

International

Girls excluded from returning to secondary school in Afghanistan

Taleban order only boys and male teachers back to classroom

KABUL: Girls were excluded from returning to secondary school in Afghanistan yesterday, after the country's new Taleban rulers ordered only boys and male teachers back to the classroom. The hardline Islamist group ousted the US-backed government last month, promising a softer brand of rule than their repressive reign in the 1990s, when women were mostly banned from education and work.

But the diktat from the education ministry was the latest move from the new government to threaten women's rights. "All male teachers and students should attend their educational institutions," a statement said ahead of classes which resumed yesterday. The statement, issued late Friday, made no mention of women teachers or girl pupils. Secondary schools, with students typically between the ages of 13 and 18, are often segregated by sex in Afghanistan.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, they have faced repeated closures and have been shut since the Taleban seized power. Since a US-led invasion ousted the Taleban in 2001, significant progress has been made in girls' education, with the number of schools tripling and female literacy nearly doubling to 30 percent - however, the change was largely limited to the cities. The United Nations said it was "deeply worried" for the future of girls' schooling in Afghanistan.

"It is critical that all girls, including older girls, are able to resume their education without any further delays. For that, we need female teachers to resume teaching," the UN's children's agency UNICEF said. Primary schools have already reopened, with boys and girls mostly attending separate classes and some women teachers returning to work. The new regime has also permitted women to go to private universities, though with tough restrictions on their clothes and movement.

Women's ministry closed

In a further sign that the Taleban's approach to



KABUL: Boys attend their class at Istiklal school in Kabul yesterday. — AFP

women and girls had not softened, they appeared to have shut down the government's ministry of women's affairs and replaced it with a department



Latest move from threaten women's rights

notorious for enforcing strict religious doctrine during their first rule. In Kabul on Friday, workers were seen raising a sign for the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice at the old Women's

Affairs building in the capital. Videos posted to social media showed women workers from the ministry protesting outside after losing their jobs.

No official from the Taleban responded to requests for comment. Although still marginalized, Afghan women have fought for and gained basic rights in the past 20 years, becoming lawmakers, judges, pilots and police officers. Hundreds of thousands have entered the workforce - a necessity in some cases as many women were widowed or now support invalid husbands as a result of decades of conflict. The Taleban have shown little inclination to honor those rights - no women have been included in the government and many have been stopped from returning to work. Meanwhile, a top United States general admitted it had made a "mistake" when it launched a drone strike against suspected Islamic State (IS) militants in Kabul last month, instead killing 10 civilians, including children. — AFP

North Africa virus cases plummeting

TUNIS: Weeks after a spike in coronavirus cases overwhelmed intensive care units across North Africa with severe oxygen shortages sparking public anger, case numbers are sharply declining. Here is a look at the situation in the four countries of the Maghreb-Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria and Libya-based on official figures collected by AFP.

Tunisia

Images of intensive care units overwhelmed with COVID patients in July sparked outrage in Tunisia, which has suffered the region's highest number of deaths per head from the virus, with around 24,500 in a population of 11.7 million. At its peak, the latest wave saw more than 55,000 new infections between 7-13 July—a weekly figure seven times the current rate. The past seven days saw 342 deaths from the virus—just a fifth of the toll in the last week of July. Authorities responded to the surge with a strict early evening curfew and travel restrictions. Neighboring Libya closed its border with Tunisia. Those measures have now been eased.

"There's the effect of mass vaccination of the population," said Hechmi Louzir, director of the Pasteur Institute in Tunis, who is a member of the country's scientific committee on the pandemic. He told AFP that up to 60 percent of the population could be fully vaccinated by October, adding that large numbers of infections had also boosted levels of immunity. AFP figures show that over the past week, Tunisia was vaccinating its population faster



RAS JEDIR, Libya: Photo shows cars crossing into Tunisia through the Libyan Ras Jdeir border crossing, after the two neighboring North African countries reopened their border crossing following a two months closure as Tunisia's coronavirus caseload soared. — AFP

than any other African country, with 0.81 percent of the population per day receiving a jab. More than a quarter of Tunisians are now fully inoculated.

Morocco

Morocco has seen 13,800 COVID deaths in its population of around 36 million, according to AFP figures. The kingdom is ahead of its Maghreb neighbors in inoculations, with 46.7 percent fully vaccinated. Morocco saw a surge in infections after easing a curfew and opening its borders to travelers in June. That allowed Moroccans in European countries hard hit by the highly infectious Delta variant to return home for summer holidays.

The caseload spiraled, with some 70,000 new cases over one week in early August. Authorities responded by imposing a new curfew and restrictions on movement and gatherings. Health ministry

official Abdelkrim Meziane Bellefquih said this week that infections were down for a fifth straight week. But in comments carried by the official MAP news agency, he warned that "high rates of critical cases and deaths continue to be recorded". The country has pushed back the start of the new school year to October 1 and has launched a vaccination drive among teenagers.

With an official toll of 5,650 deaths, Algeria announced a target in September to vaccinate 70 percent of its 43.9 million population by the end of the year. But AFP figures show that this week, barely 13 percent of the population had received a first vaccine jab, with fewer than 10 percent fully vaccinated. The country's caseload peaked in the last week of July with over 10,000 infections, but has since plummeted. While the first week of August saw 268 deaths, the last seven days saw 132. — AFP

Work-related accidents, illnesses kill nearly two million each year

GENEVA: Work-related illnesses and injuries kill nearly two million people annually, largely due to long working hours, the UN said Friday, warning that the pandemic was likely to worsen the situation. The first-ever joint assessment by the UN's health and labor agencies of the global disease and injury burden linked to jobs stretches from 2000 to 2016, so does not include the dramatic shifts in working conditions brought on by the COVID-19 crisis.

Some 1.9 million deaths worldwide were officially linked to work-related causes in 2016, up slightly from 1.7 million at the turn of the century, according to the report, which cautioned these were almost certainly underestimates. Long working hours "are the single deadliest occupational risk factor" World Health Organization (WHO) chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a press conference in a video statement. Exposure to long working hours, defined as working 55 hours a week or more, was deemed responsible for some 750,000 deaths in 2016, the report said.

In all, the study examines 19 occupational risk factors, including exposure to carcinogens like asbestos, ergonomic factors like prolonged sitting and manual handling of loads. After long working hours, workplace exposure to gases, fumes and other air pollution was seen as the top risk, responsible for some 450,000 deaths in 2016. "It's shocking to see so many people literally being killed by their jobs," Tedros said,

describing the report as "a wake-up call to countries and businesses to improve and protect the health and safety of workers."

Long working hours kill

The report found that non-communicable diseases accounted for a full 82 percent of work-related deaths in 2016, with the greatest cause of death being chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, which killed 415,000 people that year. That was followed by strokes, at 400,000, and ischaemic heart disease at 350,000. Occupational injuries were responsible for 18 percent of all work-related deaths, and were estimated to have killed 360,000 people in 2016.

"All of these deaths are preventable," International Labor Organization chief Guy Ryder said in a video message. "We can and we must ensure safe and healthy workplaces for all workers." On a positive note, the global death rate from work-related causes shrank by 14 percent over the 16-year-period covered in the report, although a growing global population meant the number of deaths remained about the same.

The decrease from 39.9 to

34.3 deaths per 100,000 working age people was possibly a reflection of improvements in workplace safety measures, the report said. But while there was a sharp drop in the number of deaths caused by occupational injuries, deaths linked to long working hours surged over the same period. The death rate from heart disease associated with exposure to long working hours ballooned by 41 percent, while stroke deaths brought on by excessive work rose 19 percent, the report showed. — AFP

REQUIRED

SCHOOL IN KUWAIT
REQUIRES
FULL-TIME DRIVERS

Working schedule:

- 6 days/week - 6:00am - 3:30pm.
- One month paid holiday.
- Residency #18.

For more information please contact:
+965 97975032

News in brief

Explosions rock Jalalabad

KABUL: Two people were killed when three blasts struck the Afghan city of Jalalabad yesterday, at least one of which targeted a Taleban vehicle, in the country's first deadly attack since the United States withdrew. The hardline Islamist group stormed to power in mid-August, ousting the government and promising to restore security to the violence-racked country. "In one attack a Taleban vehicle patrolling in Jalalabad was targeted," a Taleban official who asked not to be named said. "Women and children were among the injured," he added. An official from the health department of Nangarhar Province told AFP that three people died and 18 were wounded, while several local media reported the attacks left at least two dead. Pictures taken at the site of the blast showed a green pick-up truck with a white Taleban flag surrounded by debris as armed fighters looked on. — AFP

Libya-Tunisia border reopens

RAS JDEIR BORDER CROSSING: Tunisia and Libya opened their shared border on Friday, two months after it was closed as Tunisia's coronavirus caseload soared. AFP reporters on both sides of the Ras Jdeir border post saw small numbers of travelers queuing to pass through. On the Libyan side, more than a hundred empty cargo trucks were waiting to cross and load up with Tunisian imports, particularly food. Tunisian products have been largely absent from Libyan shelves since the border was closed. Libya shut its land border and suspended flights between the two countries on July 8 citing the explosion in COVID-19 cases in Tunisia. But with the caseload rapidly dropping, officials on both sides agreed to reopen the frontier after Libyan transitional Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah met Tunisian President Kais Saied in Tunis on September 9. — AFP

Japan 'message in a bottle'

TOKYO: A message in a bottle released 37 years ago by Japanese high school students has been found—around 6,000 kilometers away in Hawaii. Members of a natural science club at Choshi High School in Chiba, east of Tokyo, released 750 bottles into the sea between 1984 and 1985 to investigate ocean currents. The bottles—which contained messages in English, Japanese and Portuguese asking the finder to contact the sender—have washed up in places as far-flung as the Philippines, Canada and Alaska. But none had been found since the 50th bottle was discovered in 2002 in Japan's southwestern Kagoshima Prefecture. The 51st bottle was discovered by a nine-year-old girl on a beach in Hawaii in June, the school announced, with the postcard-sized messages still largely legible. "I was really surprised," school vice principal Jun Hayashi told AFP on Friday. — AFP

CONDOLENCES



Mrs. Kunjunjamma Daniel

(Ex-Principal & Director of Indian School, Salmiya, Kuwait
Ex-Principal of Jabriya Indian School, Kuwait,
Eldest Sister of Late **Mr. M. Mathews**
(Ex-Managing Director of Sefeena Group of Companies)

**The Management & Staff of
Sefeena Group of Companies express our
Heartfelt Condolences & prayers to the
bereaved family.**