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Newsletter

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“Insecurity has prevented provincial council members from monitoring local governance properly.”

Insecurity bars PCs from monitoring projects

Mohammad Hassan Khettab, 16 August 2015

KABUL (Pajhwok): Provincial council members say that growing insecurity have prevented them to evaluate and observe projects' implementations and local governance. The Wolesi Jirga or lower house of parliament has barred provincial councils from evaluating local governance in 2014 election process. Most of the provincial councils have closed their offices in protest against the parliament's decision. However, the councils have regained the right based on a presidential decree. A consultative workshop participated by all provincial council heads was held in capital Kabul on Sunday to discuss problems regarding the provincial councils. Sayed Ahmad Khamosh, the local councils solidarity head, told the meeting titled 'Consultative Workshop for Internal Procedure and Actions Mechanism of Provincial Councils Monitoring Role' that the gathering was aimed at strengthening evaluation role of provincial councils. He said that they have introduced a clear procedure for provincial councils' evaluation in coordination of the councils head in the past five months. Nadir Naeem, deputy head of Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG), said the provincial councils had basic role in building partnership among all sectors and improving local governance. But he said the councils had faced major problems. He added lack of clarity in the relations among provincial councils and local government departments, shortage of transport facility and office buildings and insecurity were main problems the provincial councils had faced. The government is aware of it and efforts were underway to resolve the problems. The provincial council heads expressed concerns that insecurity has created problems for them to evaluate local governance. Haji Ahmad Jafari, provincial council head for Maidan Wardak province, told Pajhwok Afghan News the new procedure has cleared their role of evaluation and resolve misunderstandings in their works. But he concerned about law and order which was the main problem confronting them. "Insecurity has prevented provincial council members from monitoring local governance properly, and they cannot go to remote areas to oversee projects' implementation," he said. Mohammad Safdar Mohsini, the provincial council head of Baghlan province, said he had taken the problems in projects implementation and shared them with relevant organs, but no action was taken. He said provincial councils were faced with security threats, particularly in Baghlan province. He said that he shared his concerns about insecurity with relevant security officials but no one has taken action. However, Atta Mohammad Haqbayan, Zabul

provincial council head, said that they have bridged the gap between the government and people, traveled to 10 districts and met with local people, Ulema and local elders and encouraged them to support the government. He added that Zabul provincial council had also monitored projects' implementations including the construction of airport, roads, and development projects in rural areas. Eliminating corruption in government offices and preventing of violation of laws were other efforts of the council, he said. Haqbayan also concerned about deteriorated law and order and said that lack of facilities and office building for the council were problems they had faced with. The building of Zabul provincial council was damaged in the wake of two suicide attacks few months ago.

Rampant corruption in Paktia irks residents: PC

Sahel Mangal, 17 August 2015

KABUL (Pajhwok): People in southeastern Paktia province have complained they were facing with serious problems while doing their official work because government employees demanding bribe. In an exclusive interview with Pajhwok Afghan News, Paktia provincial council member Taj Mohammad Mangal said that despite efforts to bridge the gap between people and government, people were still facing problems to do their legal work without greasing the palm of government officers. He said the provincial council efforts had removed anarchism and arbitrary actions in government offices to some extent. "The government offices in the past did not respond to people's problems, but the problem has now resolved to some extent," he added. Mangal said that district officers also did not attend their offices on time, leading residents of the district to face problems. "Our efforts yielded fruits as most of the officers come to their offices on time and address people's problems," he said, adding that in the past people were waiting for months for a small issue. The provincial council's efforts brought positive changes regarding the reconstruction and security of the province, Mangal added. Citing an example, he said: "We had meetings with civil society activists and other individuals about security that also led to president's visit to Paktia province to assess the situation." The provincial council has also shared the problems of Paktia province with the officials in Kabul and they have promised to resolve them, he said. Hundreds of people daily refer to council for solution to their problems and the council members trying to settle them. Paktia provincial council has 15 members including three women.

“I am duty-bound to defend women’s rights and ensure thoroughgoing investigations into violence against them.”



Above: A consultative workshop participated by all provincial council heads. Kabul, Afghanistan.

Warlords, graft hamper probe into violence against women

Muhammad Hassan Hakimi, 18 August 2015

FEROZKOH (Pajhwok): Violence against women has doubled in the first four months of the current solar year in western Ghor province, fueling concerns among human rights campaigners and civil society activists. Last week, three women were killed and a girl wounded as a consequence of domestic tension in different parts of the province, according to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission’s Ghor chapter. Seven cases of violence against females were recorded in the first trimester of the last solar year by the rights watchdog, which says 15 cases have been registered with it during the corresponding period this year. Most of these cases involve girls running away from home, beatings, divorce and a denial of sustenance. Last year’s incidents included no murder, as per the commission’s record. Farida Nasiri, in charge of the women’s wing of the panel, told Pajhwok Afghan News that the killer of one woman was caught and handed over to police by residents of the provincial capital. But the remaining two murderers are still at large. She named one of the victims as Fareshta, 22, whose husband connived at her murder. Although police were sent a formal letter regarding the incident, no one has been arrested yet. Some say the young woman was shot dead, others claim she was stabbed. In the Amrotak village of Ferozkoh, a woman named Rangin was shot dead by her brother-in-law a year after her marriage. “Police have not yet taken any step to detain the killer, because such incidents are deliberately kept under wraps,” Nasiri complained.

Another woman Kishwar, who had been engaged forcibly to a young man, was gunned down in the Madrassa village of the provincial capital by a brother of her fiancé. The killer and his accomplice were handed over to police by residents, Nasiri said. The 20-year-old victim’s mother Reza Gul said: “My daughter was unhappy with her engagement and ran away from home to a shelter. As part of a settlement, we paid the boy’s family one million afghanis and they promised not to bother us any longer.” After the patch-up, Gul recalled, her family shifted from Badgah area to Madrassa village. But the fiancé’s relatives later killed Kishwar inside her house. “Unlike my helpless family, the killers are strongmen who roam about

the village without any concern.” Gul, whose husband is quite old, has three daughters to look after. She urged the authorities to bring the perpetrators to justice. The commission official alleged cases of violence against women in remote areas could not be investigated properly due to threats from gunmen and widespread corruption in state institutions. “Women will continue to face such painful fates if the perpetrators of violence are not prosecuted.” Local authorities say up to 6,000 gunmen from 130 groups operated in Ghor until two years ago. But now 4,500 irresponsible gunmen belonging to 103 outfits are active in the province, they claim, linking the decrease to the government’s stronger writ. Women’s Affair Director Masooma Anwari, meanwhile, vehemently denounced all forms of violence against females and demanded the immediate arrest of perpetrators. She confirmed efforts by some powerful individuals to impede investigations into such incidents. Provincial council member Anisa Ghayyur also voiced her grave concern over the increasing violence against women in Ghor. “We want the governor, herself a woman, to investigate this violence and bring the perpetrators to justice.” Gul Paida Mansh, who also heads the Sisters’ Movement (a feminist organisation), said: “We are concerned about the failure of security and judicial organs to detain and prosecute the accused.” She explained 90 percent of Ghor women either had no access to justice or were not allowed to initiate litigation for their rights. Thanks to primitive customs, men still think that women’s recourse to the government for rights is against their honour. As a result, she grumbled, girls were deprived of going to schools, married against their choice before attaining puberty and used as a dispute settlement mechanism. Absent true rule of law and respect for the rights of women and girls, they were still sold and purchased like animals, she lamented. But Governor Seema Joyenda said: “As a woman, I represent this province. I am duty-bound to defend women’s rights and ensure thoroughgoing investigations into violence against them.” One of two women governors in Afghanistan, she promised exercising her discretion in this regard. Also a former member of the Wolesi Jirga, Joyenda added: “I instruct all security personnel to follow such cases with a sense of urgency and ask justice sector organisations to treat the perpetrators of domestic violence in accordance with the law.”

“It was time to focus on building security and improve economic situation.”



Above: Ghor Governor Seema Joyenda at a meeting with a group of women. Ghor, Afghanistan.

Kunduzi vows to generate employment opportunities

Zeerak Fahim, 12 August 2015

JALALABAD (Pajhwok): The governor of eastern Nangarhar province on Wednesday said lack of job opportunities in government and private sectors was one of the reasons of growing unemployment and pledged he would leave no stone unturned to create jobs. Speaking at a gathering marking International Youth Day, Salim Khan Kunduzi said some circles considered the government posts hereditary and appointed their family members on certain positions. He lamented there was no merit system in the country and majority of talented youth left without jobs. The governor pledged to generate employment opportunities for youngsters and provide vocational training for thousands of youth. Meanwhile, Matiwallah Ahmadzai, Nangarhar Youth Affairs director, said it was government responsibility to generate jobs. He said Nangarhar youth had fully participated in nation building and the provincial government should provide them with jobs. Ahmadzai said that government should offer scholarships for talented students to study higher education in foreign universities.

Zarif appointed UN chief's special representative for Liberia

Javed Hamim Kakar, 13 August 2015

KABUL (Pajhwok): UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Thursday announced appointing Farid Zarif of Afghanistan as his new special representative for Liberia and head of UNMIL. Zarif is currently serving as special representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). He is expected to take up his new job in early September. Director of Europe and Latin America Division of DPKO since August of 2010, he served as Chief of Staff and Acting DSRSG with UNMIS in Sudan, and prior to that, as Chief of Staff of UNAMI in Iraq. Following three years of service as the UN Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq since January 1997, he was appointed as chief and, later, director in the Office of Iraq Programme at the UN headquarters in New York. He was Chief Elections Officer with UNMIL in Liberia from 1994-96, and served in as Referendum/Elections Coordinator with the UN missions in Eritrea and South Africa in 1993 and 1995, respectively. In 1991-92, he

was the Secretary-General of the Economic Advisory Council, Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Afghanistan. Serving his national governments, he was the Principle Foreign Policy Advisor to the President of Afghanistan from 1989-1991, and Deputy Foreign Minister from 1987-1989. Prior to that, Zarif was Ambassador, Permanent Representative of his country to the United Nations in New York from 1980. He joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan in 1974 and served in various departments in increasingly responsible positions, as well as Charge d'Affaires in Havana. He has studied Law, Diplomacy and International Relations at the Faculty of Law and Political Science of Kabul University, the Afghan Institute of Diplomacy and Oxford University. He is married with two sons.

Khost gathering stresses enhanced security, peace

Mohammad Haroon, 12 August 2015

KHOST CITY (Pajhwok): A large number of Ulama, tribal elders, civil society activists and youth in southeastern Khost province on Wednesday demanded the government leaders to shun their differences and work for building security and peace in the country. In a gathering organized by the Hiwadpal Zwak Social Network (HZSN), the participants expressed deep grief over loss of precious lives in suicide attacks that jolted capital Kabul some days back. The HZSN head Sahib Gul Farahad said internal differences between the leaders of unity government had provided a chance to the enemy to carry out such devastating attacks in the capital. He said it was time to focus on building security and improve economic situation of the country otherwise the enemy would carry out such dastardly acts in future. Over 50 people had been killed and more than 500 wounded in series of suicide explosion in Kabul. The recent wave of violence spread anger among common Afghan leadership and common people. President Ashraf Ghani said on Monday the recent wave of violence showed suicide training camps, facilities used for making explosive devices and sending them to Afghanistan to kill innocent people were still functional in Pakistan. A high level Afghan government delegation will be leaving for Pakistan tomorrow for talks over recent terrorist attacks, an official said on Thursday. Deputy Spokesman Sayed Zafar Hashimi told Pajhwok Afghan News Foreign Minister

“But as a nation it is our right to have a clear fate, to know which direction we are headed in and why we are being scapegoated.”

Salahuddin Rabani, Acting Defence Minister Masoum Stanikzai, and National Directorate of Security (NDS) Chief Rahmatullah Nabil comprised the delegation. Hashimi said during the visit, the Afghan delegation would

present to the Pakistan officials an action plan against militants that enjoyed safe heavens in that country and would seek Pakistan's quick action against them.



Above: Farid Zarif of Afghanistan appointed as UN special representative for Liberia and head of UNMIL.

Ex-president chides Pakistan Army, intelligence service

Mohammad Hassan Khettab, 12 August 2015

KABUL (Pajhwok): Former president Hamid Karzai on Wednesday supported the unity government's stance against Pakistan, saying Islamabad would never achieve its goals through oppression, intimidation and destruction of Afghanistan. Speaking at an event marking International Youth Day in Kabul, Karzai said the Afghan people considered the Pakistani people their brothers, sisters and friends. There were no differences among the two peoples, he added. "The Pakistani nation has been brotherly and friendly (toward us). When we were faced with problems during the Soviet invasion, the people of Pakistan shared their homes with us and welcomed us with open arms. We lived an honorable life there," he acknowledged. He welcomed the unity government's serious stance, saying their complaint was against the Pakistan Army and intelligence agency. He warned the Pakistan government, army and ISI would never reach their goals by resorting to destruction and intimidation. Following recent bombings in Kabul that took the lives of more than 50 people and wounded 500 others, President Ashraf Ghani took a swipe at Pakistan, saying war was being declared from Pakistan's soil on Afghanistan. Earlier, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah Abdullah also slammed Pakistan's lack of cooperation with regard to the Afghan peace process, saying Kabul had conclusively proved its desire for better relation with Islamabad based on mutual respect and non-interference. Karzai said American and Western politicians had repeatedly said that Pakistan's intelligence service was a major supporter of terrorism. He asked them to choke terrorism funding if they really meant what they said. "We want friendship with America and Pakistan. But as a nation it is our right to have a clear fate, to know which direction we are headed in and why we are being scapegoated," Karzai remarked. During his presidency, Karzai visited Pakistan more than 20 times, but could not

achieve tangible results in terms of the peace process. "The ill-wishers of Afghanistan should know that we did not fall despite thousands of wounds. For 30 years now we have been in war, but we are still a proud nation. We bury our martyrs and rebuild our country," he continued. He urged the youth to focus more on education in this age of revolution in information technology. He voiced concerns about youth queuing up to get passports and leave the country, saying running away was no solution, but being in this country, giving sacrifices and safeguarding the nation was the solution. He also urged businessmen and investors to financially cooperate with victims of the recent terrorist attacks in Shah Shaheed and other areas. The spirit of patriotism must come into play at critical times, he concluded.

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