



# VOTE.af

## Newsletter

Your weekly news update on the electoral process in Afghanistan

6-13 August 2015

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### **Electoral system dubbed outdated, undemocratic**

**Mohammad Hassan Khettab, 06 August 2015**

KABUL (Pajhwok): Calling the electoral system as completely outdated and undemocratic, legal experts on Thursday said the election law did not differentiate between electoral violations and crimes. The Electoral Reform Commission has started holding consultative meetings with civil society activists, election observers, women, political parties and the international community about reforms in the electoral system. As part of these meetings, members of the commission on Thursday held a gathering with lawyers, representatives of the Attorney General's Office and the Academy of Sciences and listened to their proposals and views in Kabul. Afghanistan Lawyers Association head Gul Mohammad Madadzai told the gathering that the electoral law and the law on the composition, duty and authority of the election bodies needed to be amended. He said the two laws did not define electoral crimes which should be told apart from electoral violations in these laws. He said the appointment of commissioners on the election commission should be legalised under the law on composition, duty and authority of the electoral bodies so that these individuals could be appointed on the basis of their qualifications. But legal expert Kabir Ranjbar said the parliament could not amend the electoral law under the Constitution. He said Article 103 of the Constitution clearly stated that the Wolesi Jirga could not discuss elections in the last year of its five-year term. “The electoral system being outdated and undemocratic cannot prove effective in Afghanistan's current situation. People cannot elect their real representatives to the parliament under the current electoral system,” he said. Electoral Reform Commission chief Shah Sultan Akefi said all opinions the panel had recorded from people of different walks of life were being studied and those considered beneficial would be included in the commission's own proposals before presenting them to the president. He said they had been recording people's views over the past one week and most proposals were about how to make elections transparent. He said elections could be held in a transparent manner if small constituencies were created. These proposals also insisted on increased women's role and particularly women in provinces had the demand that their quota in elections should be increased to 30 percent from the current 20 percent, which had

been 25 percent in the previous law, Akefi said. He said many people had called for a cut in election costs. “Another important topic was to differentiate between electoral violations and electoral crimes which should be defined in the Afghanistan penal code or the electoral law in order to be made prosecutable.”

### **Improved security paves way for uplift projects in Jawzjan: PC**

**Hamid, 11 August 2015**

SHIBERGHAN (Pajhwok): Expressing satisfaction with the improved law and order situation in northern Jawzjan province, the provincial council head on Tuesday said the way had been paved for implementation of welfare projects. Speaking to Pajhwok Afghan News, Maulvi Abdul Hai Hayat said the projects in the past 14 years despite better security have not been implemented in a way people expected. He said there were no asphalted roads in ten districts and residents grappled with a lot of challenges. He expressed optimism that with the new administration in place, security in the province has improved and implementation of the projects did not face any hurdles. “The development projects were not much before. Now we are optimistic about more uplift schemes to be implemented,” he added. He said recently the government has embarked on construction 10 schools, constructing part of the Jawzjan University, and asphalted of Shiberghan – Qosh Tapa road that is 40 kilometres long. Another important project in the province, Maulvi Hayat said, was construction of a grand mosque and a technical institute. The mosque would be built at a cost of \$3.5 million to be funded by Turkey. Some resident, however, complain that they did not benefit much from the welfare projects in the province. Sardash, a resident of Aqcha district and a civil society, said: “Security is deteriorating in Jawzjan also and it undermines the development projects.” Sardash said projects like health clinics, schools, irrigation and electricity were need of the hour and the government should pay utmost attention to resolve the direly needed problem. Shahabuddin, a resident of Shiberghan, said security situation in the province was relatively better than other provinces, but not major reconstruction efforts have taken place as per need of the residents. “We still don't have enough clinics and schools.” Deputy Governor Abdul Rahman Mahmoodi said they were planning to conduct a conference in order to generate funds for development projects in the province.

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“ The local government is weak and has no coordination to take bold decisions against Taliban.”

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Above: Members of the Electoral Reforms Commission. Kabul, Afghanistan.

### **Baghlan PC concerns over bad governance, Taliban influence**

**Habibur Rehman Sherzai, 09 August 2015**

PUL-I-KHUMRI (Pajhwok): The provincial council of northern Baghlan province criticized local governance amid complains that Taliban's influence has gaining momentum even inside the capital of the province. Provincial council head Mohammad Safdar Mohsini told Pajhwok Afghan News that militants were active in Wazirabad areas of Pul-i-Khumri City, the provincial capital, and they were inciting locals against government. He shared the issue time and again with security officials during their meetings but no attention could be paid to ameliorate the situation. "The local government is weak and has no coordination to take bold decisions against Taliban," he said, adding that local administration should deploy security forces in the areas under militants' threat. He warned rebels would block Pul-i-Khumri- Mazar-i-Sharif highway if they extended their sway to Huma Sharif locality of Pul-i-Khumri city. Mohsini added that Taliban had obtained heavy weapons and they could pose a threat to the provincial capital even. A month ago, militants fired 12 rockets from Dand Ghori area into Pul-i-Khumri City that left two persons dead and over 10 wounded. Provincial council members and residents had previously warned the government to clear Dand Ghori area of insurgents otherwise they would disrupt Pul-i-Khumri security. Abdul Rahim, a resident of Wazirabad area, said: "We cannot go outside after 7: 00 pm, because there is a strong possibility of fight between militants and Afghan forces." He said that Taliban were parking their cars on the Pul-i-Khumri- Mazar-i-Sharif highway and then searches people. He said that one of his relatives was stopped and kidnapped by militants but he was released after mediation by elders. Residents of Doshi and Talaw Barfak also expressed concerns over spiraling insecurity. The provincial council secretary Samiuddin Nazir said that militants have increased their influence in some parts of the districts and incite people against the government and campaign for Jihad. "If government officials do not take action against militants they may increase their presence to Salang area and block Doshi-Kabul highway," he warned. However, Baghlan police Chief Col. Abdul Rashid Bashir said police

had worked out a plan to conduct operations and clear the areas of rebels. He said that security forces were arrived in Dand Ghori locality and would soon start clearing operation there.

### **Daesh constructing military base in Nuristan: PC**

**Zeerak Fahim, 05 August 2015**

JALALABAD (Pajhwok): Provincial council head of eastern Nuristan province claimed on Wednesday that the self-styled Daesh had initiated constructing a military base there amid reports that security forces was investing the issue, an official said on Wednesday. The area of Mandawal is located in eastern Nuristan and an easy access to Paroon, Panjsher and Badakhshan provinces. The influx and heavy presence of militants left great impact on law and order situation in Badakhshan province and to pave way to central Asian states, the official said. Eng. Sadullah Painsa, head of PC, told Pajhwok Afghan News Daesh group had been active in four districts and wanted to establish a military base in the district. "Daesh fighters came from Pakistan through Nangarhar and striving to force their way to Mandawal district. The government writ is weak in the district and Daesh wants to increase its influence there," he added. Daesh presence has been reported in Shinwari district amid reports that US drone had killed several fighters in the area. But local departments had not reported about Daesh fighters' movement to other provinces. The group had started recruiting fighters in Mandawal, Wigal, Kamdesh and Brugmatal districts, Eng. Painsa said. Brig. Gen. Khalilullah Zae, police chief, rejected Daesh presence in the province and said they had started investigation in this regard. "I don't reject and accept provincial council statement regarding presence of Daesh. We have noticed a group fighting against Taliban in Wigal district but can't say for sure that they are Daesh," he added. The district of Madawal had been controlled from Du Aab district for last few years, the police chief said. Zabihullah Ghazi, a local journalist, said Nuristan officials had confirmed presence of Daesh and said that "the group can recruit more people in Nuristan and Kunar then Nangarhar since it believes on Salafi sect." The PC head demanded government to initiate military operation against the group in the province.

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“Unfortunately, security forces failed to eradicate poppies even in the areas where they are fighting against rebels.”

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Above: Ghor governor Seema Joyenda

### **Ghor administration fails to address poppy cultivation issue**

**Muhammad Hassan Hakimi, 05 August 2015**

FEROZKOH (Pajhwok): The government has failed to eradicate poppy farms even in areas under its control in western Ghor province due to increased insecurity and a presence of illegal armed men there, officials acknowledged on Wednesday. Provincial counternarcotics authorities say the Ghor administration has been unable to win the annual prize for Zero Poppy Cultivation amounting to one million dollars for the past three years, as cultivation of the illicit crop has resumed in the province. The Ministry of Counternarcotics allocates \$1 million every year for the development of a province where poppy cultivation is zero. The level of poppy cultivation in Ghor is not high, but most common in areas under Taliban or illegal armed men's control. Currently 2,600 Taliban militants and 4,500 other illegal gunmen are active in the province. Counternarcotics Director Mohammad Yousuf Wakili says the poppy crop in Ghor was affected by a disease this year. But he blames the government for taking no action against the illegal crop. Based on his information, the level of poppy cultivation in 2014 and this year remained the same at around 1,000 hectares of land. The outlawed crop has been cultivated in Chahardara, Dawlatyar and Pasaband districts and the outskirts of Ferozkoh, the provincial capital. "Unfortunately, security forces failed to eradicate poppies even in the areas where they are fighting against rebels," Wakili deplures. Ghor provincial council members believe the province would have seen more development projects if the level of poppy cultivation had been lowered to zero in the past three years. The council head Fazal Haq Ehsan says the money people received from their poppy products is less than a million dollars, an amount provided by the Ministry of Counternarcotics to each poppy-free province. "Poppy growing just harms people, farmers should stop sowing it and thereby prevent their children walking into the trap laid by the enemy," Ehsan argues, estimating a farmer can collect only three kilograms of opium from his fields annually despite his hard work that does not let him grow legal crops. He blames the government for paying no attention to development projects and providing job opportunities for the people. Most of youth travel to Iran and return addicted or

join militants due to poverty, he explains, asking the authorities to address the problem on a priority basis. A number of Ghor residents are ready stop growing poppies if the government implements reconstruction projects and provide job opportunities in their areas. A dweller of Pasaband district, Mohammad Gul, told Pajhwok Afghan News: "The government has completely ignored his area, where no development project has been executed." The Taliban who took control of the district last year encouraged people to grow poppies. Gul thinks people would no longer cultivate poppies if the government distributes improved seeds to farmers and help them set up orchards. Syed Nasim, a resident of Dawlatyar district, many people do not grow poppies, not because they are afraid of the government. The reason is that the plant does not have a good yield. A counternarcotics campaign by local officials and influential individuals was recently launched in Ghor. Governor Seema Joyenda calls the cultivation and smuggling of narcotics an unfair practice, creating social and security problems for the community. She says the illicit commerce caused addiction to 50,000 Ghor youth, leading them to illegal activities like robberies. It is a collective social responsibility, particularly of religious scholars, to campaign against cultivating and consuming narcotics, she says, warning the number of addicts will double if they are not paid due attention. A recent survey shows the number of drug addicts in Afghanistan has increased from 1.6 million in 2012 to 3 million in 2015 -- about 11% of the population. The drug addicts also cause concern and harm to their own and other families. A woman wishing not to be named says: "My cousin had spent 13 years working in Iran but returned addicted to drugs. I was unaware about his addiction before my engagement to him." She recalls her husband worked as architect with a good earning potential but most of the money he earned is spent on drugs. "I know my husband would not be able to continue working in the next few years and I would be responsible for looking after my six children," she comments. Despite millions of dollars spent on rehabilitation efforts, only three percent of drug addicts are treated while the rest have to live in miserable condition, with some dying on roads. However, the Ministry of Counternarcotics says hospitals could treat only one percent of drug addicts last year but after enforcement of a new counternarcotics policy, the percentage has increased to six.

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“Now some schools are teaching students how to fire bullets, something which is unacceptable.”

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Above: Hayatullah Hayat Maidan Wardak governor

### **Effective security, uplift plans drawn up: Wardak governor**

**Idrees Noori, 08 August 2015**

MAIDAN SHAHAR (Pajhwok): A comprehensive strategy has been devised to improve the security environment in the central province of Maidan Wardak -- a gateway to the capital Kabul. In an exclusive interview with Pajhwok Afghan News, Governor Hayatullah Hayat said he believed before his appointment to the slot that Wardak, given its proximity to Kabul, would be a stable province. But 45 days after his nomination, Hayat has concluded Wardak would be one of them if there were to be insecure provinces in Afghanistan. His assessment is based on briefings he has received so far. He concedes Daimir Dad, Jaghatu, Nirkh, Chak and Jalrez are among the volatile districts of the province. Although Behsud is a relatively calm district, there are disturbing questions about the rule of law there, he says. While linking the wave of insecurity to a heavy presence of militants, Hayat has no idea who the fighters are aligned with. The guerrillas, who are harassing civilians, paraded a police officer naked in the main bazaar after beating him severely. On militant activities in Wardak, the governor has presented a detailed report to the National Security Council (NSC) in the hope that steps will be taken to stabilise the province. His previous perception of the situation has changed 180 degrees. Because of the grim situation, he convenes two weekly meetings on security, compared with only one that he would chair until recently. "Our objective is to ensure people's safety; these meetings are a message that insecurity has escalated here." Without delving into details, the official says they have drawn up effective plans to enforce security in all restive areas across the province. Encourage by people's pledge to cooperate with security organs, Hayat plans getting even closer to residents through meetings with people from all districts. This will help him to ascertain people's views and recommendations in the context of security. Apart from security officials, representatives from 40 state institutions will attend the meetings aimed at instant resolution of public problems. He thinks security organs in Wardak have coordination, but there are certain difficulties in maintaining public order. He has no issue with the composition and strength of security institutions in the province, but has his reservations about their actual presence on the ground. He puts the number of security

personnel in Wardak at 5,000, compared with up to 1,500 rebels operating there. "Despite the numerical superiority of our security forces, we are still on the defensive," the governor notes, doubting accuracy of the numbers. "We have appointed a delegation to determine whether or not these many security personnel are deployed here." He also refers to a shortage of heavy weapons being faced by the security organs and the absence of an Afghan National Army (ANA) brigade in the central province. The four ANA battalions in Wardak are operating under the Gardez-based brigade. In case of need, these battalions discuss their problems with their counterparts in Gardez before getting to the ANA Corps and the Ministry of Defence, the governor explains, saying it is a long-drawn-out process that hampers a timely response to emergency situations. In the same breath, he insists, the militants are no longer capable of face-to-face combat with the security forces. In the area of reconstruction, the provincial administration is focused on completing unfinished projects like several roads and Chak dam and executing on priority the schemes identified by officials and residents of each district. "Another important issue that is under serious consideration concerns schools in the province, which was once deprived of academic programmes. Now some schools are teaching students how to fire bullets, something which is unacceptable. "My first and foremost priority is to purge such schools of insurgent influence and thereby pave the ground for a wholesome teaching-learning process in Maidan Wardak," Hayat concludes, asking the masses to keep an eye on governmental affairs and help improve education as well as security.

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Email [marketing@pajhwok.com](mailto:marketing@pajhwok.com)

Telephone: +93 (0) 20 220 1814 or +93 (0) 20 220 1915