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Newsletter

Your weekly news update on the electoral process in Afghanistan

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“The elections could take place when there are reforms.”

Unity govt unconstitutional until loya jirga convened

Hassan Khettab, 27 May 2015

KABUL (Pajhwok): The unity government would continue to wield “extra-constitutional authority” until a loya jirga is called into session, which needs electoral reforms before conducting parliamentary and district council polls, a member of the newly-created electoral reforms body said on Wednesday. The power-sharing agreement calls for the convening of a Loya Jirga within two years to consider amending the Constitution to create the position of an executive prime minister. Electoral reforms are also a major part of the agreement between then presidential candidates Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah after last year’s disputed presidential election. After taking office, President Ghani issued a decree creating an electoral reforms commission, but three months on since the decree was issued, the panel is yet to officially start working. Gul Ahmad Madadzai, a member of the reforms commission, said electoral reforms were mandatory and delaying tactics in this regard would mean more troubles for the government. Speaking to Pajhwok Afghan News he said: “A delay in electoral reforms is a big problem for the country because the current government has been created based on a political agreement.” In order to have a lawful status, he said, the government needed to convene a Loya Jirga and conduct parliamentary and district council elections. “The elections could take place when there are reforms.” Madadzai linked the delay in starting work by the electoral reforms commission to wrangling between the unity government leaders. He said parliamentary elections would not take place until the government implemented electoral reforms. Javed Faisal, deputy spokesman for the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), said they were waiting for the president to direct the electoral reforms commission to start work. “If anyone wants or doesn’t want, reforms will take place and without reforms, there would be no elections in the country,” he added. Some Wolesi Jirga members also expressed concerns over the delay in electoral reforms, urging the two leaders to set aside their differences in the larger interest of the country. Abdul Qader Zazai, a lawmaker, said one of the major differences between the government leaders could be the appointment of the reform commission’s head. With a strong will, he said, the government could bring reforms immediately and announce a date for next elections. Ali Akbar Qasemi, another lawmaker, said the reforms commission’s members had been named, but differences over who would head the panel remained between the two leaders. Without reforms, he said, people’s trust could not be restored over the election process. MP Shukria Barakzai

was first appointed as head of the reforms commission, but due to CEO’s opposition, she was dropped and Jandad Spinghar was picked on her place, but he too is yet to be formally introduced.

Ministers with dual citizenship must resign: Qadir

Khwaja Basir Ahmad, 27 May 2015

KABUL (Pajhwok): Haji Zahir Qadir, deputy speaker of the Wolesi Jirga, on Tuesday said some incumbent ministers still held dual citizenship and if convincing evidence found they should tender resignation. Without naming anybody Qadir said: “Among the cabinet members, some still hold dual citizenship. If proved they should resign.” Qadir’s remarks comes at a time when parliament finally voted for 24 ministers after thoroughly evaluating their documents, making sure they did not hold dual citizenship. Deputy speaker said before getting a vote of confidence the ministers had promised to resign if they were found with another country nationality. Among the incumbent ministers, Noor-ul-Haq Ulumi, minister of interior, Salahuddin Rabbani, foreign affairs minister and Sayed Sadaat Mansour Naderi, urban development minister had to cancel their second nationality before going to parliament for a vote of confidence. Qadir warned the lawmakers could take back their votes from ministers in the same manner that they had voted for them. “No minister, governor or other officials can do anything against the law,” he added.

New governor pledges Kunar development

Khan Wali Salarzai, 27 May 2015

ASADABAD (Pajhwok): The newly-appointed governor for eastern Kunar province on Wednesday took charge, vowing to use all his energies and available resources for development of the province. Wahidullah Kalimzai, who replaces Shujaul Mulk Jalala, was speaking at a ceremony wherein he was introduced as the new governor in Asadabad, the provincial capital. Kalimzai urged the people of Kunar to cooperate with him in every sphere, saying without their cooperation, it would be difficult for him to advance the affairs. Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) spokesman Tawab Ghorzang told Pajhwok Afghan News the ceremony was attended by IDLG deputy head for policy and technical affairs, Farid Mamondzai, who read out Kalimzai’s appointment order. In his address, Mamondzai praised former governor Jalala’s contributions and said the IDLG would support the provincial departments in meeting their priorities and implementing positive activities.

“I would hold face-to-face meetings with people to find out how their issues could be resolved.”



Above: Ballot boxes on Election Day. Kabul, Afghanistan. Photo: John Wendle

Defence minister-designate introduced to WJ

Khawaja Basir Ahmad, 30 May 2015

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Wolesi Jirga speaker has said government has formally introduced Mohammad Masoum Stanikzai as defence minister-designate to the house. Speaker Abdul Rauf Ibrahim said Stanikzai was introduced formally through a letter to the house on Wednesday, urging the government to immediately present his educational documents to them for evaluation. Last week President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani appointed Stanikzai as acting defence minister. Currently, the Ministry of Defence (MoD), Supreme Court, Attorney General Office and 22 provinces are taken care of by acting officials. Ibrahim also urged the government to introduce governors of the provinces in order to put an end to the problems of security and corruption. Mohammad Masoum Stanikzai, the defence minister-designate, is the son of Mahmood Khan Stanikzai and was born in Moghulkhel village of Mohammad Agha district in central Logar province. Stanikzai completed his primary education at his hometown and was later enrolled in communications institute in Kabul where he completed 14th class majoring in Microwave. He also studied communications in military university and completed high-level in military field. He obtained his first masters degree in management from Princeton University and went on to study Engineering in sustainable development in UK's prestigious Cambridge University for his second masters. He worked as senior researcher at United States Institute for Peace (USIP) for six months, where he did extensive research on peace and security and published several papers. During his refugee days in Iran and Pakistan, he

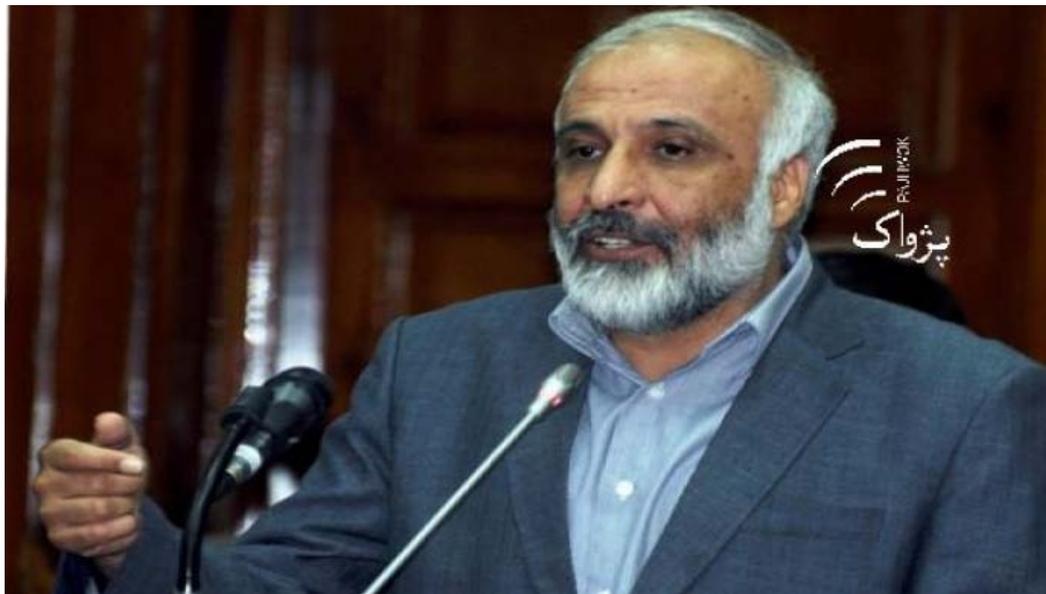
has worked with many humanitarian organizations delivering services for Afghan refugees. After formation of interim government in Afghanistan, Stanikzai worked as a commissioner for human rights and later became minister for Information Technology and Communications. He has also worked as advisor to former president Hamid Karzai on security-related issues and in the last five years, he has been working as a member of High Peace Council (HPC) and the council's secretary. He has had membership of many commissions also, including membership of the National Security Council (NSC).

New Nangarhar governor pledges inclusive reforms

Zeerak Fahim, 30 May 2015

JALALABAD (Pajhwok): Salim Kunduzi, the newly appointed governor to eastern Nangarhar province, on Saturday pledged to work for durable peace and fight corruption and vacate state land. Ghulam Jilani Popal, director of Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG), introduced the new governor in a ceremony arranged in his honour. A number of tribal elders attended the gathering demanded the new governor peace and development of agriculture sector were their demands. Jilani said Kunduzi was a qualified individual and served as acting minister of agriculture and livestock in the past. Senate Chairman Fazal Hadi Muslimyar hoped Kunduzi would play active role in bringing peace and stability to the province. Kunduzi promised to resolve all problems being faced by the people. "I would make sure to hold face-to-face meetings with people to find out how their issues could be resolved".

“We will bring necessary changes in the IDLG law soon to further empower governors.”



Above: Mohammad Masoum Stanikzai Defence Minister-designate

Governors to be empowered further: IDLG

Zeeraq Fahim, 30 May 2015

JALALABAD (Pajhwok): Ghulam Jilani Popal, director of Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG), said on Saturday executive and financial powers of the governor would be increased after necessary amendments to the relevant law. He expressed this in a gathering held in honour of newly-appointed governor to eastern Nangarhar province. Salim Kunduzi, the newly appointed governor pledged to bring peace, eliminate corruption and take back the state land from land grabbers. Popal said: “We will bring necessary changes in the IDLG law soon to further empower governors.” He added the president wanted allocation of 40 percent of budget to the province and the role of governance was vital to intensify development activities. With more powers, the governor should be more responsible and answerable to the people and therefore the IDLG was considering formulating laws under which the governor should be answerable to the provincial council, he remarked. Provincial Council Chief Israrullah Murad said empowerment of governor should be constitutional. He added the government should be careful about giving more powers to governors. According to Murad powerful governors could join hands with mafia groups.

Bolstered security a panacea to problems: Ex PC head

Mohammad Haroon, 31 May 2015

KHOST CITY (Pajhwok): Former provincial council head of southeastern Khost province has said President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani should focus more on

bolstering security and law and order in the country. Sayed Karim Khaksar during an exclusive interview with Pajhwok Afghan News said emergence of Islamic State (IS) or Daesh fighters in some parts of the country was a looming threat to nascent security. Citing an example, he said that security situation had got worsened in Khost province as militants launched spring offensive codenamed Azm. “Security in Khost was excellent and the residents could safely travel from one side of the province to another. But now the situation has changed to worse amid increased bomb blasts and coordinated attacks on border security posts,” he lamented. Khaksar linked recent insecurity to lack of coordination between president and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). He said president had a focus and he was spending time on small issues while fundamental issues had been ignored. “Peace is important than any other issue so the president should take measures for improved law and order to counter of Taliban’s attacks,” Khaksar added. He said that Ghani also committed a big mistake by removing some individuals who were supporting him during presidential election campaigns. He said that many individuals with good governance experience also ignored. “If the government appoint former governors and ministers, it would help prevent the country witnessed crisis”, Khasar said, adding the government plans could be implemented better if senior provincial officials were granted with more authorities and responsibilities. For bolstered security, the president should respect people’s demands in appointing new governors, he said. “The president should appoint individuals as governors with excellent experience and bridge the gap between people and government,” Khaksar added.

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Above: Ghulam Jilani Popal IDLG Director

Call to build coordination between Laghman Officials, PC

Zeeraq Fahim, 31 May 2015

MEHTARLAM (Pajhwok): Provincial council members in eastern Laghman province on Sunday complained local departments did not have coordination with the council but they still managed to evaluate performance of some departments. Mohammad Zahir Hussainkhel, provincial council secretary, told Pajhwok Afghan News they had many achievements in the last few months thanks to their closer cooperation with local populace. But he said it was the local officials who did not cooperate with them and yet they visited some of the local departments to look closely their activities. "We have tried to reach to people and resolve their problems," he said, adding that better coordination also existed among provincial council members and its administrative board. He added through a workshop they had presented a set of suggestions to President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah Abdullah regarding improvement in education, agriculture, public health and security areas. He said they were promised that immediate action would take place soon. Atiqullah Abdul Rahimzai, a member of the council, said following people's extended cooperation schools had been made functional in the province and there were no evidence of insecurity in any locality. He said due to efforts by security forces highways had been made secure and there were no problems to passengers or local officials. He added a team from the council was visiting most of the districts and with the help of local council they were trying to resolve people's grievances. He also demanded increase in number of local police force for improved law and order in the province.

New Nimroz governor vows to eradicate graft

Ramin, 31 May 2015

ZARANJ(Pajhwok):Eng.Samiullah has formally resumed work as new governor for southwestern Nimroz province amid pledges to root out administrative corruption and ensure security. Samiullah was previously deputy minister for water and energy and was appointed as governor

following suggestions by the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) to President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani. Speaking at a gathering arranged in his honour, he said he would also prevent the waste of water in the province and would develop plans for better management. He said the vital Kamal Khan Dam in the province was in its final stages of completion and the president has promised the project would be completed soon. "Supporting media is my priority. It is their job to report any wrong-doings so that officials could fix it," he continued, adding that even if he were to remain in the position for one day he would fight administrative graft.

Helmand PC links bad governance to acting officials

Zainullah Stanikzai, 01 May 2015

LASHKARGAH (Pajhwok): A number of provincial council members of southern Helmand province on Monday said that acting officials serving as heads of various departments were causing serious problems in the province. Karim Attal, head of the provincial council, told Pajhwok Afghan News the council was unable to resolve people's problems because most of the departments were headed by acting officials. "People have reposed trust on us and they now share their problems with us but we could not resolve their problems. The government has so far does not replace the acting officials," he added. In addition, the governor's house and some other government departments were also run by acting officers that caused security problems, he said, urging the government to introduce new governor for the province to help resolve people's problems. Attal noted that the new governor should prioritize improving security situation and law and order in the province, which would leave positive impact on other sectors. A provincial council member Bashir Ahmad Shakir said the council could not serve people the way the masses expected them. His colleague Baryali Nazar said the provincial council was striving to tackle people's problems through all available channels.

“We have clearly told the governor to keep away from local politics if he wants to build good reputation among people.”



Above: Nimroz governor officially takes charge.

New governor urged to control rampant corruption

Zeerak Fahim, 02 June 2015

JALALABAD (Pajhwok): Nangarhar governor Salim Khan Kanduzi--- having lack of political and local support like his predecessor--- has resumed his duty as governor earlier this week amid expectations by residents that he would control mafia groups in the province. Ajmal Omar, provincial council secretary, told Pajhwok Afghan News on Tuesday that administrative corruption was at its peak which needs to be controlled immediately. He said that mafia was ruling since they were in control of all procurements contracts in the province. The secretary, however, did not mention names of any mafia but warned that some elements wanted to develop relations with governor to misuse his office. “We have clearly told the governor to keep away from local politics if he wants to build good reputation among people,” Omar added. Nasar Kamawal, provincial council deputy chief, said the governor had many challenges such as land mafia, lack of coordination among various departments and administrative corruption. He suggested transferring old employees who had been remained on their posts for years to tackle administrative corruption in the province. Obaid Jabarkhail, a student of Nangarhar University, said new governor would have to confront worst law and order situation since the start of spring offensive by militants. The government sought support of provincial council members and local people to overcome challenges and improve law and order in the province.

Farah PC members’ performance satisfactory: Residents

Humayoon Zaheen, 28 May 2015

FARA CITY (Pajhwok): Majority of residents of western Farah province on Thursday expressed satisfaction over the performance of provincial council while some accused the council’s members of not taking initiatives to development the province. But Farid Bakhtawar, head of provincial council, pledged they had taken a number of steps for the progress of the province. Ashoqullah Amini, a resident of Fara City, the provincial capital, said: “I believed the provincial council members are more active as compared to the previous members. The previous members were elected purely on tribes basis while the

incumbent body is more democratic.” The provincial council members were extending residents with all out cooperation and leave no stone unturned to resolve problems of the people. Hameedullah Rahmani, spokesman of civil society organizations, said: “I am hopeful the provincial council will do a commendable job to develop the province. People are satisfied with the council’s dealing with the residents.” Rahmani said provincial council members helped in opening of road between governor house and the police headquarters for public, which was closed due to security reasons. But Eng. Naqibullah Azeen, a resident of Farah City, accused provincial council members of having no strategy to develop some of the neglected sectors. He suggested provincial council members should strive to help build Bakshabad Dam, ensure supply of electricity, expand the network of industries, education and generate job opportunities for jobless youth. The provincial council should concentrate on long-term projects and inform high ranking officials about problems being faced by the people.

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