

## Subsidence in Iran five times higher than global standards



### Social Desk

The Director General of Geodetic and Land Mapping of Iranian Mapping Organization has raised concerns about the growing number of land subsidence cases in Iran, particularly in the Kerman Province.

"We need to take this warning seriously," said Abdolreza Sa'adat Mirmoqaddam, IRNA reported. During a meeting of the infrastructure affairs working group in Arak, Markazi Province, he emphasized the importance of preventing the spread of land subsidence into cities. He mentioned that Isfahan and Arak are already experiencing the encroachment of land subsidence from surrounding areas, necessitating appropriate measures to combat this phenomenon.

Mirmoqaddam noted that Markazi Province is affected by land subsidence by approximately five percent, slightly higher than the national average of 2.70 percent. In Arak city, the highest subsidence rate is recorded at 15.8 tenths of centimeters per year within an area of approximately 450 square kilometers.

The director general highlighted the urgency of taking preventive measures to stop the subsidence from reaching the inner city of Arak. He also pointed out other affected cities in the province, including Saveh and Komijan, where varying degrees of subsidence have been reported. Currently, around 300 plains in Iran are facing a crisis of land subsidence, with some areas reaching critical stages that can lead to the formation of sinkholes.

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## The hunting bird is exceptionally popular in Persian Gulf Arab countries

# Iran's saker falcon population at risk

### Social Desk

Each year, between 6,000 to 12,000 mammals and birds are captured alive in Iran and are brought to the market or smuggled out of the country, announced the deputy director of natural environment and biodiversity at Iran's Department of the Environment (DoE).

"The number is high, and the majority of these captured animals leave the country," said Hassan Akbari, according to IRNA.

During the inaugural meeting on the management and prevention of wildlife species smuggling, held on Sunday, November 26, Akbari identified four valuable native species in Iran, namely the Falcon, Saker Falcon, Peregrine Falcon, and Bustard, which have the highest smuggling

statistics.

He expressed concern about the saker falcon's declining population, emphasizing that its situation is worse than that of the cheetah, with a significant decrease worldwide, pushing it to the brink of extinction.

"These birds are particularly sought after by Arabs from Persian Gulf countries, resulting in a sharp decline in their population," Akbari said.

He pointed out the importance of leveraging international treaties to demand action from Persian Gulf countries.

The environmental official described the saker falcon's behavior as a remarkable phenomenon of nature, noting its incredible speed of over 200 km/h during attacks. He stressed the importance of these birds in main-

taining balance in nature and pointed out that most saker falcons are smuggled from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran. "Unfortunately, these birds often suffer severe injuries during capture and are sometimes kept in plastic tubes by smugglers."

Akbari also shed light on the fact that Iran has become a destination for the smuggling of ornamental birds entering the country through the eastern borders.

The DoE deputy attributed the surge in wildlife trafficking to poverty in local communities and a lack of awareness about the consequences of such activities. Moreover, Iran's vast territory, paired with the prevalence of live capturing animals across various regions, contributes to the difficulty in apprehending smugglers.

Akbari further highlighted that local individuals are hired for the live capturing of animals, which has led to the formation of an illegal market for wildlife trade, particularly in Tehran. He emphasized the difficulty of dealing with the legal aspects of wildlife smuggling and the need for stronger deterrent laws and increased cooperation from judges.

"As long as the Khalij-e Fars Wildlife Market remains active in Tehran, it would be challenging to tackle the smugglers," he said.

He suggested that training programs, enhanced coordination with law enforcement agencies, and intelligence cooperation in apprehending wildlife smuggling ringleaders can effectively reduce such illegal activities.

Regarding biodiversity, Ak-

bari revealed that Iran is one of the world's 20 richest countries in terms of biodiversity, with 8,660 identified plant species, one-third of which are endemic.

Iran has 1.5 million hectares of wetlands and 13.5 million hectares of protected reserves. However, the decrease in wildlife populations is attributed to factors such as illegal hunting, road accidents, invasive species, wildlife diseases, and climate change, as well as land use changes and vegetation destruction.

Wildlife smuggling ranks as the fourth largest illegal trade globally, with Iran experiencing the highest number of wildlife smuggling cases and discoveries in provinces such as Bushehr, Hormozgan, South Khorasan, and Sistan and Baluchestan.

## All Alone

There is a growing concern about the increasing number of single elderly individuals in Iran

### Social Desk

In the past, grandchildren couldn't wait for the hours to pass until it was time to meet their grandparents again. Things were very different, as elders played important roles in young people's lives, either making decisions for them or helping them make all the big decisions of their lives.

Today, however, many elderly people are left alone, leading to increasing loneliness among them. In Iran, there are 80,000 unmarried elderly individuals, and this number is projected to exceed 2.5 million in the next decade.

Loneliness among the elderly poses risks to their mental and physical health, including depression and dementia. Efforts to address this issue in our country have been lacking, and the welfare and social security system have not effectively supported the elderly. Abandonment, property theft,

violence, and even murder are some of the consequences faced by lonely seniors.

To alleviate these challenges, comprehensive policies and programs are needed to enhance the well-being and social integration of the elderly. Upholding Article 29 of the Constitution, addressing declining social capital, and tackling institutionalized poverty are crucial steps. It is essential to act now to prevent this issue from becoming a crisis as the aging population continues to grow.

In an interview with ISNA, Hassan Mousavi Chelak, head of Iran's National Association of Social Workers, discussed the longstanding concern of population aging in Iran, primarily attributed to increased life expectancy and declining fertility rates.

"This issue has been addressed through population and family policies, as seen in the establishment of the National Council of

the Elderly and the national document on the elderly in the Ministry of Health," he said.

The aging population challenge has become more significant in recent years due to prolonged life expectancy and reduced marriages and childbirth. While measures have been taken to support families and the younger population, solutions for the growing number of unmarried elderly individuals, particularly in rural areas, remain unaddressed.

Mousavi Chelak further pointed out Iran's current demographic window, which presents opportunities for economic growth. However, factors like declining fertility rates and challenges related to marriage have led to a rise in the elderly population, blocking the full potential of this demographic window.

"The position of the elderly in families and society has evolved over time, with disparities in the

care provided, especially in urban areas. Addressing the challenges faced by the elderly, particularly those who are single or unmarried, is crucial."

According to the official, comprehensive policies and programs must be developed to enhance their well-being and social integration, ensuring they continue to play a vital role in society. Mousavi Chelak pointed out the inefficiency of the welfare and social security system, expressing concerns about the livelihood and access to essential services for the elderly. "Article 29 of the Constitution guarantees social security rights, but its effective implementation remains a challenge," he noted. Mousavi Chelak went on to highlight the consequences of elderly individuals being alone, including abandonment, property theft, violence, and even murder. Loneliness among the elderly leads to decreased attention and inter-



actions, increased risk of mental disorders and depression, and a distressing sense of isolation. He also stressed the need for policies that alleviate the worries associated with aging, addressing the inefficiency of the welfare and security system, changes in family structures, and communication patterns.

In terms of solutions, Mousavi Chelak emphasized the need for the welfare and social security system to prioritize the needs of elderly citizens. The social support and social health systems should be adequately prepared to

meet these needs and effectively respond to elderly-related problems.

"There's a need to address the decline in social capital, and combating institutionalized poverty are areas that require attention and action."

Mousavi Chelak urged proactive measures to address the challenges faced by the elderly population, emphasizing the need to avoid allowing problems to escalate into crises. With the aging population projected to increase significantly in the next 30 years, it is crucial to tackle this issue before it becomes a crisis.