

# Dust storms burden Iran \$2 billion annually



## Social Desk

The Secretary of the National Headquarters for Policy and Management of the Dust Phenomenon of the Department of the Environment, Ali Mohammad Tahmasebi Birgani, underscored the escalating cost of dust damage, which he said amounts to more than \$2 billion annually, affecting six provinces.

Tahmasebi made the re-

marks during a meeting held on the International Day for Combating Sand and Dust Storms, themed "Sand and dust storms: Warning for everyone," at the research institute of Iran's Meteorological Organization, according to ISNA. The event was organized in response to the severe dust effects experienced in Iran last spring, which led to the formation of numerous committees, bilateral

agreements with neighboring countries, and a summit on bilateral cooperation for a better future. The outcomes included Tehran's statement, a regional joint fund to combat dust, a regional working group, and the establishment of a dust convention. Tahmasebi also revealed plans for an international conference on dust management, scheduled for September, 2023, with

invitations extended to 54 countries and 19 international organizations. The proposal for the conference was made during a meeting of the United Nations General Assembly. The DoE official highlighted the multifaceted impact of dust on Iran, with approximately 270 active high-intensity centers identified in 21 countries. He noted that sub-regional measures are underway to

address indoor dust centers. He further praised the significant strides made in understanding and mitigating the effects and damages of dust, with numerous publications on the subject. He emphasized the need for awareness about the consequences of dust, particularly its impact on agriculture. Domestic dust centers, he said, cause \$50 million of damage to agri-

culture, and also especially beekeeping. Mehdi Rahnama, the head of the meteorological research institute, noted that dust is not a new phenomenon and that its impact will likely increase due to climate change. He highlighted the importance of cooperation with the National Dust Headquarters of the DoE in identifying domestic and foreign dust centers and their effects

on Iran. He also mentioned a project carried out in collaboration with the National Dust Headquarters of Kharazmi University, which resulted in an action plan in the field of sand and dust storms. Rahnama stressed that all projects are based on field and operational measures in the DoE and Natural Resources Organization and are not merely meeting-oriented.

## Little girl with big ambitions:

# 'I wish to become a world champion'



By Mahdiah Ghazvinian  
Staff writer

Mahdiah Nikjoo, a young girl with a calm and pleasant demeanor, began her taekwondo journey at the tender age of four. Under the watchful eye of her father and coach in the Hakimiyeh neighborhood of Tehran, she quickly excelled. By the age of eight, she had outperformed her peers in the Iranian Taekwondo Federation exam, becoming the youngest participant to receive a black belt. This achievement marked her as the youngest female taekwondo practitioner in

the country to do so, an impressive record in its own right. Mahdiah, born in 2014, is a shy, quiet, and beaming girl. When she first entered the editorial office of Iran Daily, she looked around in awe. As she sat down for the interview, she offered small smiles and kept her head down, indicating her shyness. The interview seemed to be a bit challenging for her, so we turned to her parents instead. We asked her father, Hossein Nikjoo, why he chose taekwondo for his daughter. He explained that he was once a professional athlete in this martial art, but had to leave due to a medical is-

sue. However, he always dreamed of enrolling his child in the sport. From the moment Mahdiah was born, he had an ambitious plan for her. He started taking her to the gym at the age of four, with the goal of her earning a black belt by the age of eight. Mahdiah's mother, carrying a strong sense of motherly love with her, shared that while it was initially challenging to

get her daughter to the gym and through training sessions, Mahdiah now loves the sport. She even trains at home on days when she doesn't have gym sessions. The young athlete is determined to become a champion in the national competition scheduled for next summer. Despite her young age, Mahdiah faced the challenges of attending classes and performing rigorous exercises. With her father's encouragement, she successfully earned her red belt in taekwondo at the age of seven. This achievement was even more remarkable considering the clubs were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, making sports training more difficult than ever. Hossein recalls the early days of the pandemic when his daughter practiced at home and sometimes in the neighborhood park. When the club reopened, training resumed under emergency conditions, with athletes required to train with masks. This was par-

ticularly challenging for the children, who had to exert more effort while wearing masks. Interestingly, at the age of four, Mahdiah had not yet started school and had not learned to read and write in her native language of Farsi, and yet, she had to learn Korean, the language of taekwondo. Her father wrote the Korean words she needed to learn on the wall of her room so she could practice daily. When asked about her aspirations, the shy and quiet girl looks at her father and says, "I wish to become a world champion." We turned to her father and asked, "Are you ready for this journey? Don't you worry about your daughter getting hurt?" He firmly answers, "No, in recent years, girls' interest in martial arts has increased. However, some families consider this sport violent and unsuitable for girls." Her father went on to inform us that although martial arts are based on the principles of self-defense, respect, and the defense

of peace and friendship, some people may have misconceptions. A martial arts student always begins with defensive moves, not with attacking ones. At each stage of taekwondo, the student learns important values such as discipline, respect, humility, patience, tolerance, endurance, and an indomitable spirit. "Furthermore, among combat sports, taekwondo is the only discipline accepted in the Olympics. It provides comprehensive protective equipment from head to toe, and currently, blows are controlled with sensors placed on the athletes' helmets and clothing." "There is no need to worry," he said with a smile of confidence on his lips.

