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## Newsletter

Your weekly news update on the electoral process in Afghanistan

21-28 May 2015

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### **Ibrahimi stresses parliamentary polls date be specified**

**Khawaja Basir Ahmad, 25 May 2015**

KABUL (Pajhwok): The speaker of Wolesi Jirga or lower house of parliament on Monday said president had promised him that date for parliamentary elections would be specified soon. Last week President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani said electoral reforms was a necessity, calling the upcoming polls a challenge. The unity government leaders agreed to reform poll panels, before formation of the government. The reforms commission has not started work so far and the parliamentary elections that were due to take place this month has been postponed due to lack of funds. Abdul Rauf Ibrahimi, Wolesi Jirga speaker speaking at a general session, said: "In a meeting that I had with the president, he said that in consultation with you we would specify a date for the elections." He urged both the leaders to specify the date soon so that people's and representatives' concerns should be put aside. Javed Faisal, deputy spokesman for Chief Executive Officer (CEO), told Pajhwok Afghan News: "Without reforms there will be no elections," adding that people and international community wanted electoral reforms to take place in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, some lawmakers complained that the newly-appointed ministers did not take their demands seriously. "Those ministers, who took vote of confidence, were oblivious to the demands of people's representatives. They say that after a month our period would be over and we would also become acting lawmakers," said Abdul Rahman Rahmani. "There are whispers that after a month the Wolesi Jirga would also become illegitimate. That's why no minister is paying attention to MPs," said Abdul Satar Darzabi, MP from Jawzjan.

### **68 hurt as Zabul PC office comes under suicide attack**

**Nasim hotak, 25 May 2015**

QALAT (Pajhwok): At least 44 people were wounded when a suicide bomber ploughed his car into the provincial council office of southern Zabul province on Monday morning, an official said. The incident took place in front of the provincial council office in Qalat City, the provincial capital around 11:15 am. Zabul acting Governor Massoud Bakhtawar confirmed the incident and told Pajhwok Afghan News it was a truck suicide attack. According to his information, a number of people, mostly civilians, were wounded in the incident. Zabul police chief

Ghulam Jailani Farahi said 30 people including civilians, government officers and police personnel were wounded in the attack. However, Qalat civil hospital director Zalmi Rishtin said that 44 wounded people were brought in to the hospital. Provincial council head Atta Jan Haqbayan said the bomber smashed his explosive-laden vehciel into the wall of the council's building. No council member suffered injuries or casualties in the incident but only some officers and other officials were wounded, he said. As usual, Taliban spokesman Qari Yousuf Ahmadi claimed responsibility for the attack.

### **Pakistan in state of undeclared war with Afghanistan: Ghani**

**Ahmad Qureshi, 24 May 2015**

KABUL (Pajhwok): President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani on Sunday while introducing Masoom Stanekzai as acting defence minister said Pakistan was in a state of "undeclared war" with Afghanistan and peace with the neighboring state was of paramount importance. Ghani introduced Massoum Stanikzai as acting defence minister, Lt. Gen. Abdul Khaliq as deputy defence minister and Lt. Gen. Qadam Shah as Chief of Army Staff, a statement from the Presidential Palace said. "Our national army personnel are patriotic and brave and I take pride in them as a supreme commander," the president said while addressing a gathering at MoD. He Afghan security forces had considerable strength and nobody could overlook their power. He directed the acting defence minister and other officials to take into consideration a rise in the amount of wages of the families of the lost soldiers and to set up a foundation in coordination with international organisations for helping these families. The president also appreciated the work done by the health team of the MoD for saving lives of many wounded soldiers. He reiterated that anybody who would use violence against people would be responded equally. "We don't want war. This war has been imposed on us. We want lasting peace but would respond with full force." He again stressed that Afghanistan needed to have a peaceful co-existence with Pakistan in order to end the undeclared hostilities. "We need two kinds of peace. One is with Pakistan because this country is in an undeclared state of war with us." "We won't back down even for a bit. Every person of this country should be assured that peace would occur in framework of the country's constitution and the holy religion of Islam," he concluded.

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“ The government is using delay tactics to hold the elections.”

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Above: Zabol PC office came under suicide attack, Zabol, Afghanistan.

#### **Voter awareness drive must begin right away: EWA**

**Zeerak Fahim, 24 May 2015**

JALALABAD (Pajhwok): The Election Watch Organisation of Afghanistan (EWA) on Sunday launched its voter awareness campaign in eastern Afghanistan, stressing the need for starting the drive nationwide right away ahead of the parliamentary elections. EWA officials, who addressed a gathering in Jalalabad, the capital of eastern Nangarhar province, announced their presence in the east and started a two-day workshop for the youth. EWA head for eastern provinces, Ejaz Malakzai, told Pajhwok Afghan News on the sidelines of the gathering that the workshop was aimed at creating awareness about the rights of voters, procedures, transparency in elections, the importance of elections and people's participation. The youth after attending the workshop would transfer their knowledge to people of their respective areas, he said. Malakzai said before Jalalabad similar workshops involving youth were organized in Behsud and Kama districts and would be conducted in all districts in the eastern zone. Nangarhar's acting governor Mohammad Hanif Gardiwal in his address to the gathering urged the youth to play their part in strengthening democracy and creating awareness about the elections. Recalling some problems that plagued previous elections, he said the youth should inform the people about the importance of elections and should help prevent electoral fraud in future elections. One of the workshop participants, Ghotai, told Pajhwok Afghan News that she attended the workshop in order to learn more about the importance of elections and

share her knowledge with women of her area. She said women did not know how and to whom they should cast votes in the previous elections, calling for the voter awareness programme to be extended to remote areas where people knew little about the importance of elections.

#### **Senate stresses parliamentary elections be held soon**

**Khwaja Basir Ahmad, 24 May 2014**

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Meshrano Jirga or upper house of parliament on Sunday asked the government to conduct Wolesi Jirga election as soon as possible. In a general session, the Meshrano Jirga warned legal term of parliament was about to expire and as per the law the new member of the parliament should join the lower house before the expiry of its mandated term. Senator Safiullah Hashimi said Wolesi Jirga's legal period would end on June 22. He urged the departments concerned and government to take steps to reform the election system and pave way for conducting parliamentary polls early. Chairman Senate Abdul Hadi Muslimyar said the ballot should have been held long before. He blamed the government for using delay tactics to hold the elections. Muslimyar also urged the government to work out election process and put an end to people's concerns. According to 83rd article of the constitution, the new members of the Wolesi Jirga should start work on June 22. The article includes the election for the lower house should be held one month ahead before the period of prior lawmakers end.

“We all want electoral reforms commission be established and start work soon.”



Above: EWA campaign launches in Jalalabad. Afghanistan.

### Germany, US stress sweeping electoral reforms

**Ahmad Qureshi, 23 May 2015**

KABUL (Pajhwok): The US and German special representatives for Afghanistan and Pakistan have stressed the need electoral reforms without further delay. Speaking at a press conference after the Afghanistan Contact Group (ACG) meeting, Daniel Feldman, the US special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, stressed it was necessary that the elections were acceptable to everybody in Afghanistan. “We all want electoral reforms commission be established and start work soon.” Feldman welcomed unity government’s efforts in completing its council of ministers, calling it very good news. He praised Afghan security forces’ performance for having full responsibility in providing security for Afghan people. He said his government would lend full support for Afghan forces. Michael Koch, German special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, said the ACG meeting in Kabul was a representative of the international community’s commitment and support for Afghanistan. He said based on the agreement on which the unity government was formed it was necessary that the electoral reforms commission start its work. He expressed concerns about a spike in insecurity in northern provinces, saying training of Afghan forces was ongoing in an effective manner.

### Parwan residents accuse PC members of inefficiency

**Farid Tanha, 23 May 2015**

CHARIKAR (Pajhwok): Some residents of central Parwan province on Saturday expressed grave concern over the performance or work done by the new provincial council (PC) in the province. But PC members say some of the work has been done and they were planning to initiate more development projects. The PC members that emerged successful in the last year’s provincial council elections included Ghulam Bahawuddin Jilani, Abdul Matin Quddosi, Saleh Mohammad, Khwaja Mir Mohammad Azim, Asmatullah Mohammadi, Mohammad Mujib Shores, Mohammad Khalil Fazli, Qari Abdul Aminullah Shokori, Shams-ul-Haq Shaikhani, Maleka Mayel Zada, and Hasiba Efat. Mir Hamdullah Munib, Abdul Zahir Salangi, Rahman Ahmadi, and Hosi Bayani are among members who served in previous terms as

well. Ghulam Bahawuddin Jilani has been elected as the council’s head, while Aminullah Shokori was named as deputy and Shams-ul-Haq Shaikhani as secretary. Some residents of Parwan expressed concern over the performance of provincial council members. Mohammad Sharif, a resident of Charikar, told Pajhwok Afghan News he still hasn’t seen any commendable work to be done by the council. He said problems of road construction and potable water were immediate needs of the people that they should’ve addressed. Najibullah Wahidi, a civil society activist, said during the campaigns the candidates had made pledges to change people’s lives in each and every aspect. “But the council still hasn’t done something appreciable.” For instance, he said, the Hofian Sharif road in the provincial capital and lack of dormitory at Parwan University were among problems that needed to be addressed urgently. “We are not pleased with the council’s work. We don’t expect them to work for us from their own pockets, but for development projects they should work hard with government officials,” he added. Hashmatullah, another resident, said the council was still new and needed more time to get things done. He added the council’s members have already started joint work with authorities to resolve electricity problem of the province. Hashmatullah was of the opinion that people should not expect big work in less time from the council. “If there are facilities for them and they won’t work then that would be their negligence.” Shams-ul-Haq Shaikhani, provincial council secretary, said they regained the right to oversight and evaluation of local departments which was a big achievement. He said the council was committed to thoroughly evaluate the performance of local departments.

He added the provincial council is in contact with local officials and have regular meetings with them. Shaikhani added they have also established committees to evaluate the performance of security, reconstruction and other officials. Shaikhani said electricity sub-station project in Jabal Seraj district was halted but after efforts by provincial council members and in coordination with local officials the project was reactivated.

### Consultative meetings on polls begin in Paktia Sahel Mangal, 23 May 2015

GARDEZ (Pajhwok): Independent Election Commission (IEC) officials say they have started holding consultative

“The government and other parties should not cut deals on elections.”

meetings with civil society activists and tribal elders on elections related problems in southeastern Paktia province. They say the meetings are aimed at identifying problems in the previous elections to avoid their repetition and work for their solution so that the future elections are transparent. IEC official Sher Ali Faizi told Pajhwok Afghan News that they had been in contact with tribal elders and civil society groups over the past one month discussing elections related subjects. He said the civil society had mentioned up to 15 problems that plagued the previous elections. He said they had acknowledged those problems to the greater extent and would work jointly with elders and the society to avoid their recurrence. He said few of the important problems discussed included the distribution of ballot boxes beyond the voter lists, issuance of more than one voter cards to a single person, the absence of observers, lack of transparency in appointment of election duty officials, insecurity, lack of coordination between observers and police and negligence in duty. Faizi said some of the problems were related to the IEC and others to other departments and claimed they had tried their level best to maintain transparency in issues relating to the IEC. Loya Paktia Culture Centre head Syed Jamaluddin Asafkhel said such consultative meetings with civil society groups would have a positive outcome and could bring about transparency in electoral matters. He said the authorities concerned should take practical steps to resolve problems concerning elections. He said the civil society had some proposals which needed to be jointly enforced by the IEC, government departments and the people. Asafkhel called for issuance of electronic identity cards and reforms in the electoral system and suggested that

previously issued voter cards should be declared void and four constituencies created in each province. Civil society activist Anar Gul, who had participated in consultative meetings with IEC officials, said the government and other parties should not cut deals on elections besides paying attention to the mentioned problems for the sake of a transparent ballot. He said efforts should be made to ensure that the future elections were transparent in order to protect people's rights and prevent any political deadlock. Paktia provincial council member Dr. Allah Mir Zazai said held the IEC and the government responsible for failing to hold elections as per people's wish and the relevant law. He said the government's and the IEC's mistakes and weaknesses had eroded people's trust in elections and people would not easily partake in polls until they were given a strong guarantee. Zazai said if the previous mistakes were repeated in the upcoming parliamentary elections, powerful and illegible people would find their way to the lower house and they would create problems for the government. Wadan Afghanistan political party member in Paktia, Syed Rahman Niazi, told Pajhwok Afghan News the people had lost faith in the elections for three reasons. He said civil society groups could do much to resolve such issues by working independently. Widespread fraud allegations marred both rounds of the presidential election, sparking a months-long political impasse. President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah in their unity government deal have agreed to implement electoral reforms. Months after the unity government's inauguration, an electoral reforms commission was formed, but the panel is yet to start its job.



Above: A voter on Election-Day. Kabul, Afghanistan.

### Uruzgan PC finally elects admin board

Ajmal Wisal, 24 May 2015

TARINKOT (Pajhwok): The provincial council (PC) of central Uruzgan province on Sunday finally voted to elect its administrative board about seven months after the elected body was inaugurated. However, six members of the nine-member council attended the ballot that took place at the governor's house. Acting provincial governor Amanullah Taimuri thanked the provincial council members for holding the election and meeting the

required threshold. He said the protracted delay in election of the provincial council administrative board had created numerous problems for local residents. He hoped people would be able to get their problems addressed after the administrative board's election that was put on hold for seven months. Independent Election Commission (IEC) representative in Uruzgan, Jan Mohammad Baryal, said all the PC members had been invited to the ballot, but still three members did not turn up. The PC members elected Abdullah Haqbin as head, Mohammad Karim

“My first priorities will be good leadership, good governance and doing a real service to the people.”

Karimi his deputy and Abdul Karim Khadimzai as secretary. The newly-elected PC chief told Pajhwok Afghan News the election could not be conducted for the last seven months due to differences among the members. He said they would try to serve the people of Uruzgan in the remaining time in line with the relevant law and principles. PC member Hayatullah Afzali, who did not partake in the ballot, called the election as illegal and symbolic. He told Pajhwok Afghan News the election was conducted by the governor who wanted his men to succeed. Another absent PC member Amir Mohammad Barakzai claimed he had not been informed about the ballot. However, he said he was happy that the election took place in a proper manner ending the deadlock.

#### **Fidai takes office as new Logar governor**

**Abdul Maqsood Azizi, 26 May 2015**

PUL-I-ALAM (Pajhwok): Mohammad Halim Fidai on Tuesday took office as the governor of central Logar province with pledges to ensure good governance and real service to the people. Fidai was introduced to the people of Logar as the new governor by Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) deputy head Farid Mamozai at a ceremony in Pul-i-Alam, the provincial capital. Soon after his inauguration in late September, President Ashraf Ghani issued a decree that declared all governors as acting officials. The introduction ceremony for Fidai was attended by parliamentarians, provincial council members, religious scholars, IDLG officials and common people. In his address, Fidai said he would work to strengthen cooperation among departments, the people and political leaders and attract aid for the province as his priorities. The new governor said he would not make a special promise with the people of Logar, but he had a strong will to work for the development of Logar. “My first priorities will be good leadership, good governance and doing a real service to the people,” said the former governor of central Maidan Wardak province. He urged the people their cooperation would help him resolve problems.

#### **‘Many Nangarhar offices rife with systematic graft’**

**Zeerak Fahim, 25 May 2015**

JALALABAD (Pajhwok): Provincial council members on Monday said some government departments were rife with systematic corruption in eastern Nangarhar province. They said contracts were being awarded against heavy bribes, deals were cut on projects and understanding prevailed between departmental heads and officials on such practices. Deputy provincial council (PC) head Dr. Nasir Kamawal told Pajhwok Afghan News their observation of government departments had reduced corruption to some extent, but problems remained. He said the council members had started monitoring the affairs of most of the provincial departments and some entities had been found rife with widespread administrative corruption. In his words: “Corruption and other anomalies are being practiced in some departments, but documents are produced clear by officials in connivance with their departmental heads.” Kamawal said they had produced evidence about corruption in some departments to the governor’s house and the attorney’s office. “We have scrapped some graft-tainted contracts, including one by the provincial police chief, the re-announcement and new agreement of which earned the government 65 million afghanis.” The PC deputy chief said they had investigated about corruption at the Torkham weighbridge and several other departments and the findings would be shared with the authorities concerned and the media. Meanwhile, PC secretary Ajmal Omar told Pajhwok Afghan News corruption incidents had declined in some departments

due to their monitoring, but still more than 60 percent of departments remained rife with corruption. Another member of the body, Israrullah Murad, explained the systematic corruption as bribes being taken in project contracts and deals among officials. He urged the central government to pay attention to the menace of corruption in Nangarhar departments. The governor’s spokesman, Ahmad Zia Abdulzai, acknowledged corruption took place in government departments, but not on a high scale. “The governor’s house has formed a commission to monitor departments. We respect the views of the provincial council. If the council has evidence, it should share with us.” Civil society activist and journalist Zabihullah Ghazi did not rule out corruption in the province and urged the government to seriously tackle it. He praised the provincial council for its efforts to combat corruption in government offices and said: “The good example of their efforts is unearthing corruption at the Torkham scale. Now it is up to the government to either close the scale or find a solution.” Former acting governor Maulvi Attaullah had cited his failure to root out administrative corruption one of the reasons behind his resignation.

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