

Afghanistan's lack of cooperation could lead to human catastrophe



TASNIM

Social Desk

The deputy of marine environment at Iran's Department of the Environment (DoE) called on Afghan environmental activists and officials to help revive the Hamun Lake and avert potential environmental and humanitarian catastrophes in the Sistan plain and surrounding areas, irrespective of political issues. Hamun Wetland stands as a transboundary ecological treasure shared by Iran and Afghanistan. Recognized as a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO in 2016, its significance cannot be overstated, Tasnim news agency reported. Regrettably, conditions within this vital wetland, located in southeast Iran, have deteriorated beyond

measure. Despite assurances from the Afghan government regarding cooperation on granting the wetland's water rights, no tangible steps have been taken thus far. Apart from its ecological importance, Hamun has long served as a lifeline for local communities – providing sustenance and natural air conditioning throughout their lives. However, prevailing chaotic circumstances have severely impacted livelihoods while exacerbating health risks amid escalating environmental crises such as the relentless 120-day winds afflicting residents of Sistan and Baluchestan. "The survival of Hamun relies on upstream river floods originating from Farah and Helmand rivers flowing through Afghanistan," said

Mojtaba Zoljudi, deputy of marine environment and wetlands at DoE. Expressing deep concern over recent developments, he added, "Unfortunately, due to diversion of Helmand River's natural course, along with extensive construction projects further upstream on Farah River, without regard for historical or natural rights associated with this ecosystem, Hamun wetlands now lie dried up." Commenting on ongoing efforts related to the international Hamun Restoration Project, he revealed that "The international Sistan Project, supported by the European Union and in collaboration with the United Nations Development Office, has been implementing crucial measures aimed at improving livelihoods and restoration. How-

ever, it is suspended due to sanctions." The DoE official highlighted that dust storms originating from Hamun's parched bed travel as far as Afghanistan – resulting in numerous hospitalizations of Sistan and Baluchestan residents. He emphasized that Afghanistan's actions including non-compliance regarding Iran's entitlements from Helmand River, diversions enacted at Kajaki Dam, and completion of Bakhshabad Dam on Farah River have played a significant role in the demise of Hamun Wetland. Regarding these developments, Zoljudi stressed, "It is imperative for good neighborliness to adhere to joint treaties, as well as rectifying natural river courses, while honoring downstream environ-

mental water requirements." He further appealed to Afghan environmental activists, officials, and the international community to rally together to restore this globally valuable ecosystem – a responsibility shared by all signatories of the Convention on Biological Diversity – regardless of political considerations. "Our collective aim must be preventing environmental catastrophe devastating Sistan plain and its environs," he said. He further underscored that "fulfillment of international obligations alongside concerted efforts towards restoring Hamun lagoon stand among Iran's priorities through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Energy.

Over 1,000 new classrooms ready to use this September

Social Desk

There has been a noticeable improvement in "educational spaces" within Tehran Province, announced director general of Renovation, Development, and Equipping of Schools of the province.

This was achieved "through the efforts of school building enthusiasts" in the renovation department of schools in Tehran, ILNA reported.

The official further stated that continuous endeavors are being made to enhance existing conditions.

Zaare further mentioned that with strategic planning, 100 schools comprising 1,091 classrooms and infrastructure covering 142,000 square meters will be constructed and handed over to education departments by September 2023. Notably, Tehran Province ranks first among all provinces in terms of delivered classrooms across the country.

"This achievement exemplifies our tireless work and dedication towards creating suitable educational environments for our dear students," the official said. Zaare emphasized that upon completion of these educational projects by September, approximately 33,000 students will have access to modernized and standardized schools.

"It is worth mentioning that while considering necessary educational equipment and auxiliary facilities for this year's newly renovated schools, our group strives towards construction as well as development and improvement of schools under the Ministry of Education's purview."

The director general also highlighted the escalating progress made in constructing and delivering educational spaces throughout Tehran Province.

"Thanks to divine blessings along with generous contributions from school-building benefactors combined with unwavering support from government, we are witnessing substantial growth in school construction within the province," Zaare said, adding, "In 2020-21, we delivered 48 educational spaces, followed by another 88 being completed in 2021-2022, and culminating in 100 new educational spaces scheduled for delivery this year."

Currently, there are 183 ongoing educational projects encompassing 2,029 classrooms and an infrastructure spanning 289,000 square meters. A significant portion of these projects will be ready for operation in September 2024, according to Zaare.

Zaare then expressed gratitude for the invaluable support rendered by school-building benefactors in various parts of Tehran Province.

Mourning Imam Hussein:

Manifestation of interfaith unity in Pakistan, India



By Syed Ali Hassan
Iran Daily's correspondent in Pakistan

According to a study, the history of *Azadari-e* (mourning of) Imam Hussein (PBUH) in India and Pakistan has been established since the time of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (PBUH). A part of Hindu Brahmins in India has been involved in *Azadari-e* Imam Hussein since the incident of the martyrdom of Seyyed al-Shohada Imam Hussein, up until today. According to Hilal Naqvi, a prominent researcher of Pakistan, the history of *Azadari* in the Indian subcontinent covers a thousand years. There have been some occasions in the Mughal period when the *Azadari* of Imam Hussein was not observed, when the Shia Muslims of India began to keep their faith hidden, but they did not abandon *Azadari-e* Seyyed al-Sho-

hada altogether; the elders in India also protected *Azadari-e* Imam Hussein in this period and continued it with splendor, according to Dutch trader Pehlay Sart's travelogue in the 1620s. Also, a group of Hindus are called Hussein Brahman. According to them, one of their ancestors fought *Lashkar-e* (Army of) Yazid along with Imam Hussein in the field of Karbala and was martyred, and, therefore, the group regularly remembers Karbala. In the former regions of India, noteworthy among them Rajasthan, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, and Andhra Pradesh, Hindu gentlemen also observed historical traditions of devotion and *Azadari-e* Imam Hussein. The tomb dedicated to the month of Muharram was patrolled in the palaces and the Muslim servants used to pray there, while Shiv Prasad, Indian scholar, linguist, and historian, and his sons followed those barefoot and bareheaded.

In 1775, in the Shia state of Oudh, the established foundation of the *Azadari-e* Imam Hussein was acknowledged by the Mughal rulers. After the British occupation of India, however, the new rulers considered the gatherings of *Azadari-e* Imam Hussein as a threat to them and made it the subject of Shia and Sunni differences. They celebrate it separately, with this division so far intact, which was the will of British occupants. After separation from India, Karachi in Pakistan became the center of *Azadari-e* Imam Hussein, while the second center is Lahore. Countless gatherings for *Azadari-e* Imam Hussein are held in Pakistan, especially in Karachi as the largest center. According to senior journalist and analyst, Kamran Khan, the cost of *Azadari-e* Imam Hussein in Karachi is Rs 20 billion, which also strengthens the Pakistani economy. The Sunni center of *Azadari-e*



Imam Hussein is Hyderabad and Sukkur, where more than a thousand processions are held, wherein the scholars of the Sunnah and the poets perform *Marsiya Khwani* (lamentation). The second largest center of *Azadari-e* Imam Hussein is Multan, which is called the city of Sufi, besides having a historical status. Meer Anees and Mirza Dabeer have played an important role

in the *Azadari-e* Imam Hussein for the subcontinent. There has been no greater poet in writing *marsiya* and *salam*. Even today, in Pakistan and India, *Majalis-e Aza* (mourning processions) begin with the *salam* and *marsiya* of Ustad al-Shu'ara Mir Anees and Mirza Dabeer. Their *marsiya* and *salam* are read by Shia and Sunni Muslims, as well as Hindus of the subcontinent.