

Experts debate Iran issue

Election of new Iranian president raises new question about U.S. foreign policy

By AMANDA SMITH
Staff writer

Experts on foreign policy in the Middle East took contrasting takes on how the United States should proceed in future relations with Iran Wednesday night at the MSC.

Mahul Patel, director of programming for the MSC Wiley Lecture Series, said Iran has undergone significant changes since the May 1997 election of President Mohammed Khatemi.

"We have had a bad relationship with Iran since the late 1970s, but Khatemi said he now wants to start a dialogue with America," Patel said.

Dr. Bahman Bakhtiari, an associate professor at the University of Maine, said the United States must improve foreign relations with Iran. The road to a new relationship between the two nations may not be easy, Bakhtiari said.

"As of today, the U.S. State Department has extended diplomatic relations to Iran. There needs to be some flexibility on the United States' part. Both countries need to move forward."

James Phillips, a senior policy analyst for Middle Eastern Affairs at the Heritage Foundation, said Khatemi does not promise improved relations with U.S. diplomats.

"His foreign policies with the West may not be as some have hoped," Phillips said. "He campaigned as an agent of social change. Khatemi will probably continue with domestic reforms but is unlikely to make drastic changes in foreign policy. I am not sure as president that he has the ability to make a clean break with foreign policy because of the control (still held) by conservative groups."

Bakhtiari said the election of Khatemi has ignited a silent revolution among the Iranian population and a call to reform the government.

The United States-Iran relations have been strained since Ayatollah Khomeini, a conservative fundamentalist, took control of the Iranian government in 1979.

Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois, the moderator of the lecture and an assistant political science

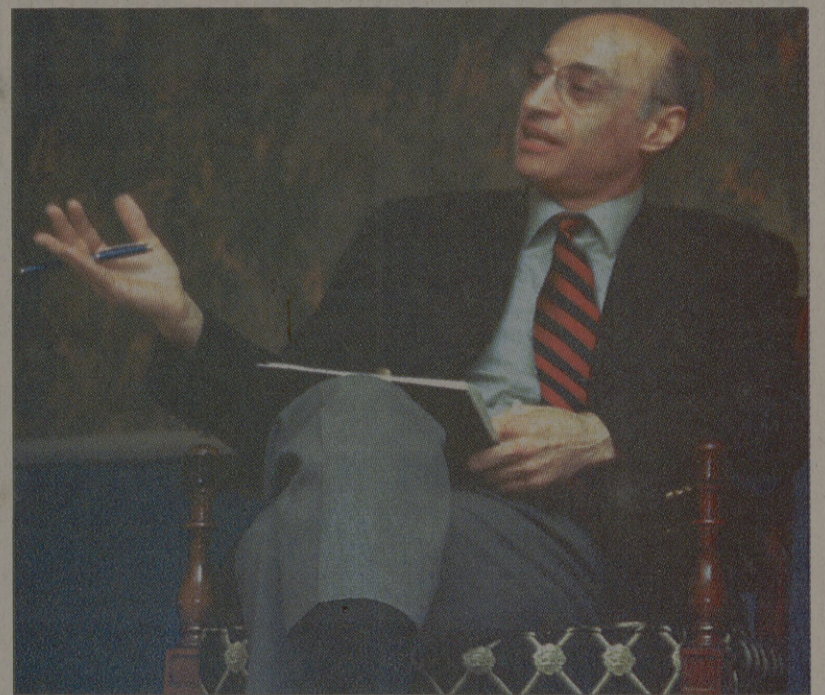
professor at Texas A&M University, said it would be beneficial for both countries to improve United States-Iranian relations.

"It would be good for the U.S. because Iran is a major oil supplier," she said. "The situation really is different (with the election of Khatemi) and with a relatively more moderate president. Khatemi is not calling us the demon of the world (as past leaders) anymore. Now, we are just the bad guys."

Currently, the United States continues to operate under its "dual containment policy," an attempt to isolate Iran and Iraq through trade sanctions and embargoes.

Astorino-Courtois said the U.S. containment policy will probably not last.

"The dual containment policy is not something that will last ad infinitum," Astorino-Courtois said. "Right now, the world economy is strong and oil prices are low. But if we were to fall into recession, then it would be hard to continue the policy. The European Allies want to trade with Iran and Iraq."



Dr. Bahman Bakhtiari spoke at the "Changing Face of Iran" lecture last night for the MSC Wiley Lecture Series.

Music man



Brendon Murphy, a senior construction science major, gives a few lessons at a local guitar shop Wednesday afternoon. Brendon is a member of the Voodudes, a local band.

SCONA opens with talks of inner-cities

By COLLEEN KAVANAGH
Staff writer

Students from universities across the nation will discuss educational, political, environmental and social welfare issues that affect U.S. cities at the 43rd annual Student Conference on National Affairs (SCONA) in College Station today and Friday.

Martha Middleton, SCONA vice chair for public relations and a sophomore elementary education major, said SCONA has planned for 102 delegates to attend, 80 of whom are from other universities.

The delegates will discuss possible solutions to problems in education, law enforcement, politics, neighborhoods, inner-city challenges, commerce, urban planning and social reform in America's cities.

"America's cities have seen such big changes in recent years like the move to the suburbs in the '80s," she said. "Now people are trying to make cities more attractive to live in, and everyone has to deal with the problems that exist in cities."

Middleton said students at the conference have the opportunity to hear opinions from students at other universities.

"SCONA doesn't exist to solve problems," she said. "We just provide a forum for discussion and possible solutions."

Bruce Katz, director of the Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy at the Brookings Institute, is the keynote speaker.

Katz, the former Chief of Staff for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development under the Clinton administration, worked as a principal adviser on adminis-

trative and legislative initiatives including urban economic development, community reinvestment, public and assisted housing and fair housing enforcement.

Dana Boehm, a 1997 SCONA delegate and a sophomore animal science major, said she learned from the experiences that the nationally renowned speakers and students from other universities shared at the conference.

"It was refreshing and enlightening to hear what the delegates had to say," she said.

SCONA, sponsored by the MSC, was established in 1955 to bring students together to examine topics of national and international importance.

Next year's conference topic will be announced at the closing banquet on Friday.

A&M retains more students than most schools

By AMANDA SMITH
Staff writer

A higher number of freshmen return to Texas A&M University than most state universities, according to an A&M Office of Admissions and Records report.

Gary Engelgau, executive director of the Office of Admissions and Records, said academic success usually keeps students at A&M.

"Our data suggests that students have to be academically successful (maintaining a 2.0 or above)," Engelgau said. "If students are doing well academically, then chances increase that students stay."

Last year, only four percent of more than 6,300 students who maintained a 2.0 GPR for their first two semesters did not return to A&M for Fall 1998, according to a new freshmen retention report released by the Office of Admissions and Records.

An Associated Press report said about one in every eight UT freshman did not return for the spring 1998 semester. More than 12 percent of last year's freshman did not return for the

second year.

The Texas A&M Office of Admissions and Records did not have the information on the number of freshmen who returned for the Spring 1998 semester.

Programs such as Aggie Networks may contribute to A&M's high retention rate.

Aggie Networks places a small group of freshmen general studies majors in residence hall and similar classes during their first semester at A&M.

Kriss Boyd, the general academic program director, said freshmen may benefit from having familiar faces in their classes.

"Helping students come to a big university and see familiar faces is important," she said. "Having a social group is very important for freshmen."

Vanessa Rice, an Aggie Network participant and a freshman business major, said the program made her college transition smooth.

"It was comforting to know students that are in your class," she said. "I think that it provides a sense of security. Reality sets in when your parents drive off for the first time."

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Vanessa Rice
Aggie Network

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online

http://battalion.tamu.edu
Look up with state and national news through The Battalion, AP's 24-hour online news service.

Cadet attempts suicide after murder conviction

FORT WORTH, Texas (AP) — Former midshipman Diane Zamora, sentenced to life in prison for the murder of a romantic rival, was placed under a 24-hour suicide watch Wednesday after wounding herself with a razor blade.

Zamora, convicted and sentenced on Tuesday, cut herself on the upper left arm sometime before Wednesday morning, said Tarrant County Jail commander James Skidmore.

The wound, which Skidmore called "superficial," stopped bleeding and Zamora concealed it from guards. It was noticed by a psychologist examining her on Wednesday afternoon.

Although the cut was not life-threatening and Zamora told officials she was not trying to kill herself, officials placed her under 24-hour supervision, Skidmore said. "To be on the precautionary side, she has been classified as potentially suicidal," he said. "She will remain under that classification until she goes to state prison."

Skidmore said it wasn't clear how long Zamora would remain in the county lockup before her transfer to Huntsville.

The prosecutors who secured

her conviction, meanwhile, are setting their sights on her ex-boyfriend and accused accomplice.

"We're only half done," lead prosecutor Mike Parrish said. "The man who pulled the trigger still needs to be brought to justice."

Robert Swofford, David Graham's attorney, said he won't accept a plea bargain offer by the state that would give his client a 30-year sentence for allegedly killing a 16-year-old-girl.

"That's out of the question," said Swofford. "We will go to trial with this case and you will see a very different trial than Diane Zamora's."

Swofford wouldn't talk about his defense strategy, citing a gag order, but he did say he would seek to have the trial moved out of Fort Worth.

"It's pretty clear that there has been an enormous amount of publicity here."

Zamora was convicted of capital murder in the Dec. 4, 1995, slaying of Adrienne Jones. Prosecutors alleged she ordered Graham to kill the girl after he had sex with Jones.

If his trial proceeds, Graham will face much of the same damning evidence that made prosecutors' case against Zamora seem like a slam dunk.

Hole in One

Aggie Fish Club hosts tournament to raise money for charity

By LYNDSEY NANTZ
Staff writer

The Aggie Fish Club (AFC) is helping the Girls Club of Brazos County fund after-school programs for elementary girls by hosting a charity golf tournament Saturday.

The tournament is open to amateur and professional golfers, with tee time at 7:30 a.m. for the professional golfers and noon for amateur golfers. The entry fee is \$40 per person and includes the greens fee, cart, T-shirt and lunch from Outback Steakhouse.

Sean Clements, public relations representative for AFC and a sophomore accounting major, said that the tournament is benefiting a great organization and is fun but competitive.

The Girls Club closed its doors over the Christmas break because of lack of funding.

"Most of the girls that go to the Club after school are from low-income families and if the Club is closed the girls have to go home to empty houses," Clements said. "We want the Club to stay open and hope the donation can help them stay working."

The Girls Club reopened their doors in late January and, with the help of 155 volunteers and donations, have started new after school programs including gymnastics, music appreciation and an arts class.

J.W. Butts, golf tournament co-chair and a sophomore business major, said the programs keep the girls in a safe environment.

"The girls can play outside, draw and make pro-



jects," he said. "But the place is just treading above water and needs as much support as it can get."

Pam Walker, executive director for the Girls Club, said the members of AFC have been supportive of the program for over three years.

"They have come out every Friday to play with the girls," she said. "It's wonderful that they took this project and ran with it. We didn't have to do much of anything except say yes. They are doing all the work."

Anyone interested can sign up in four-man teams at the MSC, Commons Lobby and Zachry until Friday.

More than \$1,000 in prizes and raffles will be awarded to the winning teams.