

Karzai recommended 15 IECC nominees

By [Abasin Zaheer](#) Sep 11, 2013 - 23:25

KABUL ([PAN](#)): The selection committee on Wednesday said it had recommended 15 individuals to President Hamid Karzai for choosing five of them as commissioners on the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (IECC).

[Meshrano Jirga](#) chairman Fazl Hadi Muslimyar, also a member of the selection commission, told reporters in Kabul 302 individuals had applied for the positions.

He said 15 of the 263 short-listed applicants, who met the conditions, were recommended to President Karzai today. They included three females.

Tribal representation has also been considered in the selection, according to Muslimyar, who said the list included five Pashtuns, four Tajiks, two Uzbeks and three Hazaras and one Turkmen.

They are Dr. Najibullah, Shujauddin Shuja, Shafiq Muabir, Abdul Sattar Sadat, Abdul Jabbar Hameedi, Syed Azizullah Oryafar, Kazima Muhageq, Syed Azizullah Ulfati, Rida Azeemi, Mohammad Jawad Salehi, Abdul Ghayyur Ghayyur, Syed Farooq Omar, Amanullah Tajali, Nadir Muhseni and Pighambar Qul Doghan.

Muslimyar insisted transparency had been maintained throughout the selection process and there was no pressure on the committee.

Link: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/09/11/karzai-recommended-15-iecc-nominees>



IEC says extending voter registration drive

By [Abasin Zaheer](#) Sep 12, 2013 - 02:36

KABUL ([PAN](#)): Independent Election Commission ([IEC](#)) officials on Wednesday said the voter registration campaign for the April 5 elections would be extended by one and a half month-

in order to establish more registration centres and appoint mobile teams.

IEC chief Mohammad Yousaf Nuristani, his Abdul Rahman Hotaki and Secretary Ziaul Haq Amarkhel were summoned to the [Meshrano Jirga](#), upper house to brief lawmakers on preparations in connection with the presidential and provincial council elections.

They said registration centres had been established in district centres and residents in remote areas could not travel long distances to obtain voter cards from these facilities.

Nuristani said the decision to extend the campaign was aimed at registering more and more eligible voters as a public demand.

He said the commission also planned to establish registration centres in big villages, but gave no details. He said a huge turnout and wide representation of people would help convince the world that the elections were credible.

He said so far 1.4 million people, including 7000 [Kuchi](#) tribesmen, had obtained over cards, with women percentage increasing to 28.

Nuristani said the campaign could not be initiated so far in Baghran and Desho districts of southern Helmand province, Nawa in Ghazni, Kakar in Zabul and Kamdesh in eastern Nuristan due to security concerns.

Essential tools required for the registration are yet to reach Nikah district in southeastern Paktik and Alla Sae district of central Kapisa, he said, but added the materials would be dispatched soon to the areas.

The IEC chief ruled out the possibility of any change in the election timetable, insisting the vote would take place as scheduled.

Link: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/09/12/iec-says-extending-voter-registration-drive>



Youth in Kabul rejects change in election date

By [Abasin Zaheer](#) Sep 12, 2013 - 16:33

KABUL ([PAN](#)): A youth organisation on Thursday held a gathering in Kabul and warned against bringing any change to the April elections' timetable, saying the vote should take place as scheduled.

“The National Youth Coalition” head, Abdul Razzaq Haidaryar, told the gathering there was no alternative to the elections, which should take in line with the Constitution.

The gathering came comes days after hundreds of people during a rally in Kabul asked the government to delay the April 5 elections until 2018 due to insecurity.

But Independent Election Commission chief Ahmad Yousuf Nuristani on Wednesday told the [Meshrano Jirga](#) there was no possibility of any change in the election timetable, insisting the vote would take place as scheduled.

The youth leader, Haidaryar, said the upcoming elections should be inclusive and transparent in order to have a legal future government.

“Like every section of the society, the youth is also responsible to keep an eye on the election process and prevent fraud,” he said, adding they would support a presidential candidate who had the ability to preserve the gains achieved over the past decade.

The gathering said it was supportive of the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) between Afghanistan and the US, but would not tolerate any compromise on national interest issues.

Link: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/09/12/youth-kabul-rejects-change-election-date>



Britain wants Taliban to contest polls

By [Pajhwok Report](#) Sep 15, 2013 - 09:11

KABUL ([PAN](#)): Britain says it will respect the result if the Taliban win next year's presidential and provincial council elections. “The election is open to everyone. If the Taliban take the path of honour and wish to nominate a candidate, that is their right,” the British ambassador to Afghanistan said on Sunday. But the Taliban's boycott of the polls would prove they were afraid of the verdict of the Afghan people, Sir Richard Stagg said in his message on the International Day of Democracy. Following is the text of the message:

“Across the world, people are celebrating a basic human right: the right to choose their leaders and how they are governed. For many years, Afghans were deprived of this right. They had dictatorship, violence and fanaticism imposed on them. “But, in the last ten years, that has changed. On 5 April, the Afghan people will vote to decide who they want to lead them for the next five years. Every Afghan, man or woman, from every province and tribe, will have the right to choose. Every person's vote will count the same as everyone else's. I hope that as many people as possible will take part, in all areas of the country.

“I congratulate all those who have been involved in the election preparations. The work is on track. More than one million new voters have registered to vote in recent weeks. Parliament has debated and passed new election laws, which the President has signed. And new members of the Independent Election Commission have been appointed. “Many people ask me what role Britain will play. The answer is simple. This is Afghanistan's election. We fully respect the sovereign right of the Afghan people to pick their next leader. We have no preferred candidate. We will not interfere. Afghans know far better than anyone else who is the right person to lead them.

“We will, though, support the Afghan authorities, if they ask for our help, so that it is an orderly election. We will work with the Independent Election Commission to help them fight fraud and cheating. We will do all we can to encourage a high turnout in all areas of the country. And we will work with the Afghan security forces and our [ISAF](#) partners to allow as many Afghans as possible to vote safely.

“The election is open to everyone. If the Taliban take the path of honour and wish to nominate a candidate, that is their right. If they win, we will respect the result. But, if they choose not to stand, then it will be clear that they are afraid of the verdict of the Afghan people.

“Afghanistan’s next President will have a great responsibility. The country needs a leader who can build on President Karzai’s legacy. Afghanistan today looks very different to how it looked in 2001, after more than two decades of conflict and civil war.

“One lesson from the last decade is that stability and economic growth can be achieved if the Government draws on a wide variety of talents and reflects the country’s rich regional and political diversity. Afghanistan is strongest when all Afghans can ‘see their face’ in the Government.

“Britain and other countries have made a huge, long term commitment to support Afghanistan. We want to build on this close co-operation in the years to come: the more Afghanistan’s next President wants to deepen this partnership, the more we will be able to do to support Afghanistan.

“Next April, Afghanistan will show its own people and the outside world how much has been achieved here in the last decade. This will be the first constitutional transfer of political authority from one Afghan leader to another in recent memory, a truly historic achievement.

“On this International Day of Democracy, I congratulate the Afghan people for everything they have achieved in the last decade, and offer my best wishes for the important year to come.”

Link: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/09/15/britain-wants-taliban-contest-polls>



30 get info kits for presidential runners

By [Javed Hamim Kakar](#) Sep 15, 2013 - 19:06

KABUL ([PAN](#)): Thirty likely presidential candidates, including important political figures, were issued with information kits on next year’s polls, an Independent Election Commission ([IEC](#)) official said on Sunday.

The recipients of information kits included National Coalition of Afghanistan leaders Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and Ahmad Zia Massoud, an IEC source confided to Pajhwok Afghan News.

Security Transition Commission head Dr. Ashraf Ghani, Commerce Minister Dr. Anwarul Haq Ahady, Right and Justice Party chief Hanif Atmar, Mohammad Mohaqiq, ex-defence minister Abdul Rahim Wardak also received the kits.

Presidential Advisor Hakim Nawrozi, Nangarhar Governor Gul Agha Sherzai, Sardar Mohammad Nader Naeem, Eng. Abdullah Kandahari, Sarwar Ahmadzai, Dil Aqa Kohdamani, Daud Sultanzoy, Khadija Ghaznavi, Mohammad Yousaf Wayar and Younus Fakoore are also eyeing the top constitutional office.

With the candidate registration process set to begin on Monday, political parties, coalitions and groups have stepped up hobnobbing. Sources say Foreign Minister Dr. Zalmay Rassoul also intends to run for the presidency.

Balkh Governor Atta Mohammad Noor and Mohaqiq are said to be his running mates. Several parties are reportedly pondering over the option of supporting Ashraf Ghani.

Link: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/09/15/30-get-info-kits-presidential-runners>



Elections to be held at all costs, promises Karzai

By [Syed Mudassir Ali Shah](#) Sep 15, 2013 - 20:42

KABUL ([PAN](#)): President Hamid Karzai on Sunday reiterated his commitment to conducting presidential and provincial council elections in 2014, calling the polls important for the country's future.

At a meeting with tribal elders from Helmand and Zabul provinces at the Presidential Palace, Karzai categorically ruled out any delay in holding the elections.

"We'll definitely hold the polls, which augur well for Afghanistan. Retaining power without elections will raise questions about the system's legitimacy," the president said. According to a statement from his office, Karzai urged his interlocutors to encourage Helmand's people to get voter cards, participate actively in the elections and vote for candidates of their choice.

Governors of the two provinces also attended the meeting, in which some elders spoke about the need for opening more registration centres in Helmand and Zabul. They stressed tight security around the centres.

Earlier in the week, the president held out a similar assurance during an interview with an Indian daily. "A delay of a few weeks may be. But avoiding the election — no way! I'd like a new set-up. Any election is better than no election. We cannot delay elections for security considerations..."

If the peace process became a factor, then the Independent Election Commission and the [High Peace Council](#) would decide on changes in the electoral schedule, he argued.

"That has nothing to do with me. But I do not visualise any long delay in any case."

Link: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/09/15/elections-be-held-all-costs-promises-karzai>

Senators offer footballers 2m afs in reward

By [Abasin Zaheer](#) Sep 15, 2013 - 15:55

KABUL ([PAN](#)): The [Meshrano Jirga](#), the upper house of parliament, on Sunday announced a reward of two million afghanis (over \$35,700) for the national soccer team that clinched the South Asian Football Federation Championship in Kathmandu. Thousands of people welcomed home the champions on Friday, when President Hamid Karzai embraced the players on arrival at the Kabul International Airport from Nepal, where they vanquished India 2-0 to win the major international event.

Senate Chairman Fazal Hadi Muslimyar, on behalf of the upper house, greeted the squad and the entire nation. While offering a \$2,000 reward for the players, he asked senators to present their three-day pay to the team, a proposal welcomed by lawmakers. The chairman's monthly salary is 272,000 afghanis, while each member's pay works out at 195,000 afghanis. The overall cash award thus comes to more than two million afghanis.

On Saturday, [Wolesi Jirga](#) Speaker Abdul Rauf Ibrahim told the house the footballers had brought home well-deserved laurels. Announcing to give the team his one-month salary in reward, he asked MPs to present their three-day pay to the footballers.

Link: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/09/15/senators-offer-footballers-2m-afs-reward>

Race for presidency begins with runners' registration

By [Azizullah Hamdard](#) Sep 16, 2013 - 14:07

KABUL ([PAN](#)): The Independent Election Commission ([IEC](#)) on Monday announced the beginning of the candidate registration process for presidential and provincial elections.

Noor Mohammad Noor, the IEC spokesman, said registration offices would remain open from 8am till 4pm and from 8.30am till 1:30pm on Thursdays.

No candidate has so far registered for the presidential election due in April 2014. The process would continue till October 6, the official told reporters in Kabul.

Presidential runners are required to have a clean track record, should have 100,000 supporters and the ability to deposit id="mce_marker"7,985 in the IEC account in security.

A provincial council wannabe should have at least 200 voter cards (supporters) and the ability to deposit \$360 in the IEC account, the spokesman said.

The final list of candidates will be displayed on November 7. Noor said 29 individuals had so far been issued with information kits for presidential candidates.

Another 1126, including 100 women, have received information kits for provincial council candidates. However, he stopped short of identifying the recipients.

An IEC source told Pajhwok Afghan News on Sunday that 30 likely presidential candidates, including important political figures, had been issued with information kits on next year's polls.

The recipients included National Coalition of Afghanistan leaders Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and Ahmad Zia Massoud, IEC spokesman confirmed.

Security Transition Commission head Dr. Ashraf Ghani, Commerce Minister Dr. Anwarul Haq Ahady, Right and Justice Party chief Hanif Atmar, Mohammad Mohaqiq, ex-defence minister Abdul Rahim Wardak also received the kits.

Presidential Advisor Hakim Nawrozi, Nangarhar Governor Gul Agha Sherzai, Sardar Mohammad Nader Naeem, Eng. Abdullah Kandahari, Sarwar Ahmadzai, Dil Aqa Kohdamani, Daud Sultanzy, Khadija Ghaznavi, Mohammad Yousaf Wayar and Younus Fakoor are also eyeing the top constitutional office.

Noor added after September 27, the IEC would send mobile voter registration teams to remote rural areas to give voter cards to the people who were unable to travel to provincial capitals for registration. The process will last 45 days.

Link: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/09/16/race-presidency-begins-runners-registration>



Women's active participation in polls urged

By [Sharafuddin Stanikzai](#) Sep 16, 2013 - 19:09

HERAT CITY ([PAN](#)): The Independent Election Commission ([IEC](#)) regional office in western Herat province on Monday said the polls' legitimacy would be questioned if the women were denied participation. Addressing a public awareness conference for women in Herat City, the provincial capital, IEC head for Herat Ahmad Zia Zia said-

since the beginning of the voter registration process in early June, 70,000 people received voter cards.

The recipients included 38 percent women, he said, hoping the number would increase to 50 percent. Since women constituted half of the population, elections would have no legitimacy without their participation, he argued.

Addressing the participants, provincial council member Sakina Hussaini demanded creation of voter registration centers in more areas of Herat to enable all residents to receive voter cards.

One of the major problems for women during the electoral process was insecurity, she said, calling on security institutions to take special measures to address the threat.

Link: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/09/16/women%E2%80%99s-active-participation-polls-urged>

Acting ministers referred to assembly for trust vote

By [Abasin Zaheer](#) Sep 16, 2013 - 14:18

KABUL ([PAN](#)): Vice-President Mohammad Karim Khalili on Monday introduced two ministers-designate and three other high-ranking officials to the [Wolesi Jirga](#), the lower house, for a vote of confidence.

Mohammad Akram Khpalwak was referred to the assembly for a trust vote as minister of border and tribal affairs, Omar Daudzai as interior minister and Prof. Barat Ali Matin as member of the Supreme Court High Council.

Nasrullah Stanikzai and Lutfur Rahman Saeed were introduced to the house for approval as members of the Independent Commission for Supervision of the Implementation of the Constitution.

While introducing the five individuals, Khalili said it was up to parliamentarians to approve or reject the nominees. He, however, stressed the role interior and border ministers in conducting the elections, scheduled for April 2014.

He acknowledged the current wave of insecurity as a hurdle to the polls, hoping the lower house would soon hand a trust vote to the two ministers-designate. He praised the nominees as experienced and competent people. "All of us are faced with a historical challenge that we must meet successfully," the vice-president said of the upcoming elections. He insisted the Ministries of Interior and Border Affairs had to play a crucial role in holding the polls.

About the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) with the US, Khalili said: "Negotiations on the pact are ongoing. We will sign it only when Afghanistan's interest is guaranteed and security across the country enforced."

Link: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/09/16/acting-ministers-referred-assembly-trust-vote>

Karzai appoints 5-member electoral watchdog

By [Mohammad Asif Ahmadzai](#) Sep 16, 2013 - 15:21

KABUL ([PAN](#)): President Hamid Karzai on Monday appointed five of the 15 individuals recommended to him as members of the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (IECC).

On Sept. 11, the selection committee recommended 15 of the 263 short-listed applicants to president today. The nominees included three females, five Pashtuns, four Tajiks, two Uzbeks, three Hazaras and one Turkmen.

The Office of Administrative Affairs said President Hamid Karzai had appointed Abdul Sattar Sadat, Reda Azimi, Nadir Mohseni, Azizullah Aryafar and Paighambar Qul Doghan as members of the electoral watchdog.

In mid-July, a joint commission of both houses of the parliament approved a new election law, envisaging the creation of the selection committee to introduce IECC and IEC members to the president.

The committee includes parliamentary speakers, the chief justice, civil society representatives, human rights campaigners and other top-ranking officials.

A statement from the Office of Administrative Affairs said the appointments had been made in line with Article 156 of the Constitution.

Under the relevant law, the commissioners will have to elect at their first meeting the IECC chief, deputy head and secretary before embarking on their assignment in compliance with the Constitution.

Link: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/09/16/karzai-appoints-5-member-electoral-watchdog>



Scholars' role in motivating voters stressed

By [Hasan Khitab](#) Sep 16, 2013 - 17:54

KABUL ([PAN](#)): The Independent Election Commission ([IEC](#)) chief on Monday said religious scholars and tribal elders could play a crucial role in encouraging people to participate in next year's elections.

The conduct of elections had entered an important stage, where participation of religious scholars and elders was needed, IEC Chairman Ahmad Yousuf Nuristani told a seminar in Kabul.

Hundreds of tribal elders, religious leaders and provincial council members from different parts of the country attended the seminar on cooperation from spiritual leaders and influential figures in awareness about elections.

"Ulema can highlight the importance of free, fair and inclusive elections in their sermons and can convince people that the polls are not against Islam," Nuristani said regarding the role of spiritual leaders.

For legitimate political transition, there was no option other than elections, he added.

IEC Secretary Ziaul Haq Amarkhel said the aim of the seminar was encouraging the masses to get voter cards. "I am sure Ulema would discharge their responsibility by motivating voters."

Link: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/09/16/scholars%E2%80%9999-role-motivating-voters-stressed>



Joint plan for election security devised, Senate told

By [Abasin Zaheer](#) Sep 17, 2013 - 08:51

KABUL ([PAN](#)): An elaborate joint security plan has been devised for next year's presidential and provincial council elections, senior officials informed the [Meshrano Jirga](#) on Tuesday. Defence Minister Bismillah Mohammadi and Interior Minister Omar Daudzai assured the upper house their strategy would ensure adequate election security.

Mohammadi acknowledged polling stations in several parts of the country were faced with a high security threat, but it would be warded off with implementation of the security agencies' joint strategy. Mohammadi acknowledged polling stations in several parts of the country were faced with a high security threat, but it would be warded off with implementation of the security agencies' joint strategy.

“Afghanistan’s enemies are trying to scuttle the elections, but they would not succeed in their nefarious designs,” the minister said, adding they were doing their bit to conduct the polls in a peaceful environment.

For his part, Daudzai said [NATO](#)-led troops would help Afghan forces in implementing the security strategy to help conduct the elections in a free and fair manner.

“At this stage, I can’t say with certainty whether or not the security problem will impinge on the elections. However, we do have effective operational plans in place. Hopefully, we will be able to hold a successful vote,” he remarked.

A former ambassador to Pakistan, Daudzai said: “I’m confident of tight election security. We have worked out useful plans on the one hand and Taliban assaults decline in the winter on the other.”

He stressed the need for police officials’ neutrality during the electoral process. “If they don’t remain impartial, the election credibility will come under question,” the acting minister warned.

Voter registration materials had been dispatched 402 of the 408 polling stations, he said, explaining the material could not be delivered to centres in the Nawa district of Ghazni, Deshu and Baghran districts of Helmand, Ala Sai district of Kapisa and Khak-i-Afghan district of Zabul for security reasons.

He confirmed of the 8,000 polling stations planned across the country, 259 were faced with a high security threat.

Senate Chairman Fazal Hadi Muslimyar called for the forces to do whatever they could to forge coordination in order to ensure a satisfactory security environment for the polls, slated for April 2014.

Link: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/09/17/joint-plan-election-security-devised-senate-told>



No rush to sign BSA, polls on schedule: Karzai

By [Hasan Khitab](#) Sep 17, 2013 - 15:07

KABUL ([PAN](#)): If the United States does not hold out the guarantees sought by his administration, it will have to sign the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) with the new

Afghan government, President Hamid Karzai said on Tuesday. Addressing a youth conference in Kabul on elections, BSA and the peace process, he billed the security pact as an important issue for the country. If his conditions were met, the accord would be in Afghanistan’s interest, he said. “It’s for this reason that we have been studying constantly and minutely the content of this agreement; we have been discussing it and have conveyed them our terms,” the president said, indicating he was in no rush to sign the deal. Cast-iron guarantees of peace and stability, the country’s economic development and equipping its forces, as well as respect for Afghanistan’s sovereignty were listed as Kabul’s major conditions for signing the pact. He made clear America’s demand for military bases would not be accepted if Afghanistan’s security remained under threat. “We don’t want bases that are safe but fires rage around them. We are trying to win security guarantee from the US.” Respect for the country’s sovereignty was a key demand, he reiterated, stressing American bases must not violate Afghan traditions. He wanted occupants of the bases to live like tenants in remote corners of the country. “We have been in talks with the US under very clear circumstances and that’s why the pact signing has been delayed...we’re trying to conclude it during the current month,” he said, adding the Americans wanted to wrap it up in haste. “It’s not necessary that I myself should ink the deal; it could be done by my successor. Whoever signs it must have the nation’s support, because no government can ram its own decision down the people’s throat,” he continued. Barred by the constitution from running for a third term as head of state, Karzai said a consultative [loya jirga](#) would be called to give its opinion on the pact once the two sides concluded talks. The forum should accept the deal only if it was acceptable, he maintained. On Sunday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the US and Afghanistan had held two rounds of talks on the BSA in Kabul since the negotiations were suspended earlier in the year. National Security Advisor Dr. Rangin Dadfar Spanta, Security Transition Commission head Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai and Irshad Ahmadi, deputy foreign minister, represented the Afghan side. US Ambassador to Afghanistan James Cunningham and International Security Assistance Force ([ISAF](#)) Commander *Joseph F. Dunford* headed the US team at unofficial talks on the security agreement. The upcoming presidential election, slated for April 2014, would be held on schedule in a transparent and inclusive manner, the president promised. “We are determined to hold free, fair and transparent presidential and provincial council elections.” Efforts must be put in place to hold the polls on time, he said, underlining security for the important national event. “Even with incomplete security, we must hold the elections, because it is very important and putting off the process would be problematic.” <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/09/17/no-rush-sign-bsa-polls-schedule-karzai>