

# Climate change world's 'most pressing issue': Vice President



## Social Desk

The head of Iran's Department of the Environment (DoE) emphasized the global significance of environmental issues in his talk at the 9th Conference of Environment Ministers in the Islamic World in Jeddah. Ali Salajegheh emphasized that the Article 50 of Iran's Constitution encompasses a vital and progressive principle that forms the foundation of environmental policies and strategies. This principle advocates for knowledge-based development and emphasizes the importance of how knowledge is generated and disseminated within the country. Head of DoE also expressed gratitude to the Saudi Arabian government and educational organization for hosting the event. He acknowledged the role of education in shifting the dominant development-focused mindset of industrial

societies towards sustainable thinking. Salajegheh stressed that environmental awareness is crucial for changing attitudes and fostering sustainable values such as justice, equality, contentment, respect for nature, and the rights of all living beings. These values are deeply rooted in the religious and cultural teachings of the Islamic world and align with the principles of sustainable development, making them an effective model to propose. The Iranian environmental official pointed to the importance of combining traditional value-oriented knowledge and culture with scientific rationalism, considering the changing world and the emergence of green development thinking. "Both aspects are necessary to achieve balanced development," he said. Furthermore, he brought to the fore the need for regional and international cooperation

and collective participation due to the universal nature of environmental issues. "The opportunity to exchange opinions and share experiences at this meeting should be seen as valuable for addressing common concerns," he said. The VP also discussed the effective measures taken in Iran to promote balanced development through education. Notably, the literacy rate in Iran has surpassed 90 percent, with faster growth among women compared to men. Additionally, rural areas have experienced higher literacy growth rates than urban areas. In terms of university education, the number of female students has exceeded that of male students, indicating progress in gender equality. "The focus now is on improving the quality of education and enhancing practical skills," Salajegheh said. He further outlined various actions undertaken to

integrate environmental topics into the official education system, implement extracurricular training programs, establish urban environmental assistants, and enhance the development of social capital and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the environmental sector. "Currently, there are over 1,470 active environmental NGOs in Iran. These policies aim to expand community-oriented organizations and improve the quality of environmental activities," the official said. To further these efforts, DoE has initiated the establishment of "Environmental Houses," which serve as local community-oriented organizations. "These houses aim to raise environmental awareness, promote qualitative environmental growth, provide a platform for sustainable livelihoods, and encourage broad participation from all social and local groups

in environmental planning," Salajegheh said. According to him, over 2,000 environmental houses have been established to date, facilitating conscious, voluntary, and effective public engagement in environmental protection and improvement. Salajegheh then proposed several measures

to strengthen the higher environmental education sector. These include establishing specialized environmental faculties, increasing scientific disciplines related to the environment, and conducting fundamental research through knowledge-based companies focused on environmental education. The goal is to implement the green development plan and promote environmental culture, with the aim of engaging people in protecting the environment and supporting environmental activists.

## Iranian scientist awarded

During the 9th Conference of Environment Ministers in the Islamic World, Lo'bat Taqavi, an Iranian environmental scientist won the Islamic World Environmental Management Award from the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO). Taqavi, an associate professor of environment and energy department at the Islamic Azad University Science and Research Branch, was honored for being among the authors of the world's most cited research in the field.



Lo'bat Taqavi (L) won the Islamic World Environmental Management Award from the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.  
● IRNA



Ali Salajegheh, Head of Iran's Department of the Environment at 9th Conference of Environment Ministers in the Islamic World in Jeddah, October 2023  
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## An overview of violence against women



By Reza Gerami  
Legal advisor

### OPINION

Violence against women is a pervasive issue with no boundaries. It's not limited to social stratum, climate, region, or class of society. This problem exists all over the world and cannot be ignored. However, the alarming rise in violence against women is a cause for concern.

In Iran, acute family discord, child abuse, and spousal abuse are among the most common reasons for seeking social emergency services. Violence against women is prevalent in all these cases. It encompasses not only physical and sexual abuse but also verbal insults, intimidation, isolation, controlling behavior, repetitive acts of jealousy, denying access to friends and family, attempting to hinder education or work opportunities, preventing women from seeking medical help, and making decisions on their behalf.

If the image of a bruised eye and a sorrowful woman is the only thing that comes to your mind when thinking about violence against women, you are not alone. Many people mistakenly believe that violence against women is solely physical. However, street harassment and other forms of daily mistreatment also constitute violence against women, even if they have become so commonplace that they are often overlooked.

To address this issue, it is crucial to raise awareness among families, particularly in rural communities and small towns. They need to be educated on how to treat and protect women and girls. Providing families with vital information about the dangers women and girls face and teaching life skills from an early age, even before childbirth, can make a significant difference. Additionally, laws should be amended to reflect the current societal conditions, and comprehensive research should be conducted in order to effectively tackle this problem. Educational videos created by psychologists and utilizing the expertise of efficient researchers can also play a vital role in combating violence against women. Furthermore, it is essential not to overlook the importance of educating and informing men. By educating men and encouraging them to change their behavior towards women and girls, we can work towards a society free from violence against women.

## Iran's SWO pushes for expansion of free counseling services

## Social Desk

The director general of the counseling and psychological affairs office at the Social Health Deputy of the Iranian State Welfare Organization (SWO) revealed that over 56,000 Yaribarg (health coupon) were provided to individuals in need, allowing them

to access psychological and counseling services throughout the past year. Masoumeh Tavakoli highlighted the SWO's three-decade-long commitment to mental health support, explaining that these efforts were carried out in compliance with legal obligations and assigned duties, ISNA reported.

"Due to limited capacities and challenges related to the availability of human resources and funding, non-governmental counseling centers were established in the 1990s to enhance mental health at a community level and provide high-quality services," Tavakoli said. She further stated that SWO currently holds the legal responsibility for licensing non-governmental counseling centers. Over the years, more than 30,300 counseling centers have been established in the country under SWO's supervision. "The organization diligently monitors, evaluates, and reviews the performance of even the most remote counseling centers in the smallest cities," she said. In addition to the efforts of governmental and non-governmental counseling centers,

Tavakoli acknowledged that some individuals in society face financial barriers preventing them from accessing these services. "To address this issue, counseling and psychological services subsidies, known as 'Yaribarg' have been designed for those in need," the official said. Explaining how the coupons are utilized, Tavakoli elaborated that individuals receive counseling services through non-governmental counseling centers, and the welfare organization covers the cost on their behalf. Tavakoli proudly announced that over 56,000 people benefited from counseling and psychological services in the past year, with an additional 25,000 people benefiting within the first six months of the current year. Pointing to the high demand for the coupons, Tavakoli acknowledged that the available funding does not fully meet the needs of the population. "Efforts are underway to increase funding in this area,"

she noted. Tavakoli also mentioned the provision of non-attendance counseling services through the 1480 hotline. "This hotline offers free counseling services to individuals nationwide who may not have the desire or financial means to visit counseling centers in person," Tavakoli added. According to the official, last year, the hotline provided psychological and counseling services to over 1.7 million callers. She further emphasized the organization's commitment to expanding the availability

of free counseling and psychological services and increasing its capacity to meet the growing demand. Finally, Tavakoli highlighted the economic benefits of investing in mental health. "According to conducted research, every dollar spent in the field of mental health results in the saving of four dollars for society," she said. The SWO deputy posited that by prioritizing mental health, societies can benefit from a stronger and more productive workforce, improved work quality, and reduced social conflicts and damages.





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