

# Call for Comprehensive Water & Soil Management

According to officials, drought is posing a threat to various parts of the country such as the northern regions. Professors and experts underline the need to conduct comprehensive studies on the impacts of drought since this is a prerequisite for sound management of water and soil resources, IRNA reported.

Lack of comprehensive data and improper management have led unchecked exploitation of water and soil reserves and aggravated losses.

Although, based on statistics, the potential for tapping domestic water resources is about 400 billion cubic meters per year, about 70 percent of this amount is not managed properly.

A 33-percent decline in precipitation in the north, the lack of a plan to control and manage surface waters as well as water wastage have driven the northern regions to a crisis. The average rainfall in the northern regions used to be 1,200 millimeters per year.

Since the northern provinces are home to over 1.8 million hectares of valuable Caspian forests, about 1,000 hectares of farmlands and produce a significant percentage of agro, horticultural and livestock products, a comprehensive plan should be compiled to counter drought.

A professor at Agricultural Faculty of Islamic Azad University's Chalous Branch described the declining water reserves and mismanagement as the two main problems which should be resolved.

Global warming and climatic changes have inflicted serious damages, underlined Mojtaba Neshaei-Moqaddam.

According to him, climatic changes play a major role in the destruction of northern forests.

Also, destruction of forests has led to extensive flooding in the area, the official added.

Unfortunately, surface waters are not managed well and a large portion of it is wasted each year, he regretted.

As per statistics, Mazandaran province's water potentials stand at 6.6 million cubic meters, of which only 1.9 million cubic meters are tapped, the university professor pointed out.

Neshaei-Moqaddam said the number of dams in the area is insufficient, adding that the water shortage should be overcome by constructing earth-filled dams for storing water.

There are about 150 dams with a total storage capacity of 100 billion cubic meters in the



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country, he said, underlining that Mazandaran province has 660 floodgates.

Also, Hamidreza Sadeqi, a watershed professor at Tarbiat Modarres (instructors' training) University, said that annual precipitation in Iran is one-third of the global standard.

In related news, head of Noshahr Meteorological Department said that precipitation in the city declined by 297.8 millimeters in the year to March 19. This is unprecedented in the past 20 years, Ali Fallah claimed.

The official pointed out that Noshahr precipitation rate stood at 2.6 millimeters during March 20-April 19, indicating a 96-percent decline against the figure for the same period of the previous year.

Meanwhile, head of Noshahr Agricultural Jihad Department Esmail Shahsavari called for the formation of drought crisis taskforce in this northern city in an attempt to prevent water shortage in the agro sector.

Despite the water shortage in the region, about 200 million cubic meters of water from local rivers, including Gardgel, Mashalak, Chalous and Kourkoursar, flow into the Caspian Sea, said Esmail Nataj who is in charge of Noshahr-Chalous Water Supply Office.

He urged the construction of dams to reduce wastage of rivers' resources. The Caspian province of Mazandaran has about 460,000 hectares of farmlands.

## News in Brief

### IOR-ARC Urged to Expand Cooperation

Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki called on members of the Indian Ocean Rim-Association for Regional Cooperation Conference to expand cooperation.

Mottaki issued the call while addressing the 8th annual meeting of the IOR-ARC ministerial council, which opened in Tehran on Sunday, PressTV reported.

"The IOR-ARC member-states are currently facing serious challenges regarding cooperation. We should enable the public and private sectors of our countries to make the utmost use of their potential for regional cooperation in various fields," he said.

He added that implementation of economic cooperation plans is among important goals of the association, which should be fully realized.

"Undoubtedly, the IOR-ARC has entered a phase where it can adopt stances on international issues. It can serve as a model for cooperation among regional states," he said.

Mottaki voiced Iran's readiness to transfer its technical and technological expertise, including its achievement in the field of nuclear energy to the Indian Ocean countries for improving the regional nations' welfare.

Foreign ministers of Iran, India, Oman, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Yemen and Singapore are participating in the IOR-ARC conference in Tehran. Representatives from China, Japan, Egypt, France and Britain are also taking part in the confab as observers.

Indian Ocean Tourism Organization is also attending the conference as an observer.

The 18 member-state IOR-ARC spans an area of 20 million sq. km and has a population of 1.9 billion people.

The IOR-ARC aims at promoting sustainable growth and balanced development of the region and member-states, focusing on areas of economic cooperation that provide maximum opportunities for development and lowering barriers to promote a freer flow of goods among member-states.

The association holds a Council of Ministers meeting once every two years. The working groups of the association have business and academic representatives to ensure that different viewpoints and interests are fully reflected in its work program.

### 1,100 Agro Cooperatives Planned

About 1,100 agricultural cooperatives are to be organized across 3.2 million hectares of farmland by bringing land owners under the umbrella of production cooperatives in the year to March 2009, said deputy agricultural jihad minister for industrial and infrastructural affairs.

Farid Ejlali called for laying water supply pipeline network, using drip irrigation system in gardens and sprinkler irrigation system for special products, expanding greenhouse and centralized cultivation, promoting cultivation of plants which need less water as the priorities of the ministry to counter the drought, reported IRNA.

Currently, horticultural and farm produce account for 55 and 45 percent respectively of the output of regions with scarce water resources, the expert said.

Agro products such as pomegranates, pistachios and olives which consume less water should be cultivated in these regions, he suggested.

## Jet Fuel Subsidy Plan Unclear

Head of Civil Aviation Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran (CAO) Hossein Khanlari has said that the organization has not yet received any official notification about the elimination of jet fuel subsidy.



The government has already approved the plan to eliminate jet fuel subsidy.

Speaking to Fars news agency, he said the organization has also not received any other notification vis-à-vis the amount of jet fuel subsidies allocated for this year, adding that the organization will follow the rules as it can only devise its policies and flight schedules for the airline industry on the basis of official notifications and directives.

According to Khanlari, the organization has already devised plans to increase the number of flights this year, particularly during the peak season of summer.

Airlines have been informed of this and asked to submit their national and international flight schedules. They have been told that their demands will be met accordingly, he said.

Khanlari said earlier that six passenger planes had joined the country's civil aviation fleet.

## Pakistan Trade To Rise

Iran's Consul General Saeed Kharrazi said in Lahore on Friday that Iran and Pakistan plan to increase trade by one billion dollars.

Addressing members of Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industries (SCCI), he hoped that Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline would soon be undertaken. "Given the cordial relations, the proposed gas pipeline project would further cement ties between the two countries," he said, according to Fars news agency.

"We are also making efforts to promote interaction between the business communities of Iran and Pakistan to expand trade," he said.

The consul general said that an 'Information Center' has been set up in Lahore to provide necessary information to Pakistani business community, adding that steps were also being taken to make data available to SCCI to promote trade and commerce.

The Iranian diplomat also paid tribute to great poet and philosopher Allama Muhammad Iqbal, saying that it's his privilege to visit the city of Iqbal.

In a welcome speech, SCCI President Khurram Anwar Khawaja said that he was satisfied to note that both Iran and Pakistan were eager to expand cooperation in various fields and benefit from each other's expertise to make progress.

## Wind Power Purchase Guaranteed

Director of Iran's New Energies Organization has announced that documents have been signed to guarantee the purchase of electricity generated from wind by the private sector.



Speaking to Fars news agency, Souf Armodei said the permit was issued by Iran Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution Management Co. (Tavanir), adding that the company aims to purchase electricity from private firms involved in generating wind power.

According to him, Tavanir has already received applications from private enterprises to generate 3,700 megawatts of electricity. Electricity purchased from these companies will be priced at 620 rials per kilowatt, he added.

Wind power is produced in large scale wind farms connected to electrical grids, as well as in individual turbines for providing electricity to isolated locations in Iran.

Wind energy is plentiful, renewable, widely distributed, clean and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. The intermittency of wind seldom creates problems in supplying a low proportion of total demand, but presents extra costs when wind is used to meet higher demand.

## IRISL Expanding Operations

Managing director of Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Line (IRISL) has said that increasing the number of vessels and transportation of export cargo are among the company's top priorities in the year to March 2009.

A giant container ship, which was ordered from South Korea three years ago, is to join the shipping fleet within two weeks, disclosed Mohammad-Hossein Dajmar, according to ISNA.

The proposed vessel has the capacity of carrying 6,500 containers, he added.

About 18 ships ordered from foreign and domestic companies would be delivered in the year to March 2009, the official pointed out.

Despite the rise in fuel prices, sea transportation tariffs have been reduced, he said. Iran Shipping Company tariffs declined by 50 percent on average in the past two months, Dajmar underlined.

IRISL is the main administrator of the national marine transport sector. Established 40 years ago, it has 115 vessels with the total cargo capacity of 3.7 million tons.