

Call for Ending Scientific Discrimination

Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Mohammad Husseini stressed the need for ending scientific discrimination and ensuring nations' access to advanced technologies.

Addressing UNESCO's General Assembly in Paris on Friday, Husseini said from the Islamic Republic's viewpoint, observation of justice will stabilize international relations, IRNA reported.

"Nations should have free access to advanced sciences and technologies, and imposition of any type of discrimination and scientific monopoly, such as restricting such matters to a certain region and depriving nations in other regions is totally denounced," he said.

The minister noted that preservation of the environment for future generations is a need and abiding by ethical norms alongside development of countries is a necessity.

He called for adopting measures to preserve the ecosystem of the Persian Gulf and to end all types of pollutions in that waterway.

Husseini noted that 2010 is an important year from the cultural aspect, highlighting the role played by the renowned Iranian literary, scientific and cultural



personalities in bringing the hearts and mind of the world nations together.

"Based on the initiative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Avicenna Award is meant to create a bond between ethics and sciences,

while other awards such as Ferdowsi and Sheikh Bahaie awards also play decisive roles in line with the same objective in different fields," he said.

According to Husseini, the International Philosophy Day



Mohammad Husseini

themed "Philosophy, From Theory to Practice" would be marked in Iran 2010 in collaboration with UNESCO.

"Due to the significance of Persian as the language for loving mankind and forging friendship among nations, the 1,000th anniversary of Ferdowsi's composition of the grand and immortal masterpiece of Persian language, Shahnameh (Book of Kings), would also be commemorated next year," he said.

Calorie Switch Key to Feeding Billions

Feeding Earth's expected population of 9 billion by 2050 will need a switch in eating habits and farming practices, if inequalities and environmental overload are to be avoided, French researchers said.

Teams from two institutes sketched projections for what could happen over the next four decades as the world's population swells by around 2.5 billion.

The statistical basis for their study was food production between 1961 and 2003, a period that included the "green revolution" of rice production that especially benefited third-world countries.

The researchers put forward one scenario that followed historical trends in food output and use of land in an open-market manner.

Under this projection, production would grow by 2050 thanks to intensive farming.

However, the movement toward meat production would also accelerate, inequalities between the nutritionally rich and nutritionally poor would widen, and environmental issues—as today—would only

after they have become a problem.

A rival scenario sees low-intensity, sustain-

compared with 17 percent in 2003.

Meat farming requires large inputs. Every calorie of meat produced by a cow or sheep requires seven calories of grass and other vegetation. For chickens and pigs, the ratio is one to four.

Achieving the goal of 3,000 calories per head would entail a cut of around a quarter in daily intake in rich countries today and a corresponding rise in sub-Saharan Africa.

Two factors would help the fight to feed the billions, the institutes said.

One is the big gains that can be made from fighting waste. Globally, more than a third of food produced each day is lost in the fields, in processing plants and distribution. Another is the growing preponderance of the elderly.

By 2050, "the average age of the world's population will have increased by 10 years. When a population ages, the calorific needs fall," Marion Guillou, president of the National Institute for Agricultural Research, said.



able farming where meat or fish would account for around 500 calories in an average daily intake of 3,000 per person, or around 15 percent of the diet

Religious Life Affected by Downturn

Before the fall of 2008, Christian and Jewish denominations were already in trouble. They were stagnating or shrinking, and congregations across faith groups were fretting about their finances.

The Great Recession made things worse. It's further drained the financial resources of many congregations, seminaries and religious day schools.

Some congregations have disappeared and schools have been closed. In areas hit hardest by the recession, worshippers have moved away to find jobs, leaving those who remain to minister to communities struggling with rising home foreclosures, unemployment and uncertainty, AP reported.

Religion has a long history of drawing hope out of suffering, but there's little good news emerging from the recession. Long after the economy improves, the changes made today will have a

profound effect on how people practice their faith, where they turn for help in times of stress and how they pass their beliefs to their children.

"In 2010, I think we're going to see 10 or 15 percent of congregations saying they're in serious financial trouble," says David Roozen, a lead researcher for the Faith Communities Today multi-faith survey, which measures congregational health annually. "With around 320,000 or 350,000 congregations, that's a hell of a lot of them."

The sense of community that holds together religious groups is broken when large numbers of people move to find work or if a ministry is forced to close.

"I'm really still in the mourning process," says Eve Fein, former head of the now-shuttered Morasha Jewish Day School in Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif.

The school, a center of religious life for students and their parents, had been relying on a sale of some of its property to stay afloat but land values dropped, forcing Morasha to shut down in June.

The news isn't uniformly bad. Communities in some areas are still moving ahead with plans for new congregations, schools and ministries, religious leaders say.

And many congregations say they found a renewed sense of purpose helping their suffering neighbors. Houses of worship became centers of support for the unemployed. Some congregants increased donations.

At Rock Harbor Church in Costa Mesa, Calif., members responded so generously to word of a budget deficit that the church ended the fiscal year with a surplus.

"We're all a little dumbfounded," says Bryan Wilkins, the church business

director. "We were hearing lots of stories about people being laid off, struggling financially and losing homes. It's truly amazing."

In the Great Depression, one of the bigger impacts was the loss of Jewish religious schools, which are key to continuing the faith from one generation to the next.

Jonathan Sarna, a Brandeis University historian and author of "American Judaism," says enrollment in Jewish schools plummeted in some cities and many young Jews of that period did not have a chance to study their religion.

Today, some parents, regardless of faith, can no longer afford the thousands of dollars in tuition it costs to send a child to a religious day school. Church officials fear these parents won't re-enroll their kids if family finances improve because it might be disruptive once they've settled into a new school.

News in Brief

Healthy Baby Born To Comatose Woman

A 40-year-old woman who fell into a coma in the 13th week of her pregnancy delivered a healthy baby 22 weeks later in a Bavarian hospital, German broadcaster Bayerischer Rundfunk reported.

She suffered a heart attack and fell into a coma early in her pregnancy. The University Clinic in Erlangen said it was the first time that a woman in a persistent vegetative state was able to deliver a healthy baby, the broadcaster said, Reuters reported.

The baby is now 1-1/2 years old, it said. It quoted Matthias Beckmann, a director at the hospital, saying: "We wanted to keep the spectacular case secret for as long as possible to demonstrate that we're not experimenting on people and that the child is still healthy."

The hospital had no comment and it was not clear whether the mother remained in a coma or whether the baby had been delivered naturally or by caesarean section. Other German media reports said a news conference was scheduled for next Wednesday.



Top World Universities Announced

The 2009 ranking of world universities shows a rise in the number of Asian universities and a fall in the number of North American universities in the top 100.

The sixth Times Higher Education table outlines the leading universities around the globe showing Harvard still top the realms of academia. While Cambridge moves up from the third to the second place, Oxford slips from the fourth to the fifth rank, Prestsv reported.

There are 16 Asian universities in the top 100, up from 14, with Japan having six top universities. The number of European universities rose from 36 to 39.

However, there has been a significant fall in the number of North American universities in the top 100, from 42 in 2008 to 36 in 2009.

The University of Tokyo, which is placed 22nd in the table, is the highest ranked Asian university and the University of Hong Kong moved up two places from the 26th to the 24th.

With University of Cambridge, University College London, Imperial College London and University of Oxford on top five of the list as well as 35 other universities, Europe is expected to experience a content academic year.



Mustached People Earn More?

Maybe American men should skip a day of shaving, especially when interviewing for a job.

Sporting a mustache may improve your chances of landing a higher paying job, according to a study commissioned by financial services provider Quicken and the American Mustache Institute which admittedly represents people opting for facial hair, Reuters reported.

The study found that mustached Americans earned 8.2 percent more on average than those with beards and 4.3 percent more than the clean shaven.

But the news is not all good. Mustached Americans also tended to spend 11 percent more and save 3 percent less than their collective counterparts, according to the study, titled "Saving and Spending Patterns of Mustached Americans."

"If efficiencies in financial management could be realized in the near term...it's highly probable that over the next four to five years, we will see mustached Americans' savings rate grow to surpass their bearded and shaven peers," research consultant Hans Menjou-Bartchen said in a statement.

The study was conducted during the first six months of 2009, examining a random sample of 2,000 mustached American men along with 2,000 bearded and 2,000 clean-shaven peers.

Flu Pandemic Alert to Stay

It could take years for the World Health Organization to downgrade the H1N1 flu from a pandemic to seasonal-like virus, the UN agency said on Friday.

The WHO moved its six-point pandemic alert level to the top rung in June in response to the spread of the new virus widely known as swine flu, which has killed at least 4,500 people, especially in North America, Reuters reported.

WHO Spokesman Gregory Hartl said health warning would stay in place until people can better fend off infection from the H1N1 strain.

"At some point in the future, there would be a recognition of the fact that if it's no longer circulating on a sustainable basis in communities. Then you would lower the pandemic

level," he said, while stressing: "There is absolutely no indication yet of that happening."

In previous pandemics, Hartl said, it has taken time for worrisome flu strains to become less contagious. The slowdown generally comes from people having some prior exposure to the virus or gaining protection from a vaccine.

"Eventually a pandemic virus becomes more like a seasonal virus and that normally will take something like two to three years," Hartl said.

