

Smog in Iran shuts schools, universities

November 30 2019



Smog is seen blanketing the Iranian capital in this November 13, 2019 picture

Air pollution forced the closure of schools and universities in parts of Iran on Saturday, including Tehran, which was cloaked by a cloud of toxic smog, state media reported.

The young and elderly and people with respiratory illnesses were warned

to stay indoors and sporting activities were suspended for the start of the working week in the Islamic republic.

The decision to shut schools and universities in the capital was announced late Friday by deputy governor Mohammad Taghizadeh, after a meeting of an emergency committee for [air pollution](#).

"Due to increased air [pollution](#), kindergartens, preschools and schools, universities and higher education institutes of Tehran province will be closed," he said, quoted by state news agency IRNA.

Schools in the capital would also be closed for a second day on Sunday, Taghizadeh said later.

"Having examined the index of pollutants in Tehran... it was decided for all schools to be closed tomorrow in Tehran province, except for the counties of Firuzkuh, Damavand and Pardis," he was quoted as saying.

An odd-even traffic scheme was imposed on Saturday to restrict the number of private vehicles on roads in the capital and trucks were banned outright in Tehran province, IRNA reported.

The scheme would be lifted on Sunday, but heavy vehicles would still be barred from the [city](#), said Taghizadeh.

Industry to be halted

But activities would be halted on Sunday for all sand mines and industries in Tehran that contribute to air pollution, he added, without specifying which ones.

Schools were also closed on Saturday in the northern province of Alborz and in the central province of Esfahan, IRNA reported, citing officials.

Other areas where schools were shut included the northeastern city of Mashhad, Orumiyeh city in northwestern Iran and Qom city, south of Tehran.

In Tehran, average concentrations of hazardous airborne particles reached 146 micrograms per cubic metre on Saturday morning, according to air.[tehran](http://tehran.ir).ir, a government-linked website.

By mid-afternoon, the index had dropped to 107 after winds blew away some of the pollution hanging over the capital.

The World Health Organization's advised maximum level is 50.

The pall of pollution has shrouded the sprawling city of eight million for days and is only expected to clear on Monday when rain is forecast.

Air pollution was the cause of nearly 30,000 deaths per year in Iranian cities, [state media](#) reported earlier this year, citing a health ministry official.

The problem worsens in Tehran during winter, when a lack of wind and the cold air traps hazardous smog over the city for days on end—a phenomenon known as thermal inversion.

Most of the city's pollution is caused by heavy vehicles, motorbikes, refineries and power plants, according to a World Bank report released last year.

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