

# Gray skies devoid of rain

MP points out shortcomings of executive officials in Tehran's life-threatening air pollution



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In the morning, as usual, I prepare myself for work, and along the way, I also have the responsibility of dropping off my daughter at school. As we step out of the house, I notice that the weather is not its typical clear self. Initially, I perceive the sky to be cloudy, indicating an imminent rain shower. Considering this, I contemplate returning to fetch an umbrella. However, I notice a slight sensation of burning in my eyes. The color of the clouds is peculiar, distinct from the shades witnessed on rainy days; they have transformed into a somber gray. The entire city seems enveloped in darkness, as if black clouds have descended upon the landscape. The air is thick with smoke, making it difficult to catch even a glimpse of the Milad tower, an iconic landmark visible from almost every corner on ordinary days. Today, however, it is shrouded in a haze of smoke. It appears that the tower's soaring height of 435 meters is insufficient to escape the pollution emanating from the city's surface. Amidst this sea of

pollution, we find ourselves struggling to stay afloat, unable to catch a breather. We hadn't yet arrived at the school when I notice a text message on my phone that had been sent late the previous night: "All schools in Tehran Province will be closed tomorrow, except Firuzkuh." Naturally, I take my daughter's hand once more, and we make our way back home. It seems we must now prepare for at least a week of remote learning. Upon reaching home, I switch on the tablet and log into the Shad program, the student educational network. A sense of relief washes over me as I hear the teacher's voice calling the roll. Now, I can proceed to work. Memories of days plagued by air pollution flood my mind as I hoist my bag onto my shoulders and head toward the bus station. Once again, I find myself running late today.

This description surely resonates all too well with the citizens of the capital and many other major cities in the country. They encounter similar situations each year, particularly during the colder months.

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Allahverdi Dehqani, a member of the Parliament's Industries and Mines Commission, explains the cause of air pollution in big cities these days. According to him, most of the air pollution in Tehran and other major cities could be attributed to industries and automobiles. The

impact of these factors becomes more pronounced during the colder seasons, largely due to the phenomenon known as air inversion.

Air inversion refers to a condition where, contrary to the natural state, temperature rises with increasing altitude. As a result, the lower levels of the atmosphere experience lower temperatures compared to the upper layers. In simpler terms, a layer of warm air gets trapped between two layers of cold air in the Earth's atmosphere. It is important to note that temperature inversion itself is a natural occurrence and does not inherently pose a threat to humans and animals. However, in densely populated and industrialized cities, the presence of this phenomenon leads to the concentration and escalation of air pollution.

He added, "According to the statistics from the Department of the Environment, cars account for over 70 percent of pollution in big cities, while the remaining pollution is attributed to industries, including household, commercial, and manufacturing centers located within or on the outskirts of these cities. The majority of these industries should be relocated away from the city centers and outskirts. The failure to implement such measures actually indicates the shortcomings of the executive officials."

Dehqani emphasized that the pollution caused by industries and cars originates from the type of fuel used. He stated, "Our fuels, industrial systems,

and cars fall far behind global standards. Nowadays, countries around the world are shifting towards the production of low-consumption cars or vehicles that utilize clean energy, such as electric or hybrid cars. Even the use of CNG in cars and vehicles contributes to a reduction in pollution, as CNG fuel emits fewer unburned carbon particles into the air."

The MP continued, "Furthermore, a significant number of our industries rely on diesel fuel, which is known for its high emissions. Even the use of other conventional fuels, such as gasoil, contributes to air pollution. Considering this, it is crucial that factories and industries are established far away from the vicinity of large cities. Additionally, their systems should be upgraded to minimize pollution."

Mohammad Hassan Asafari, a member of the Commission for Internal Affairs and Councils in the Parliament, also addressed the issue of air pollution and the need to address it with responsible agencies. He stated, "We have identified weaknesses in the legal and regulatory aspects concerning this matter. For instance, when pollution occurs, the Parliament should have the ability to directly intervene and engage with the responsible agencies. Additionally, we need to determine the level of authority that the head of the Department of the Environment possesses to effectively address pollution issues."

Asafari further commented, "We are receiving conflicting news regarding the

fuel used in power plants, which directly impacts air pollution. While the country's oil and gas officials have stated that there is no shortage of gas fuel for factories, we are facing a situation where, despite not even entering winter, the Ministry of Petroleum has cut off gas supply to several power plants, leaving them with no choice but to resort to using mazut."

Referring to the impact of worn-out motorcycles and cars on air pollution, he stated, "The low capital available to many citizens for vehicle ownership necessitates government intervention. Therefore, the government should provide incentives and solutions to enable people to afford newer and more environmentally friendly cars. This will allow us to take prompt action in phasing out old vehicles from our cities."

It should be noted, however, that due to the monopolistic nature of the automobile industry and market in Iran, low-quality, pollution-inducing cars are being sold to Iranians at prices higher than the global average. Perhaps it would be more beneficial to address this issue first, without resorting to worn-out socialist solutions that would only benefit a few and potentially create even more economic disparities.

Asefari further added, "In addition to this, another contributing factor to the worsening pollution in various cities and regions of the country in recent years is the decline in rainfall. Rainfall, especially during the cold months, plays a crucial role in reducing air pollution and purifying the air."

## Taxidermy Olaf

The canine detective participated in 1,600 operations during his 9-year tenure with the Iranian police, uncovering a total of 10,200 kilograms of drugs.

Social Desk

EXCLUSIVE

Iran plays a crucial role as one of the primary transit routes for drug smuggling from Afghanistan to European countries.

Its efforts in preventing the international spread and distribution of drugs are immensely significant. Without Iran's proactive measures, there is a high likelihood that drugs would have inundated Europe and the United States.

In the fight against drug trafficking, it is essential to acknowledge the pivotal role of drug-sniffing dogs. According to law enforcement statistics, 15 percent of the country's drug discoveries are attributed to these highly trained canine units. Their importance was highlighted in a recent exhibition organized by the Anti-Drug Headquarters in Tehran to combat addiction. One such undercover dog, Taxidermy Olaf, was prominently featured at the exhibition entrance, symbolizing a decade of dedicated service.

Up close, Taxidermy Olaf, with his tightly bound paws, conjures images of patrolling the arid and remote border areas of Sistan and Baluchestan. The dog's keen senses, especially when sniffing around stationary vehicles at border checkpoints, play a crucial role. His sudden barking serves as an alert to authorities about the pres-

ence of smuggled drugs.

Major General Younes Abdi, head of the Center for Foreign Nationals Affairs under the command of the Islamic Republic's law enforcement and the official in charge of the law enforcement booth at the exhibition, explained Olaf's significance.

"Olaf is a prime example of dogs that have genuinely assisted law enforcement officers in combating smugglers. These dogs have not only reduced the financial and human costs of police operations but have also contributed to the increased accuracy and success of these operations," he said. Abdi detailed Olaf's impressive record, participating in 1,600 drug discovery operations in the eastern part of the country during his nine years of service. He uncovered a total of 10,200 kilograms of drugs. After years of service in challenging border areas and harsh weather

conditions, Olaf, in old age and facing illness, is taxidermed. Instead of burial, his taxidermy is displayed, acknowledging his services to the police and the people. The history of using detection dogs in tracking smugglers in Iran dates back to more than two decades ago. Collaborating with France, trainers and foundation dogs were sent to establish the main drug-sniffing dog center. The subsequent year saw the inauguration of the training and education center for drug-sniffing dogs in Karaj city. Since then, these dogs have played a significant role in various operations, assisting police officers in combating drug traffickers.

Abdi shed light on the law enforcement's specialized unit called SAPKA. Operating under the Anti-Drug Police, SAPKA is one of the specialized units that fulfill its duties in various law en-

forcement missions.

Dogs in the SAPKA unit undergo training in various branches to participate in different missions. For example, in drug detection training, the dogs' noses become sensitive to various drugs such as heroin and methamphetamine, and they react by barking when confronted with these substances.

Abdi clarified a common misconception that dogs become addicted to finding drugs.

"This is not true. Dogs only become sensitive to drugs through reward-based methods, such as providing them with food. Forced drug consumption would shorten a dog's lifespan and diminish its effectiveness," he said.



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