

Ministry Against University Gender Quotas

Women Jobseekers To Outnumber Men in 2011

Minister of Science, Research and Technology said his ministry vehemently opposed any plans to define gender quotas for university admissions, ISNA wrote.

"The proponents of the scheme will not be able to lead the ministry in the direction they wish, unless they provide us with logical reasons about why they intend to restrict admission of girls students into higher education institutes," Mohammad Jafar Tofiqi, commented.

Tofiqi in an address to the Nationwide Festival of 'Women and Research,' commended women researchers and said, "Women in Iran have had fewer opportunities to use their intellectual creativity than men."

He added, "We are living in a world wherein states on a higher scientific status have the last word in the political sphere. A country with advanced scientific and technological capacity will have a leading role in geopolitics, and this has added extra significance to the scientific progress of women."

The minister underscored the role of the young generation who are basically much more creative than the previous generation. "We are more in need of

theoretical than scientists and we should therefore do away with the obstacles against the advancement of young people."

Tofiqi insisted that the country would never attain development, unless women would play an equally important part in the process.

Meanwhile, speaking at the same gathering, presidential advisor and head of the Women Participation Center, Zahra Shojaei, predicted that the number of women seeking jobs would be 1.5 times higher than that of men in 2011.

She insisted that erroneous attitudes toward women must be rectified and their self-esteem improved.

"The national human development index will certainly improve with an increase in the number of women occupying managerial positions in the years to come," she said.

Shojaei pointed to the achievements of the reform government in women's programs and stated, "The scientific approach toward women's issues was formulated during the third post-revolution decade. The development of women research centers and NGOs, as well as the establishment of 'Women Studies' as a distinct branch of learning in five universi-

ties are the outcomes of the change."

She said that three charters on the status of women in the Islamic Republic have been devised, of which only one has so far been endorsed by the High Council of Cultural Revolution.

"The center has so far carried out 40 research projects on women's issues to help resolve their concerns," she concluded.

Tehran Working On Five-Year Operational Plan

Advisor to Tehran's Governor General on women's affairs, Rezvan Nayyeri, said an operational plan for women's activities over the next five years would be devised with the collaboration of provincial women committees, heads of the organizations handling women's affairs and scientific advisors of universities.

Posessing 43 women's social/cultural centers, Tehran ranks first nationwide in this regard, she said, adding new centers

would be inaugurated in the provincial towns of Shemiranat, Firouzkuh and Nazar Abad.

Nayyeri added a job generation scheme for girl university graduates had been ratified. "The plan would be executed based on the number of jobless graduates announced by every provincial town with an aim to familiarize them with various employment fields."

She termed as successful the results of the 'Healthy Family' plan in

three Tehran districts as well as the towns of Varamin and Firouzkuh and said, "The plan covered subjects such as fertility health, family law and psychology."

She pointed to Governor General's Office decision to provide housewives with information technology (IT) education and said, "This will help establish closer ties among mothers and their children who spend a lot of time working with computers and on the Internet."

Arak Hosts Exclusive Exhibit

The Second Nationwide Exhibition of Women Capabilities opened on Dec. 14 at the permanent international fairgrounds of Arak, in Markazi province, IRNA reported.

The social, cultural, political, economic, artistic and managerial potentials of women from 18 provinces were exhibited in 110 pavilions.

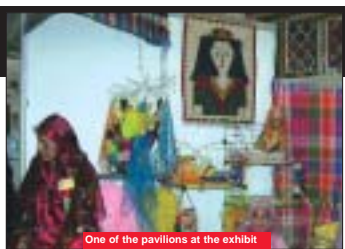
Tribal women from Fars, southern and northern regions also displayed their lifestyles, daily chores and traditional costumes on the sidelines of the exhibition, which closed on Sunday.

Advisor to the Interior Minister, Fakhrossadat Mohtashami-Pour, told the inaugural ceremony, "Comprising half of the

country's population, women have an influential role in the development process and this has to be recognized."

She criticized the extremist traditional attitudes toward women as a serious obstacle against empowerment of women.

Mohtashami-Pour insisted that women must be given a rightful share of socioeconomic activities. "Providing women with education and support is a duty of the



One of the pavilions at the exhibit statesmen. Women must be equipped with cutting-edge knowledge and skills," she said. "The Interior Ministry

places special emphasis on job generation schemes for women in a bid to avert probable employment crises."

Dynamic Role in Environmental NGOs

Women are in charge of more than 40 of a total 550 non-governmental organizations dealing with environmental issues, an official with the Department of Environment, Zahra Javaherian, told IRNA.

Director general of the DoE's Office for Information and Planning Office added that one of the most important objectives of the department is to raise the awareness of women as well as environmental executives and policymakers as two groups who have a major influence on the environment. She said women comprise the majority of members of environmental NGOs operated by women directors.



Women have played an important role in anti-pollution schemes.

She noted that women are more interested in environmental issues than men. "Instructors will provide rural and urban women with face-to-face training on environmental preservation," Javaherian added. She pointed out that the

Celebrities

Jane Austen

Jane Austen was born in 1775 Steventon, Hampshire, where her father, Rev. George Austen, was a rector. She was the seventh child in a family of eight.



The first 25 years of her life Jane spent in Hampshire. On her father's unexpected retirement, the family sold off everything, including Jane's piano, and moved to Bath. Jane, aged 25, and Cassandra, her elder sister, 28, were considered by contemporary standards confirmed old maid, and followed their parents.

Jane Austen was mostly tutored at home, and irregularly at school, but she received a broader education than many women of her time. She started to write for family amusement as a child. Austen's own favorite poet was Cowper. Her earliest-known writings date from about 1787. Very shy about her writing, she wrote on small pieces of paper that she slipped under the desk platter if anyone came into the room. In her letters, she observed the daily life of her family and friends in an intimate and gossipy manner.

Austen's father supported his daughter's writing aspirations and tried to help her get a publisher. After his death in 1805, she lived with her sister and hypochondriac mother in Southampton and moved in 1809 to a large cottage in the village of Chawton. Austen never married, but her social life was active and she had suitors and romantic dreams. Austen's sister Cassandra also never married.

Austen was well connected with the middle-class landed gentry that she portrayed in her novels. In Chawton, she started to write her major works, among them Sense and Sensibility, the story of the impoverished Dashwood sisters, who try to find proper husbands to secure their social position.

In all of Austen's novels her heroines are ultimately married. Pride and Prejudice described the clash between Elisabeth Bennet, the daughter of a country gentleman and an intelligent young woman, and Fitzwilliam Darcy, a rich aristocratic landowner. Their relationship starts from dislike, but Darcy becomes intrigued by her mind and spirit. At last they fall in love and are happily united.

Emma was written in comic tone. Austen began the novel in January 1814 and completed it in March of the next year. The book was published in three volumes.

Austen focused on middle-class provincial life with humor and understanding. She depicted minor landed gentry, country clergymen and their families, in which marriage mainly determined women's social status.

Although Austen was restricted to family matters, she passed the historical events of the Napoleonic wars, her wit and observant narrative touch has been inexhaustible delight to readers. Of her six great novels, four were published anonymously during her lifetime. Austen also had troubles with her publisher, who wanted to make alterations to Pride and Prejudice.

At her death in 1817 in Winchester, at the age of 41, Austen was writing the unfinished Sanditon. She managed to write twelve chapters before stopping in March 18, due to her poor health.

Austen was buried in Winchester Cathedral, near the center of the north aisle. Austen's brother Henry made her authorship public after her death. It was not until the publication of Austen-Leigh's Memoir in 1870 that a Jane Austen cult began to develop. Austen's unfinished Sanditon was published in 1925. She was an English writer, who first gave the novel its modern character through the treatment of everyday life.

Emily Dickinson (American poet, 1830-86):
A mother is one to whom you hurry when you are troubled.



Armenian women in Tehran buy Christmas trees on the eve of Christ's birth—Dec. 24. (Photo by Faraj Samadi)

Biological Clock
Delicate lines extend the curves of your eyes. You're beginning to feel older. You heard the first tick of your biological clock at age 30, when a glint of silver appeared in your hair. The ticking grew louder at 35, when crow's-feet made their debut. And it reached a crescendo at 40, when you wondered whether you were fertile enough to get pregnant. True, your body is beginning to age. But the process may not be as inevitable as you think.

In the past, the physical markers of aging led scientists to believe that the body was one big biological clock that got wound up at birth, never missed a tick through age 29, then spent the next 46 years or so winding down. Today, scientists suspect

that our biological clocks could actually keep on ticking for as long as 120 years. Some scientists are studying lifestyle changes that may help. Here's how experts suggest we do it: Share. Getting together with other women to talk about the changes in ourselves is crucial. Sharing your feelings with other women who are experiencing the same biological changes will help you understand and accept those changes. Examine your dreams. Another way to come to terms with a biological clock that's slowing down is through your dreams. Dreams are an access to parts of yourself you don't know. In them, you can identify how you feel about yourself getting older. Some women might see images in their dreams that indicate they are having difficulty accepting the breakdown of their biological clocks. The point is to bring these anti-aging feelings out into the light, where you can evaluate them instead of having them subconsciously determine your attitude toward getting older. Write a letter. For some women, one of the best ways to come to terms with aging is to write about the biological changes in a letter addressed to a friend or relative. You don't have to send the letter to anyone. The idea is to list your feelings on paper, then think about them. It's a process that will help you not only accept the notion that you're getting older, but also get to know yourself better. Feel you've accomplished something. Adjusting to aging is really not that difficult. If you've done things that you're proud of—built a bridge, raised a child, supported friends or family through life's crises, volunteered at a local hospice—then it's simply a matter of saying "Well, I like what I've accomplished."

Many people who have difficult times accepting their own aging are the ones who believe that they have done little with their lives. Take stock of your life now and establishing goals that, once attained, will give you a sense of accomplishment whenever you look back.

Midwifery Potentials Neglected

Fatemeh Rahimi Kian member at Tehran University of Medical Sciences said midwifery potentials in the country are not used properly. "Midwives charge less compared to gynecologists. For that reason, their services are mostly sought by low-income and average social classes." She gave assurances that midwives can provide safe services to mothers in low-risk conditions and refer high-risk cases to gynecologists. "Midwives can provide useful services on puberty education," Rahimi Kian stated.

"They can as well be invited to provide counseling in health centers, or parent-teacher associations and act as efficient mediums between school and families."

Controversy Over Bangla Parliament Seats

Bangladesh court gave the government 15 days to say why a controversial law guaranteeing 45 new parliamentary seats for women should not be ruled unconstitutional. The Islamist-allied coalition government plans to distribute the women's seats among various parties, which could choose whom to appoint. But women rights' groups oppose the move, saying they want "election, not reservation."

The high court has given the government 15 days to show why the legislation passed in November should not be declared unconstitutional, the official BSS news agency said. "We want women parliamentarians to be elected rather than selected," said Farida Akhter, executive director of a group called Policy Research for Development Alternative.

Women's rights groups in the majority Islamic nations say political parties should run more women candidates rather than use the reserved seat system. The court petition against the measure was filed by 13 women's rights activists including Akhter. Parliament now has only eight women members including Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and the leader of the opposition Sheikh Hasina Wajed. The government led by the Bangladesh National Party says the aim of the measure is to bring more women into the legislature and the seats would be on top of the existing 300 seats.

Singapore Reports Progress

Saturday (Dec. 18) marked the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, channelenewsasia.com reported. In a report sent to the UN last month, Singapore's Minister of State for Community Development Yu-Foo Yee Shoon lauded the changes to the country's citizenship laws this year. One amendment allows children born overseas to a Singaporean mother to also get Singaporean citizenship.

She said this change shows there is recognition of the changing role and contributions of women in Singapore today. Looking ahead, Yu-Foo called on everyone to adopt a helping-hands approach to address issues facing women now. Government ministries, together with the Singapore Council of Women's Organizations and other groups such as the labor movement's women's committee, also contributed their views to the Singapore report.