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Newsletter

Your weekly news update on the electoral process in Afghanistan

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“People cannot trust the election process without reforms and fairness.”

UN links financial aid to inclusive electoral reforms

Mohammad Asif Ahmadzai, 24 June 2015

KABUL (Pajhwok): The UN deputy special representative for Afghanistan has said that inclusive electoral reforms are prerequisite for financial and technical assistance of the UN to any future elections of Afghanistan. Tadamichi Yamamoto, the UN deputy special representative, expressed these views in a meeting with Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah Abdullah, a statement from Sapidar Palace said. “Following UN assessment, the electoral reforms issue is a demand of all Afghans and also the people cannot trust the election process without reforms and fairness,” said Tadamichi. He added the UN would also submit a set of suggestions for electoral reforms to the unity government. “The issue of accountability for the past fraud is a major issue that the UN stresses and believes it would regain people’s trust on the electoral process,” he said, adding their assessment showed Afghans wanted those behind electoral fraud punished. Tadamichi opined that strong political will by the leaders of the unity government for bringing about electoral reforms was imperative. According to the statement, the CEO welcomed the UN’s stance on issues of reforms. He said: “Electoral reforms were a major point of agreements of the unity government and implementation of these reforms is a red line for me and people of Afghanistan.”

Ex-lawmaker Seema replaces Rehmati as Ghor governor

Javed Hamim Kakar, 28 June 2015

KABUL (Pajhwok): President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani on Sunday approved Ms Seema Jwainda as governor of western Ghor province. 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. She is well-qualified and have served as Ghor representative in the Wolesi Jirga, Ghorzang said, praising the services rendered by Rahmati as governor. 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. A female governor was earlier appointed for Daikundi province who had braved criticism from local people.

Senate want WJ election date be specified

Khawaja Basir Ahmad, 30 June 2015

KABUL (Pajhwok): Some members of Mesharano Jirga on Tuesday underlined early election of Wolesi Jirga (WJ) and said they would not approve any draft legalizing the incumbent lower house to work until election schedule was defined. Article 83 of the constitution states: “The constitutionally mandated tenure of the house of people shall terminate after the disclosure of the results of the election, on the 1st of Saratan (22 June), and the new parliament shall commence work.” Earlier, President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani said the sitting Wolesi Jirga or lower house of parliament members would continue until date for parliamentary elections were announced after one month. A statement from Presidential Palace had said that technical, security, financial and other problems led to delay in conducting Wolesi Jirga elections. The statement said it was decided that the incumbent Wolesi Jirga would continue work keeping in view the current problems and challenges. Senator Afzal Shamil urged leaders of the unity government to materialize their pledge they made with the people and announce date for WJ ballot. He said the government should specify schedule for parliamentary election before the end of one month deadline. He, however, said that Mesharano Jirga would not agree with any decision of lower house until the election dates were announced. Another Senator Dr. Sami Faisal also stressed to specify sates for holding Wolesi Jirga and district councils’ elections. He added no bill or draft would be approved until the election date was announced. Zalmay Zabuli and some other lawmakers expressed similar opinion during their debate on the subject. Chairman Senate Fazal Hadi Muslimyar urged president and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to specify dates for Wolesi Jirga election. Earlier, Abdul Ali Mohammadi, president’s legal advisor, said Wolesi Jirga election would take place in the near future.

“Electoral reforms panel work has been postponed due to technical issues and changes in the list of the panel’s members.”



Above: Ongoing session of Meshrano Jirga or upper house of parliament.

Electoral reforms panel work again postponed

Mohammad Hassan Khettab, 30 June 2015

KABUL (Pajhwok): The electoral reforms commission work has been delayed once again due to technical issues and changes in the panel’s member list, an official said on Tuesday. The commission was supposed to start work last week. The formation of electoral reforms was a major point of agreement on which the unity government was formed. The commission was formed following a presidential decree three months back but is yet to embark on its work. Javed Faisal, deputy spokesman of Chief Executive Officer (CEO), told Pajhwok Afghan News the panel was all set to start work last week “but its work has been postponed due to some technical issues and changes in the list of the panel’s members.” Discussions were ongoing among leaders of unity government, he said, hoping they would soon pave way for commission to start work. Faisal added the government would bring reforms to electoral process, thus it was imperative that both leaders agreed on head of the panel. Election monitor and civil society organizations insist the commission should start work without further delay. They say the commission’s suggestions should be final and the government leaders not take final decisions about elections. Following the formation of the commission, president chose lawmaker Shukria Barezai to head the panel but she faced stern opposition from the CEO.

Many problems, disputes of Jawzjan people settled: PC

Hamid, 24 June 2015

SHIBERGHAN (Pajhwok): Members of provincial council in northwestern Jawzjan province claimed settling a large number of problems particularly addressing tribal disputes but some were not satisfied with their performance. Results of the provincial council election of April 5 elections were announced in November 2014. After the provincial councils’ ballot result, the parliament decided to limit the right of provincial council with regard of evaluation of local departments’ performance. However, the provincial council members opposed the parliament’s step, closing the council offices for a month to protest the

issue. The provincial council office of Jawzjan was reopened on March 10 after one month of protest. Deputy provincial council head Abdul Qadir Malia told Pajhwok Afghan News that his office resolved several problems particularly disputes between some people and groups. Citing an example, Qadir said that six months ago residents of Aqcha and Faizabad districts of the province had engaged in a dispute over irrigation water, which resulted into the injuries of some people. When the residents referred the problem to the provincial council, he said the council succeeded to settle the dispute permanently, he said. He said that a stream flowing to Faizabad district was controlled by the people of Aqcha that created problem for Faizabad residents in access to clean water. Malia added that the issue was then resolved following interference by provincial council. Tens of people everyday refers their problems to the council for solution, he said, adding the council had tried somehow to address people’s problems. “Most of the cases referring to us include legal and social issues as well as other issues of serious nature. We address them after broad based consultations among our colleagues,” he said. Calling the provincial council a bridge between the government and people, Malia said: “We also evaluate the performance of local government and listen to people’s problems in order to better serve the masses.” However, some residents of Jawzjan were not satisfied with the provincial council and alleged that the council had no mean for most of the people. Sardar, a resident of Shiberghan City, the capital of the province, said that the performance of the council was less than 10 percent because they did not do work for the interest of people. “The council is a meaningless office and no one hears their complaints,” he said, adding the provincial council was ineffective. Abdul Rehman, another resident of the city, said: “The council members do not resolve our problems and even mistreat us whenever we refer our problems to them.” “We are now repentant why we cast our vote in the provincial council elections,” he said. But a member of the council Halima Sadaf said that their office was only carrying out assessment regarding performance of local governance. She said that new reforms in government offices in the province were the result of the provincial council efforts.

“People expect us to help them in getting passports and visa. This is simply against the laws of provincial council.”



Above: A voter on Election-Day. Kabul, Afghanistan. April 2014. Photo: John Wendle

'Some Herat PC members hampering smooth work flow'

Storai Karimi, 28 June 2015

HERAT CITY (Pajhwok): Secretary of the provincial council has alleged that some members of the council in western Herat province use force and extra-legal measures in order to resolve problems of the residents. Sakina Hussaini told Pajhwok Afghan News use of force by some members was a major a major hurdle in their work which caused residents to have conflicting views regarding the council. "Some of the members resolve people's issues by force which is against the law and council's principles. People do not understand that those who resolve their issues by force are the ones who actually work and the other don't," she added. "Some might think this is strength. But this is a huge challenge for us and causes women representatives to be criticized," Hussaini said. She did not name any members using force but said despite these challenges their performance had been noteworthy than other provincial councils. "During the last nine months, we have continued our monitoring work on areas of financial resources, district affairs, schools, development works and family support," she said. In the beginning, she recalled, the council's monitoring work problems due to presence of acting officials, but with the introduction of new governor it had been resolved. The council had paid special attention to improve security of the province. She said three women and three children, who were abducted in Guzara district, had been freed with the help of provincial council. "We have many visitors on a daily-basis. People have complaints and want the council's help," Hussaini added. The residents of Herat residents were concerned about recent incidents of kidnappings in the province, she added. Lack of cooperation by local officials, she said, was another challenge hampering their work. "The first problem is that some government officials do not understand the role of the provincial council." According to Hussaini, people also did not understand the responsibilities of the provincial council members. "People expect us to help them in getting passports and visa. This is simply against the laws of the council." She urged

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people to cooperate with them in order to render better services to the public.

Central govt asked to empower governors

Zarghona Salehi, 29 June 2015

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Afghanistan Governors Association (AGA) on Monday asked the central government to empower governors in areas of military, security and civil affairs at provincial level. In a statement, the association expressed its concern over the deteriorating security situation in a number of provinces and praised security forces for their valor. In order to strengthen the security situation and provincial administrations, the association asked the central government to authorise governors of some provinces in military, security and civil affairs. It called for the authority and responsibilities of governors to be explained and specified and also urged increased coordination among security organs in provinces. Demanding a working mechanism between provinces and ministries, the association welcomed Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) chief Jilani Potal's first 100-day action plan and praised the plan as inclusive. The implementation of such action plans would further strengthen provincial governments and reform them, the statement concluded.

Ex-PC head in Nimroz survives rebel attack

Ramin, 30 June 2015

ZARANJ/ (Pajhwok): Former provincial council head of southwestern Nimroz province survived a gun attack that left one of his bodyguards dead, an official said on Tuesday. A security official in Nimroz wishing anonymity said a group of armed men stormed the house of Najibullah Naser in Zaranj City, the provincial capital, on Monday night. He said that a bodyguard of the former provincial council head died in the incident. Provincial council secretary Niamatullah Sadiqi said a group of six armed motorcyclists attacked the house of Naser last night at around 9:00pm. He said that armed men wanted to barge into the house of former provincial council head but were stopped by bodyguards.

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“ Unfortunately because the war has escalated and fortunately because we are prepared for it.”



Above: Herat provincial council secretary.

Laghman square being named after heroic soldier

Zeerak Fahim, 24 June 2015

MEHTARLAM (Pajhwok): A square is being named after Afghan National Army (ANA) soldier Essa Khan in eastern Laghman province in recognition of his action during a brazen attack on the parliament building in Kabul. Eight insurgents launched the coordinated attack on the Wolesi Jirga, with one of them blowing up an explosive-laden car in front of the parliament entrance gate and the others tried to storm the building but faced with stiff resistance from security guards. Essa Khan, a resident of Laghman province, said he gunned down six terrorists one after another during the attack that lasted nearly two hours, leaving two civilians dead and 28 others wounded. President Ashraf president has given Essa Kahn a new home in recognition of his actions and recognised his “resolve and heroism” during a meeting in the Presidential Office. Sarhadi Zwak, the Laghman governor’s spokesperson, told Pajhwok Afghan News Governor Abdul Jabbar Naeemi at a meeting with provincial officials had decided to name a square after Essa Khan. A land plot would also be given to Essa Khan in Laghman, he said.

The meeting participants also asked the governor to facilitate education of Essa Khan’s children, he said, adding Governor Naeemi appreciated Staff Sgt Essa Khan Laghmani for his valor and gallantry that foiled the enemy’s plot in no time. First Vice-President Abdul Rashid Dostum has offered Essa Khan a HiLux vehicle while several lawmakers have announced contributing one or two months’ salaries to Essa Khan. Essa Khan Laghmani, 28, said in an interview on Tuesday, a day after the attack, said that after the huge blast when he saw a group of young militants approaching, he hesitated for a second before opening fire. “I said bismillah [in the name of God], and then: Bang! Bang! Bang!” “I shot all six.” His bravado made him a national sensation in the wake of the latest Taliban assault on the parliament. His actions made him an instant hero for a country and a beleaguered government that desperately needed one.

Next four months are fate-deciding: Ghani

Asif Ahmadzai, 24 June 2015

KABUL (Pajhwok): President Ashraf Ghani has said the next four months are “fate-deciding” for Afghanistan and

the only way to build sustainable and durable security is to depoliticise the Afghan forces. Talking to lawmakers from southern Ghazni province at his office last night, the president asked the public representatives to join hands with the government in implementing its reforms programme. A statement from the Presidential Palace said lawmaker Dr. Abdul Qayum Sajjadi spoke on behalf of others about security related issues in Ghazni province, including targeted killings, hostage-taking of the passengers, absenteeism in police forces in districts and a weak government support for Afghan Local Police. The president thanked the Wolesi Jirga members for sharing their views and proposals regarding the security situation in Ghazni and said: “Unfortunately and fortunately our predictions about the current situation were right.” “Unfortunately because the war has escalated and fortunately because we are prepared for it,” the president said, calling the next four months as fate-deciding. The president said they intended to execute a three-pronged policy in Ghazni and other important provinces. The supreme commander of the armed forces said the Afghan forces were improving with the passage of time from discipline and professionalism perspective, but in this area, support from lawmakers and all political forces was seriously needed. The president said special attention would be paid to strengthening local police and effectiveness of the special units. He urged lawmakers to prevent the hostage-taking issue from becoming a tribal issue so that a vicious culture could be prevented. The president also said the next 100-day action plans were aimed at reforming the justice and judicial organs besides focusing on provinces. Ghani said he would interview candidates to head municipalities in the coming six days.

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