

9/11 attacks failed to divide us

Says UK PM

REUTERS, London

The Sept 11, 2001, al-Qaeda attacks in the United States failed to divide those who believe in freedom and democracy, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said in a video message marking the 20th anniversary of that day.

Nearly 3,000 people were killed, including more than 2,600 at the World Trade Center in New York, after hijackers seized control of airplanes and used them to attack the World Trade Center's twin towers and the Pentagon just outside Washington. Sixty-seven British nationals were among the dead.

"While the terrorists imposed their burden of grief and suffering, and while the threat persists today, we can now say with the perspective of 20 years that they failed to shake our belief in freedom and democracy," Johnson said in the video message.

"They failed to drive our nations apart, or cause us to abandon our values, or to live in permanent fear."

The message will be played at an event held in London's Olympic Park, where there is a memorial sculpture created from steel salvaged from the collapsed World Trade Center towers.



The Tribute in Light installation, the World Trade Center, The Empire State Building, The Statue of Liberty and the skyline of New York are seen on the eve of the 20th anniversary of the September 11 attacks in Manhattan, as seen from Bayonne, New Jersey, US; A woman places a lantern at the Wall of Names during the Luminaria Ceremony to serve as tribute to the passengers and crew members of Flight 93 in Stoystown, Pennsylvania; and people mourn at the 9/11 Memorial in Manhattan, New York City, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS

Afghan economic meltdown would be 'gift for terrorists: UN

AGENCIES

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has appealed for an injection of cash into Afghanistan to avoid an economic meltdown that would spark a "catastrophic" situation for the Afghan people and be a "gift for terrorist groups."

His remarks come after his special envoy on Afghanistan, Deborah Lyons, warned the Security Council on Thursday that the freezing of billions of dollars in international Afghan assets to keep them out of Taliban hands would inevitably spark "a severe economic downturn."

"At the present moment the UN is not even able to pay its salaries to its own workers," Guterres told reporters on Friday.

"We need to find ways to avoid a

situation that would be catastrophic for the people and, in my opinion, a source of instability, and an action, gift for terrorist groups still operating there," he said.

Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State's Afghan affiliate, ISIS-Khorosan, are present in Afghanistan.

Guterres said he had been speaking with International Monetary Fund chief Kristalina Georgieva, telling reporters it was essential to agree on waivers or mechanisms to get money into Afghanistan. The IMF has blocked the Taliban from accessing some \$440 million in new emergency reserves.

Much of the Afghan central bank's \$10 billion in assets are also parked overseas, where they have been frozen since the Taliban came to power last month. They are considered a key instrument for the West to pressure

the Islamist group.

Meanwhile, a video analysis shows the United States may have mistakenly targeted an aid worker rather than Islamic State fighters in its final strike in Afghanistan which killed 10 civilians, The New York Times said Friday.

The New York Times, analyzing security camera footage, said the US military may have been seeing the slain Ahmadi and a colleague loading canisters of water, which was in short supply after the collapse of the Western-backed government, and picking up a laptop for his boss.

Ezmarai Ahmadi was an electrical engineer for the California-based aid and lobbying group Nutrition and Education International and himself was among thousands of Afghans who had applied for resettlement in the United States, relatives said.

US pulls missile defences in Saudi Arabia

AL JAZEERA ONLINE

The United States has removed its most advanced missile defence system and Patriot batteries from Saudi Arabia in recent weeks, even as the kingdom faced continued air attacks from Yemen's Houthi rebels.

The redeployment of the defences from Prince Sultan Air Base outside Riyadh came as Gulf Arab countries nervously watched the chaotic withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, including their last-minute evacuations from Kabul's besieged international airport.

While tens of thousands of American forces remain across the Arabian Peninsula as a counterweight to Iran, Gulf Arab nations worry about the US's future plans as its military perceives a growing threat in Asia that requires those missile defences.

Tensions remain high as negotiations appear stalled in Vienna over Iran's collapsed nuclear deal with world powers, raising the danger of future confrontations in the region.

"Perceptions matter whether or not they're rooted in a cold, cold reality. And the perception is very clear that the US is not as committed to the Gulf as it used to be in the views of many people in decision-making authority in the region," said Kristian Ulrichsen, a research fellow at the James A Baker III Institute for Public Policy at Rice University.

"From the Saudi point of view, they now see Obama, Trump and Biden – three successive presidents – taking decisions that signify to some extent an abandonment."

MORE NEWS

Iran invites IAEA chief for talks before showdown with West

UN nuclear watchdog chief Rafael Grossi will fly to Tehran this weekend for talks that may ease a standoff between Iran and the West just as it risks escalating and scuppering negotiations on reviving the Iran nuclear deal, diplomats said yesterday. Three diplomats who follow the International Atomic Energy Agency closely said Grossi's trip before next week's meeting of the IAEA's 35-nation board of governors was confirmed. Two said Grossi was due to arrive in Tehran early today and meet the new head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, Mohammad Esلمي.

Russia summons US envoy over 'election interference'

Russia said Friday it summoned the US ambassador in Moscow over interference of US tech giants in parliamentary polls due later this month. Moscow has ramped up control of the internet and is taking legal action against foreign tech companies for not deleting content banned by authorities. The foreign ministry said Ambassador John Sullivan was presented with "irrefutable proof" of US tech giants violating Russian laws in connection with the September 17-19 elections to the lower house State Duma. It said deputy foreign minister Sergei Ryabkov expressed the "categorical inadmissibility of interference in the domestic affairs of our country" during the meeting.

UN chief calls for action on Covid-19, climate

The United Nations chief warned Friday that the world is "moving in the wrong direction" and exhorted nations to take urgent action to fight the Covid-19 pandemic and climate change. Speaking ahead of the UN General Assembly that kicks off in New York on Sep. 21, Guterres lamented that vaccine-manufacturing nations have been unable to ramp up production toward the goal of vaccinating some 70 percent of the world population by the first half of 2022. Guterres dismissed calls to delay a major UN climate summit, known as COP26, due to take place in Scotland in November. Guterres urged the United States and China to do more to combat climate change. "We need a stronger engagement of the US, namely in financing for development, for climate-related development issues, mitigation, adaptation, and we need an additional effort from China in relation to emissions," Guterres said.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

NATURE CONGRESS RESOLUTION FOR SAVING WILDLIFE

Protect 30pc of Earth, 80pc of Amazon

AFP, Paris

The world's most influential conservation congress passed resolutions Friday calling for 80 percent of the Amazon and 30 percent of Earth's surface -- land and sea -- to be designated "protected areas" to halt and reverse the loss of wildlife.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which is meeting in Marseille, does not set global policy, but its recommendations have in the past served as the backbone for UN treaties and conventions.

They will help set the agenda for upcoming UN summits on food systems, biodiversity and climate change.

An emergency motion calling for four-fifths of the Amazon basin to be declared a protected area by 2025 -- submitted by COICA, an umbrella group representing more than two million indigenous peoples across nine South American nations -- passed with overwhelming support.

"Indigenous Peoples have come to defend our home and, in doing so, defend the planet. This motion is a first step," said Jose Gregorio Diaz Mirabal, general coordinator of COICA and a leader of the Curripaco people in Venezuela.



Over the last two decades, the Amazon has lost roughly 10,000 square kilometres every year to deforestation, much of it through fires set deliberately to clear land for commercial agriculture or cattle grazing.

This destruction combined with climate change, scientists have warned, could push the world's largest tropical forest irretrievably past a "tipping point" into a savannah-like landscape.

Another hotly debated measure that was accepted in a vote of IUCN members -- government agencies, NGOs and indigenous people's organisations -- says that 30 of the planet's land and ocean area should have protected status within a decade.

The zones selected must include "biodiversity hotspots" teeming with animal and plant life, and be backed up by rigorous monitoring and enforcement, the resolution says.

Many scientists and conservationists advocated for an even more ambitious "half-Earth" target.

The pace at which animal and plant species are going extinct is 100 to 1,000 times the normal "background" rate, a widely accepted threshold for the kind of mass-extinction event that has only occurred five times in the last half-billion years.

The IUCN's 1,400 members overwhelmingly approved a resolution recommending a moratorium on deep sea mining and reform of the International Seabed Authority (ISA), an intergovernmental regulatory body.

Industry argued that the unattached rocks on the ocean floor some five kilometres below the waves are a greener source of minerals -- manganese, cobalt, nickel -- needed to build electric vehicle batteries. But scientists counter that seabed ecosystems at that depth are fragile, and could take decades or longer to heal once disrupted.

The measure passed with more than 80 percent of votes from government agencies, and 90 percent support from NGOs and civil society groups.

BERC broke rules to make new rules

FROM PAGE 1

The ministry in a letter to the Commission on December 10, 2018, said the 2016 regulations were passed without a public hearing and vetting from the ministry and "it is not a document with legal status."

It took the BERC over two years to make a move to right the wrong. In a special meeting on March 24 this year, it acknowledged the rules violation.

In a circular on April 6, it made public its decision to rectify the mistake by amending the previous Licensing Regulations of 2006, without mentioning anything about the 2016 amendment.

The circular also said the Commission will seek objections or suggestions through a public hearing, set for September 16.

Despite the procedural flaws, the Commission issued or renewed 1,058 licences in power sector, 932

in gas sector and 1,600 in petroleum sector in five years till last year under the 2016 regulations, according to its annual report.

These licensees include power plants, LPG producers and distributors, filling stations and oil importers, both public and private.

WHY THE AMENDMENT? Officials are unwilling to talk about the justification of the "secret" amendment, but certain changes clearly favour the business in the sector by relaxing certain provisions of the previous regulations.

For example, the amendment dropped three sub-sections (9, 12, and 14) of Section 3 of the 2006 regulations.

The first two required licensees to submit details of ownership and assets, while the third required that the companies provide an estimated production size and the amount of fuel needed for the purpose.

Established in 2003, the BERC operates under Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission Act 2003. Under 34(1) of the Act, the Commission in consultation with the government shall determine the price of power generation in wholesale, bulk and retail, and the supply of energy at the end-user level.

However, the 2016 amendment added a completely new section -- 16A -- that says prices of fuel (gas, oil, coal, LNG, etc) would be determined by the "government or according to the fuel distribution agreement between manufacturer and supplier."

All types of licence fees were also changed, while the licence period was extended from one year to three years.

OUTRIGHT ILLEGAL GM Atiqur Rahman Zamaly, deputy secretary (drafting) of Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division of the law ministry, told The Daily Star that

no government departments could issue any regulation without the ministry's permission.

Asked about the fate of the licences issued under the 2016 regulations, he said, "That is a separate issue. We have given our opinion only on that matter [the 2016 Regulations]."

"But," he added, "if the Commission wants to know about the jobs done under the 2016 regulations, we will give our opinion again."

Supreme Court lawyer Jyotirmoy Barua said if a regulation becomes illegal, every licence issued under it must be renewed under the new regulation.

"Since the companies have no faults here, they can get exemption under the new law," he added.

Eminent jurist Dr Shahdeen Malik opined that if anyone goes to the court to challenge any of the decisions taken under the 2016 regulations, the

court would likely rule in his favour.

"Without the law ministry's approval, no order could be issued by any government body," he told this newspaper.

Very recently, the BERC website published a draft copy of 2021 regulations. One of its clauses says the 2016 regulations are being abolished and any decision taken under clause 22 of the 2016 regulations will also be cancelled.

Clause 22 bestowed the power of circulating gazettes on BERC itself.

According to the 2021 draft, any complication arising from the decisions taken under the 2016 regulations would be settled through an executive decision.

Under section 59(1) of the BERC Act 2003, the Commission may make regulations by publishing it in the official gazette. To do so, the BERC should first send its proposal to the Energy Department, which then

forwards it to the law ministry for vetting. Before this, BERC should take public opinion by pre-publishing the regulation, said a BERC official.

After the law ministry's approval, the BERC can publish it in a gazette. Only then will it have a Statutory Regulatory Orders (SRO) number to be considered as an official gazette.

There is no SRO number for the 2016 regulations.

Earlier, for the same reason, BERC had to cancel the Dispute Settlement Regulations-2014, which was also amended without an SRO number in 2016.

Abdur Rab Khan, who was chairman of the regulatory body when the regulations were amended, died last month.

The current BERC Chairman, Abdul Jalil, declined to comment on the matter, saying, "If you have any question, raise it in the public hearing."