

Tehran Refinery Fined RIs.114b for Pollution

Director general of Tehran Department of Environment said Tehran Refinery was fined in excess of 114.7 billion rials as per the Third Plan Law for failing to eliminate the harmful emissions from its furnaces and boilers.

Mohammad Hassan Pirasteh told ISNA that Tehran DoE's laboratory had confirmed the refinery's emissions were harmful for the environment.

"As per Article 104 of the law, the DoE has tossed out a monthly penalty in the amount of 9.5 billion rials against the refinery for the period starting in March 2003 and lasting through March 2004," he added.

He warned that the case would be brought to the court unless the

refinery would attempt to remove the pollution, adding the fine could be increased to 700 billion rials if the unit fails to meet the deadline for payment.

Asked about whether the refinery's operations have caused any contamination to water resources, Pirasteh stated, "The source and volume of the pollution are not yet known. A group of Oil Ministry and DoE experts are presently tracing the pollution, which might lead to even more fines for the refinery."

Meanwhile, head of the DoE and presidential advisor, Masoumeh Ebtekar, told ISNA that all polluting industries in the province would be fined. "Similar action will be taken against industrial units polluting the environment nationwide," she stated.

Feed Wildlife in Winter

Iran Green Front and Iranian Mountaineers, two of the environmental non-governmental organizations, called on people to help preserve wildlife in the cold season, IRNA reported.

In a joint statement, the two NGOs said that birds and other wildlife species living in mountains and plains have approached human settlements to search food in the wake of heavy snowfall and cold weather in different cities.

They urged people, particularly those residing in rural and urban areas close to mountains, wetlands and other natural habitats, to avoid hunting or harming the wildlife approaching residential areas and to feed them with fodder and seeds.

The environmental groups will distribute fodder for animals in the Roudbar Qasran region on Feb. 25, March 10 and April 2. Nature lovers are invited to participate in the program and fulfill their role in



Wildlife species have approached human settlements in search of food.

preserving wildlife. Other NGOs have been asked to adopt similar measures in different parts of the country. Those interested can contact 8741567 to obtain more information.

4,000ha of Artificial Mangroves in Southern Coasts

Approximately 8,000 hectares of mangrove forests have naturally grown in southern coasts and another 4,000 hectares have been planted which is expected to double within the next few years, an advisor with the Marine Office of the Department of Environment said.

Afshin Daneh-Kar told Fars news agency that the General Directorate of Natural Resources has expanded southern mangrove forests by 700 hectares and Qeshm Free Zone Organization by 3,000 hectares.

"The directorate is presently pondering a scheme to plant 16,000 hectares of mangrove forests," he stated.

Asked about whether artificially regenerated forests can provide a suitable substitute for natural mangroves, he explained,



Mangrove forests have expanded over the past 10 years.

"Planted forests are needed to help preserve natural ones; because the locals depend on these forests for supplying their livestock with fodder. Therefore, we should try to make them rely on artificial vegetation."

He insisted that the public be encouraged to participate in regenerating forests. "We can provide incentives such as cash prizes or welfare facilities for rural inhabitants who plant mangrove trees on coastlines," he proposed.

According to the advisor,

mangrove forests have been developed in the southern provinces of Hormuzgan and Bushehr as well as in Qeshm Free Zone.

Commenting on the destruction of mangrove forests, Daneh-Kar said, "Satellite images show that the forests have not shrunk, but have expanded over the past decade. This, however, does not mean there has been absolutely no destruction. Rather, the growth has been overwhelming."

Benefits of Wood Pulp Factory Recounted

Iranian paper industry has the capacity to recycle a daily 400 tons of waste paper, thanks to the construction of the wood pulp factory. However, a portion of that potential remains idle due to lack of a mechanism to collect the amount of waste paper needed for the purpose.

A member of the Scientific Committee of the Conference on Environmental Achievements of Iranian Industries, Shahram Dashti, made the remark in a talk to IRNA, noting some four square meters of wood are needed for producing every ton of paper. "Specific environmental strategies should be in place to check the unfettered consumption of paper," the expert said.

Dashti mentioned the establishment of wood pulp factories is a primary measure to preserve the environment, reduce consumption of raw materials and save water and energy resources.

"Wood pulp factories can prevent the destruction of one to 3.1 hectares of forests used for paper production annually. Apart from preserving the environment, the measure can as well reduce waste production and energy depletion," he noted.

He stated that using non-wood fiber resources in paper making can help preserve natural resources and prevent dumping of solid waste in the environment.

"Extensive research should also be conducted on fast-growing garden trees such as willow, poplar and eucalyptus to reduce reliance on natural forests," he said, adding establishment of industrial sewage treatment units can help preserve the environment by standardizing the level of pollutants.

He proposed that the treated waste water be used for fish farms built in the vicinity of the units. The water can as well be used for breeding ducks and poultry.

The Conference on Environmental Achievements of Iranian Industries is slated for March 2-3 with the cooperation of the Ministry of Mines and Industry, Department of Environment and Environment Faculty of Tehran University.

Electricity Generation From Waste Needs Funding

Electricity generation from waste material is one of the long-term goals pursued by the Recycling Organization, affiliated to Tehran Municipality, the organization's managing director said.

Abolfazl Ebrahimi noted that preliminary studies for the project were complete, and foreign contractors and consultants who would be investing in recycling schemes had already been nominated.

"The only problem is that the Energy Ministry and the Management and Planning Organization should subsidize projects to generate elec-

tricity from waste materials. This is while no financial support is presently available for this purpose," he noted.

Ebrahimi explained that "generation of each kilowatt-hour of electricity from waste material costs five cents, while the Energy Ministry and Tavanir Company only pay 1.6 cents for each kilowatt-hour of electricity. So, there is a balance of 3.5 cents."

He insisted that state-run organizations such as the MPO, Department of Environment and Energy Ministry should undertake the funding, so as to make optimum use of urban garbage.

Lydia M. Child (US writer & editor, 1802-80):
Nature is a good name for an effect whose cause is God.



A windy day in Tehran (Photo by Ahmad Jalalian)

NGOs Oppose Thailand's Animal Imports

Thailand criticized green groups for opposing its plan to import hundreds of exotic animals from Kenya for a new government-funded zoo, Reuters reported.

The African nation has agreed to ship dozens of animals, including zebras, giraffes and lions, to the Chiang Mai Night Safari in northern Thailand, but conservationists have condemned the move, citing concerns for the animals' welfare.

"I can 100 percent guarantee the safety of

these animals," said Plodprasop Suraswadi, project coordinator for the zoo.

"African animals have been here for nearly 30 years. That's why I don't understand why some NGOs are making noise. It's absolute nonsense," he told Reuters.

Environmentalists from the Born Free Foundation want the Kenyan government to reverse its decision to export up to 300 animals, including rare species of white rhino, leopards and spotted hyenas.

The group said many of the animals destined for Thailand were protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

"We are deeply concerned about how and where these animals are to be sourced and the life that might await them should this proposal become reality," Will Travers, CEO of the foundation, said in a statement.

Thailand has come under fire for its poor wildlife protection



Thailand remains one of the world's leading trafficking routes for animal smugglers.

record, especially following the deaths of 150 tigers at Sri Racha Tiger Zoo after they had eaten bird-flu-infected chickens.

The Southeast Asian nation remains one of the world's leading trafficking routes for animal smugglers, with several privately owned zoos accused of illegally obtaining orangutans and other rare species.

The Thai government has dismissed the concerns voiced by animal welfare groups, saying the Chiang Mai Night Safari would be the most nature-friendly zoo in the world.

"It's not just another zoo. Thailand spent almost \$52 million on this zoo. It's better than any zoo in Kenya or any other country," said Plodprasop.

"It's the definition of NGOs that they always try to speak something different from the government."

They don't understand us. They've never been to Thailand." The zoo, set to open in April, is the brainchild of Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra who initiated the project to attract tourists to his hometown of Chiang Mai.

Modeled on Singapore's Night Safari, Thailand's version is expected to house some 1,000 animals from Australia, the Americas, South Africa, Tanzania and Kenya.

Mountains Vulnerable to Tsunami Threat

Mountain areas have long been recognized as being vulnerable to global warming, with rising temperatures damaging a fragile habitat for wildlife and threatening the future of low-altitude ski resorts, AFP reported.

Now, though, a further threat is starting to emerge: tsunamis.

The idea may sound bizarre. After all, killer waves are perceived as a threat to coastal communities, vulnerable to walls of water unleashed by giant earthquakes.

That was the case in the Dec. 26 tsunami that scoured shorelines around the Indian Ocean, killing 284,000 people.

But European specialists say there is also a risk in the mountains, from huge lakes of meltwater that build up behind glaciers. If the icy barrier is

breached, communities downhill are at risk of being swept away.

"In the Himalayas, some glaciers are up to 70 kilometers long," said Martin Beniston, a climate scientist at Freiburg University in Switzerland.

"In Bhutan alone, there are at least 50 lakes in this category, and a similar number in Nepal as well. Towns and villages in their path could be hit by a tsunami," he told AFP.

The unusual phenomenon came to light last October in France's Savoie region, says Christian Vincent, a research engineer at the Glaciology Laboratory in Grenoble.

A huge lake, five hectares across and 25 meters deep, formed at the back of the Rochemelon glacier at an altitude of 3,218 meters, due to

summer heat that had melted part of the glacier.

The discovery prompted the intervention of engineers, who decided to drain the lake to avoid the risk that the glacier wall could erode and then crack open.

A series of studies over the past five years has accumulated evidence that glaciers are in retreat in the Andes, the Alps in western Europe and the Himalayas, thanks not only to warmer temperatures but also shorter or less prolific seasons for snowfall.

The global benchmark is Austria's Pasterze glacier, whose length and volume are measured by a NASA satellite. A computer model of the Pasterze, devised by the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands on the basis of

data sent back by the satellite, suggests that all of the glaciers in the Alps may disappear by 2080, according to Austrian specialist Heinz Slupetzky.

Chinese expert Yao Tandong, director of the Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, last year said as much as 64 percent of China's high-altitude glaciers may vanish by 2050 if current warming trends continue.

Each year, its Himalayan glaciers shrink by an amount equivalent to all the water in the Yellow River, he said.

Twenty-three percent of China's 1.3 billion people live in oases in the arid west of the country that ultimately depend on glacier runoff for their water.

Glaciers "are a capital in

freshwater which is rapidly being exhausted," says Italian climatologist Luca Mercalli.

Global warming is the term for rising temperatures on the Earth's surface, caused by "greenhouse" gases emitted by burning fossil fuels. This pollution lingers in the atmosphere, trapping solar heat instead of letting it radiate back into space.

Since 1900, Earth's surface temperature has warmed by 0.7-0.8 C, and a rise of another five C may occur by the end of the century if emissions are not braked.

The first treaty aimed at curbing greenhouse gases, the UN Kyoto Protocol, was to enter force on Wednesday, but scientists say it falls way short of what is needed to tackle the problem.