



JEMBUPDATE

Edition 009/E • 3 August 2005

Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Joint Electoral Management Body



A Week in the Life of the JEMB



Above left: From left, JEMB Commissioners Type, Taza, and Yari at a JEMB plenary session. Middle: JEMB Chairman Bismillah Bismill addresses journalists at a press conference. Right: Commissioner Ayubi attends a Small Grant Program Event in Kabul.

The acronym of the Joint Electoral Management Body oft-evoked. "In a decision taken by the JEMB..." "At a JEMB press conference on Wednesday..." "JEMB Commissioners spoke to political party agents..."

But what IS the JEMB? Who is the JEMB? And what is their role?

Following the signing of the Bonn Agreement in December 2001, a Transitional Authority was designated to lead Afghanistan until such time as a fully representative government could be elected through free and fair elections, which were to be held no later than two years from the date of convening the Emergency Loya Jirga.

In order to establish an effective and independent national body to advise the Government in all electoral matters and to cooperate with UNAMA in the preparation and administration of voter registration for the elections, President Karzai issued Decree no. 39 of 26 July 2003, which established the Interim Afghan Electoral Commission (IAEC).

The members of the IAEC were to recruit civic education and registration staff, advise the government on the preparation and issuance of electoral law, participate in a capacity-building programme, prepare for the election and perform other duties as specified by subsequent legislation relating to the voter registration process for the 2004 general elections.

In order to strengthen this body and enhance the effectiveness of the cooperation with UNAMA, President Karzai also issued Decree no. 40 of 26 July 2003 (subsequently amended by Decree no. 110 of 18 February 2004), which created the Joint Electoral Management Body. The JEMB now consists of 13 members: a Chairman, Deputy Chairman, seven Commissioners of the IAEC and four international electoral experts appointed by the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for Afghanistan. The Chief Electoral Officer of the JEMB Secretariat holds a seat as a non-voting member of the Body.

"The JEMB is a legal and administrative body given the full responsibility for the preparing, managing, convening and overseeing the 2004/05 general election process."

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The JEMB is a legal and administrative body tasked with the issuance and publication of regulations, procedures, instructions, notifications, and guidelines for the registration process. Decree no. 110 of 18 February 2004 further gave the JEMB full responsibility for preparing, managing, convening and overseeing the 2004 general elections. At the end of the transitional period, defined by the completion of the National Assembly elections, it is intended that the JEMB will dissolve and be replaced by the IAEC.

A 'typical' week

Each week, the JEMB formally meets three times each week – on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday afternoon - to discuss a number of agenda items that are presented by the Secretariat's Department Heads and compiled by the JEMB Support Unit. On the day of the meeting, the Commissioners are supplied with documents and other materials relevant to agenda items on the previous day in order to familiarize themselves with the topics of the next meeting. All meetings are held in both Dari and English with translators present. Special sessions may be called on alternate days when timely issues requiring urgent attention arise.

In a recent session, the JEMB decided to allow selected observer entities to attend their regular meetings. At the moment, one representative each from the EU, OSCE, ANFREL, FEFA and AIHRC have been invited to attend; the JEMB may decide to extend the invitation to other organizations at a later time. Observers may not participate in the meetings, but they do have a right to report on issues discussed at the JEMB meetings only in their formal reporting, subject to the Observer's Code of Conduct.

During the week of 16 - 21 July, the JEMB considered a number of issues concerning the establishment of the Electoral Media Commission, electoral employee and campaign finance regulations and provincial count modalities and locations. The Commissioners were briefed on the activities of the Post-Election Strategy Group, the current security situation, the registration process and the upcoming JEMB assessment missions.

The sessions resulted in a number of decisions: JEMB Decision No. 43 outlines the regulations on the Electoral Media Commission and the Mass Media, No. 44 establishes the Electoral Media Commission and supports the appointment of the Media Commissioners; No. 45 clarifies the regulations regarding electoral employment. Before decisions are made, the Commissioners painstakingly go through each article together for clarity and content, to discuss the finer points and their implications.

Sub-Committees

In addition to meetings thrice weekly, each Commissioner sits on one or more sub-committees. These groups, including Legal, Operational, Public Outreach, Security, External Relations and Administration/Human

Resources, meet as required to consider issues in-depth. Regulations, presentations and procedures are produced by the sub-committees which consist of JEMB Commissioners and members of relevant departments from within the Secretariat.

In preparation for an upcoming JEMB session, the Legal Sub-Committee convened to address the Regulation on Campaign Finance. Two working meetings later, a draft regulation was produced. The regulation was drafted by the Secretariat's Legal Support Department and discussed by the sub-Committee at length until a final version emerged. The sub-Committee then took the regulation to the JEMB to be presented by a sub-Committee member from the Secretariat to the other members of the Commission. Following intense scrutiny and deliberation, the JEMB may choose to ratify the decision or return it to the sub-Committee for modifications. When all members of the Commission are satisfied with the regulation, it will be signed, thereby becoming official protocol and having the force of law. "The current Campaign Finance Regulation was drafted by the Legal Sub-Committee, presented to the JEMB and then sent back to the sub-committee for reworking," said Legal Sub-Committee member and JEMB Commissioner Rebecca Cox.

Electoral Law gives the JEMB the power to issue regulations and decisions as necessary to implement the law. On that basis, JEMB Decisions and Regulations, within the scope of the JEMB's authority, have the force of law.

Outside the JEMB

In addition to regular plenary sessions and semi-regular sub-Committee meetings, the JEMB Commissioners have a long list of extra-curricular activities filling their weekly schedules. In the last few weeks, the Commissioners have visited Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat, Ghazni, Panjshir, Parwan and Bamyán to speak with women's groups, government officials, members of the press, and gatherings of voters to address issues related to the upcoming elections such as candidate nomination, voter registration and the campaign period. They have been invited to and attended Small Grants Program-sponsored events, and conferences and seminars sponsored by local and international organizations. Last week, Commissioner Najla Ayubi spoke to a gathering of women in Parwan province. Earlier this summer, JEMB Deputy Chairman Ayub Assil traveled to London, England to observe national elections there. Commissioner Ayubi traveled to Tokyo, Japan by the invitation of Japan's Parliament. Observation and study tours are being planned for the month of August to Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and other locations.

The Commissioners participate regularly in the fortnightly Political Parties Consultative Forum, weekly press conferences, Training Department simulations and receptions. It is all par for the course during a 'typical' week at the JEMB. ■

Commissioner Mastora Stanikzai

Mastora Stanikzai



Mastora Stanikzai is an educator by trade. After over 28 years in pedagogy, JEMB Commissioner Stanikzai has parlayed her teaching skills into civic and voter education on behalf of the JEMB.

Born in Imail Khail village in Logar province and raised in an intellectual household, Ms. Stanikzai was exposed to the civil service at a young age - her father was a senator. He moved the family to Kabul and then to Herat, where she graduated from high school and passed her entry exams to attend Kabul University.

Ms. Stanikzai completed her studies in management and observation in the Faculty of Education in 1975. Soon after graduation, she accepted a position as a teacher at Surya High School in Kabul. Rapidly rising in the ranks of the school system, she joined the faculty of Ariana High School a few years later as Deputy Principal. Building on this experience, Ms. Stanikzai accepted the position of Principal at Mahmood Hotaki High School, where she oversaw the administration of programs for 330 students and 11 teachers. Three years later, she joined the Ministry of Education.

Following intense fighting in the capital and continuing destabilization in the country, Ms. Stanikzai and her family decided to leave Afghanistan. In 1373/1994, the family applied for passports and tourist visas to Iran under the pretext of religious pilgrimage.

"But we did not return," Ms. Stanikzai said. "I became a refugee in Iran along with my family. We stayed in Iran for ten years."

During this time, Ms. Stanikzai opened a two-tiered school for Afghan refugees in Tehran. From early morning until mid-afternoon, she taught children from the first to the ninth class to read and write; in the late afternoon and early evening, she provided adult education courses in literacy, first aid, tailoring, carpet weaving and family guidance.

Her service to the refugee community did not go unnoticed. In 2003, Ms. Stanikzai was one of seven selected out of 300 candidates to be nominated to represent the Afghan refugee community of Iran as a delegate to the Constitutional Loya Jirga (CLJ). She accepted the nomination and returned to Kabul.

As a delegate, Ms. Stanikzai said, her objective at the CLJ was clear. "I wanted to emphasize human and women's rights, peace

and stability," she said. "I was giving my views and inputs directly and freely in CLJ and its smaller working groups. I engaged in debate very freely and impartially."

After settling into Kabul, Ms. Stanikzai determined that the situation had greatly improved and sent for her family to return and join her in Kabul.

"I love my own country more than any other," she said. "I purposely chose Iran because it was somewhere very close and I could come back again very easily."

While her immediate family returned with her, some of Ms. Stanikzai's family remain abroad - in France, the U.S., Germany and Russia.

Her participation in the emergence of the transitional state did not end there. As a member of the "Peacemakers and Representatives of the People" *shura*, Ms. Stanikzai served as an observer during the polling and counting process for the 2004 Presidential Election.

"I believe that elections are the basis of democracy," she said. "They will help bring peace and stability. Parliament is a bridge between the people and the government that make the wishes of the people known."

"One skill that an orator should have is to speak in the language of the people. I've worked in education for 28 years, and people in this country listen to teachers."

In late 2004, Ms. Stanikzai was appointed by Presidential Decree to the Independent Election Commission of the JEMB. In addition to the regularly scheduled activities of the JEMB Commissioners, she has made a number of visits to the provincial centers, including Ghazni, Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat to educate voters about their rights and responsibilities.

"One skill that an orator should have is to speak in the language of the people," Ms. Stanikzai said. "I've worked in education for 28 years, and people in this country listen to teachers."

In numerous media interviews and public appearances, Ms. Stanikzai listens and responds in kind. "I respond according to questions, the issues raised by people," she said. "My goal is to leave the floor open to questions, without limits. And to provide impartial and thorough answers." Gauging the response of her audiences, it would appear that Ms. Stanikzai has done just that. ■

News in Brief...

- **JEMB Decisions:** The JEMB issued a decision prohibiting anyone from conducting exit polls on polling day and approved three additional ballot counting locations.
- **Media Commission:** The Media Commission established by the JEMB held its first meetings this week. The Commission elected John Matisonn as its Chairman.
- **Voter Registration:** After the conclusion of the Voter Registration Update Period last week, the retrieval of registration materials and data entry of all information are on-going.
- **Polling and Counting:** Preparation for polling and counting continues. The first shipment of ballot materials arrived in Kabul and distribution to the regions will begin next week. The Training Unit is finalizing its plan for training all polling and counting staff.
- **Observation:** The first Observer Forums for international and national observer groups were held last week. So far, 237 entities have been accredited for observation.
- **Capacity Building:** The second phase of capacity building training began in the regions last week. The programme aims to train 200 staff across the country on all aspects of the electoral process.

Meet the Press...

PRESS RELEASE • 29 JULY 2005 BALLOT PAPERS BEGIN ARRIVING ON ONE OF WORLD'S LARGEST AIRCRAFT

Plans for Afghanistan's Wolesi Jirga and Provincial Council Elections moved a step closer Friday with the arrival of the first batch of ballot papers from London on an Antonov AN 124 plane.

The Antonov, one of the world's largest aircraft, touched down at Kabul International Airport just after 7am carrying the first shipment of the millions of ballot papers needed for the nationwide polls on September 18th.

"The arrival of these ballot papers marks an important milestone in our plans to hold the first Wolesi Jirga and Provincial Council elections. It heralds the start of the huge logistical challenge that we face in transporting these ballot papers safely and securely across the whole of Afghanistan," said Joint Electoral Management Body Chairman Bissmillah Bissmil.

The 40 million ballot papers, weighing over 1,000 tonnes, are being printed in the UK and Austria by the only two printing houses that were capable of printing the required volume in the required timeframe.

They will be transported on to polling stations in time for the elections by air and road, and on to more remote locations on donkeys.

Mr Bissmill added: "We are confident that our meticulous planning will pay off, ensuring that we are able to deliver these ballot papers to every district of Afghanistan in time for polling day on September 18, so that all Afghans will have their voice heard in deciding the future of our country."

National Assembly Elections: Financial Status as of: 18 July 2005	
Received (funds transferred to UNDP)	
DONOR	AMOUNT USD
USA	12,000,000
Greece committed in 2004 transferred in 2005	678,428
Switzerland committed in 2004 for 2005	1,754,386
Netherlands (carry over from the Constitutional Loya Jirga)	844,712
Australia (exchange gains from 2004)	35,190
New Zealand (exchange gains from 2004)	48,616
Netherlands	5,284,015
UK	7,786,691
Denmark	1,996,531
New Zealand	729,927
Switzerland	1,000,000
Australia	1,550,388
Norway 1	793,650
Italy	4,819,277
Canada	6,349,206
Finland	2,409,638
EC	8,202,654
Sweden	1,277,139
Republic of Korea	500,000
Ireland	965,018
Total received to date	59,025,464
Total committed	11,110,000
Pledged	
DONOR	AMOUNT (USD)
Total pledged	36,150,000
Total Project Budget	148,665,087
Effective Carry Over from 2004	14,976,315
Total Received 2005	59,025,464
Total Committed (agreement signed)	11,110,000
UNFUNDED	63,553,308

For further information about the JEMB Update please contact: Jiffer Bourguignon at jifferb@unops.org.af or visit our website www.jemb.org.

Photography: Marie Frechon and Jiffer Bourguignon /JEMBS