

Iran hosts international conference on combating dust storms

# A menace spreads through Middle East



● TEHRAN TIMES

## EXCLUSIVE

Dust storms are a complex and multifaceted issue that requires a comprehensive understanding of their causes, consequences, and potential solutions. In the Middle East, especially Iran, where the frequency and intensity of these storms have been on the rise, the need for effective strategies to mitigate their impact is more urgent than ever. By implementing sustainable land management practices and fostering regional cooperation, it is possible to reduce the devastating effects of dust storms on the environment, public health, and regional stability.

Amir-Saeed Iravani, Iran's ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations, addressed the 18th annual United Nations General Assembly meeting on the role of forests in tackling economic, social, and environmental crises, as well as the detrimental effects of dust storms on sustainable forest management. Iran's UN ambassador announced that the Islamic Republic of Iran, in collaboration with the United

Nations, will host an international conference on combating dust storms. The senior Iranian diplomat stated that the conference will take place in Tehran on September 9 and 10, this year, with the aim of exploring challenges faced by countries affected by dust and offering practical solutions to address this global issue. In his speech, Iran's UN ambassador outlined Tehran's efforts towards sustainable forest management, highlighting limited resources, deforestation, climate change, and restricted access to markets and financial resources as the primary challenges faced by countries with low forest cover. Iravani emphasized the need for increased international cooperation under the United Nations' management to provide the necessary assistance in overcoming these challenges and achieving sustainable forest management. Dust storms, nature's powerful and often overlooked phenomenon, have been shaping the environment and impacting societies for centuries. These storms, which can span hundreds of miles, are not only a force to be reckoned with but also a harbinger of change. In recent years, the Middle

East, and particularly Iran, has experienced a surge in dust storm activity, raising concerns about the consequences for the environment, public health, and regional livelihoods.

It would be best now to delve into the intricacies of dust storms, their impact on societies, and the potential solutions to mitigate their effects.

### What are dust storms?

Dust storms, also known as sandstorms or haboobs, are meteorological events characterized by strong winds that lift and transport large amounts of sand, dust, and other fine particles over vast distances. These storms typically occur in arid and semi-arid regions, where loose soil and sparse vegetation provide ample material for the winds to pick up and carry. Dust storms can last from a few hours to several days, depending on the strength of the winds and the availability of dust particles.

### Environmental impact

The environmental consequences of dust storms are multifaceted. On one hand, they can lead to soil erosion, degrading the quality of agricultural land and contributing to desertifica-

tion. This process exacerbates the loss of fertile soil, which in turn affects food production and the livelihoods of local communities. On the other hand, dust storms can also have a cooling effect on the Earth's surface by reflecting sunlight back into space. This phenomenon, known as the albedo effect, can temporarily counteract the warming effects of greenhouse gases. However, the long-term consequences of this cooling effect are still not fully understood.

### Societal consequences

Dust storms pose significant challenges to societies, particularly in the Middle East and Iran, where they are stronger and more frequent than ever. The fine particles carried by these storms can infiltrate homes, schools, and workplaces, leading to respiratory issues, allergies, and other health problems. Moreover, the reduced visibility during dust storms can disrupt transportation, causing accidents and delays in both land and air travel. The economic impact of dust storms is also considerable. Agricultural production can be severely affected, as crops are damaged or destroyed by the abrasive

particles and reduced sunlight. This can lead to food shortages, increased prices, and even social unrest.

### Countering dust storms

To mitigate the effects of dust storms, a combination of short-term and long-term strategies is necessary. In the short term, early warning systems can help communities prepare for incoming storms, allowing them to take necessary precautions such as staying indoors, closing windows, and wearing protective gear. Long-term solutions, however, require a more comprehensive approach. One such strategy is the implementation of sustainable land management practices, such as reforestation, afforestation, and the establishment of windbreaks. These measures can help stabilize soil, reduce erosion, and ultimately decrease the frequency and intensity of dust storms. Another long-term solution is the promotion of regional cooperation among Middle Eastern countries. By sharing resources, knowledge, and technology, our nations can work together to address the root causes of dust storms and develop effective strategies to combat them.

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## Iran hits key milestones in organ transplantation

### Over 6,000 liver, 5,000 kidney transplants performed

#### Social Desk

Iran's medical community has achieved significant milestones in organ transplantation, with over 6,000 successful liver transplants

and 5,000 kidney transplants performed in recent years, according to Iraj Fazel, the chairman of the Iranian Association of Surgeons. Fazel praised Iran's medical community for expand-

ing organ transplantation capacity throughout the country, citing it as the most crucial step in achieving success, IRNA reported. He emphasized that Iran's medical community is in an elevated position due to its remarkable progress in organ transplantation.

The surgeon also noted a growing trend of transplants for less fortunate patients in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Iran has established stringent regulations against the purchase and sale of body parts and prohibited foreign nationals from undergoing organ transplantation in the country, he said. These measures have contributed to Iran's success in organ transplantation.

Fazel spoke out against the illegal trade of human organs, stating that it violates the law and has been glob-

ally prohibited.

His comments come ahead of the upcoming 44th Conference of the Iranian Association of Surgeons, which is set to take place from May 13-17 in Tehran.

He highlighted the importance of honoring pioneers and made a request to name a street or square in the southern city of Shiraz after Professor Ali Malek-Hosseini, who is known as Iran's liver transplant pioneer and is also a distinguished professor at the Shiraz University of Sciences.

Fazel commended Dr. Malek-Hosseini for his contribution to the field of liver transplantation, calling him one of the top five liver transplant surgeons in the world.

Malek-Hosseini currently treats patients and trains doctors at Shiraz's Namazi Hospital, which is one of



● IRNA

Iran's prestigious liver transplant centers.

The Ministry of Health's report shows that all types of transplants including liver, intestine, pancreas, kidney, heart, and lung transplants are being carried out in Iran. Liver transplants are conducted in twelve departments, while kidney transplants are performed in thirty centers. Heart transplants are done in eleven centers.

## 1m babies could be saved annually



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Providing simple and cheap healthcare measures to pregnant women – such as offering aspirin – could prevent more than a million babies from being stillborn or dying as newborns in developing countries every year, new research said on Tuesday. An international team of researchers also estimated that one quarter of the world's babies are born either premature or underweight, adding that almost no progress is being made in this area, according to Science Alert.

The researchers called for governments and organizations to ramp up the care women and babies receive during pregnancy and birth in 81 low- and middle-income countries. Eight proven and easily implementable measures could prevent more than 565,000 stillbirths in these countries, according to a series of papers published in The Lancet journal.

The measures included providing micronutrient, protein, and energy supplements, low-dose aspirin, the hormone progesterone, education on the harms of smoking, and treatments for malaria, syphilis, and bacteria in urine.

If steroids were made available to pregnant women and doctors did not immediately clamp the umbilical cord, the deaths of more than 475,000 newborn babies could also be prevented, the research found.

Implementing these changes would cost an estimated \$1.1 billion, the researchers said.

This is "a fraction of what other health programs receive", said Per Ashorn, a lead study author and professor at Finland's Tampere University.

Another study author, Joy Lawn of the London School for Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, told AFP that the researchers used a new definition for babies born premature or underweight.

She said the traditional way to determine a baby had a low birthweight – if it was born weighing under 2.5 kilograms – was "a bit randomly selected" by a Finnish doctor in 1919.

This "very blunt measure" has remained the benchmark for more than a century, despite plentiful evidence that "those babies are not all the same", Lawn said.

The researchers analyzed a database that included 160 million live births from 2000 to 2020 to work out how often babies are born "too soon and too small", she said.

"Quite shockingly, we found that this is much more common once you start to think about it in a more nuanced way."



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