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## Mujaddedi's appointment termed undemocratic

By Muhammad Hassan Khetab & Mohammad Jawad Sharifzada

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KABUL - Participants of the traditional Loya Jirga and some political analysts on Wednesday said the appointment of Sibghatullah Mujaddedi as chairman of the jirga was against democratic norms.

Senator Sibghatullah Mujaddedi, also a former president, was as chairman of the Loya Jirga and Advisor to President on Islamic Affairs Naimatullah Shahrani as first deputy chairman.

Presidential Advisor on Tribal Affairs Mohammad Arif Noorzai was appointed as second deputy chairman, with First Deputy Chairman of Meshrano Jirga Mohammad Alam Yazidyar and Hayatullah Belaghi chosen as secretaries.

Safia Siddiqui was named spokeswoman for the four-day jirga. The deputy chairmen, secretaries and spokesperson were proposed by Mujaddedi and approved by participants.

A Kabul University teacher, Najib Mahmood, believed jirga board members should have been selected through a ballot. He said the appointments showed the government wanted to influence participants of the assembly.

Najib Mahmood, who is participating in the jirga as a guest, said most of the board members had previously worked in different governmental positions.

"The government selected individuals of its choice to avoid hostile decisions."

Political analyst, Mohammad Amin Wakman, claimed selection of board members was pre-planned.

Another analyst, Mohammad Yunus Fakoor, said elections were needed for the appointment of board members and everyone should have been given the right to participate in the voting.

However, the spokeswoman for the Jirga Preparatory Commission said the early selection of board member was aimed at preventing a waste of time.

Herat provincial council chief, Dr. Abdul Zahir Faiz Zada, said the board members were democratically appointed. He added participants of the two-session jirga had been divided into 40 working committees.

Women participants of the jirga said a female should have been picked as one of the deputy chairmen.

"Women are always deprived of high positions at such forums," alleged Zuhra Ahmadzai, Logar women affairs director. She said as many as 500 women were attending the event.