

# New bad weather batters south with flood waters



IranTimes: Iran was battered again by severe weather last week, but the challenge shifted from snow in the north to floods in the southeast. The north was still digging out from Iran's worst snowstorm in decades. The media have reported at least 64 weather-related deaths this month. Some were reportedly due to the gas shortages, but many were of people trapped out-of-doors in the worst weather. The weather was not the only factor claiming lives; nearly 90 people have been killed by faulty heaters over the last month. The conservative Jomhuri Eslami newspaper reported a total of 89 deaths due to carbon monoxide poisoning from badly installed or damaged heaters this month. Carbon monoxide is odorless and fatal in poorly ventilated areas. In the southeast, Iranian officials said power supplies, which had been cut off for nearly two days as a result of flooding, have been resumed to 700 villages in Sistan va Baluchestan province. The flooding also had devastating effects on rural roads, houses and electric and water supplies. The Sistan-Baluchestan provincial TV, Hamun TV, announced, "All the roads to and from Iranshahr and Nikshahr are closed due to the torrential rainfall and flooding." The station quoted a Mr. Baghbani, the head of the provincial electric power company, as saying, "The recent rainfalls and floods have cut water and electric power supply to 772 villages in the southern parts of the province." The station also reported that, according to the Housing Foundation in Sistan va

Baluchestan, "Torrential rainfalls and flooding destroyed 70 to 80 percent of the mudbrick houses in Bampur and in its suburbs." The governor general said, "Floods have destroyed most of the roads and infrastructure in the affected districts" and added, "In order to re-open the side roads, all equipment belonging to the local administrations, army and police vehicles and their machinery should be used." The Fars News Agency reported the head of the Iranian National Gas Company said the gas shortage problem has been completely resolved. Seyed Reza Kasaizadeh said all provinces, in which the pressure of gas was under the required level, now enjoy regular gas pressure, and said, "The gas cut in these provinces was due to defects in regulators, which are now being fixed by the National Gas Company personnel." The Iranian Students News Agency, however, reported that the gas has been cut in Kashmar and Shahrud and added, "According to the announcement by the city authorities, the gas will be cut from 30 Dey [January 20] until the completion of the repairs in the Damghan-Semnan 48-inch pipeline and will remain cut for about one month." In an interview with the Fars News Agency, Kasaizadeh said, "Currently, all the cities and provinces which had a low gas pressure are now enjoying a suitable gas pressure." He added: "Some sparse gas cuts which occur in some cities are because the gas regulators have been tampered with; the regulators are now being fixed by National Gas Company personnel."

# Women's rights activists freed



IranTimes: Maryam Hosseinkhah and Jelveh Javaheri, two journalists jailed for demanding women's rights, were released January 3 after being held for more than a month at Evin prison. The women were released from prison after the amount of bail was reduced to 50 million rials (\$5,300) from much higher sums. Nobel laureate Shirin Ebadi had earlier told Etemadi Melli, "Despite the fact that they have not committed a crime—and even if they have—the bail sums are too high." Reporters Sans Frontiers (RSF) said, "This is a relief. Hosseinkhah and Javaheri were imprisoned for no other reason than the views they

expressed. They are innocent and we would like to think their release marks an end to the repression of women's rights activists." It continued, "The authorities have been waging an all-out policy to deter people from expressing themselves freely on the Internet. Around 30 cyber-dissidents have been arrested in the past year. We urge the authorities to drop the charges brought against them." Hosseinkhah, 27, is a journalist for the feminist websites Zanestan and WeChange. Javaheri, 30, is a contributing author to both websites and one of the founders of the Million Signatures Campaign, a campaign calling for an end to discriminatory laws against women. RSF said the women were charged with "disturbing public opinion," "publishing false news" and "publicity against the Islamic Republic" because of articles they had written calling for women's rights under the Constitution. Hosseinkhah was arrested November 18 and Javaheri December 1. The women were among 33 arrested in March outside a revolutionary court where fellow feminists were on trial for organizing a Tehran protest in June 2006.

give you any answer to that question. I would say, 'I don't know. Give me time to research.' Now Jafari has a different answer. "Absolutely. I think we can 'deescalate' the aging process, slow it down, and increase our health span and have a better quality of life. "We've done really well. Since the 1900s, we have almost doubled the human life span. I feel like there's so much to learn; I wouldn't mind living another 50 or 60 years." Jafari is married and the mother of a 9-year-old son. She told the Iran Times, "I feel very blessed to wake up each morning and look forward to going to work. I love teaching and doing research. I enjoy teaching and inspiring my students. Teaching allows me to learn and there is so much to learn. My students teach me constantly."

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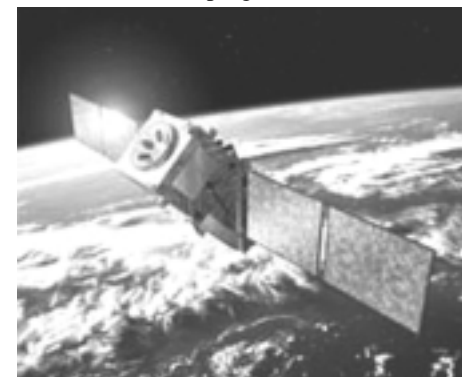
## Iranian helping...

University of California at San Francisco (UCSF), one of America's top pharmacology schools. After completing both her doctorate in pharmacy in 1994 and her residency in clinical pharmacy in 1995 at UCSF, she was offered a job teaching at her alma mater. From there, Jafari went on to teach at Western University of Health Sciences and the University of California at Irvine (UCI). Between 2000 and 2004, Jafari worked for Abbott Laboratories but left to start UCI's first program in undergraduate pharmacology in 2005. When The Orange County Register asked Jafari if there is anything humans can do to lengthen life, she said, "Three years ago, I wouldn't

# India launches Israeli satellite to spy on Iran

IranTimes: India launched an Israeli spy satellite Monday that is believed geared chiefly to looking on Iran. For India, the launch was touted as evidence that India is now entering the commercial launch market and competing with the likes of France and Russia. But the Islamic Republic might look suspiciously at India, a country Tehran often cites as a strategic partner, helping Israel to spy on Iran. Israel is capable of launching satellites and has lofted several previously. But given Israel's geography, it cannot put a satellite into a polar orbit—that is, an orbit where the satellite circles the earth over both poles and thus can look down on every square meter of the planet. The launch of the Tecsar satellite was not announced until after it was shot into space, Indian officials said the secrecy stemmed from the espionage nature of the satellite. The Israeli media reported that the satellite was important to improve Israel's ability to monitor Iran's military activities. An unnamed defense analyst told Agence

France Presse, "The kind of low-earth polar orbit they are putting the satellite into is meant to give Israel the capability to keep an eye on the Iranian nuclear program. This is bound to



be seen in the Islamic world as a sinister tie-up between Israel and India." Reuters said the satellite does not use cameras, like previous Israeli spy satellites, but a "special radar system" that allows Tecsar to view more than Israel's current camera-equipped Ofek satellites.

# Runner Baluchi awaits Guinness acknowledgment

IranTimes: Reza Baluchi, 36, the Iranian-American who literally spent the last six months running around the United States, says he's now waiting for the Guinness Record Book to certify his feat as a world record. On January 4, Baluchi returned to New York where he began his run June 17. Baluchi says it was the longest solo run around the perimeter of the 48 continental United States. Baluchi got to the United States originally while biking around the world for seven years. In 2002, he was arrested in Arizona for entering the United States illegally after he unknowingly crossed the border and set up camp. He was eventually granted political asylum. Baluchi says the goal of his latest run was to promote world peace and to show the world that Iranians were peace-loving people. He dedicated his run to his father, an Iranian rice farmer, who died in 2006. Baluchi left New York

on Father's Day, running along the east coast, across the southern border, up the West Coast and across the northern border. Robert Sweetgall held the previous Guinness record for the same course, running 10,608 miles in 280 days—about nine months. Sweetgall set the record in 1983, beginning and ending his journey in Washington, D.C. Baluchi began his run in New York on June 17, and returned to New York January 4, finishing his run in less than seven months. Baluchi has now sent Guinness his application for the new record along with a video and photo record of his run. Baluchi's run was sponsored by the Iranian-American community and others inspired by his message of world peace. All proceeds are going to Denver's Children's Hospital. Baluchi, who works as a mechanic in Denver, said, "I want people to know that the Iranians want peace. We are peaceful people."

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## Second 'suicide'...

claimed Lotfallahi had committed suicide in his cell. Ismail, the brother, told Radio Farda that Ebrahim was "well" when his family last saw him. "He said he would be released. He said he needed a few razors and some other things." Ismail said none of the family members was allowed to see the body. "A few days after they buried him there, they covered the grave with concrete." Saleh Nikbakht, the family's lawyer, told Reuters, "The family wants the body exhumed for examination by doctors, including one who should be their trusted doctor." The earlier death of the doctor, Bani-Yaghoub, also occurred under suspicious circumstances. Last October 12, police and security forces arrested Bani-Yaghoub and her fiancé in a public park in Hamadan. The couple was accused of having an "illegal relationship." The next day, prison officials informed Bani-Yaghoub's family that she had committed suicide in her cell. In statements to the Iranian press, Bani-Yaghoub's brother said she seemed fine when he had spoken with her on the telephone 30 minutes before her reported death. Stork, of Human Rights Watch, said, "These two young lives were extinguished in circumstances that make the official explanation implausible and cry out for accountability. The Iranian authorities must take credible steps to determine what actually happened and hold accountable any officials

responsible for these two deaths." The United Nations Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-Legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions provide that there shall be "thorough, prompt and impartial investigation" of all suspected cases of unlawful killing, including where complaints by family members suggest suspicious death. The principles state that if the "body has been buried and it later appears that an investigation is required, the body shall be promptly and competently exhumed for an autopsy [which] shall be available to those conducting the autopsy for a sufficient amount of time to enable a thorough investigation to be carried out.... In order to ensure objective results, those conducting the autopsy must be able to function impartially and independently of any potentially implicated persons or organizations or entities." There were these developments recently in other cases of detained Iranians: • Emadeddin Baghi, the award-winning former journalist who was arrested in October and accused of anti-regime propaganda, has been taken to a local hospital due to his failing health. Lawyer Saleh Nikbakht said, "Baghi has been transferred to a hospital in Tehran to be treated." Nikbakht told ISNA that Judiciary Chairman Mahmud Hashemi-Shahrudi had granted a request by the family to transfer the prisoner to a hospital. • Nobel laureate Shirin Ebadi's Center for the Defenders of Human Rights issued a statement protesting the detention of Ahmad Ghassaban, Ehsan Mansouri and Majid Tavakoli—students at Amir Kabir University. The students were originally sentenced to up to three years in jail, on accusations that they published anti-Islamic images in four reformist student newspapers. The students testified that conservative students had published the images to ruin the reputation of reformist students. The students have been acquitted of serious charges that included insulting Islam. "Not releasing Ghassaban, Tavakoli and Mansouri after several months is regrettable and an obvious violation of domestic and international human rights laws," the center said. • A recent report by Amnesty International said between 20 and 30 students were arrested on National Students Day, December 7, for joining a protest. All except two are still being held without charge. At least nine other students have been arrested in the past few days.

