Secretary of the 21th National and the 9th International Congress on Biology Shams Al-Zoha Abolmaali said on Saturday.

Abolmaali said that by signing the letter, Semnan University became a member of UNESCO and will open office, biology laboratory for regional and international cooperation.

He added that lecturers from Armenia, India and the UK had attended the event.

Semnan University has over 15,000 students in 210 fields.

In relevant remarks last December, Head of the Islamic World Science Citation Center (ISC) Mohammad Javad Dehqani said that 74 Iranian universities and research centers have ranked among the top 1 percent of the world’s top universities with the highest impact.

Dehqani said that Essential Science Indicators (ESI) database belonging to Clarivate Analytics



(ISI) published the latest list of the world’s top 1 percent scientific institutions that have received the highest number of citations in the past 10 years.

He gladly said that in the last update conducted in December 2020, 74 universities and research institutes from Iran have stood among the top 1 percent of the top univer-

sities globally. “Compared to the previous year, the number of universities and research centers in Iran increased by 14 percent,” Dehqani noted.



A still from Iranian short film ‘Spotted Yellow’.

Scotland Screens Iran’s ‘Spotted Yellow’

TEHRAN (MNA) – Iranian short ‘Spotted Yellow’, directed by Baran Sarmad will participate at the Glasgow Short Film Festival in Scotland.

Directed by Iranian filmmaker Baran Sarmad, the Iranian short ‘Spotted Yellow’ has made its way to the 14th edition of the Glasgow Short Film Festival

Scotland. This Scottish cinematic event will take place from 24 to 28 March 2021.

Spotted Yellow tells the story of Roya, a young girl with a yellow spot on her face. One day she feels the signs of a real giraffe in her life. And her normal life is slowly changing.

Tehran, Rome Observe International Mother Language Day

TEHRAN (IFILM) -- On the occasion of the International Mother Language Day, a webinar has been held at the initiative of the Cultural Attaché of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Rome with the theme of examining the history and prospects of teaching Persian and Italian language and literature in Iranian and Italian universities.

The webinar was held on Saturday and within the framework of a series of programs on the 160th anniversary of Iran-Italy relations.

Mohammad Taqi Amini, the Islamic Republic of Iran’s cultural attaché in Rome, as one of the attendees of the webinar said, “Teaching and learning Persian and Italian languages are the key to the comprehensive cultural relations between the two cultures and the rich and ancient civilization of Iran and Italy.”

Juraslava Romanova, Head of the Cultural and Press Department of the Italian Embassy in Tehran, was another guest who made a speech and praised the Cultural Counselor’s initiative in Rome for contribution in holding this webinar “that comprehensively introduced Iran’s culture and Italy and the Italian language.”

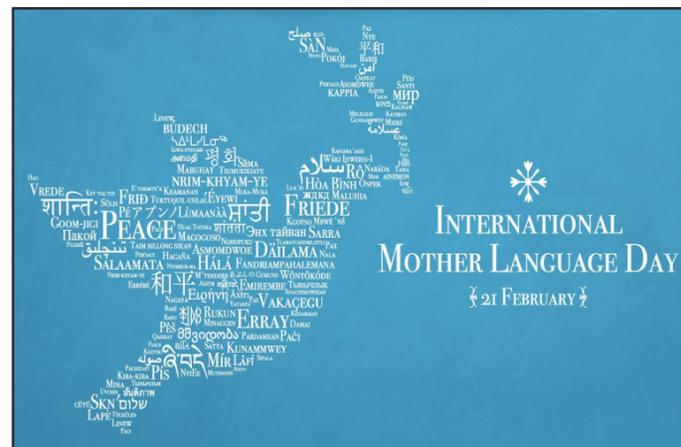
Romanova also explained the Italian school activities in Tehran and the Italian language and literature chairs at the Islamic Azad University in Tehran.

Besides face-to-face and virtual courses held by the Iranian

cultural institute in Rome, other Persian language and literature courses are held in Italian universities like La Sapienza, Bologna, Palermo, and Cagliari.

Meanwhile, Italian language and literature are taught in the Italian school of Tehran University.

Also, every year, several books are translated from Persian into Italian and vice versa



Picture of the Day



Ancient rock carvings have been newly discovered in the western Iranian province of Lorestan, according to the province’s Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts. These carvings include images of humans, animals and plants as well as scenes of hunting and horse riding. These shapes possibly date back to the first millennium BCE.

Courtesy of IFP News