

(1) President Dedicates...

standards, 3.5 million eligible children were out of school and around 1,000 schools had been closed across the country.

"Being president, I want to share new things with the nation on education. First, the new solar year has been the year of support for education and I have important messages this year."

The president directed the authorities concerned to provide all possible support for promoting education and keep it among the top priorities.

He said a budget of over \$200 million had been allocated for the construction of 6,000 schools. He directed the authorities to acquire land for schools which had been deprived of property.

The president added the Education Ministry had been able to get 6,51.5 acres of land from people for schools in the past two years. He called on people to discharge their religious duty by donating land for schools, just like they had donated 160,000 acres of land for mosques.

In line with the cabinet order the Education Ministry had completed the draft for the salary scale of the teachers through which many teachers would be benefited until August this year.

The president said he had decided to conduct the teacher recruitment process through the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Services Commission (IARCSC). Payment of bribes for teaching slots was an unacceptable crime.

Ghani recalled his promise to construct flats for teachers had not been kept satisfactorily. However, he assured the Urban Development Ministry and Land Authority had been directed to devise an effective strategy to resolve issues of teachers, returnees, internally-displaced people and relatives of martyrs.

Ghani also directed the Ministry of Communications to connect schools in the provincial capital through the internet facility. (Pajhwok)

(2) UNAMA Condemns...

Representative for Afghanistan. "At a time when Afghans are looking toward much-needed peace, we must not allow such attacks to deter our collective resolve to make progress on ending the conflict," said Yamamoto, who is also head of UNAMA. "The United Nations stands with Afghans in solidarity and remains committed to an Afghan-led peace process that will end the war and enable Afghanistan to allocate more resources to protect all citizens from such atrocities."

UNAMA maintained that there was no justification whatsoever for such attacks, which may amount to war crimes, and that those who have organized and enabled this attack must be brought to justice and held to account.

On behalf of the United Nations in Afghanistan, Yamamoto expressed his condolences to the loved ones of those killed in the attack and wished a full and speedy recovery to those injured. (Pajhwok)

(3) Lawmakers Slam...

"The government has lost its credit for the people considering to the current situation of the country, the government is failed in ensuring justice, law enforcement, fighting corruption and solving internal differences."

However, Ramadan Bashardost, representing Kabul people in the lower house blamed the Wolesi Jirga and said that current security officials received votes from lawmakers.

"Who are responsible for killings, who made a construction engineer the leader of National Directorate of Security (NDS) and another engineer the interior minister as well as a second lieutenant the defense minister, did they have experience in their posts, did they appointed according to the conditions explained in the law," he said.

"Looting, murdering, land grabbing and other illegal activities turned to legal practices but you

are silent about them, if you cannot do anything else, at least vote a honest and qualified person," Bashardost said.

First deputy speaker, Hamayon Hamayon, called the government blind and deaf and said, "We cannot have any demands from the government, it is better we use our own authority for improving situation in the country,"

About recent remarks of Hizb-I-Islami Afghanistan (HIA) leader, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, targeting Wolesi Jirga, Hamayon said that such statements should be avoided.

"He (Hekmatyar) as a citizen of this country has the right to criticize the parliament and its members, but making such statements on behalf of a political party would turn the situation worse," he said.

Meanwhile, Abdul Latif Pedram, a lawmaker from Badakhshan province, also criticized the government for its failure in ensuring security and holding Wolesi Jirga elections, but endorsed Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's statements about the parliament.

He said that corruption was raging in Wolesi Jirga and there was urgent need for election so honest people elected as representatives. Hekmatyar during a gathering in Jalalabad, the capital of Nangarhar province last week said, "People want a honorable parliament, the current parliament is a shame, it has turned to a center of buying and selling, the only way to get rid of this parliament is electing honest representatives in the upcoming polls,"

He had said that corrupt figures should be defeated in the next elections and people of all areas of the country should be given the right to cast their votes. (Pajhwok)

(4) Hekmatyar Stresses ...

Peace Zone for the Taliban and opening office for them in Kabul and supported the suggestions. Hekmatyar said no armed groups from the Taliban, foreign forces and Afghan forces would be present in the Peace Zones where the Taliban leaders with their families will be living.

He added the Peace Zones would be selected during talks between the Taliban and Afghan government and its security and other matters would be discussed during talks.

He asked the Taliban not to stress over direct talks with the US and negotiate with the Afghan government.

He termed peace as the last solution of crisis in the country and added some circles showed opposition with his peace draft and defined the Peace Zones as handing over some provinces to the Taliban.

Earlier, Jihadi leader Abdul Rab Rasoul Sayyaf said handing over some provinces will not help the peace bid and added Mujahidin would never allow this to happen and push Afghanistan to the verge of collapse.

Hekmatyar again stressed over the conduct of free, fair and timely Wolesi Jirga and District Council elections and asked the political parties, influential people to help the government in the conduct fair election. (Pajhwok)

(5) Mogherini to...

in the worn-torn nation and the region.

A statement from EU said on Saturday the conference built on the successful Kabul Process meeting held at the end of February, as well as the 2016 Brussels Conference on Afghanistan.

Matters relating to peace and reconciliation, counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics and regional cooperation will be discussed at the event -- themes that feature in the EU's Afghanistan strategy. The high representative will address the conference and hold a number of bilateral meetings, including with the presidents of Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, as well as several ministers. (Pajhwok)

(6) Goods, Essential...

280afs and the same amount of African black tea 300afs -- same prices as last week's.

Ahmad Wali Panjsheri, who owns a grocery store in Dahn-i-Bagh area, sold 49-kg bag of sugar for 1,800afs, a 16 liter tin of ghee for 1,100afs, a 50kg sack of Kazakhstani flour for 1,150afs, 24kg Pakistani rice for 2,200, a kilogram of green Indonesian tea for 300afs and the same quantity of black African tea for 350afs.

The prices of fuel also remained steady as a Wazirabad filling station worker, Abdul Hadi, sold one liter of diesel for 41afs and the same quantity of petrol for 42afs.

Ahmadullah, a liquefied gas seller in Kolola Pushta neighborhood, told Pajhwok Afghan News the rate of a kilogram of gas remained steady at 45afs.

The prices of gold also did not register any change as one gram of Russian gold was sold for 1,900afs and the same quantity of Arabian variety for 2,400afs, the same rates as last week's.

According to Sadaqat Money Exchange Service in Sara-i-Shahzada in Kabul, one US dollar was accounted for 69.13afs and 1,000 Pakistani rupees for 606afs this week against last week's 69.14afs and 616afs respectively. (Pajhwok)

(7) MoE Pledges...

grades, from 17 to seven for seventh to ninth grades and from 15 to 12 for 10th to 12th classes.

Shinwari said 150 closed schools were reopened last year with the help of people and religious scholars. Efforts were underway to reopen all closed schools, he added.

Efforts are also ongoing for preventing corruption in teachers' employment and 10,000 teachers were recently employed in a transparent manner.

He said the education standard in Afghanistan would match the level of developed countries in the next 15 years.

Training of teachers, joint campaigns with civil society activists for boosting girls' enrollment in schools, reforms in certificate distribution and other important programmes would be implemented this year, he promised.

Creating a new computer-based system would help distribute 48,000 certificates a day, the acting minister said. More than a million students would be enrolled nationwide and 50 million books printed in the new academic year, he concluded. (Pajhwok)

(8) China Donated ...

diplomats. The problem of text books shortage has resolved with the donation of China, he said.

He was happy over receiving of 25,000 textbooks and said shortage of teaching materials was a huge problem for students of his school.

The textbooks included chemistry, Dari (language), math, geometry, biology, Pashto (language), culture, history and physics. (Pajhwok)

(9) Lashkargah...

Another official, who wished to go unnamed, said the two policemen who prevented the car from entering the Ghazi Ayub Khan Stadium were also killed.

On the other hand, Mohammad Dawat, an eyewitness, said the incident occurred when people were entering the stadium. "If police had not prevented the bomber at the gate, dozens of people would have lost their lives."

No group has claimed responsibility for the attack so far. (Pajhwok)

(10) Tashkent to...

the United Nations, United States, Russia, China, the European Union, Germany, France, Italy, the United Kingdom, India, Pakistan, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Afghanistan's High Peace Council (HPC) has remains hopeful about a positive result of the conference.

In the conference, the Afghan delegate will share its views on how to remove obstacles from the way of peace process, HPC spokesman Sayed Ehsan Taheri told TOLO news on Saturday.

"Afghanistan's peace is included in the agenda of the Tashkent conference besides other issues

including counterterrorism, drugs and human smuggling," Taheri said.

Some Afghan MPs meanwhile stressed the need for direct talks between Afghan government and the Taliban to achieve success in the peace process.

"For Afghanistan's peace, the better option is to talk with the Taliban and house them in the country instead of talking with other countries," said Amir Khan Yar, the second deputy speaker of Afghan parliament.

Continuation of war and violence in Afghanistan, especially in north and north-eastern parts of the country has concerned countries in the region, said Mohammad Akbari, an MP.

"Uzbekistan is worried about the ongoing war in Afghanistan," he added.

"Afghanistan's representatives in the conference should seriously speak on terrorism in the country to make sure the issue is taken seriously," said Juma Din Keyanwal, a lawmaker.

Other lawmakers meanwhile said several meetings have been held between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, but none had a good positive result.

"Uzbekistan is not in a position to have influence on Afghanistan's issue. The reason that why such meetings are not productive is that the countries involved in Afghan war want war," MP Sadiqi Zada Nili said. (Tolo news)

(11) Afghan Forces...

Farah, Badghis, Faryab and Helmand provinces.

The Daesh militants were killed in Deh Bahal district in Nangarhar, the statement said, adding that "other terrorists were killed in Trinkot district in Uruzgan, Kunar, Ghazni and Kandahar provinces".

The ministry said that three strongholds of the militants were eliminated in the military operations.

According to the ministry, the Afghan Air Force conducted 66 flights to support army soldiers and targeted 14 strongholds of terrorists. (Tolo news)

(12) Taliban Threaten ...

the north, told Pajhwok Afghan News: "We have nothing in hand right now. We would strive to distribute electricity to all areas."

Police spokesman Zabihullah Shuja told Pajhwok Afghan News no area in Baghlan was faced with the electricity problem. He said the Taliban were trying to misguide the masses. Afghan forces had the ability to remove the threat, he asserted. The Taliban destroyed an electricity pylon in Dand-i-Shahabuddin last year, cutting off the imported electricity supply to Kabul for 40 days. (Pajhwok)

U.S. Charges, Sanctions Iranians for Global Cyber Attacks On Behalf Of Tehran

WASHINGTON - The United States on Friday charged and sanctioned nine Iranians and an Iranian company for attempting to hack into hundreds of universities worldwide, dozens of firms and parts of the U.S. government, including its main energy regulator, on behalf of Tehran's government.

The cyber attacks, beginning in at least 2013, pilfered more than 31 terabytes of academic data and intellectual property from 144 U.S. universities and 176 universities in 21 other countries, the U.S. Department of Justice said, describing the campaign as one of the largest state-sponsored hacks ever prosecuted.

The U.S. Treasury Department said it was placing sanctions on the nine people and the Mabna Institute, a company U.S. prosecutors characterized as designed to help Iranian research organizations steal information. U.S. Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein said the nine Iranians were considered fugitives who may face extradition in more than 100 countries if

they travel outside Iran.

Authorities "will aggressively investigate and prosecute hostile actors who attempt to profit from America's ideas by infiltrating our computer systems and stealing intellectual property," Rosenstein told a news conference.

The case "will disrupt the defendants' hacking operations and deter similar crimes," he added. The hackers were not accused of being directly employed by Iran's government. They were instead charged with criminal conduct waged primarily through the Mabna Institute on behalf of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the elite military force assigned to defend Iran's Shi'ite theocracy from internal and external threats.

In Tehran, Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Bahram Qasemi denounced the move as "provocative, illegitimate, and without any justifiable reason and another sign of the hostility of the (U.S.) ruling circles toward the Iranian nation", state news agency IRNA said.

The targeting of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, or FERC, was a matter of special concern, U.S. Attorney Geoffrey Berman said, because it oversees the interstate regulation of energy and holds details of some of the country's "most sensitive infrastructure."

Hackers targeted email accounts of more than 100,000 professors worldwide, half in the United States, and compromised about 8,000, prosecutors said.

Hackers also targeted the U.S. Labor Department, the United Nations and the computer systems of the U.S. states Hawaii and Indiana, prosecutors said.

Friday's actions are part of an effort by senior cyber security officials at the White House and across the U.S. government to blame foreign countries for malicious hacks.

They were announced a day after U.S. President Donald Trump named John Bolton, a former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations who is deeply skeptical of the 2015 international nuclear accord with Iran, as his new national security adviser.

Trump himself has repeatedly cast doubt on the nuclear deal, in which the U.S. and other world powers eased sanctions in exchange for Tehran putting limits on its nuclear program. (Reuters)

Sydney Goes Dark As Global Earth Hour Climate Campaign Kicks Off

Sydney - The Sydney Opera House and Harbour Bridge went dark for an hour Saturday, kicking off a global campaign that will see landmark buildings around the world dim their lights to raise awareness about the impacts of climate change.

Earth Hour, which started in Australia in 2007, is being observed by millions of supporters in 187 countries, who are turning off their lights at 8.30pm local time in what organisers describe as the world's "largest grassroots movement for climate change".

"It aims to raise awareness about the importance of protecting the environment and wildlife," Earth Hour organiser WWF Australia chief Dermot O'Gorman told AFP.

Images from across Asia showed buildings including Kuala Lumpur's Petronas Towers, as well as the famous harbour skylines of Hong Kong and Singapore, being plunged into darkness to mark the occasion.

Other global landmarks that will take part include Beijing's Bird's Nest Olympic stadium, the Eiffel Tower in Paris, the Pyramids of Egypt and New York's Empire State Building. With global temperatures the highest on record, O'Gorman said this year's theme was the impact of climate change on biodiversity and plant and animal species. (AFP)