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Newsletter

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02 – 09 July 2015

“There is support and opposition but I think that opposition cannot hamper development activities.”

Stanikzai fails to win confidence vote from WJ

Khawaja Basir Ahmad, 04 July 2015

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Wolesi Jirga or lower house of parliament on Saturday did not approve Mohammad Masoum Stanikzai as defense minister. On July 1, the government introduced defense minister-designate, the nominee for the Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB) and two members-designate of the Supreme Court to the Wolesi Jirga for vote of confidence. Stanikzai explained his working plan to the Wolesi Jirga today. Stanikzai said that bringing reforms to the Afghan National Army (ANA), improving capacity and better equipping ANA and the armed forces, improving security situation, bolstering defense industries and creating a unit for carrying out special operations would be among his goals. He added that removing of parallel organs, preventing corruption and strengthening cooperation between security organs would also be among his other priorities. However, he could not win the vote of confidence from the lawmakers. Of the 213 lawmakers present during the session, 84 voted in favor of proposed defense minister Mohammad Masoum Stanikzai while he was required to get 107 votes to win the seat. Based on article 64 of the constitution, the ministers should be appointed on the suggestion of the president and then approved by the Wolesi Jirga.

New Bamyán governor received amid protests

Hadi Ghafari, 01 July 2015

BAMYAN CITY (Pajhwok): Taher Zahir, the newly-appointed governor for central Bamyán province was introduced on Wednesday amid protest by some lawmakers and people. Zahir was appointed as governor by the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) last month, but he delayed resuming work due to opposition by some lawmakers against his appointment. Bamyán lawmakers, including Mohammad Akbari, Safura Ilkhani and Sayed Fakoor along with their supporters staged protest demonstration as Taher Zahir arrived in Bamyán City, the provincial capital. Zahir who was accompanied by a delegation from Kabul said he might work with a political party but he would deal all people of the province equally. During a ceremony arranged in his honor, Zahir said: “Bamyán has a democratic community and people can express their views openly. There is support and opposition but I think that opposition cannot hamper development activities.” Bamyán was reeling under widespread corruption, he claimed, pledging he

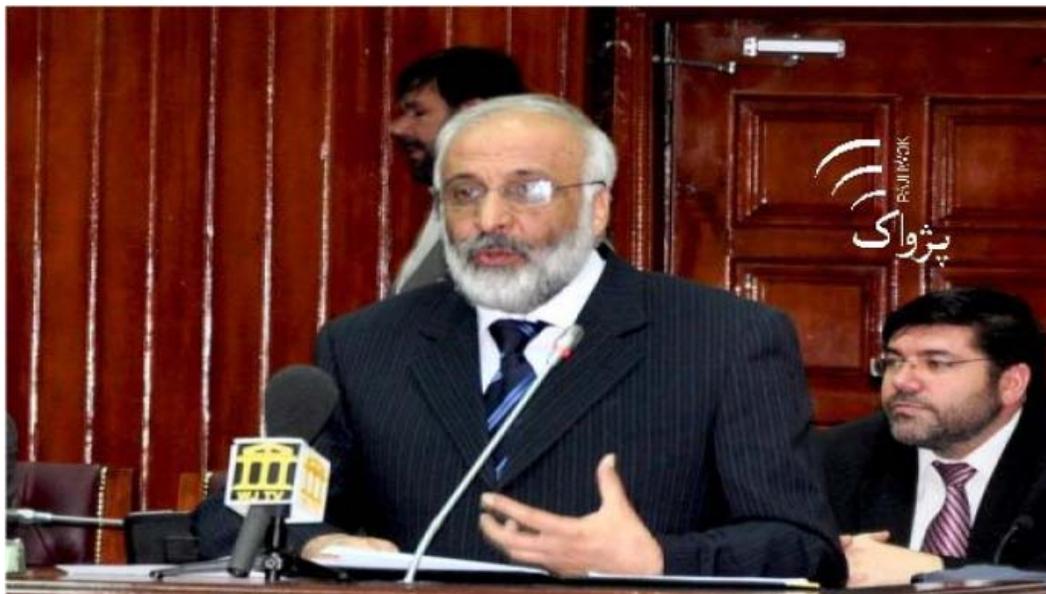
would help improve education, health and media sectors in cooperation close cooperation of local people and departments. Mohammad Tahir Zahir is the resident of Dara-i-Souf Bala district of Samangan province who received his bachelor degree in sociology from Kateb private university. He had served as advisor to former Second Vice-President Mohammad Karim Khalili from 2011 to 2014. Zahir was the 34th ground brigade commander in Bamyán from 2001 to 2004. Zahir was advisor to President Ashraf Ghani during his electioneering campaign in 2014. However, Safura Ilkhani representing Bamyán people in Wolesi Jirga today said that she along with her supporters gathered in front of the governor house to oppose the appointment of Zahir as Bamyán governor. “We in the past also opposed the new governor and now we’re opposing because he is an emotional man,” she said.

Ghani urges Meshrano Jirga members to end strike

Khawaja Basir Ahmad, 07 July 2017

KABUL (Pajhwok): President Ashraf Ghani has assured lawmakers his ministers would appear before them to answer their questions, the Meshrano Jirga or upper house secretary said on Tuesday. Senate members have boycotted attending sessions from the last two days in protest against the fast worsening insecurity in the country and the killing of 24 Afghan Local Police (ALP) men in the Jalrez district of Maidan Wardak province by Taliban insurgents. The ALP members were killed when militants stormed their posts on Thursday and captured the posts. The rebels also decapitated some corpses of the ALP men. Meshrano Jirga secretary Abdullah Qarlag told reporters President Ghani on Monday assured the house administrative board that security problems would be solved and officials who had committed negligence in the Jalrez incident would be brought to justice. The president also ordered the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs to ensure that Cabinet members responded to Meshrano Jirga demands and questions from senators, Qarlag said. “The senators should end their protest and get back to work,” Qarlag quoted Ghani as saying. However, Qarlag said the house members would decide next Saturday whether to continue their protest or resume attendance. A Meshrano Jirga member Haseebullah Kalimzai said senators would protest again if the president failed to honour his promises.

“Now that the government has appointed me as governor they should also support me in bringing reforms and fighting corruption.”



Above: Mohammad Masoum Stanikzai, Defence Minister-designate in Parliament. Kabul, Afghanistan.

Ghor's female governor resumes work

Muhammad Hassan Hakimi, 01 July 2015

FEROZKOH (Pajhwok): The newly-appointed female governor of western Ghor province on Wednesday pledged to gear up efforts for fighting administrative graft, disputes settlement, beefed up security and empowering women would be her top priority. Sima Joyenda was welcomed at a ceremony arranged in her in which thousands of people took part. Sima, previously represented Ghor in the parliament, expressed gratitude to the unity government for appointing a her as Ghor governor for the first time. Sima who also had served as teacher--- said bridging gap between residents and the government and coordination between local departments including civil-military agencies were her top priority. She said women had been neglected in Ghor and she would try to bring about positive changes in their lives. "Now that the government has appointed me as governor they should also support me in bringing reforms and fighting corruption, otherwise working would be difficult," she remarked. She announced support for provincial council, civil society organizations and media, underlining their role in combating corruption. Abdul Hameed Nateqi, provincial council member, told Pajhwok Afghan News problems were more in the province. He welcomed appointment of female governor. "We hope the new governor take serious steps in ensuring security and fighting corruption." Earlier, the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) nominated her for the position. IDPG spokesman Tawab Ghorzang told Pajhwok Afghan News Ms Seema replaced Syed Anwar Rahmati. Ms. Seema was born in 1982 in the Chaghcharan district of Ghor province. She has also served at the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development and Ministry of Education.

Gap between residents, govt widened in Uruzgan: PC

Ajmal Wisal, 02 July 2015

TARINKOT (Pajhwok): Provincial Council in central Uruzgan province on Wednesday observed that lukewarm approach to tackle residents' grievances have created gulf between people and government. Uruzgan provincial council has nine members. Due to differences between members, the council elected its administrative board six months after being sworn-in. Abdul Karim Khademzai, provincial council secretary, in an interview with Pajhwok Afghan News claimed some local officials had established private prisons where people were tortured. Without any evidence, he added, in some districts, officials detained innocent people on pretext of being member of Taliban and introduced them to judicial organs. The officials then released the individuals after taking bribes. "Because of these reasons people's opposition to the government have intensified and the gap between them have widened," he added. He said an ordinary citizen was released from prison after paying 400,000 Pakistani Rupees and was currently undergoing medical treatment in Kandahar province due to torture. He said majority of people visiting provincial council office had complaints about local officials asking for bribes. That is why, Khademzai said, people were getting distance from government and the security situation in the province was deteriorating because some youth had no option but to swell insurgents' ranks. "We started working some months late, but still we have tried to resolve people's problems." According to Khademzai no development had taken place in Uruzgan in vital areas of health, education, reconstruction and security. He noted security situation in some districts have worsened that has resulted in closing down of several health centres. In order to resolve these problems the provincial council had conducted regular meetings with local officials, he added.

“The last tenure of PC was more active than us. We did not serve the people during the last few months in office.”



Above: Abdul Karim Khademzai, Uruzgan provincial council secretary.

Deputy Secretary alleges Ghazni PC of inefficiency

Saifullah Maftoon, 05 July 2015

GHAZNI CITY (Pajhwok): Deputy head of Provincial Council (PC) in southern Ghazni province on Sunday alleged majority of members were illiterate, in collusion of land grabbing and were indifferent to resolve problems of people in this remote province. Abdul Jami Jami in his an exclusive interview told Pajhwok Afghan News said that PC members failed to materialize their pledges made with people during canvassing. PC could begin work on due date because the results were announced after seven months of delay, he added. In addition, members did not attend council's session for over a month due to Wolesi Jirga decision to shrink their powers of observation over local departments. PCs members rejoined their offices after presidential decree allowing them to exercise their powers of evaluation and observation. According to Jami, PC was dominated by warlords who did not have understanding of law and complex issue. "The last tenure of PC was more active than us. We did not serve the people during the last few months in office," Jami acknowledged. He said tribal balance was not kept in mind as far as representation of people is concerned. Majority of candidates had been in the council for personal interests. He said PC members were under immense pressure from Wolesi Jirga members and they adopted the policy guided by the lower house members. He alleged Ghazni PC did not perform its constitutional responsibility and remain a burden on government. About investigative role of the council, he said: "We are downed by 90 percent in evaluation and scrutiny of provincial government departments." He alleged majority of council members were inefficient of resolving problems of masses. According to Jami, majority of members did not attend office for months.

Logar edu directorate hub of corruption: PC

Abdul Maqsood Azizi, 06 July 2015

PUL-I-ALAM (Pajhwok): Members of provincial council in central Logar province on Monday blamed directorate of education for hiring unprofessional and inefficient persons, which left far-reaching negative impact on the vital sector--- a charge the directorate of education rejected. Adalat Abdul Rahimzai, deputy head of provincial council, told Pajhwok Afghan News the

directorate of education was facing with serious issues which needed immediate attention. "People complaints and our monitoring proved that education department needs improvement because its current performance is extremely weak," he noted. Rahimzai said: "Education director prefers references in appointment of employees' thus trampling merit. Deputy education director and several other officials have been appointed on heavy bribe. The negligence of education department have vanished education from schools." Mohibullah Saleh, provincial council members, warned that education sector would meet disaster had the corruption and other issues were not resolved. Mohammad Rahim, Baraki Barak district chief, said most of the teachers were inefficient and inexperienced or merely grade 12th graduates. "The schools are opened but there is poor education. There is quantity but there is no quality education," he rued. Abdullah, a student of Kalangar High School, said: "Mostly teachers remain absent even they don't teach if they come to schools. We have shortage of books therefore the students don't often attend schools." Mohammad Akbar Stanakzai, director education, called all these as baseless allegations. "Education directorate follows rules and regulations and neither education department nor I am involved in any type of corruption." Stanikzai said the provincial council members and other officials leveled baseless allegations and blamed the education department for their personal interests. He offered to be open for investigations and asked members to visit and monitor all activities closely. Logar has as many as 280 schools where hundreds of teachers teach but at least 12 girls' schools have been closed for last two weeks due to threats from militants.

Ex-PC secretary shot dead in Nangarhar

Zeerak Fahim, 01 July 2015

JALALABAD (Pajhwok): Former provincial council secretary of eastern Nangarhar province shot dead by unidentified gunmen in Ghani Khail district of the province, an official said Wednesday. Ahmad Zia Abdulzai, the governor's spokesman, told Pajhwok Afghan News that Moin Shah who was also a religious scholar was on his way in his car from Jalalabad City, the provincial capital, to his home when he came under attack by armed men in Marku area of the district on Tuesday evening. The attackers were following him in another car,

“The PC members receive their salaries and other benefits, but they do not perform their duty in a proper way.”

he said, adding that the killers managed to flee the scene. Governor Salim Kunduzi condemned the attack and ordered police to conduct thorough investigations into the

incident. A member of the provincial council Zabihullah Zamarai said that Shah was an intellectual and Islamic scholar.



Above: Session of the lower house of parliament. Kabul, Afghanistan.

Bamyan lawmakers end protest against governor

Hadi Ghafari, 07 July 2015

BAMYAN CITY (Pajhwok): Protesting lawmakers on Tuesday ended their one month sit-in against the newly elected governor but their supporters attacked the governor house with stones, leaving windowpanes of the governor house smashed. Earlier, the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) introduced Taher Zahir as governor for central Bamyan province amid protest by some lawmakers and people. Zahir was appointed as governor by the (IDLG) last month but he delayed resuming work due to opposition by some lawmakers. During a ceremony arranged in his honor, Zahir had said: "Bamyan has a democratic community and people can express their views openly. There is support and opposition but I think that opposition cannot hamper development activities." Bamyan was reeling under widespread corruption, he claimed, pledging he would help improve education, health and media sectors in cooperation close cooperation of local people and departments. Lawmakers Mohammad Akbarik, Safura Elkhani, Syed Fakor Behisti and Abdul Rahman Shaidani ended their protest today but the sit-in turned violent as some of their supporters attacked the governor office with stones and eggs. Safura Elkhani said they had decided to end the protest and attend the Wolesi Jirga session on Jalrez carnage in which the lower house would impeach government officials who committed negligence. At least 30 militants and 24 ALP men were killed and 18 other rebels wounded in Kabul-Bamyan Highway clashes in central Maidan Wardak province on Friday. The ALP force also lost control of 12 security posts. However, security officials had said Afghan forces regained control of all 12 posts in Jalrez district.

Most Ghazni PC members not attending office

Saifullah Maftoon, 06 July 2015

GHAZNI CITY (Pajhwok): Most members of the provincial council (PC) have long been absent from their office in the capital of southern Ghazni province and are busy with their personal engagements. No government official could stay off from duty for three days, but parliament, provincial council members and government officials remain absent for months. Haji Allah Dad, a resident of the Andar district, said local residents had been trying for the last few months to meet the provincial council members, but they had been missing from the office. "We have many times visited the PC office but found no one there. Sometimes two or three members sit there, but we could not meet any," he complained. Allah Dad recalled people had elected the PC members by risking their lives, but the public representatives had betrayed them and remained absent from office in an organized way. Mohammad Ibrahim Amiri, deputy head of Waman group, said the PC members were engaged in their personal tasks and had no time to attend office. He said people had voted the PC members in order their voice could reach government departments. "The PC members receive their salaries and other benefits, but they do not perform their duty in a proper way," he added.

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