



Vote audit set to begin tomorrow: IEC

By [Muhammad Hasan Khitab](#) Jul 16, 2014 - 16:47

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Independent Election Commission ([IEC](#)) announced on Wednesday that the recount of votes cast in the June 14 runoff would begin tomorrow (Thursday) in the presence of national and international observers.

IEC spokesman Noor Muhammad Noor said the process would kick off in the IEC central office and last at least three weeks. "Some 20, 000 ballot boxes would be recounted," he added. IEC staff will make sure to thoroughly investigate at least 1,000 ballot boxes a day.

He told journalists in Kabul IEC staff would work in two shifts -- from 7am to noon and from 1pm to 6pm. In each shift, 100 teams of IEC staff would work under the watchful eyes of international observers and both candidates' representatives.

Noor stated each candidate was allowed to nominate 20 observers. International Security Assistance Force ([ISAF](#)), [NATO](#) and United Nation representatives are part of the process, including transportation of ballot boxes from provinces to the capital.

The spokesman explained that a 16-point check list had been selected as standard to evaluate the votes. "Eleven points have been suggested by the IEC and five more by the UN."

The audit is part of a deal brokered by the US secretary of state between presidential candidates Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah in a bid to resolve the election dispute.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/16/vote-audit-set-begin-tomorrow-iec>

Homegrown solution was best option: Massoud

By [Javed Hamim Kakar](#) Jul 16, 2014 - 18:17

KABUL (Pajhwok): Presidential advisor on tribal and border affairs Shahzada Massoud on Wednesday said Afghanistan was home to jirgas and the election crisis should have been resolved through an intra-Afghan understanding.

The election crisis deepened after presidential candidate Abdullah Abdullah rejected preliminary results from the June 14 presidential runoff and declared himself the winner.

Before the results that put presidential runner Ashraf Ghani in the lead, Abdullah had accused Ghani and President Karzai of massively rigging the polls.

However, US Secretary of State John Kerry, who arrived in Kabul on Friday, was able to resolve differences between the two candidates until Saturday.

Both the candidates reached agreement on audit of all votes and the formation of a government of national unity, thanks to Kerry's and the UN's efforts.

Shahzada Massoud told Pajhwok Afghan News during an interview that in Afghanistan, there were highly influential figures who had always resolved tribal and regional issues.

"The election crisis should have been resolved through intra-Afghan understanding. There was no need for foreigners to resolve Afghanistan's internal issues and unnecessarily become heroes," the presidential advisor said.

He said the Afghans made history by turning out in great numbers to choose their future leaders despite threats.

He said the Afghans through casting their votes wanted a peaceful transition of power but unfortunately the election process deadlocked.

However, Massoud said they welcomed Kerry's efforts for Afghanistan's national interest and sovereignty and resolving the election crisis in order to prevent political turmoil.

He said both the presidential hopefuls should honour their agreement on the formation of a government of national unity instead of a coalition set-up.

Massoud opposed the idea of power-sharing, saying government responsibilities should be given to eligible persons keeping in view their capacity and ability.

He said coalition governments had never yielded positive results and Afghanistan needed a government of national unity that could represent the whole nation.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/16/homegrown-solution-was-best-option-massoud>



Obama hopeful of peaceful power transition

By [Lalit K Jha](#) Jul 17, 2014 - 08:57

WASHINGTON (Pajhwok): As the Independent Election Commission ([IEC](#)) began the process to audit ballots following an agreement between the presidential candidates, US President Barack Obama hoped the process would result in peaceful transition of power in Afghanistan. Obama said: "Thanks to the Afghans and the courage of the two candidates, both have agreed to abide by the results of a comprehensive internationally-supervised audit and to form a unity government. If they keep their commitments, Afghanistan will witness the first democratic transfer of power in the history of that nation."

He praised his Secretary of State John Kerry, who travelled to Afghanistan last week and played a key role in enabling Ghani and Abdullah to arrive at an agreement. "This progress will honor both candidates who have put the interests of a united Afghanistan first..."

At a separate news conference, the state department spokesperson, Jen Psaki, said the purpose of the audit is to finalize the election and to honor the millions of Afghans who participated. "The audit will be conducted by the IEC under close supervision of the United Nation in accordance with international best practices, utilizing an IEC checklist supplemented by UN best practices recommendations," she said adding that the international and Afghan observers, along with representatives of the campaigns, will provide oversight and transparency. International observers have been trained and will be ready when the audit starts, she noted.

"The United States is working very hard, hand in hand with both candidates and with Afghan officials to ensure that the July 12th agreement is translated into the actions that the people of Afghanistan expect, and ensuring the full legitimacy and credibility of this audit process," she said.

Presidential runners delay meeting to Friday

By [Pajhwok Report](#) Jul 17, 2014 - 14:23

KABUL (Pajhwok): A pre-scheduled meeting between presidential hopefuls Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai has been cancelled, an official said on Thursday.

Syed Hussain Fazil Sancharaki, the Reform and Unanimity team's spokesperson, told Pajhwok Afghan News the confidence-building contact had been delayed to Friday (tomorrow).

He said: "Both runners have been busy. They have agreed to meet on Friday instead of Thursday." They are expected to discuss the audit of vote, the monitoring of the process and the deal brokered by the US secretary of state.

Their first meeting took place two days back at Ahmadzai's residence, where issues concerning the electoral process came up for discussion.

But Sancharaki said Abdullah and Ahmadzai might also discuss a replacement for the Independent Election Commission's ([IEC](#)) secretary.

Ex-secretary Ziaul Amarkhel resigned his job following allegations of fraud against him by the Abdullah camp.



Election commission embarks on vote audit

By [Muhammad Hasan Khitab](#) Jul 17, 2014 - 14:48

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Independent Election Commission on Thursday embarked on recounting the ballots cast in the June 14 presidential runoff in the presence of national and international observers in Kabul.

[IEC](#) Chairman Ahmad Yousaf Nuristani told a press conference in the capital that the audit process would last three to four weeks. The recounting will take place at IEC headquarters in line with the agreement between the presidential hopefuls. Nuristani said around 22800 ballot boxes would be audited. The International Security Assistance Force ([ISAF](#)) has assured safe transportation of the ballot boxes from provinces to the capital.

The process would start with the recount of some 3,000 boxes already present at the IEC headquarter, according to the IEC chief, who said the candidates could file complaints 24 hours after the recount was completed. He added the commission would be bound to address the complaints in 48 hours. "In accordance with their agreement with the US foreign secretary, both candidates are committed to respect the outcome" Nuristani continued.

The commission will work in two shifts -- from 7am to noon and from 1pm to 6pm. In each shift, 100 teams of IEC staff will work under the watchful eyes of international observers and both candidates' representatives. Each candidate was allowed to nominate 20 observers.

IEC spokesman explained a 16-point check list had been selected as standard to evaluate the votes. Eleven points have been suggested by the IEC and five more by the UN. The audit is part of a deal brokered by the US secretary of state between presidential candidates Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah in a bid to resolve the election dispute.

Naeem Ayubzada, Transparent Election Foundation of Afghanistan (TEFA) chairman, was also upbeat about the audit. He said some 40 observers of his organisation were monitoring the process.

The observers, however, stressed the role of their international counterparts. On the first day, 30 of the 100 IEC teams could not start their work as their foreign colleagues were absent.



No absolute winner or loser, says Abdullah

By [Meer Agha Nasrat Samimi](#) Jul 17, 2014 - 17:24

KABUL (Pajhwok): Presidential candidate Abdullah Abdullah said on Thursday that the new government would include members from both teams under the deal with his rival Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai.

At a news conference in Kabul, Abdullah said the agreement on auditing all votes cast in the June 14 runoff was brokered by US Secretary of State John Kerry and UNAMA head Jan Kubis.

The ex-foreign minister, without going into details, said representatives of both camps would be part of the future government. He added the agreement would be implemented once the outcome of the audit process was announced.

Abdullah said it was not clear yet which team was going to win. But he underlined transparency of the process. He introduced Waheed Omar as his representative to the Independent Election Commission.

The Reform and Unanimity team leader said he was to take up with Ashraf Ghani the appointment of a new Independent Election Commission (IEC) secretary at a meeting today.

Ziaul Haq Amarkhel resigned as IEC secretary in the wake of allegations by Abdullah's camp regarding his involvement in electoral fraud.

Scheduled for today, the Abdullah-Ghani meeting was delayed to Friday. Both sides linked the delay to the candidates' hectic engagements.



Election observers pin hopes on ballot review

By [Muhammad Hasan Khitab](#) Jul 17, 2014 - 15:53

KABUL (Pajhwok): Underlining the need for transparency in the presidential poll result, Afghan election observers on Thursday welcomed the vote audit process. In line with the deal between the candidates, the recount of around 8 million votes began at the Independent Election Commission (IEC) headquarters in Kabul around noon. Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan (FEFA) chief Nadir Naderi Pajhwok told Afghan News that he pinned hopes for a fair outcome on the process. "I am hopeful all measures would be adopted to ensure a transparent outcome," he remarked, saying the presence of international and national observers was vital to the audit's credibility. Some 110 observers from his organisation are part of this exercise.



Orgun residents seemed happy with Ghani's visit and urged him to give more importance to security than other issues upon reaching the presidency.

A tribal elder, Suliman, told Pajhwok Afghan News that they were happy to see Ashraf Ghani visiting the district in this difficult time.

He said the Afghans were tired of the war and Ghani should make efforts at bringing peace and stability to the country if declared winner in the June 14 election.

Presidential runners discuss vote audit monitoring

By [Khwaja Basir Ahmad Fitri](#) Jul 18, 2014 - 15:50

KABUL (Pajhwok): Presidential candidates Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai met in Kabul on Friday for the second time in less than a week

Issues related to their recent agreement, ending weeks of political uncertainty in the country, came up for discussion during the confidence-building contact.

Fazil Hussain Sancharaki, spokesman for Abdullah's campaign, told Pajhwok Afghan News Ghani visited the residence of the ex-foreign minister in Kabul in the afternoon.

He said the presidential hopefuls conferred on the ongoing vote audit, monitoring of the process, a review of results and appointment of the new [IEC](#) secretary.

Sancharaki added the two leaders had an identity of views on economic, security and political issues facing the country.

They decided to work in the near future on the contents of the agreement, which was brokered by US Secretary of State John Kerry between the two parties. Sancharak said both sides had agreed on continued talks.

On Tuesday, Abdullah and Ghani met to discuss issues of common interest, including the current political situation. The hour-long meeting had taken place at Ghani's residence in Kabul.

Under the Kerry-brokered deal, all eight million votes cast in the June 14 runoff will be audited in the presence of national and international observers, including the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

Inauguration of new president was set for August 2, but the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) urged President Hamid Karzai to delay the ceremony pending the vote recount.

Ghani again rules out coalition govt

By [Ali Mohammad Nazari](#) Jul 17, 2014 - 21:09

SHARAN (Pajhwok): Leading presidential candidate Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai on Thursday once again ruled out a coalition government with his rival Abdullah Adullah, saying he would not strike any deal over people's votes.

"Reaching agreement with Abdullah is based on principles, which does not mean a partnership or a coalition government," Ghani told a gathering in Orgun district, the scene of a deadly suicide attack earlier in the week.

Also on Thursday, Abdullah said that the new government would include members from both teams under the deal with Ahmadzai. At a news conference in Kabul, he said the agreement on auditing all votes cast in the June 14 runoff was brokered by US Secretary of State John Kerry and UNAMA head Jan Kubis.

The ex-foreign minister, without going into details, said representatives of both camps would be part of the future government. He added the agreement would be implemented once the outcome of the audit process was announced.

A suicide bomber blew up a car packed with explosives near a busy market and a [mosque](#) in Orgun district on Tuesday, killing 36 people and injuring 89 others -- one of the deadliest insurgent attack on civilians since 2001.

The blast destroyed numerous mud-brick shops, flipped cars over and stripped trees of their branches as Ghani and Abdullah struggle for power after a disputed presidential runoff.

Accompanied by Paktika Governor Mohibullah Samim and other government officials, Ghani visited the blast site. He called the attack on civilians painful and brutal and prayed for the early recovery of those injured.



US hopes for govt of national unity in Kabul

By [Lalit K Jha](#) Jul 19, 2014 - 11:46

WASHINGTON (Pajhwok): Heartened by several meetings between presidential candidates Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani Ahmedzai since the agreement on an audit of ballots, the US hoped the election results would lead to the creation of a national unity government.

“I’m heartened by the fact that Dr. Abdullah and Dr. Ghani have met now – subsequently several times since the announcement with Secretary Kerry. Part of it is to continue to work out these political issues, as well as the technical issues,” Principal Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Daniel Feldman told foreign journalists.

Briefing reporters on the process of auditing of ballots which began in Kabul a day earlier, Feldman hoped that all Afghans, regardless of who they supported, would ultimately join together and support this process, continue to build a better future for their nation.

“The US, as we’ve long said, supports a sovereign, unified, and democratic Afghanistan, and our commitment to that future is absolutely clear,” he said adding that the US President, Barack Obama, and the Secretary of State, John Kerry, have said many times it’s not up to the US to determine who will lead Afghanistan nor should it be.”

Both the candidates, he said, have agreed to abide by the results they audit and that the winner of the election will serve as president, and will immediately form a government of national unity.

“There’s obviously still significant work to be done, and the job won’t be finished until Afghanistan’s leaders finalize the election and establish this national unity government, which really honors the will of the millions of Afghans who are determined to make their voices heard during the elections despite real security threats from the Taliban,” he said.

“But it’s clear that Afghans want a democracy that works for all of them and that both candidates ultimately benefit from a process that ensures exactly that. Both candidates recognized that there’s been too much progress in Afghanistan, particularly over the course of the last 13 years, to turn back that clock,” Feldman said.



Next president to name IEC secretary

By [Muhammad Hasan Khitab](#) Jul 19, 2014 - 15:29

KABUL (Pajhwok): A new Independent Election Commission (*IEC*) secretary would be appointed by the next president, while a government, an official said on Saturday.

IEC spokesman Noor Mohammad Noor told reporters in Kabul Syed Ehsan Tahiri and Farid Afghanzai were tipped for the slot. Currently the job is being handled by the assistants of the former secretary Ziaul Haq Amarkhel.

Amarkhel was accused of trying to commit fraud by prudential candidate Dr Abdullah Abdullah. Subsequently, he resigned his position about a month ago.

Noor said: “A new secretary will be appointed based on IEC suggestion after the next government is inaugurated. The incoming president will take a decision on the issue.”

But a government official, who did not want to be named, said Tahiri, a senior member of the Office of Administrative Affairs and Council of Ministers Secretariat, was one of the candidates for the position.

The source told Pajhwok Afghan News IEC External Relations Department head Mohammad Farid Afghanzai was also in the run for the slot.

A day earlier, the issue was discussed during a meeting between presidential candidates Dr Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai.

Tahiri, 30, has been a spokesman for the Office of Administrative Affairs as well as served as the Ministry of Education.

Farid Afghanzai has held different positions in the IEC office. Currently, he is the head of External Relations Department.



Unity govt idea floated by Afghans: Qanuni

By [Abasin Zaheer](#) Jul 19, 2014 - 16:31

KABUL (Pajhwok): The strategy for a government of national unity had been devised by the Afghan government and endorsed by the global fraternity to break the electoral deadlock, the first vice-president said on Saturday.

VP Yunus Qanuni, speaking in the [Wolesi Jirga](#), said the Afghans had discharged their national duty by participating in large numbers in first and second rounds of the presidential vote. But they were frustrated by the ensuing impasse. A week back, presidential hopefuls Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai reached an agreement on forming a government of national unity -- thanks to hectic diplomatic efforts by the United States and the United Nations.

A flurry of meetings between US Secretary of State John Kerry, the two presidential runners, UN Secretary General's Special Representative Jan Kubis and President Hamid Karzai yielded progress in breaking the stalemate. Qanuni told members of the lower house: "Efforts by the people and the candidates have ended the gridlock. Now the nation can see progress in the election process."

He identified national unity as the need of the hour, calling for confidence-building between the candidates. The VP urged the people to help efforts for unity so that a fairly-elected president took office in the near future.

"From this august house, I assure the great Afghan nation that the deal between the candidates is in the interest of the country. I expect all politicians and intelligentsia will support this strategy for strengthening unity and stability," he remarked. As a result of efforts by both VPs, an atmosphere of trust had been created between the candidates ahead of the announcement of the preliminary results, Qanuni claimed. But the situation worsened after the outcome was unveiled, he explained.

Vote audit to be completed in time, says IEC

By [Mohammad Halim Karimi](#) Jul 19, 2014 - 17:16

KABUL (Pajhwok): As the vote audit continues in Kabul, the Independent Election Commission [IEC](#) on Saturday affirmed its commitment to completing the process within four weeks.

IEC spokesman Noor Muhammad Noor told reporters that 40 teams of the investigators were auditing the votes in the morning shift and as many in the afternoon. Noori did not say how many ballot boxes were audited.

But Ahmad Yousaf Nuristani, the commission's chairman, recently said at least 100 teams of auditors would investigate 1,000 boxes on a daily basis. He believes the exercise should end within four weeks.

However, the fact that only 238 ballot boxes have been investigated in the first two days indicates the process may take longer to complete.

Noor explained to auditing more than 20000 ballot boxes, the process would be carried out day and night after the holy month of [Ramadan](#). He said so far no serious issues had arisen during the audit.

Ballot boxes from Balkh, Maidan Wardak and Ghazni provinces have arrived at the IEC headquarters in Kabul. He added ballot boxes from Herat, Kandahar and Helmand were also expected to reach Kabul later in the day.

The ballot boxes are transported in the presence of representatives of both presidential candidates and the United Nations. The task is performed under the umbrella of [ISAF](#).

"A total of 878 observers have registered themselves with us; 346 represent the candidates, 251 international observers and 281 independent Afghans," Noor said.

EU team observing audit of ballots

By [Pajhwok Report](#) Jul 19, 2014 - 17:59

KABUL (Pajhwok): The European Union Election Assessment Team (EU EAT) said on Saturday it was actively observing the ongoing audit of the presidential run-off vote.

The EU EAT is the main international observer organisation participating in the audit. In coming weeks, up to 242 observers will be involved in the EU EAT assessment of the run-off vote.

Working in shifts on a permanent basis, the EU EAT observers, will assess if the audit process is conducted in line with agreed procedures. Possible irregularities will be registered and brought to the attention of the authorities concerned. EU EAT Chief Observer Thijs Berman said: "The European support for this audit in Afghanistan is unprecedented in the history of EU election observation missions around the world. This audit is a necessary step..."

In a statement, he said they had repeatedly called for the investigation, because only with full transparency and an in-depth audit, the Afghans would be able to feel confident about the outcome of the elections.

The EU team trained in audit methodology a first group of 135 observers in Kabul, including a majority of diplomats from EU member states, embassies based in the Afghan capital, as well as US diplomats and [USAID](#) staff.

An additional 100 observers will be trained in similar conditions on July 20 in Kabul, 35 of them European. The EU is currently recruiting another 100 observers from member states, as well as from Canada, Norway and Switzerland.

Commenting talks between election stakeholders, Berman expressed the concern the negotiations on the precise audit procedure needed to be concluded soon.

“Candidates should continue their dialogue with election authorities and the United Nations in a constructive spirit, and agree on all aspects of the audit process without delay. They have the collective responsibility to contribute to a speedy process that respects the will of the Afghan voters,” Berman concluded.

Vote audit resumes after hours of suspension

By [Muhammad Hassan Khetab](#) Jul 20, 2014 - 13:33

KABUL (Pajhwok): The vote audit resumed after suspension for a few hours due to misunderstandings between representatives of the two candidates, an official said on Sunday.

The audit was launched at the Independent Election Commission ([IEC](#)) headquarters in the presence of representatives of both runners, Afghan and foreign observers three days ago.

The recount resumed at around 2:00pm, IEC spokesman Noor Mohammad Noor told Pajhwok Afghan News. The audit had been going well until Saturday afternoon. But it was suspended due to disagreements between the two sides. “Differences between the two camps surfaced over voter signatures and thumb impressions on ballot papers. One of the teams said only those votes are valid which have signatures and thumb impressions,” Noor said.

Tahir Zahir, the Change and Continuity team deputy spokesperson, confirmed suspension of the audit. He told Pajhwok Afghan News that IEC officials, representatives of the candidates and the UN secretary general special representatives were in talks on the issue.

But the two camps later reached an understanding that paved the ground for the recount to resume, the commission’s spokesman said. The exercise is ongoing in a normal way

Following talks on the issue, the two sides agreed on an audit mechanism, Noor said. Signatures instead of tick marks and similar tick marks on result sheets were the main factors behind suspension of the exercise.

The election commission says the audit of more than eight million ballots will take up to four weeks to complete. The process was launched following a US-brokered deal between Abdullah and Ahmadzai.



Unity govt idea triggers protest in Kabul

By [Khwaja Basir Ahmad Fitri](#) Jul 20, 2014 - 16:36

KABUL (Pajhwok) Tribal councils and the Afghan National Movement (ANM) on Sunday demanded formation of a national unity government with the representation of all parties to ensure stability in the country.

A numbers of civil society activists and representatives of tribal councils staged a rally in the capital Kabul for the formation of a unity government.

But Mohammad Yousuf Amin Zazai, a civil society activist, said: “Establishment of a national unity government is ridiculous. When the election winner or loser is not clear, what was the need for conducting the exercise?”

Zazai on behalf of protesters told Pajhwok Afghan News the next president should be elected by popular vote, and a coalition government. The national unity government would never resolve Afghanistan’s problems, he warned.

A coalition government would be the continuation of President Hamid Karzai’s regime, Zazai added. All stakeholders including Taliban, Hizb-i-Islami Afghanistan (HIA) should have a share in case a national unity government was to be formed, he opined.

“If the presidential candidates do not provide detailed information about the national unity government within three days, we will extend our protests to other provinces,” the activist warned.

He asked President Hamid Karzai and the candidates not to play with people’s votes and let the next president be elected through a transparent voting process.

435 ballot boxes audited in 3 days: IECBy [Muhammad Hassan Khatib](#) Jul 20, 2014 - 17:06

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Independent Election Commission ([IEC](#)) said on Sunday that 435 ballot boxes had been audited over the past three days in the presence of representatives of both presidential candidates and national and international observers.

Accreditation cards were issued to 282 international observers, the commission's spokesman told a news conference in Kabul. Noor Mohammad Noor said ballot boxes had reached Kabul from Balkh, Ghazni, Wardak, Kandahar, Helmand and Herat provinces.

Ballot boxes from Paktika and Khost provinces would arrive at the commission's head office later in the day, he added. Similar materials will be airlifted from a number of provinces to Kabul tomorrow by [NATO](#)-led troops.

Currently, 8,680 of the nearly 23,000 ballot boxes have reached the IEC headquarters. Noor said some 435 ballot boxes had been audited during the last three days. Some 559 representatives of the candidates, 307 Afghans and 282 international observers are monitoring the process.

He confirmed the vote audit had been halted due to some differences between representatives of the candidates but the commission was poised to resume the process. Consultations between the candidates; IEC and UNAMA are underway to resolve the differences.

Dobbins briefs Karzai on ballot recountBy [Pajhwok Report](#) Jul 20, 2014 - 17:19

KABUL (Pajhwok): The special US representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan on Sunday met President Hamid Karzai and discussed issues pertaining to recount and audit of presidential vote, a statement from the presidential said.

James F. Dobbins and briefed the president in line with progress in the recount of ballots and subsequent meetings between presidential candidates Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai.

The meeting held at cordial atmosphere at the presidential palace. Both the leaders discussed election related issues at length.

Country headed in right direction: AbdullahBy [Ali Mohammad Nazari](#) Jul 20, 2014 - 17:32

SHARAN (Pajhwok): Presidential hopeful Dr. Abdullah Abdullah on Sunday said Afghanistan was heading in the right direction and no one would be allowed to create any crisis. At a meeting with relatives of the victims of last week's bomb attack in Orgun district, Abdullah said he had been extremely shocked by the loss of lives in the terrorist act.

One of the deadliest in southeastern Paktika province since 2001, the suicide car bombing left at least 42 people dead and scores wounded. The explosion also razed dozens of shops in the main district market.

The ex-foreign minister announced a donation of 5 million afghanis to relatives of the victims. "I assure you the country would not plunge into crisis. No one will be allowed to fuel chaos."

Locals thanked the presidential runner for the donation and expression of sympathies. Resident Ali Khan, who lost two relatives to the bombing, said his grief had been lessened by political leaders' visits.

Earlier in the week, Abdullah's rival Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai and President Hamid Karzai also visited the district to condole with the bereaved families.

**IEC vows to speed up auditing ballots**By [Muhammad Hassan Khetab](#) Jul 21, 2014 - 16:36

KABUL (Pajhwok): As representatives of the candidates and observers complained of a slow-paced vote audit, the Independent Election Commission ([IEC](#)) pledged on Monday speeding up the process. The recount of over eight million votes started on July 17, with the commission believing the audit will be completed in four weeks after ballot boxes from all 34 provinces are transported to Kabul. Neutral observers and candidate representatives, however, fear that if the commission continues to audit the ballots at the current speed, it may not meet the deadline.

Arian Noori, an observer of the Transparent Election Foundation of Afghanistan (TEFA) told Pajhwok Afghan News the audit was going well but slowly. Regretting the slow face, she hoped it would gain momentum in coming days. Gregory Minjack, chief election observer for Democracy International, said international observers were monitoring the audit in accordance with the agreement between the candidates. He expressed satisfaction with the progress made thus far. "We will make every possible effort to ensure the transparent completion of the audit process,"