

South Korea's consumption of antibiotics edged down in 2015 but remained the highest among members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

## 400,000 foreign students studying in Iran

### Society Desk

Iran has spent \$266 million on the education of foreign nationals in the country, said the head of the Education Ministry's Office for International Affairs.

Speaking at a ceremony to sign a contract, named Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) between Iran and Japan, Khalili Babalou said although the unilateral Western sanctions created financial problems for Iran, about 400,000 foreign students are studying in schools nationwide.

He added that the cultural commonalities between the two nations led to the positive views about Japan among the Iranians.

The official said both nations had struggled with war and its aftermaths

— thereby creating many commonalities between the two countries.

"Iranian and Japanese officials hold similar views about education, thus exchanging experiences between the two countries will help improve their education systems."

He hoped that cultural relations between Iran and Japan will further expand in the near future.

Babalou said earlier that teachers, as cultural ambassadors, are representatives of Iran's Ministry of Education.

Addressing teachers who are assigned to overseas schools, he further said that instructors should be aware of their duties to the nation so they can fulfill their responsibilities well abroad. Since Iran has turned the threats into opportunities in scientific,



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nanotechnology and medicine fields, it has become a successful model across the region, he pointed out. He said teachers should uphold cultural values and

identity. Overseas schools should prioritize standardizing, he said, noting, "Please visit the schools of the host nations and

report their achievements to the Education Ministry's Office for International Affairs so that the experience can be used in their future plans.

A rural residential community is not the right site to be testing this technology, said Naomi Joyce, a solicitor from Appley Bridge, Lancashire, in northwest of England. Born and raised in the village, Joyce helped to lead its fight against a proposed waste-to-fuel plant, which had hoped to convert up to 6,000 tons of plastic rubbish into diesel, gasoline and other products each year.

Worried that harmful fumes would pollute their valley, locals rallied against the proposal — signing petitions, writing to the council and protesting in the street. In January last year, the project was shelved, reported The Guardian.

Proponents of the rapidly growing plastics-to-fuel sector, tipped to be worth \$1.9 billion by 2024, say their technology will help to keep plastic rubbish out of our oceans and away from landfill. By melting non-recyclable plastics into liquid fuel, they claim to offer a new and vital solution to the planet's plastic waste crisis.

Grassroots opponents disagree — and they are getting in the industry's way. After Appley Bridge in the UK, the latest protest is taking place in the Australian city of Canberra.

Plans for a new-generation plant in the country's capital, capable of converting up to 200 tons of plastic a day directly into fuel, without first needing to turn it into crude oil as most competitors do, are in doubt.

After locals raised concerns about air and

## Campaigners reject plastics-to-fuel projects



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noise pollution from the Foy Group plant, the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) government formed a special panel to investigate. It is expected to report its findings in April.

Though local impacts are the focus of the opposition, the objections go beyond nimbysism. Larry O'Loughlin, executive director of the ACT Conservation Council, and one of the leading voices against the plant, said the

industry poses a wider environmental threat.

Although plastics-to-fuel is often discussed as a form of recycling, O'Loughlin said it is misleading given that the plastics may only get used once before conversion into fuel.

Widespread adoption could also slow efforts to find alternatives to plastics and gasoline, creating extra demand for the former and additional supply of the latter, he argued.

"At a time of reducing carbon emissions, they are introducing another fossil fuel," he said. "The ACT is trying to move to zero emissions by 2050. How are we going to do that by setting up a refinery here?"

Foy Group's managing director, Stuart Clark, says he considers the community opposition normal and healthy, and that any new technology requires scrutiny.

But he rejected both the local and macro environmental arguments against the project. Emissions and noise levels would be low, he said, and — far from driving plastic waste — such plants will help to discourage it: "Waste plastics are worthless at the moment, so by giving them a value, it makes people and businesses less inclined to simply throw that plastic away."

Recovering the fuel content of plastic waste is also more efficient than sourcing new supplies of oil, he added: "Instead of dragging oil out of the Middle East, transporting it to Australia, refining it, taking it to another outlet, let's just go to our landfill."

Industry voices aren't the only ones advocating for plastics-to-fuel. David Attenborough has backed the technology for use in aviation, while the Ocean Recovery Alliance, a conservation NGO, has collaborated with industry players to develop a plastics-to-fuel developer's guide.

Ocean Recovery Alliance co-founder Douglas Woodring said it is a vital transition technology as the global economy moves away from oil-based products: "Most countries don't have enough recycling capacity and I don't foresee them having enough in near future, so to me the best opportunity is to turn the plastic into fuel, not by incineration but by liquification."

## Singing to babies engages their attention, creates bonds

Mothers singing to babies is an age-old practice found across all cultures and traditions. Now US research finds it is actually an important way to create bonds and stimulate children.

Shannon de l'Etoile, professor of music therapy and associate dean of Graduate Studies at the University of Miami Frost School of Music, initially set to look at how infants behave in response to their mothers' singing, also called infant-directed singing, compared to other mother-baby interactions such as reading books and playing with toys, themalaymailonline.com wrote.

In addition, the research looked into the role that infant-directed singing plays in creating the intricate bond between mother and child.

For her initial study, de l'Etoile filmed 70 infants responding to six different interactions: mother sings an assigned song, 'stranger' sings an assigned song, mother sings song of choice, mother reads

book, mother plays with toy, and the mother and infant listen to recorded music.

The babies showed high cognitive scores during infant-



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directed singing, suggesting that song is just as effective as reading books or playing with toys for engaging and maintaining babies' attention, and far more effective than listening to recorded music.

The promising results led

de l'Etoile to carry out a second study that focused on the mother's role during infant-directed singing by measuring the make-up of the song and

the mother's voice.

The results suggested that when infants had a high level of engagement during song, their mother's instincts were higher, with mothers intuitively knowing when to adjust pitch, tempo or key or the song to stimulate

and regulate their child's response when the child's level of engagement declined.

De l'Etoile then looked at the acoustic voice of the singing voices of mothers with post-partum depression. The results showed that although the children were still engaged, the tempo of the singing did not change and was more robotic. However, de l'Etoile added that for mothers with postpartum depression singing to their child can offer a distraction from negative emotions and thoughts, while children are given much-needed sensory stimulation.

In conclusion, de l'Etoile commented, "The tempo and key certainly don't need to be perfect or professional for mothers and infants to interact through song. In fact, infants may be drawn to the personalized tempo and pitch of their mother, which encourage them to direct their gaze toward and ultimately communicate through this gaze."

## Turkish toy store owner launches holy book campaign for children

A toyshop owner in Turkey's central Anatolian province Konya is offering presents to children under the age of 11 who read the Arabic and Turkish interpretations of the Surah Al-Asr from the Qur'an.

Goktas used social media to share the 'Al-Asr Campaign' on social media in order to make the small children excited to come to his toyshop and to better understand the holy book, Daily Sabah wrote.

Surprised that the campaign garnered so much attention, Goktas told Anadolu Agency that he was very pleased with the outcome.

"A family came to the shop and picked up some toys for the children, but then had to put them back. When I saw that the child was very upset about the situation, I said 'I will give you whatever toy you want when you memorize the Arabic and Turkish version of the Surah Al-Asr,'" Goktas said, explaining his inspiration for the campaign.

"The child arrived one day later, and he picked his desired toy after reciting the surah as well as its meaning. His friend said, 'Will you give me a toy as well if I memorize it?' I said yes, and thus our campaign started."

Goktas explained that he is running this campaign to encourage children to read and understand the holy book. He said that



AA PHOTO  
Goktas offers children, under the age of 11, toys if they can memorize Quran's Surah Al-Asr.

he has been receiving congratulations and thank-you phone calls from all over the country.

The campaign seems to be working, and the incentive has given the children a new interest in reading the Qur'an. "The parents of the children have been calling us and explaining that their children are starting to read the Qur'an on their own at home thanks to the campaign," Goktas continued.

"This makes us very happy. As long as the children come, this campaign will continue," he added.

Surah Al-Asr is the 103rd surah of the Holy Qur'an.

## Scientists attempt North Pole expedition to study climate change

Scientists under the guidance of Mosaic (Multidisciplinary drifting Observatory for the Study of Arctic Climate) mission will attempt a round-the-year expedition of the North Pole or the Arctic Pole to study climate patterns, especially the rapid melting of ice on the pole.

The expedition will be the first since Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen's attempt in 1893 to reach the North Pole by using the natural drift of the polar ice. The scientists aim to undertake the operation on board a 120m-long German research vessel, the Polarstern, to answer big questions about the Arctic, including why the region is warming faster than any other place on Earth, ibtimes.co.uk wrote.

"The decline of Arctic sea ice is much faster than the climate models can reproduce and we need better climate models to make better predictions for the future," said the mission's co-leader Prof Markus Rex, of the Alfred Wegener Institute in



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Germany.

"There is a potential that in a few decades the Arctic will be ice-free in summer. That would be a different world and we need to know about that in advance; we need to know is that going to happen or will that not happen?"

The mission, estimated to cost €50 million (\$52 million, £42 million), will involve 50 institutions from 14 countries including

the UK, the US and Russia. Currently, the outlining and planning for the expedition are underway.

"The plan is to travel in summer 2019, when sea ice is thin and its extent is much smaller. We can make our way with our icebreaker Polarstern into the thin sea ice to the Siberian sector of the Arctic. Then we stop the engines and let the Polarstern drift with the sea ice."