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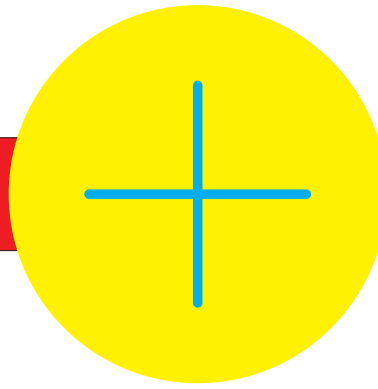
## 11th Persian Painting Nat'l Biennial to open today



ISNA - The 11th Persian Painting National Biennial will open today at Tehran's Saba Cultural and Artistic Institute. This year, 221 works by 152 artists will go on display.

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# Iran, India ink MoU to expand cultural cooperation



Iranian and Indian officials signed a memorandum of understanding in the field of publication. The MoU was signed on the sidelines of the 31st edition of the New Delhi World Book Fair (NDWBF), in the presence of Di-

rector of National Book Trust Shri Yuvraj Malik and CEO of Iran Book and Literature House Ali Ramezani, Mehr News Agency wrote. Iran is participating in the book fair for the eighth time with more

than 600 books. Ramezani said within the framework of the memorandum, organizers of book fairs of both Tehran and New Delhi will provide booths to Indian and Iranian publishers free of charge.

Shri Yuvraj Malik also added that based on the agreement, India and Iran participate in each other's book fairs in order to expand cultural communication between the people of the two countries. Malik stated that the signing of

the MoU is an excellent point for further cooperation. The 31st edition of NDWBF officially began on February 25 at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi, and is scheduled to go on till March 5.

# Kandinsky painting fetches record £37.2m at auction



A Wassily Kandinsky masterpiece that had been stolen by the Nazis, who killed its owner in the Auschwitz concentration camp in 1944, has been sold for a record £37.2m at auction in London. The painting was sold at Sotheby's on behalf of the great-grandchildren of the owner. They were recently reunited with the 1910 work, titled Murnau mit

Kirche II (Murnau with Church II), which had been discovered in a museum in Eindhoven in the Netherlands, the Guardian reported. The descendants of Johanna Margarethe Stern-Lippmann and Siegbert Stern, the founders of a textile company and keen art collectors, said they would use some of the proceeds of the sale to try to track down more of

the family's vast art collection that was seized by the Nazis in the 1930s. The painting, which depicts the Bavarian village of Murnau in a burst of color, had hung in the couple's dining room in their villa in Potsdam, Berlin. It is said to have heralded the Russian master's move towards abstract art. The £37.2m sale to an as-yet unknown telephone bidder

was the star of Sotheby's 36-lot modern and contemporary sale this week and set a fresh record price for a Kandinsky. The previous highest amount paid at auction for a Kandinsky was £33m for Painting with White Lines (1913), sold at Sotheby's in 2017. Its original owners were friends with some of the most influential writers and thinkers of their day including Thomas Mann,

Franz Kafka and Albert Einstein. The couple's collection of more than 100 artworks ranged from Dutch old master paintings to Renoir and modern artists including Munch and Kandinsky. Everything changed, however, after the Nazis rise to power. Although Stern died of natural causes in 1935, Stern-Lippmann was forced to flee Germany and was later murdered in Auschwitz.

# UK to extend energy bill help for 3 months

Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt is set to extend support for household energy bills by an extra three months beyond April in a move that would help ease the country's cost-of-living squeeze, the Times reported on Friday. Government subsidies are scheduled to be scaled back from next month, meaning average annual bills would rise to 3,000 pounds (\$3,594.00) from 2,500 pounds now, Reuters reported. But the Times said the lower bills would now be kept in place until the end of June. Hunt is due to deliver a budget statement on March 15, when any extension to the level of support could be announced. Opposition parties and

campaigners have urged the government to change course and keep providing its current level of help to households, many of which are struggling to meet the rising cost of living even before bills rise. Hunt can count on a roughly 30 billion-pound windfall as he prepares his budget, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS). Keeping the current level of energy subsidies would cost 2.7 billion pounds until the end of June, based on current energy price forecasts, the IFS estimated this week. Under the government's energy price guarantee mechanism, which was set up last September, taxpayer money has been used to shield households from the surge in prices that followed Russia's in-



● GETTY IMAGES

vasion of Ukraine. Wholesale prices are expected to fall over the three months from April to June meaning the government's guarantee will no longer be necessary beyond after that period, The Times citing a Whitehall source. The Finance Ministry did

not immediately respond when contacted by Reuters. Energy companies are already preparing to amend bills to reflect the current level of support being renewed rather than reduced in April, according to a separate report by the BBC on Friday.



A Palestinian fireman extinguishes a fire at a landfill in Juhr al-Deek, southeast of Gaza City, on March 3, 2023. Officials are calling for help to extinguish the fire that started on Thursday, saying it could last for days and cause "an environmental catastrophe".  
● IBRAHEEM ABU MUSTAFA/REUTERS