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2010 visa lottery begins

IranTimes: This year's annual U.S. diversity visa lottery started October 2 and will run two months until December 1. The lottery, run by the U.S. State Department, will award 50,000 visas to applicants drawn at random by a computer. The winners' spouses and children 18 and younger will also get immigrant visas. Millions of people apply every year for the 50,000 visas, which are immigration visas, not tourist visas, and allow the winners to become U.S. citizens after five years. Interested applicants may apply only over the Internet at www.dvlottery.state.gov during the two-month window. Paper entries have not been accepted since 2003. Full directions are on the website. Although the lottery is held during 2008, it is called the 2010 Visa Lottery because the actual visas will be handed out between October 1, 2009 and September 30, 2010, which is the U.S. government's Fiscal Year 2010. The hardest part of the application for many people is the requirement for color photos of each applicant to be attached. Many applicants have to find someone more computer savvy to help them meet the lengthy requirements on the style and format of the photos. Winners of the lottery will be notified by regular mail by the State Department. Anyone receiving an e-mail telling them they have won and asking for a payment is being tapped by a fraud. The winners will receive notice next May, June or July. Those not chosen receive no notice. However, for the first time, applicants will now be able to check the status of their applications on line and determine if their applications have been selected or not. There may be some added competition for immigration visas this year as Russia has joined the list of eligible countries. The purpose of the lottery is to diversify the eth-



nic base of the United States. It is, therefore, open to nationals of all countries except those 19 that have sent more than 50,000 immigrants to the United States in the previous five years. That had disqualified Russians in recent years, but Russia is back on the eligible list this year. Kosovo, as a new country, has also been added to the eligible list this year. No other countries were added or deleted from the eligible list. Many people submit multiple applications thinking that will improve their chances of winning an immigration visa. But the State Department computer searches out duplicate entries. It not only rejects the duplicates, it also throws out the original entry in such cases. However, a husband and wife may each submit separate applications, and, if either wins, the winner may bring along the other spouse. Millions of people apply each year for the lottery, but the winning percentage is actually significantly higher than in most financial lotteries. For example, for the 2004 lottery, 10.2 million applications were submitted. More than a quarter, 2.9 million, were rejected for errors or as duplicates. Of the remaining 7.3 million, 50,000 or 0.7 percent were winners.

Israelis accept 12-year-old Iranian cancer patient

IranTimes: A 12-year-old Iranian cancer patient arrived at an Israeli hospital last month for emergency treatment of an aggressive brain tumor after treatments in Iran failed. Israel granted the child, who was identified only as Roy—a special permit to enter the country and he arrived at Ben Gurion Airport October 10 according to the Associated Press. From there he was taken to the Sheba Medical Cen-



Sheba Medical Center

ter near Tel Aviv, after treatments in both Iran and Turkey failed to provide relief. The extraordinary arrangement, in which the parents were also granted special entry permits into Israel, was mediated by an Israeli businessman of Iranian descent. Sheba hospital CEO

Zeev Rotstein said it wasn't the first time Israeli doctors had treated children from politically adversarial countries. "We hope that with the love and affection we give these kids, we are paving the way for at least some understanding between people," he said. "We can't change the politics. We are not politicians. We do this because we feel it is our job." Amos Toren, head of Sheba's Pediatric Hemato-Oncology Department, said his initial diagnosis was that the boy's year-old tumor was the most aggressive kind that exists among brain tumors. "He is conscious and he can smile, but it is hard," he said. "We will give him the most modern treatment possible and maybe we will be able to help him." Rotstein told the Associated Press that the child had been operated on before but that he may need to undergo another procedure in Israel. "There are very limited things you can do," he said. "But if this kid has any chance, it is here. "As far as we are concerned, we are not involved in politics. He is from a country that doesn't really like our existence here, but I think part of our job is to prove to countries like Iran that we are here to help the regular people."

Air France ends Paris-Tehran flights

IranTimes: Air France is halting all of its daily flights between Paris and Tehran at the end of October; the airline cited the economic slowdown as the reason and said it hopes to resume flights when the economy improves. The airline currently has eight flights weekly to Tehran—two on Sunday and one on each of the other six days. Air France and KLM are now owned by the same company. Air France said that KLM will now increase its weekly flights between Amsterdam and Tehran from four to five to compensate for the loss of the Paris-Tehran route. Iran Air will



continue to fly the Paris-Tehran route twice a week, with round-trips on Tuesdays and Fridays.

Zanjan students arrested for protecting woman

IranTimes: The Zanjan University students who exposed a university official for propositioning a female student have now been jailed and face prosecution for what they did. The Iranian Students News Agency reported that Provincial Prosecutor Jafar Gol Mohammadi had announced the students who exposed the university official's improprieties had "political intentions" and were now in custody and facing charges. The report did not say how many students had been jailed. There was no explanation for why the prosecutor waited four full months to make the arrests. But he may have been concerned about a campus uproar. The June incident prompted thousands of students to stage a sit-in that led to the university being closed for a while. Gol-Mohammadi initially spoke of the students who exposed the sex as bigger criminals than the propositioning dean. But that did not go over well. In July, he backtracked a bit and said, "We recognize the sit-in students as responsible forces." Gol-Mohammadi first arrested the female student who was propositioned in June saying, "Publicizing a sin is worse than the sin itself." Two weeks later, after much criticism, he announced he had arrested the college official who propositioned the woman. But in August, Gol-Mohammadi said the man and the female student were linked by a sigheh or temporary marriage contract, which can commit a couple to a marriage ranging from a few hours to 99 years. The angry students at the university, however, said the unnamed university official summoned the female student to his office in June and then offered to erase a disciplinary problem she faced in exchange for sex. Students at the university said they were suspicious about the university official and



had wired the woman with a radio transmitter before she entered his office. When she was propositioned, the students broke into the office and took the official captive. They videotaped their action and posted the video on YouTube. The prosecutor's remarks about the sigheh marriage would appear to eliminate all charges against the college official, who has never been named, without necessarily eliminating the charges against the woman for "publicizing a sin." But Gol-Mohammadi has not made clear whether the woman still faces charges. The Zanjan prosecutor said in June that the students had violated the law by acting on their own to seize the campus official rather than summoning the police first. Science Minister Mohammad-Mehdi Zahedi, whose job includes overseeing higher education, was also quoted as saying the taping of the woman's conversation with the university official was "illegal."

Another dual national is jailed

IranTimes: by Grace Nasri
A U.S. born Iranian-American student and women's rights activist has been jailed at Tehran's Evin Prison, 13 months after the regime freed four other dual nationals. It wasn't known if this was to be the start of yet another assault on dual nationals visiting Iran. Esha Momeni, 28, a graduate student at California State University at Northridge (CSUN), was arrested October 15. The arresting officers claimed to be traffic police who said they were stopping her for a traffic violation. But they took her to Evin prison. The Los Angeles native is reportedly being held without charge in Evin's Section 209, which is run by the Ministry of Intelligence. According to Amnesty International, Momeni is at risk of torture or other ill treatment. But if the experience of past detained dual citizens is any guide, Momeni is probably being treated reasonably well physically while being held incommunicado in solitary confinement and subject to interrogations about her political affiliations. In addition to being a student, Momeni is also a member of the Campaign for Equality, an organization aimed at ending gender discrimination within Iranian law. It is also known as the One Million Signatures Campaign for its drive to amass signatures on a petition for women's rights. Momeni had recently traveled to Iran and had been there for two months before she was arrested. She was in Iran to visit family and conduct research for her master's thesis on the Iranian women's movement, for which she had conducted video interviews with members of the Campaign for Equality in Tehran. According to Amnesty International, Momeni was arrested while driving in Tehran by police who identified themselves as traffic police and who reportedly told her she was being arrested because of a traffic violation. But the officials

subsequently escorted her to her family's home—which they searched—confiscating her computer and the footage of the interviews she had conducted. She was then taken to Evin Prison. According to an Amnesty International report, Momeni's family has not been allowed to visit her and was told by the arresting authorities that if they did not publicize news of her arrest, she would be released quickly. On October 20—five days after her arrest—relatives visited the Revolutionary Court in Tehran. Officials told them Momeni was still being investigated and no details would be released until the investigation was completed. Following this, her family went public. The United States has asked Switzerland, which represents U.S. interests in Tehran, to investigate. "My understanding is that she's a dual national," State Department spokesman Robert Wood told reporters in Washington, adding that he had no way of immediately confirming that. "We're working through the Swiss and any other appropriate channels that we feel are necessary to try to ascertain all of the information that we need to have." Momeni's attorney, Mohammad Ali Dadkhah, said no formal charges had yet been made but officials at the Revolutionary Court privately told her parents that her detention was related to her involvement in the "Change for Equality" campaign. The four Iranian-American dual nationals arrested last May and detained through September were all accused of trying to promote a "velvet revolution" in Iran. None was ever formally charged with anything. Iran's Foreign Ministry said it has still not been informed of her situation by the Judiciary. Momeni was born in Los Angeles while her father was a civil engineering student at Cal State Los Angeles. Her family

Continued on page 45 >>