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Opium production in Afghanistan at record high: UN

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The United Nations office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC) announced Tuesday that the opium cultivation in Afghanistan has reached a record level.

UNODC officials in Kabul said over 200,000 hectares planted with the poppy for the first time in Afghanistan, which shows an increase of 36 percent as compared to last year.

The officials further added that most of the rise was in southern Helmand province of Afghanistan.

Jean-Luc Lemahieu, head of the UN office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Kabul also warned that opium production was likely to rise again next year, citing uncertainty regarding the withdrawal of NATO forces and presidential elections.

According to the latest UNODC report, the total area planted with poppies rose from 154,000 to 209,000 hectares, while potential production rose by 49% to 5,500 tonnes, more than the current global demand.

The survey report also added that northern Faryabj and Balkh provinces which were poppy-free, have lost their status.

“If the drug problem is not taken more seriously by aid, development and security actors, the virus of opium will further reduce the resistance of its host, already suffering from dangerously low immune levels due to fragmentation, conflict, patronage, corruption and impunity,” the report said.