



Some media outlets violating IEC law: Mohseni

By [Pajhwok reporter](#) Dec 25, 2013 - 16:32

KABUL ([PAN](#)): The Independent Election Commission ([IEC](#)) on Wednesday warned some media outlets for what it called the launch of an election campaign for candidates ahead of the stipulated time.

IEC Secretary Nadir Mohseni told a press conference that some electronic media programmes amounted to a campaign for presidential runners. Such programmes were in violation of IEC laws, he added.

He asked the candidates to avoid electioneering ahead of the due date. The commission was evaluating the documents of more than 200 individuals who would be hired as commissioners for IEC provincial offices.

According to him, of the 750 individuals who had submitted applications for the posts, 202 have been found eligible. Establishment of provincial complaint offices would enable people to register their complaints regarding irregularities, he hoped.

Presidential candidates are allowed to run their election campaigns from Feb. 2 to April 2. Provincial council runners have a one-month campaign period.

Link: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/12/25/some-media-outlets-violating-iec-law-mohseni>

For many, poll campaign a distant dream

By [Bashir Ahmad Naadem](#) Dec 25, 2013 - 12:38

KANDAHAR CITY ([PAN](#)): A number of provincial council candidates in southern Kandahar province on Wednesday said the security situation was not favourable for electoral campaign in remote districts.

The upcoming president and provincial council polls are scheduled to take place on April 5, 2014. The election campaign for presidential polls will start on Feb. 2 and provincial councils on Mar. 4.

One provincial council aspirant Haji Niamatullah Sher Dili said though the security situation had improved in the province, candidates could not openly conduct electioneering anywhere.

Except the provincial capital and Arghandab, Dand, Daman, Spin Boldak districts, poll contenders avoid going to remote districts because of security concerns.

Having been a two-time provincial council member, Sher Dili said they had been unable to easily campaign even in Kandahar City ahead of the previous elections.

Echoing his view, another provincial council candidate, Haji Fida Mohammad Khan, suggested that aspirants should take into confidence tribal elders as part of their campaign.

Nasir Mubarez, also a provincial council runner, also acknowledged problems in reaching out to the people. Young candidates, contesting polls for the first time, find the going even tougher.

He urged the authorities to improve security ahead of the polls in far-flung parts of the province.

Under the current circumstances, women candidates could not campaign anywhere in the province except Kandahar City, grumbled a female runner, Jamila Yousafi. She viewed media outlets as the only way for women to share their agenda with the masses.

But Javed Faisal, the governor's spokesman, said provincial authorities were ready to create a favourable campaign environment for candidates. He admitted far-flung districts were insecure.

Gen. Abdul Hameed Hamid, the 205 Afghan National Army (ANA) Corps commander, told Pajhwok Afghan News they constantly monitored the overall security situation and launched operations, if necessary.

Governor Toryalai Weesa said voter registration centres had been set up in hard-to-access parts of the province. He voiced confidence the security environment would become better and candidates would be able to campaign freely.

There are 73 people, including seven women, in the run for the 15-seat Kandahar provincial council. The outgoing council has four women.

Link: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/12/25/many-poll-campaign-distant-dream>



Poll security: Offensive launched in Kunduz

By [Hidayatullah Hamdard](#) Dec 26, 2013 - 12:35

KUNDUZ CITY ([PAN](#)): Security forces have launched an operation in the Khanabad district of northern Kunduz province to ensure a peaceful and favourable election environment, an official said on Thursday.

Syed Sarwar Hussaini, a police spokesman, told Pajhwok Afghan News that security forces had captured landmines and an explosives-laden barrel during the operation in Zard Kamar, Chahar Toot and Hussainkhel areas.

Hussain said the operation was aimed to clear the areas where militants still had a presence pace the ground for peacefully conducting the presidential and provincial council elections -- slated for April 2014.

But some residents believed the operation would not produce the desired results. Haji Rozi, an influential figure from the district, claimed hundreds of armed groups were active in Khanabad. They were out to sabotage the polls, he said.

Rozi said the ongoing operation was not a determined effort to curb the militancy. People were worried and would not take part in the election unless the insurgents were driven from the district, he explained.

Karima Sadiqi, a provincial council candidate, is also pessimistic about a high turnout in the election. Peace must be ensured, but security forces had little time to achieve the goal, she observed.

But the police spokesman hoped the Afghan Local Police (ALP) force would be able to boost security before the election in Khanabad, a district 30 kilometres east of Kunduz City. The insecure town also saw a delay in the security transition process.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/12/26/poll-security-offensive-launched-kunduz>



No favourites in Afghan elections: Pakistan

By [Qaiser Yousafzai](#) Dec 26, 2013 - 16:33

ISLAMABAD ([PAN](#)): Pakistan on Thursday made clear that it had no favourites in the Afghan presidential elections, scheduled to be held in April 2014.

Advisor to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz said that Islamabad would review its relations with Washington after the withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan.

The situation in Afghanistan was a challenge but Pakistan remained committed to working sincerely for peace in that country in the interest of progress in the region, he told a seminar here.

Aziz said Pakistan was pursuing a foreign policy based on promoting trade and economic relations with the European Union, the Middle East and Russia.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/12/26/no-favourites-afghan-elections-pakistan>

IEC pledges fair, inclusive elections

By [Javed Hamim Kakar](#) Dec 28, 2013 - 19:24

KABUL ([PAN](#)): The Independent Election Commission ([IEC](#)) on Saturday promised holding epoch-making presidential and provincial polls to complete the country's political transition.

Ziaul Haq Amarkhel, the IEC secretary, held out the vow at a four-day workshop in Kabul, attended by the commission's regional directors from across the country.

He urged the provincial officials to make concerted efforts to hold a countrywide and transparent vote in compliance with the election law, constitution and other provisions and guidelines provided by IEC.

"We have to ensure an inclusive election in April 2014 to facilitate historical political transition by employing the lessons we learnt from the past experience," Amarkhel added.

He believed fair elections could be conducted only in a stable security environment and proper monitoring by political parties, civil society networks, candidates, media, foreign observers and the people at large.

Speaking on the occasion, IEC deputy chief Abdul Rahman Hotaki called the 2014 security and political transition a vital process. He said the withdrawal of foreign troops would place a heavy responsibility on the shoulders of Afghan forces and politicians.

He said the same year Afghanistan would see landmark transfer of power from one president to another through elections -- an objective that all parties are duty-bound to work for.

Link: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/12/28/iec-pledges-fair-inclusive-elections>



Ghani ahead of Abdullah in new opinion poll

By [Meer Agha Nasrat Samimi](#) Dec 29, 2013 - 16:43

KABUL ([PAN](#)): Dr. Ashraf Ghani, a former World Bank official and finance minister, is leading the race for the presidency, followed by Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, according to a new opinion poll released on Sunday.

Jointly conducted by Glevum Associates, a Washington-based research company, and Asia Innovative Research Communication, the survey puts President Hamid Karzai's brother Qayyum Karzai in third place.

Twenty-nine percent of likely voters supported Ghani and 24 percent Abdullah while the rest of contenders were backed by less than 10 percent.

Pamela Hunter, a member of Glevum Associates, told a news conference the 4th position was shared by Prof. Abul Rassoul Sayyaf and ex-foreign minister Zalmay Rassoul -- each favoured by six percent of respondent.

Eighty-five percent of the 2,148 likely voters said they would not be influenced if President Karzai chose to back a particular contestant. The poll has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus about two percentage points.

Ghani, who polled only two percent of the popular vote in the 2009 election, was second behind Abdullah in last week's survey by the US-based Democracy International. The DI poll found 86 percent of Afghans had confidence in Karzai.

The latest poll said 61 percent would vote for a candidate who planned negotiations with the Taliban, 51 percent advocated for good relations with Pakistan and 71 percent wanted positive ties to the United States.

Forty percent of respondents said the presidential runners should keep foreign forces in the country beyond 2014, when the [NATO](#) combat mission is scheduled to end. About 90 percent refused to vote for a corrupt candidate.

Meanwhile, Independent Election Commission head Abdul Sattar Sadat told a private TV channel that seven of the candidates were facing criminal charges. Cases against them were being probed by prosecutors, he said. Asia Innovative Research Communication head Hafizullah Omar said many respondents did not know the names of vice-presidential candidates and that some of them were accused of war crimes.

"People are unaware who vice-presidential runners are! They are focused on presidential contenders and have no idea who's been guilty of war crimes," Omar added.

Link: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/12/29/ghani-ahead-abdullah-new-opinion-poll>

New ministers sworn in, greeted by Karzai

By [Khawaja Basir Ahmad](#) Dec 30, 2013 - 16:59

KABUL ([PAN](#)): Five Cabinet members, who won a vote of confidence from the [Wolesi Jirga](#) on Wednesday, were sworn in by President Hamid Karzai on Monday.

Zarar Ahmad Osmani took oath as foreign minister, Mohammad Arif Noorzai as energy and water minister, Shakir Kargar as commerce minister, Mohammad Akbar Barakzai as petroleum and mines minister and Din Mohammad Rashidi as counternarcotics minister.

According to a statement from the Presidential Palace, the ministers pledged to discharge their responsibilities to the best of their ability and in accordance with Islamic teachings, as well as Afghan laws.

Following the swearing-in ceremony, President Hamid Karzai greeted the Cabinet members -- whose predecessors have resigned to contest the presidential April 2014 vote. Karzai urged them to serve their country in the best possible manner.

Link: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/12/30/new-ministers-sworn-greeted-karzai>



Election materials being sent to provinces

By [Meer Agha Nasrat Samimi](#) Dec 30, 2013 - 16:02

KABUL ([PAN](#)): As preparations for next year's vote continue, the Independent Election Commission ([IEC](#)) on Monday said it had started sending non-sensitive materials to provinces.

IEC Secretary Ziaul Haq Amarkhel told Pajhwok Afghan News the materials, including booths, were being transported to four central provinces -- Kapisa, Parwan, Wardak and Logar.

The process would be completed on January 15, the secretary said. However, he would not say when the dispatch of sensitive materials like ballot papers and ink to the provinces would begin.

Without giving any date, Amarkhel said sensitive materials would also be transferred in due course of time. Efforts are underway to complete the logistics exercise before roads are closed by snow.

Ballot papers for the presidential vote have been printed and delivered to Afghanistan. But the printing of ballots for the provincial council polls was still in progress, the IEC official explained.

Sensitive stuff would be airlifted to the provinces, where appropriate measures have been put in place to ensure their security, according to the secretary.

Link: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/12/30/election-materials-being-sent-provinces>

MPs stress caution in freeing Bagram detainees

By [Abasin Zaheer](#) Dec 31, 2013 - 16:27

KABUL ([PAN](#)): Some [Meshrano Jirga](#) --- upper house -- members on Tuesday said cases of Bagram jail inmates should be investigated. Those found guilty should be punished, they said but others insisted "innocent prisoners" be released forthwith.

The house debated the issue a day after a review board investigating prisoner cases announced the release of 650 "innocent" inmates from the Bagram jail, about 40 kilometres north of Kabul.

Abdul Shakoor Dadras, a member of the board, told a news conference in Kabul on Monday they had started investigating the prisoners' cases in April. He said 650 of the 764 prisoners had been found innocent.

Commenting on the board's decision, a US official in Kabul told Pajhwok Afghan News there was strong evidence or investigative leads supporting prosecution or further investigation. He said 40 percent of the detainees were involved in direct attacks wounding or killing 57 Afghan citizens and security members and 30 percent participated in assaults wounding or killing 60 US or coalition soldiers.

"We strongly disagree with the release of 88 detainees, (they haven't been released yet, but we are currently disputing them from being released). All of these cases have strong evidence or investigative leads, without processing their cases through the Afghan justice system."

Participating in the debate, Mohammad Daud Hasas, a lawmaker from southern Zabul province, asked the board to exercise utmost caution in releasing Bagram detainees. "In this jail, there are Pakistanis, Arabs, Chechens and other dangerous prisoners."

Hasas suggested security organs should once again review the cases of those released by the board.

Mohammad Yunus Takhari from northeastern Takhar province said no inmate should be freed from the Bagram jail and all those held there should be dealt with in accordance with the law. "If prisoners, who are still loyal to the Taliban, are released, they would join their comrades in the battlefield and would threaten the (April) elections," he feared.

But his colleague from southeastern Khost province Arifullah Pashtun said those found guilty of committing crimes should be punished, but innocent prisoners languishing in the jail should be released as soon as possible. "There are men who have been jailed at Bagram for sporting beards or wearing turbans. They all are innocent and should be freed with immediate effect," Pashtun demanded. Rafiullah Haideri from eastern Kunar province, praising the board's job as commendable, sought punishment for criminals. But he said some people had been jailed at the facility as a result of misinformation passed on to foreign troops by local translators.

A number of other lawmakers held similar views. Senate first deputy chairman Mohammad Alam Ezedyar said every decision on the fate of Bagram detainees should come in conformity of the Afghan laws. Link: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/12/31/mps-stress-caution-freeing-bagram-detainees>