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## Corps of Engineers to light up downtown Kabul with solar street lights

**KABUL, Afghanistan** – Kabul Mayor Muhammad Yunus Nawandish and other Afghan and U.S. officials unveiled a pilot project to install solar-powered streetlights along a one-kilometer portion of one of Kabul's most important commercial corridors on Tuesday, Nov. 9.

The officials broke ground in a median in the street near the Jumhoriat National Specialized Hospital to mark the start of the project.

Plans call for 28 solar-powered streetlights to be installed in the median of the road between the hospital and the Sherpoor traffic circle in the heart of downtown. They're scheduled to operational by the end of the year.

The mayor's office, in conjunction with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, is working with the firm Sustainable Energy Services Afghanistan to install the light poles.

"Lighting is essential to improving the quality of life throughout Afghanistan," Nawandish said. "I'm proud that Kabul City is leading the way down the path to renewable energy for our country."

The goal of the project is to support economic development by creating new nighttime commerce, said U.S. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Joel VanEssen, who serves as the officer in charge of the Army Corps of Engineers' Kabul South Resident Office.

The area outside the hospital already is a busy business zone, lined with shops selling stationary supplies, electronics, photo supplies and other goods; and street vendors selling fried potatoes, bananas and other food items.

Renewable energy is vital for Kabul, a city with more than 6 million residents, because three decades of war have left the city with power generation capabilities and a ruined distribution system, VanEssen said.

"Being that there are limited power generation capabilities and a limited number of distribution lines at this time, by going solar they're not dependant on a network to provide power. It just draws from the sun," VanEssen said.



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Lt. Col. Steve Danner, left, and Kabul Mayor Mayor Muhammad Yunus Nawandish break ground on a solar streetlight project on Tuesday, Nov. 9, in Kabul. Photo by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The stand-alone poles will use light-emitting diode lamps that are energy efficient, low maintenance and environmentally friendly. Solar panels will collect power during daylight hours to power the lights during nighttime hours.

With more than 300 days of sunlight a year, Kabul is an ideal location for solar powered lights, VanEssen said.

The project is being funded through the Commander's Emergency Response Program at the direction of Col. Thomas H. Magness, commander of Army Corps of Engineers' district in northern Afghanistan.

Additional projects are being explored for other streets in Kabul.

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