

### (1) Kabul's initial...

Khan Mohammad Wardak 6,005 votes, Mir Afghan Safi 5,968 votes and Ajmal Gula 4,525 votes.

Other candidates including Ahmad Zia Azimi Shinozada received 4,481 votes, Tawfiq Wahdat 4,318 votes, Obaidullah Kalimzai 4,291 votes, Hafizullah Jalili 4,183 votes, Mohammad Farhad Seddiqi 4,174 votes, Anwar Khan Oryakhel 4,120 votes, Zargai Habibi 3,983 votes, Habib Rahman Sayaf 3,879 votes and Najibullah Naser 3,779 votes. Fatima Nazari secured 2,897 votes, Shenki Karokhel 1,883 votes, Robina Jalali 1,529 votes, Fawzia Naseryar Guldarayee 1,470 votes, Maryam Sama 1,439 votes, Salima Nikbin 1,252 votes, Mursal Nabizada 1,319 votes, Zahra Nawruzi 1,297 votes and Gen. Nazifa Zaki 1,197 votes.

The IEC said that figures, political parties and other institutes could register their complaints about the initial Wolesi Jirga results within two days.

"No votes of any are missed, the votes of people are a trust and it is supported in the whole election process, anyone who received votes from the public would find way to Wolesi Jirga, we would give rights to those who deserve them," the commission said.

The IEC said that the results were not final and changes were possible in final results.

The commission has previously announced the Wolesi Jirga election results of 23 provinces. (Pajhwok)

### (2) Regional Rivalry...

At the same time, Afghan National Security Advisor Hamdullah Mohib has also traveled to Saudi Arabia where he will discuss peace talks with the Taliban and with Saudi officials.

"National security advisor, after visiting China, went to Saudi Arabia. He met with the national security advisor of United Arab Emirates in Abu Dhabi before that, and they discussed the Afghan-owned peace process and war against terrorism. It is expected that the advisor, during his trip to Saudi, will hold talks with Saudi officials on cooperation between the two countries," said Ahmad Tariq Aryan, spokesman for NSC.

"The efforts by the United States and Afghanistan's neighboring countries deserve appreciation. But the people of Afghanistan will take these efforts seriously at a time when the two sides (Afghan government and Taliban) sit together," said Chief Executive Officer, Abdullah Abdullah.

"Unfortunately, the kind of rivalry which has started between the regional and ultra-regional countries about the peace process has proved harmful to Afghanistan," said CEO spokesman, Mujiburrahman Rahimi.

But, a number of political commentators have said the efforts by the countries involved in the peace process in Afghanistan has been a barrier to sealing a peace deal in the country.

"It is perilous from two dimensions. First, these countries are likely trying to pursue their own interests in the process, which will unfortunately harm the interests of the Afghans. Secondly, a lack of coordination with the Afghan government prolongs and complicates the process," said university lecturer, Nasrallah Stanekzai. (Tolo news)

### (3) Abdullah Criticizes...

Unfortunately, the parliamentary elections faced problems but yet we hope that the new Afghan parliament will be a step forward in consolidating rule of law and political stability in the country," Abdullah said at the Council of Ministers meeting on Monday.

Abdullah once again rejected reports which say presidential elections were delayed for peace talks. "The fact is that technical issues is the reason for delay in presidential elections," the chief executive said. Based on the IEC timeline, the

preliminary results of parliamentary elections should have been announced last year on November 10 and the final results on December 11. However, the commission has announced the preliminary results for all provinces except Kabul.

This come after Second Vice President Mohammad Sarwar Danish on Sunday criticized the Independent Election Commission (IEC) over its poor management of the works in the election process, saying the IEC has committed an act of oppression against the people of Afghanistan. Allegations of fraud, violations and corruption against the election commission have raised questions on the image of the Afghan people and the Afghan government in the international arena, said Danish, amid growing calls for systematic reforms within the election management body of the country, which has been under massive pressure over poor management of the electoral process.

The people are running out of patience because of these two commissions, said Danish, referring to the IEC and the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (IECC). (Tolo news)

### (4) Observers Call...

to announce preliminary election results for Kabul. But election observers argue that the results are delayed because of irregularities in the election commission.

"There are issues which are not defined technically and according to procedures and this is delaying it. But all these issues are rooted to exceptions and reservations. The independent election commission unfortunately has become the victim of reservations and these reservations could be very harmful," said Mohammad Yousuf Rashid, head of Free and Fair Election Forum of Afghanistan (FEFA).

"Based on the reports and information we have, the commission is sunk in financial and moral corruption and this is delaying the results of the elections," said Sughra Saadat, spokesman for Transparent Election Foundation of Afghanistan (TEFA).

According to observers, there is consensus among the donors, who are funding the election process, that the IEC members should step down from their posts over poor management and poor leadership.

"There is a consensus regarding the dismissal of the commissioners and head of the secretariat and some provincial chiefs. This consensus exists among the donors, embassies, civil society, but in some areas, the government is escaping from its responsibility and this has created doubts for us," said Khalil Raufi, head of Afghanistan Youth Training Center.

"Parliamentary elections led to defamation, but they (IEC officials) organized presidential elections, Afghanistan will move towards a crisis," said MP Sakhi Mashwani.

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Danish said that there is a need for systematic reform to be put in place within the election commissions.

"The election commissions should know that the people of Afghanistan are running out of patience

and they cannot withstand weakness and inefficiency more than this. Now it is up to the national unity government to consider comprehensive reforms," he said.

While the election commission said transparency was the reason behind election results delays, a number of institutions overseeing the elections process said "illegal" demands by a number of officials of the commission from a number of candidates, was one of the reasons for the delay.

"We have been given reports about deals and corruption," said Naeem Ayubzada, CEO of Transparent Election Foundation of Afghanistan. (Tolo news)

### (5) Afghan Troops...

"If air support from the Americans is stopped, it will be a disaster for us," said Shamul Haq, a policeman in Ghazni, a central Afghan city that was overrun by hundreds of Taliban fighters in August who were driven off with the help of U.S. air strikes.

More than 28,000 Afghan soldiers and police have been killed since NATO ended its combat mission in 2014, and U.S. commanders say the losses are "unsustainable". Despite peace talks, fierce fighting has continued and dozens of troops are killed and wounded every day.

Poor leadership, low pay and irregular supplies in the face of Taliban fighters armed with sophisticated weaponry, including night vision gear, have demoralized Kabul's frontline troops.

While unable to take a major city, the Taliban have increased their hold in rural areas, and now control or contest more than a third of the country, according to U.S. estimates, and much more by less conservative reckoning.

"It is not possible to fight with an empty stomach and less weapons and ammunition than the Taliban," said Ekranuddin, a soldier in Ghazni, who like many Afghans, goes by one name.

No matter how bad things got for their frontline soldiers, Afghan commanders at least knew they could rely on American air power to prevent a stalemate from turning into a rout.

Since 2017, U.S. air strikes have intensified to levels not seen since the height of the NATO combat mission in 2011, when there were more than 100,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan. When the Taliban threatened to take the cities of Farah and Ghazni this year, U.S. air strikes were decisive in pushing them back.

Even as the insurgents tightened their grip on the countryside, hundreds of their fighters, including a string of top field commanders, have been killed by American jets, drones and helicopter gunships.

While the air strikes have drawn scrutiny and criticism from human rights activists and the United Nations for causing civilian casualties, Afghan soldiers see them as a blessing.

"We have the ability to fight the Taliban and the Americans weren't usually with us, but we strongly need their air support because it always gives us the upper hand," said Ekranuddin. "NOT ON THEIR FEET"

With details of any troop withdrawals yet to be announced, a reduction in air support is not certain as a four-year, \$7 billion training and equipment programme for Afghanistan's air force is only half complete.

The Afghan air force, including A-29 ground attack planes and rocket-equipped MD-530 helicopters, regularly supports Afghan forces and conducts about half of all air strikes.

Despite billions of dollars in aid, its ability to support units and keep them supplied in Afghanistan's harsh terrain relies heavily on international help.

Afghan government spokesmen have downplayed the potential impact of a U.S. withdrawal, noting that Afghan troops carry out nearly

all combat operations.

However, General Kenneth McKenzie, nominated to lead U.S. Central Command, warned last month that if American forces left "precipitously right now, I do not believe they (Afghan forces) would be able to successfully defend their country".

While American officers working with Afghan troops praise their bravery and fighting spirit, chronic problems remain with organisation, logistics and air supply - all elements vital to keeping an organised force in the field.

"We have sufficient forces but we will need foreign forces in air support and to assist and train Afghan forces," said General Mohammad Naseem Sangin, an infantry brigade commander in Ghazni. "If air strikes are reduced or stopped, it will be a concern for us because Afghan forces are not on their feet yet."

At a recent meeting with U.S. officials, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said U.S. air support was vital.

"We can hold the ground, if you cover us from the skies," he said, according to a senior official briefed on the meeting. (Reuters)

### (6) Human Rights...

Syed Mohammad Akhonzada, a lawmaker from Kandahar province, said: "We don't know why the HRWatch is behind Mujahideen and Muslims. This report had been published following the demand of regional intelligence networks in order to prevent Khalid, who is an anti-Pakistani personality, to discharge duty."

Lawmaker Obaidullah Barakza, said individual who is patriotic and sincere to the national interest of Afghanistan is accused of violations and human rights abuse.

He also termed the report supported by intelligence agencies and demanded support for Khalid.

Abdul Qader Qalatwal, a lawmaker from Zabul province said: "Where was the human rights watchdog when a suicide attack happened on Khalid. He changed the defence position of security forces to attacking position and the global human rights watchdog accused him of violations and abused. The report in this juncture of time was an attempt to weaken the security forces."

Speaker Abdul Rauf Ibrahimy condemned the report of the HRW and termed it a conspiracy against the acting defence minister.

He reiterated his support from security forces and their leadership and added the report was supported by the regional intelligence agencies in order to change the offensive approach of security forces. (Pajhwok)

### (7) 8,900 Key...

Hamidullah, District Governor in Faryab

Saifullah, military and logistic in-charge of Taliban in Paktika Mullah Samad, head of intelligence Mullah Basir Akhund, commander and logistics facilitator for the Taliban in Farah province

Mohammad Omar Zarqani, commander of a 50-member group Mullah Sardar, Deputy Shadow Governor for Farah province

Sayed Agha, a commander of Taliban's Red Unit in Helmand province

Mullah Aminullah, a commander of Taliban's Red Unit in Uruzgan province

Some military analysts said that the arrest and killing of senior members of the Taliban provide to be effective and that the military operations should continue against the militant groups in the country.

"The groups will struggle when their leaders being killed and it will also raise problems among them," said Mohammad Radmanish, an Afghan military analyst based in Kabul. (ATN)

### (8) Kandaharis...

the industry and reducing imports. He claimed 15 to 20 percent tax on 800 raw materials by the govern-

ment had led to an increase in the cost of domestic products. Another issue is that the items that are abundantly produced at home are imported from foreign countries.

Rahimullah Agha, head of the traders' association, complained no facility had been provided for Kandahar-based industrialists, who faced several other problems as well.

Faizul Haq Mushkani, deputy head of the industrialists' association, explained lack of electricity for the past several years had left 154 factories working at 50 percent of their capacity and 135 others inactive in the Kandahar industrial park.

There are more than 200 factories in Kandahar producing cotton, oil, soap, plastic pipes, various food items, non-alcoholic drinks, etc. About 5,000 people were working there, he informs.

Faizullah Hodman, a provincial industry and mining official, said the department had created an institution to address the issues of industry. (Pajhwok)

### (9) Journalist Killed...

were killed there in 2018. A total of 53 journalists were killed around the world in 2018.

"This summary execution is the first death of a journalist in 2019 to be registered on RSF's barometer," said Reza Moini, the head of RSF's Afghanistan-Iran desk. "There is an urgent need to end such practices." The Taliban have long been known to be especially brutal to journalists and other media workers who are protected persons under the Geneva Convention.

"We reiterate our appeal to the international community to condition the start of any talks with the Taliban on their giving an explicit undertaking to respect international humanitarian law's basic treaties, starting with the Geneva Conventions," added Moini. (DW)

### (10) Pakistani...

they had several times demanded teaching in the Afghanistan curriculum, but no one heard and thus they continued teaching Pakistani curriculum in their school.

But some sources told Pajhwok that the mentioned schools have direct formal link with Pakistan and their students were sent to South Waziristan's headquarters Wana for further education.

When asked about the issue, provincial education director Mehruddin Shafaq told Pajhwok he had no information if Pakistani curriculum was taught in private schools in the Barmal district, but they would seriously investigate the issue. (Pajhwok)

### (11) America's Troop...

Jim Mattis sparked concerns in Australia and among other US allies.

Peter Leahy, former chief of the Australian Army, said uncertainty over the future of the US commitment to the Middle East should prompt a rethink in Canberra on its alliance with Washington.

Speaking to News Corp Australia, Leahy said: "It makes it considerably more difficult in that going with the Trump gut reaction is no way to build and sustain a strategy. "If we find ourselves in a situation where we make a commitment and the US change their strategy almost at Trump's will, what are we to do? The other issue is that Australia needs to think about the long-term viability of the US as an ally." (Pajhwok)

### (12) ESCAP-Energy...

Priority areas for joint activities under the agreement include renewable energy deployment, cooling energy efficiency, green finance, electric vehicles, clean and low carbon cities, and tools for SDG7 (clean energy) and SDG13 (climate action) roadmaps in member States. Both organisations will also collaborate to enhance policy coordination, facilitate high-level policy dialogues and deliver knowledge products targeting these areas in the region. (PR)