



Legislative Newsletter

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NEWS:

Senators Condemn Recent Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan

Condemning recent suicide bombings in northern Kunduz province, Senators in the 15 March Meshrano Jirga (MJ) plenary session called on Afghan security officials to do more to protect citizens.

The northern Kunduz province has witnessed two suicide bombings in one week. The first bomb killed four people, including the provincial security chief and the second one targeting the Afghan National Army Recruitment Centre, resulted in the death of more than 30 people.

“We condemn the attacks and call on the Administrative Board of the MJ to invite security officials to the House to answer our questions in this regard,” said Ms. Anarkali Hunaryar (Kabul).

Ms. Hunaryar’s sentiments were echoed by Mr. Khaleqdad Balaghi (Kabul) who said: “If the security officials can’t protect citizens, they should step aside.”

Mr. Hidayatullah Rehayee (Bamyan) accused the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence of sending the suicide bombers into Afghanistan and criticized President Karzai’s willingness to negotiate with the Taliban. “The Taliban and Hezb e Islami take responsibility for these attacks but the Afghan government is still seeking to negotiate with them,” said Mr. Rehayee in reference to President Karzai’s remarks calling the Taliban “disenchanted brothers”.

However, some Senators chose the occasion to show their contempt for coalition forces. Mr. Esa Khan Shinwari (Nangarhar) blamed coalition forces for civilian casualties. “The U.S. forces have killed more innocent civilians than the Taliban,” said Mr. Shinwari. Mr. Hamdullah Muneeb (Parwan) said: “You should not rely on the foreign forces to ensure our security but rely on Allah to protect you.”

Senators Wary of Afghans’ Readiness to Assume Security Responsibilities

During the 12 March plenary session, Senators expressed concern over the Afghan security forces’ readiness to assume full security responsibilities from International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

The transition of the security responsibilities from ISAF to Afghan forces is scheduled to begin this year and be completed by 2014. Hafez Abdul Qayoom (Nooristani) said the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police are not well equipped to fight the enemies.

Other Senators echoed Mr. Qayoom's observation. While supportive of Afghan-led security, Mr. Mahmood Daneshjo (Balkh) said: "Before the security duty is handed over to Afghan security forces, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) must fully equip them or it will have serious consequences."

Mr. Ismail Munshi (Jawzjan) urged NATO not to leave Afghanistan prematurely. "Leaving an ill-equipped security force to take charge and abandoning Afghanistan would be a repeat of the mistakes made in the 1990s," said Mr. Munshi, referring to the civil war that ensued soon after the United States (U.S) withdrew following the defeat of Afghanistan's communist regime in 1991.

Echoing Mr. Munshi's sentiments regarding the need for a long term strategic friendship with the U.S, Mr. Abdul Baqi Baryal (Ghazni) said: "We need to have a long term partnership with the international community, especially with the U.S."

Mr. Mohammad Alam Izedyar (Panjshir) First Deputy Speaker of the Upper House, not only expressed hope that the international community would continue with its efforts to equip and train the security forces in Afghanistan, but also said that Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) should continue their valuable work.

1390 Budget Officially Introduced to Lower House

Finance Minister Mr. Hazrat Omar Zakhelwal, officially introduced the 1390 (2011) Budget to members of the Wolesi Jirga (WJ) on 12 March. Mr. Zakhelwal used the opportunity to request that members approve the budget to enable the Executive to 'serve the nation'.

Presenting the budget to the plenary, Minister Zakhelwal said the government made significant achievements in the past year. "We had a lot of achievements in the last year. Our economy grew by 7.4% and we hope we will maintain this growth in 1390."

Mr. Zakhelwal further stated that domestic revenue rose to 75 billion Afghanis (approximately USD 1.67 billion) and this will be used to finance 65% of the operating budget. "The total for the development and operational budget for 1390 is 215.9 billion Afghanis (USD 4.5 billion). Ninety-three billion Afghanis (USD 1.9 billion) is estimated as domestic revenue for 1390," said Mr. Zakhelwal.

Responding to the presentation, Mr. Sediq Ahmad Usmani (Parwan) said the WJ cannot debate the budget until the 1389 Qatia (the government's annual financial statement) is finalized. Mr. Balkhi agreed, adding; "The WJ should discuss the Qatia first before considering the 1390 budget."

Meanwhile, the leadership of the WJ this week cancelled the 16 March plenary session and gave committees until 29 March to scrutinize their respective sector budget allocations. "Today's (16 March) plenary session was cancelled because the Council of Chairs is discussing the National Budget for the fiscal year 1390 in the WJ conference hall. The discussion of the National Budget will continue in the WJ committees until 29 March. During this period no plenary sessions will take place," said Mr. Khudai Nazar Nasrat, WJ Director of Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs.

Wolesi Jirga Elects Committee Chairpersons

This week the Wolesi Jirga elected leadership teams for committees. All but the Legislative Committee completed elections for committee leaders.

The following are the leadership for committees that were put in place:

1. Complaints And Petitions Committee

Mr. Ubaidullah Khan Barakzai (Uruzgan) (Chairperson)
Mr. Mohammad Arif Tayab (Heart) (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr. Abdalullah Mohammadi (Samangan) (Secretary)

2. Defence And Territorial Affairs Committee

Mrs. Shukria Barakzai (Kabul) (Chairperson)
Mr. Hasham Watanwal (Uruzgan) (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr. Shahista Baz Nasiri (Kunduz) (Secretary)

3. Disabled Martyrs and Widows Committee

Mr. Sayed Hussain Alami Balkhi (Kabul) (Chairperson)
Mr. Haji Abdul Qadeer (Paktika) (Deputy Chairperson)
Mrs. Hamida Ahmadzai (Kuchi) (Secretary)

4. Finance, Budget Public Accounts and Banking Affairs Committee

Mr. Amir Khan Yar (Nangahar) (Chairperson)
Mrs. Roqia Nayal (Ghor) (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr. Eng. Kamal (Kunduz) (Secretary)

5. Health, Sports, Youths, Labor and Workers' Committee

Mr. Naqibullah Fayaq (Faryab) (Chairperson)
Mrs. Dr. Mujiburahman Samkani (Paktia) (Deputy Chairperson)
Mrs. Dr. Nelofar Ibrahimi (Badakhshan) (Secretary)

6. Immunities And Privileges Committee

Mr. Sharifullah Kamawal (Kabul) (Chairperson)
Mr. Abdul Habib Andiwai (Zabul) (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr. Hassan Sahrai (Kuchi) (Secretary)

7. Internal Affairs (Internal Security, Border Control, National Security and Local Administration) Committee

Mr. Mohammad Naeem Lali Hamidzai (Kandahar) (Chairperson)
Mr. Haji Abdul Hai (Helmand) (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr. Al Haj Mirdad Nijrabi (Kapisa) (Secretary)

8. International Affairs Committee

Mr. Abur Rab Rasool Sayaf (Kabul) (Chairperson)
Mr. Mohammad Noor Akbari (Wardak) (Deputy Chairperson)
Mrs. Bibi Hamida Achakzai (Kandahar) (Secretary)

9. Justice, Administrative Reform and Fight Against Corruption Committee

Mr. Mohammad Mohaqiq (Kabul) (Chairperson)
Mr. Mohammad Sarwar Usmani (Faryab) (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr. Mohammad Abdu (Balkh) (Secretary)

10. Legislative Affairs Committee

Mr. Qazi Nazeer Ahmad Hanifi (Herat) (Deputy Chair person)
Mr. Alhaj Nazari Turkman (Kunduz) (Secretary)

11. Narcotics, Toxic Substances And Ethics Committee

Mr. Wakil Mula Tarakhil Mohammadi (Kuchi) (Chairperson)
Mr. Shah Abdul Ahad Afzali (Badakhshan) (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr. Chaman Shah Etamadi (Ghazni) (Secretary)

12. National Economy, NGOs, Rural Development, Agriculture and Animal Husbandry Committee

Mr. Al-Haj Mir Rahman Rahmani (Parwan) (Chairperson)
Mr. Sheer Wali Wardak (Kabul) (Deputy Chairperson)
Mrs. Dr. Farshata Amini (Nimroz) (Secretary)

13. Natural Resources and Environment Committee

Mr. Ubaidullah Ramin (Baglan) (Chairperson)
Mr. Haji Gul Badshah Majidi (Paktia) (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr. Abdul Rahman Shahidani (Bamyan) (Secretary)

14. Nomads, Tribal Affairs, Refugees and Migration Committee

Mr. Habib Afghan (Kuchi) (Chairperson)
Mrs. Parveen Durani (Kuchi) (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr. Haidar Jan Naeemzoi (Kuchi) (Secretary)

15. Overseeing The Implementation Of Law And Central Audit Committee

Mr. Mohammad Husain Fahimi (Sar-i-Pul) (Chairperson)
Mrs. Asifa Shadab (Faryab) (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr. Bashir Ahmad Taenj (Faryab) (Secretary)

16. Religious And Cultural Affairs, Education and Higher Education Committee

Mr. Kamal Nasar Usali (Khost) (Chairperson)
Mrs. Fahima Sadatt (Jawzjan) (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr. Mohammad Ali Akhlaki (Ghazni) (Secretary)

17. Transport, Telecommunications, Urban and Housing affairs, Water and Power Supply and Municipal Affairs Committee

Mr. Dr. Ubaidullah Kaleemzai (Chairperson)
Mr. Qais Hassan (Kabul) (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr. Mamoor Musa Khan Nasrat (Farah) (Secretary)

18. Women's Affairs, Civil Society and Human Rights Committee

Mrs. Aziz Jalees (Sar-e-Pul) (Chairperson)
Fawzia Kofi (Badakhshan) (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr. Ghulam Sarwar Fayiz (Badghis) (Secretary)

COMMITTEE NEWS

Meshrano Jirga

International Affairs Committee Discusses Transit Issues with Iran, Pakistan

Following concerns raised by some Senators in the Meshrano Jirga's (MJ) regarding ongoing delays in the transportation of goods to Afghanistan through Iran and Pakistan, the Upper House's International Affairs Committee discussed the transit issue with officials from Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Economy and Afghan chamber of Commerce.

The Afghanistan's business community was also invited to the meeting which was chaired by Mr. Mohammad Yunus Takhari (Takhar), deputy chairman of the Committee. Mr. Takhari expressed concerns over the delay of the trucks transporting goods to Afghanistan via Iran and Pakistan.

Minister of Commerce, Mr. Anwarulhaq Haq Ahadi agreed that there was a problem with the transit agreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan. "There are two different interpretations of the Transit Agreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan. We have our version and our Pakistani counterparts believe in their version," he said.

Mr. Ahadi informed the Senators that a delegation from Pakistan was expected in Kabul on 17 March to resolve the transit issue.

Wolesi Jirga

Defense and Territorial Integrity Committee Discusses Budget

Wolesi Jirga's (WJ) Defense and Territorial Affairs Committee met on 15 March to discuss the 1390 Budget. Committee Chairperson Ms. Shukria Barezai (Kabul) asked the committee advisors to prepare a comprehensive analysis of the budget allocation for the security sector and present it to the committee members. Ms. Barezai said it is important for the MPs to be adequately informed of the security departments' expenditure in 1389 and budget allocations for 1390 before debating on the National Budget. The members of the committee argued that the bulk of the 1390 Budget has been allocated to the security sector but there is very little transparency in how the funds are spent. The discussion is expected to continue in the next meeting.

Acronyms

ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
MJ	Meshrano Jirga
NA	National Assembly
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
US	United States of America
WJ	Wolesi Jirga