

Milk distribution in schools aimed at preventing health issues: *Iranian MP*



By Sadeq
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Staff writer

Health problems caused by the low rate of milk consumption in Iran could be tackled by the distribution plan in elementary schools, according to an Iranian lawmaker who called on the government to prioritize the deprived areas when carrying out the national plan.

"The long-term implementation of the milk distribution plan in schools could play an essential role in raising the health level in the Iranian society, preventing the consequences of low dairy consumption in the country," Seyyed Mohammad Pakmehr, a member of the Health and Medicine Committee in the Iranian Parliament, said in an interview with Iran Daily.

Milk distribution in elementary schools has been a long-running plan in a number of countries across the world for years.

In Turkey, 270 milk servings per capita is available throughout elementary schools in an academic year, with some 10 million students benefiting from the plan, while the figure stands at nearly 30 million in China.

Iran has been a pioneering nation in distributing milk among students, as the plan was first put into action before the 1979 Islamic Revolution, but was halted for years before being restored in 2000, covering 10,000 students.

The scheme saw 70 servings being allotted to each elementary school student during the course of an academic year, but the volume gradually shrank until the plan was abolished in 2017 for various reasons, especially the lack



of financial resources.

Over the years, the issues facing milk distribution have been regarded as a major concern by education and health experts in the country, who urged Education Ministry officials to put the plan back into effect.

After a six-year hiatus, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi gave the go-ahead for the resumption of the plan for the start of this academic year in Septem-

ber, starting with eight million students in elementary schools.

Some 16 million Iranian children started the academic year in September, and the distribution plan is set for a nationwide expansion, with deprived areas being a top priority.

According to the Education Department of Tehran, the scheme went into effect in the Iranian capital on Sunday, which will see elementary students re-

ceive two servings of milk on Sundays and Wednesdays every week.

"The best years to prevent future diseases and foster good nutrition culture and literacy among Iranian children are when they go to school," Pakmehr told Iran Daily.

"Of course, proper eating habits in the first six years of a child's life are the parents' obligation, but a healthy nutrition in school could also contribute

to the students' intelligence and height, while protecting them from various future diseases, most importantly oral and dental ones, not to mention those issues that have been a serious medical concern in the country over the past years," added the lawmaker.

According to Iran Dairy Industries Association, the annual milk consumption per capita is 150-160 kilograms worldwide, with the figure close to 200kg in the United States and France, and 300kg for the northern European countries, while it barely reaches 70 kilograms in Iran.

"Given the health issues caused by the lack of dairy consumption in Iran, as well as the essential role drinking milk plays in dealing with the consequences of air pollution, the promotion of milk consumption must be established as a national health policy, with free distribution in schools being a major part of those measures," Pakmehr said.

"Wealthy families are probably capable of providing their children with proper nutrition, but students from deprived areas and low-income households might be struggling with receiving the required daily food. Thus, the government is duty-bound to feed the kids from those families at least once a day.

"As you know, milk is a complete food in its own right," Pakmehr said.



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● IRNA

Love knows no bounds

Kahrizak Charity Foundation hosts a unique wedding ceremony



By Elham
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In the coolness of dusk on December 10, the Kahrizak Charity Foundation had a unique atmosphere. Mehrdad and Malakeh, a young disabled couple who are the permanent residents of the nursing home, dressed up as a bride and a groom, were about to set out on a journey to their new home, thanks to the efforts of generous benefactors and with the prayers of kind-hearted people.

In contrast to today's luxurious wedding ceremonies, this celebration had no trace of unnecessary extravagance. The event was characterized by simplicity, with the presence of the nursing home residents, benefactors, and sports and artistic personalities.

The guests gathered around for a time in order to deliver Malakeh, dressed in a bridal gown, looking more beautiful than ever, to Mehrdad.

Keeper of my heart

Mehrdad, who is overwhelmed with joy and clearly has been waiting for this moment for years, said in the presence of the guests: "Malakeh is the queen of my home and the keeper of my heart for the rest of my life."

Mehrdad, a 35-year-old native of Hamedan, has resided in the

care home since the age of 15 due to his diagnosis of cerebral palsy (CP) and disability in his legs.

Speaking in exclusive interview with Iran Daily, he reflected on the challenges he faced, saying, "When I first moved to this center, life was incredibly difficult and monotonous. The pain of being separated from my family

tormented me until 2008, when I attended a camp at Chalous's Laleh Garden, where I found my soulmate among the girls from the care home."

As he gazed at his bride with excitement, Mehrdad continued, "Malakeh is not just a spouse to me; she is the very meaning of my life. I pray to God to be worthy of her companionship and to bring her happiness."

Like countless other romantics, Mehrdad has made relentless efforts to marry his beloved, metaphorically enduring the weight of 'iron shoes'.

He explained, "I wrote numerous letters to the officials of the charity foundation in pursuit of this goal. Initially, they did not take my request seriously, but as they recognized the depth of my love for Malakeh and the logic behind my desire to marry her, they eventually granted their approval, and ultimately gained her consent."

"Love knows no bounds," he said, "and the fear of marriage should not cast a shadow on the lives of those with disabilities."

Love at first sight

The bride is a 39-year-old from the city of Urmia, West Azarbaijan Province. She has never allowed her disability to hinder her journey in life. During her residence at the nursing home, she learned the art of doll-making. With her creativity and determination, she not only mastered the craft but also found a way to turn her passion into a source of income. Talking about her experience of joining the care home, Malakeh said, "Nineteen years ago, I arrived at Kahrizak Charity Foundation and found solace in a room which had a window overlooking a green courtyard.

While I dearly missed my family, the kindness of my roommates and the incredible staff made this place feel like a home." Malakeh talked about her relationship with Mehrdad and said, "Do you believe in love at first sight? I also fell in love with Mehrdad in the same garden."

Improving the lives of disabled youths

Mohsen Pazooki, the head of the

public relations department of Kahrizak Charity Foundation, discussed the efforts made to provide facilities for the marriage of the young couple.

He emphasized, "Thanks to the compassionate intentions of the members of the foundation's management and board of trustees, steps have been taken to enhance the lives of the young disabled residents of the nursing home. With the support of a number of benefactors, psychologists, and physicians, necessary evaluations were conducted, leading to the approval of the marriage of Mehrdad and Malakeh."

He added that a fully equipped residential unit of approximately 70 square meters has been prepared for them to meet the specific needs of the disabled couple. Additionally, this couple will be engaged in productive activities and earning an income within this institution, based on their capabilities. They will commence their new life under the support of the Kahrizak Charity Foundation.



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