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Vol. 7987 ● Wednesday, November 26, 2025 ● 100,000 rials ● 8 pages

Iran chokes on smog as schools, offices shut in major cities



A general view of the Iranian capital behind a blanket of smog as winter's heavy pollution hits a new high, in Tehran on November 25, 2025.
● REZA MOATTARIAN/IRAN DAILY

Social Desk

Tehran and several major Iranian cities are choking under hazardous air pollution, prompting authorities to suspend schools, universities, and government offices in multiple provinces. Exhaust fumes from vehicles remain the principal driver of the country's worsening air quality, releasing high levels of

nitrogen oxides (NOx), carbon monoxide (CO), and particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10) into the atmosphere. In addition, industrial emissions, including those from power plants, factories, and construction activities, emit sulfur dioxide (SO₂), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and fine particulates, further compounding pollution levels. Domestic heating, particularly the burning

of low-quality fuels during colder months, adds to the accumulation of airborne pollutants, creating smoggy conditions that exacerbate respiratory and cardiovascular health risks across the population. Major cities, including Tehran, Karaj, Qazvin, Hamedan, Tabriz, Ahvaz, Isfahan, and Urmia, remain "unhealthy for all," according to the national air quality monitoring authority. Abbas Shahsavani, deputy director at the Air Quality and Climate Change Research Center of Shahid Beheshti University, reported that the number of days classified as "unhealthy for all groups" has tripled compared with last year.

54,000 annual deaths

"About 54,000 deaths in Iran are attributed annually to air pollution," Shahsavani said. "It now ranks among the top five causes of mortality in the country." Analysis of causes shows 6,152 deaths stem from energy production, 2,996 from industrial emissions, 2,033 from agricultural activities, 4,334 from other man-made sources, and 802 from household pollution. Air pollution contributes to 28% of stroke deaths, 30% of deaths from ischaemic heart disease, 45% from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, 24% from lung

cancer, 20% of diabetes-related deaths, and 23% of lower respiratory infection fatalities.

Air pollution closure

The health alert triggered widespread closures. East Azarbaijan suspended all schools, universities, and government offices in cities including Tabriz, Azarshahr, Bonab, Marand, and others, while essential services such as banks and hospitals continue to operate. Isfahan implemented online schooling across the county, with car traffic restrictions under a local "odd-even" plan. In Tehran, all kindergartens, preschools, and special education schools closed, while older students attend online classes; many public and private offices shifted to remote work. Other provinces including Alborz, Khorasan Razavi, North Khorasan, South Khorasan, Yazd, Lorestan, Qazvin, Kerman, and Markazi also moved schools online. The National Medical Emergency Organization warned that vulnerable populations, including children under five, seniors over 55, pregnant women, and those with cardiovascular or respiratory conditions, should remain indoors and follow preventive measures. N95 masks are recommended for un-

avoidable outdoor activity. Residents are advised to keep windows closed, use air purifiers where possible, and avoid processed foods while increasing hydration and antioxidant intake. Hassan Hassanzadeh, head of East Azarbaijan's Department of Environment, said the current pollution surge in Tabriz owes less to Lake Urmia's drought than to combined industrial emissions, vehicle traffic, and domestic fuel use under stable atmospheric conditions. He emphasized the importance of citizen cooperation, noting that voluntary reductions in private vehicle use and temporary industrial shutdowns have already helped curb emissions. According to Swiss monitoring company IQAir, Tehran now ranks as the world's fifth-most polluted city, following Delhi, Bishkek, and other regional capitals. "Vehicle emissions and industrial pollutants dominate the mix," the report noted, while cross-border dust from China also contributes. Seoul ranks tenth globally with an index of 157. Iran's air pollution crisis shows a broader global trend with the World Health Organization attributing 7.9 million deaths worldwide each year to polluted air, making it the second leading cause of preventable mortality.

Kiarostami classic opens Fajr International Film Festival in Shiraz



● IRNA

Arts & Culture Desk

Fajr International Film Festival opens in the southern city of Shiraz on 26 November with a newly restored print of Abbas Kiarostami's 1994 drama "Through the Olive Trees". Festival officials said they programmed several restored Iranian titles this year but chose "Through the Olive Trees" to launch the 43rd edition, calling the film a "seminal" work in Kiarostami's career.

The picture, which earned the Silver Hugo in Chicago, was written, produced and directed by the late auteur, whose restrained visual grammar shaped a generation of Iranian filmmakers. The story follows Hossein, a young man in the quake-stricken village of Koker, as he tries to woo Tahereh after surviving a devastating tremor that levels the community. The narrative circles around loss, persistence and what Kiarostami once described as "the quiet labor of hope".

Iranian jury lineup announced

The festival named its Iranian jurors on Tuesday, before curtains rise on the 43rd edition in Shiraz. Organizers tapped five Iranian filmmakers to serve across the main strands, International Competition, Eastern Vista, New Perspective, and

Broken Olive Branch, alongside foreign jurors to be announced later. Veteran cinematographer Mahmoud Kalari joins composer Christophe Rezaei on the International Competition jury, pairing Kalari's decades of visual craft with Rezaei's score-driven sensibility. Actor Hoda Zeinolabedin takes the Eastern Vista slot, which typically showcases films from Asia and the broader East. Writer-director Mehdi Karampour judges the New Perspective section, which screens first and second features. Director Farzad Mo'tamen takes the helm of the Broken Olive Branch jury, a segment often devoted to works probing conflict and reconciliation. The festival, run by secretary Rouhollah Hosseini, runs from November 26 to December 3 across venues in Shiraz.

Iranian short film 'The Room' to compete at Spain's One Shot festival

Arts & Culture Desk

Elham Mohammadzadeh's Iranian short film "The Room" was selected for the main competition at the 15th One Shot Terrassa City of Film Festival in Spain, marking its global debut. The one-shot short, co-produced by Mohammadzadeh and Iranian Youth cinema Society (IYCS), in Kashan, will screen in Terrassa, near Barcelona, from November 27 to 29, ILNA reported. In earlier local competitions, The Room won the Best Film award at the 4th Gambron 105 Second Festival and received the statuette, citation and cash prize at the second National "25" Festival. The film portrays a tense domestic moment: A mother is combing her young daughter's hair when the sudden rumble of an explosion shatters the calm. Actors Yasaman Nasiri, Nazgol Khosravani and Mersana



● ILNA

Afrash appear on screen. The festival is known for its strict "no cuts" rule, films must be shot in a single sequence without editing, celebrating the raw immediacy of long-take cinema.

Iran faces rapid aging as population of seniors surpasses 14%

Social Desk

Iran has officially entered a period of accelerated population aging, with more than 14% of its citizens now over 60, the head of the State Welfare Organization of Iran, Javad Hosseini, told a conference on senior-friendly urban environments in Tehran on Tuesday. The milestone surpasses earlier government statistics that pegged the elderly share at 12%. "This is not a distant issue. Iran is moving fast," Hosseini said, stressing that the pace of aging outstrips many countries in the region. By 2051, he projected, nearly 30% of Iranians will be seniors, positioning the country among the world's fastest-aging nations. Hosseini warned of a persistent "cognitive

gap" among policymakers, arguing that official recognition of aging lags behind its social reality. "We must first identify and overcome this gap to integrate elderly needs into planning," he said, highlighting the need for timely policy responses to demographic shifts. The Welfare Organization is pursuing a national survey to provide a comprehensive picture of Iran's aging population. Currently, 16 cohort studies are under way across the country, the largest in Meybod, Yazd province. Officials are working with the Statistical Centre of Iran to unify these datasets into a central system that will inform future urban and social planning. In practical terms, the government has approved 16 senior-friendly urban spaces

nationwide, designed to promote mobility, social engagement, and safety. Hosseini noted that these spaces represent only the start of a long-term strategy requiring sustained administrative support. He announced that three monitoring sessions per year will assess these environments, with two governors and two mayors reporting annually to the first vice president. Hosseini also stressed that aging presents a societal and economic opportunity rather than a crisis. With retirement averaging 52 years and life expectancy at 76, roughly a third of Iranians' lives will be spent as seniors. "This is the silver economy," he said. "Seniors hold valuable skills, require minimal formal employment infrastructure,

and can contribute significantly to family, community, and service sectors." Initiatives targeting intergenerational interaction are underway. Plans include senior kindergartens, community theatres, cultural and sports activities, and pilot "senior schools" in partnership with the Ministry of Education, converting up to 120,000 schools into spaces for elderly engagement. In Hamedan, a dedicated senior restaurant has been opened to provide nutritious meals and social interaction, serving as a model for future senior-oriented venues. Hosseini framed the agenda as both a societal necessity and a moral imperative. "Taking care of seniors is not just a duty; it strengthens community cohesion and intergenerational bonds," he said. The government has already defined roles



● ILNA

for 27 state agencies, ensuring responsibilities related to aging are implemented across ministries and local authorities. He added that integrating seniors into urban and social life, monitoring demographic trends, and leveraging the silver economy are central to maintaining Iran's social health. "Providing warm, inclusive spaces for seniors is more important than medicine alone," he said.