

Esfahan cafe owners march for hookahs

Iran Times: Cafe owners in Esfahan traveled to Tehran last month and launched a protest against the recent ban on the smoking of hookahs in cafes and restaurants. "Dozens of cafe owners have staged a demonstration in front of the Majlis to protest against a ban on their activities" to provide hookahs, PressTV reported last month. The cafe demonstrators claimed their cafes had been shut down despite an official order from President Ahmadinejad allowing their businesses to reopen. "Police and health authorities in Esfahan are preventing us from doing our jobs despite a presidential order," one anonymous demonstrator said. Last December, Iran's police forced cafes around the country to stop providing hookahs—water pipes known in Iran as ghalian. But cafe owners say the ban threatens their livelihoods. One cafe union leader, who only gave his last name Alaei, said, "As the water pipe accounts for more than 90 percent of income in this business, the ban in recent weeks has made many shops only semi-active." Five years ago the Majlis passed legislation banning the popular pastime after the Ministry of Health



cautioned about the health risks associated with the hookah—which officials say is the equivalent of smoking 20 cigarettes at once—but the legislation was not seriously implemented until last year. The hookah is a pipe with a long tube passing through an urn of water, which cools the smoke as it is drawn through.

Azizi banned for hitting newsman

Iran Times: Khodadad Azizi, one of the most popular players in Iranian soccer history, has been banned from the sport for one year after striking a reporter. Azizi, 37, was the third Iranian to be hired by the German Bundesliga in the 1990s. He played the 2000 season for the San Jose Earthquakes. He retired two years ago from the playing field and is now a vice president of the Payam club of Khorasan. Payam is ranked 17th of the 18 teams in the league with just over half this season's games played. Payam has only three wins with six draws and nine losses. At the end of the season, the bottom three teams are relegated—that is, they are sent down to the B league while the top three teams in the B league are elevated to the premier league. The Mehr news agency reported that Azizi got into an argument with an unnamed reporter last week following a game in Mashhad between Payam and Moghavemat of Shiraz. Mehr said Azizi "assaulted" the reporter in the stadium VIP room. Mehr said the Iranian Football Federation had slapped Azizi with a fine of 100 million rials (\$10,000) and had barred him from all soccer activities of any kind for one year. Meanwhile, in Germany, Vahid Hashemian, 31, of the VfL



Bochum club was suspended after criticizing coach Marcel Koller. As reported in the media, Hashemian only complained that he wasn't getting as much playing time as he wished. He has only appeared in eight of the team's 16 games thus far this year and has not scored even one goal. Bochum is currently ranked 17th of the Bundesliga's 18 teams, whose bottom three teams are relegated at the end of the season. Koller said Hashemian had not played more because of injuries. In Spain, Masud Shojaei is getting playing time with Osasuna. But his team is currently in last place and also in danger of relegation.

Women like female cabbies

by Grace Nasri

Iran Times: The number of bright green, female-only taxis in Tehran is climbing as women say they feel safer with a fellow woman behind the wheel. Currently, there are about 700 female cab-



bies making a living by driving the streets of Tehran, working for a taxi agency run by women and for women. In the Islamic Republic, women are allowed to take male-driven taxis, but many conservative and traditional women prefer the womendriven cabs. Roqaya Khalili, who lives in a suburb of west Tehran, is one of 40,000 registered female customers who prefer the female driven taxis. "I feel safer in a woman's taxi, from all points of view," she told the BBC. "A lot of the men drivers are young and impatient, and they're not disciplined. Women are simply better drivers." Sahar Foghani, who took up driving to help her family make ends meet, agreed. "I've been driving for nearly two years now, and have never had a bump, or a traffic ticket." Foghani, like 70 percent of the drivers working

for Women's Taxis, owns her own car, paying for it in installments. "I can pay off the car over 60 months, so this is an investment as well as providing some extra income," Foghani said. "Tehran traffic is really heavy, so you have to love driving to do this job," she said. The agency's control center, which is also women-run, receives about 2,500 calls a day. At the center, drivers are also taught basic car maintenance. The concept of the femaleonly taxis was initiated by Mohsen Uruji—a man—who told the BBC he realized there was a gap in Tehran's transport system. "What was missing was a role for women," he told the BBC. "By setting up this purely private sector company, we've been able to provide jobs for many women, as well as a service for other women who want to travel around in a more relaxed way." Many of the drivers are Iran-Iraq war widows or divorcees who are referred to the agency by welfare foundations. The project is considered to be both progressive as well as traditional. While an all-women taxi service is not common in the world, many customers tend to be conservative Muslim women who feel uncomfortable traveling alone with an unknown male driver. Since its launch, the project has expanded to the point that Uruji is hoping to open up branches in other cities. "We started off with 10 cars," said Uruji. "Now we have 700, and plan to expand to 2,000 in Tehran, as well as opening up in other cities." The all-female taxi idea actually started in Qom a few years before it came to the capital.

Haddadi plays first game in chill Dakota

Iran Times: Hamed Haddadi played his first official game in the U.S. National Basketball As-



sociation (NBA) Saturday as the North Dakota

Wizards lost to the Iowa Energy 106-103 in the Wizard's first game of the season. The Ahvaz-born center, who was drafted by the Memphis Grizzlies in August, was temporarily sent to the Grizzlies' Development League affiliate—the Dakota Wizards in Bismarck—to get some playing time after being benched during the first 14 games of the Grizzlies' season. Although Haddadi's team lost, the 7-foot-2 Iranian center scored a total of 14 points and made six rebounds in the game.

Surgeon found innocent of speeding patient's death to harvest his organs

Iran Times: An Iranian-born transplant surgeon accused of hastening a comatose California man's death to speed extraction of his organs has been acquitted of the charge. A San Luis Obispo, California, jury last Thursday found Hootan Roozrokh, 34, not guilty of abuse after a two-month trial. In March, a judge dropped two other felony counts—of administering harmful substances and unlawful prescription—against Roozrokh. The naturalized U.S. citizen faced up to four years in prison if convicted of abuse of a dependent adult. The case is thought to be the first of its kind against a transplant doctor in the United States. In January 2006, the mother of Ruben Navarro, 26, received a call that her disabled and brain-damaged son had been found unconscious, in cardiac and respiratory arrest, but that he had been revived and transported to San Luis Obispo's Sierra Vista Regional Medical Center, located in central California. At age nine, Navarro was diagnosed with a neurological disorder and by his early 20s, Navarro's mental and physical condition had significantly deteriorated and he was placed in an assisted-care facility. By most accounts, when Navarro was admitted to the hospital he was already near death but doctors hoped they might save other lives by securing his organs. Several days after her son was admitted to the hospital, Ms. Navarro said a doctor at the hospital told her Navarro would not recover and that he would be taken off life support. Ms. Navarro said she received a call from the California Transplant Donor Network and agreed to donate her son's organs, saying she did not want him "to suffer too long." But prosecutors charged that Roozrokh purposefully prescribed too much medication to Navarro before he died in February 2006; they charged that Roozrokh did so in a failed attempt to harvest the man's liver and kidney. Roozrokh testified in his own defense, saying he did not try to hasten Navarro's death but did order painkillers to ensure the patient would not suffer when being withdrawn from life support. The doctor's lawyer, M. Gerald Schwartzbach, said Roozrokh—a surgeon based in San Francisco—had flown in to retrieve the organs and had administered the medication to ease the patient's suffering. "It was a prosecution that never should have been initiated," Schwartzbach said in a telephone interview with the Associated Press. Navarro's mother had authorized the harvesting of her son's organs, but because he was not brain dead, it was determined that the transplant procedure to be used would be "Donation after Cardiac Death," which requires withdrawal of life support leading to death prior to recovery of organs. Most donations involve brain-dead patients, but a growing demand



for organs has led to an increase in such cardiac procedures, which require speedy retrieval after a patient's heart stops. In the end, Navarro's organs could not be harvested because he did not die within an hour after being removed from life support; he died eight hours later. During the trial, the prosecution relied on testimony of a doctor and nurse who accused Roozrokh of improperly administering drugs to hasten Navarro's death. The attending physician, Laura Lubarsky, was given immunity from prosecution for her testimony. She said she did not realize she was in charge that night. "I had never experienced anything like that before, and I assumed they were following some sort of protocol," she testified. Roozrokh testified that the staff on duty and a transplant coordinator had relinquished their duty to take care of the patient, leaving him no choice but to order the use of drugs. "I felt he could suffer.

80-year-old woman kept from marriage by missing dad

Iran Times: After eight decades of spinsterhood, Setareh finally got a proposal from the boy-next-door of her youth. She's ready for marriage. But she can't tie the knot—she doesn't have her long-gone dad's permission, as required by Iranian law. Setareh, a retired foreign languages teacher, had turned 80 and was preparing to move into a retirement home to live out her final, lonely years. Then the love of her youth, Jamshid, returned and asked her to wed. The love struck couple went off to the Registry Office only to be stymied by bureaucracy. Iranian law requires that the bride must first have written permission to wed from her father or proof that the father is dead. But Setareh's father deserted the family before 1930 when she was only a baby. No one in her family knows where he went or what happened to him. The problem came to light when Setareh went to Tehran's family court to ask it to authorize the marriage. Setareh explained that her parents were forced to marry in the 1920s. It was a loveless marriage and the husband walked out not long after Setareh was born in 1928. Nei-

ther mother nor daughter ever heard from him again. In the 1940s, Setareh and Jamshid fell in love. They planned to marry—but Setareh's mother vetoed that idea. She insisted Setareh stay home and take care of her. Jamshid subsequently married another woman, who has since died, Setareh testified. Then Jamshid reappeared on Setareh's doorstep and, Setareh testified, "My heart started beating faster." For the second time, Jamshid proposed—and Setareh found a new reason to live. Judge Mahmud Baghal Shirvan asked the Registry Office to search its records and rule on the father's status. The judge also directed the police to check border crossing records to see if he ever left Iran. The judge didn't say how he would rule if no records were found. Women's rights advocates in Tehran said the case was just one more example of systematic discrimination against women. But the Women's News Agency, a state agency, said women needed their fathers' permission for marriage to protect them from "emotional" marriage decisions.

Iranian sought to trade visa for sex

Iran Times: An Iranian-born immigration officer in Australia has pleaded guilty to offering to provide a visa in return for sex. Afshin Abolfotouh, 41, was sentenced at the Brisbane District Court Monday to 18 months in prison after he was found to have promised 27-year-old Chinese national Qiao Liyuan that her boyfriend's visa application would be approved in return for sex. According to the Australian Associated Press (AAP), the court heard that Abolfotouh was an employee of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship late last year when Liyuan contacted him about an application she had submitted to obtain a visa for her boyfriend. Abolfotouh was found to have told Liyuan her boyfriend's ap-

plication was weak and might not be approved, but ensured her he would have the application approved if she slept with him. Abolfotouh continued to proposition Liyuan for more than a month before she finally agreed to meet him at her Brisbane home. But when Abolfotouh arrived at her house, police immediately arrested him; officials had been screening phone calls between the two after Liyuan notified them about Abolfotouh's propositions. Abolfotouh, who immigrated to Australia in 2004, was suspended from his job and later resigned. He pleaded guilty to one count of receiving a corrupt payment. He was handed an 18-month jail sentence but can be released on bond after serving three months.

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