

The second meeting between Pakistan Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and Leader of the Opposition Khursheed Shah to finalize the name of the caretaker premier ended inconclusively today as they failed to agree on a candidate for the post, according to media reports.

The current government led by Abbasi's Pakistan Muslim League, Nawaz (PML-N) is set to end its five-year term on May 31. The general election is expected to be held in the last week of July.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) yesterday forwarded a report to President Mamnoon Hussain, suggesting that he could choose either July 25 or July 27 as the day of the polls.



AFP/File Photo. Pakistan Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi.

The caretaker prime minister will lead the interim set-up and attend to day-to-day matters of governance.

Abbasi and Shah met earlier on May 18 but the that too remained inconclusive as both sides failed to finalize a candidate before Abbasi left for Turkey.

Another meeting will be held with Prime Minister Abbasi tomorrow or on Thursday after to finalize the caretaker premier, Shah, who is from the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) told the media after the meeting, which took place at the PM House.

Shah said no consensus could be reached during the meeting.

"The prime minister said that the names forwarded by our side are good, but so are the names forwarded by their side," Shah said.

"The government has not insisted upon any name as yet," Shah was quoted as saying by Dawn newspaper.

“We would try to finalize a name,” he said.

“If the matter is not settled in tomorrow’s meeting, the decision may be taken to a parliamentary committee,” Shah said, explaining that both sides will suggest two names each to the parliamentary committee which will then decide the matter.

If the committee also fails to come to a decision, the matter will be referred to the ECP, which will then have the prerogative to choose any one of the six nominated candidates.

The PML-N and the PPP had reached an understanding to delay announcing the names of the caretaker set-up problems and keep their discussions under wraps as long as possible to avoid unnecessary debate in the media.

The PPP and the PML-N have repeatedly expressed the desire that they want to announce the name of the caretaker prime minister with consensus and do not want to see the matter getting referred to the ECP.

Ousted former prime minister and PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif is not in favor of appointing a retired justice or bureaucrat as the caretaker premier, and hence Prime Minister Abbasi asked for more time on the matter, Geo TV reported.

Although the government and opposition remain tight-lipped about the matter, names of Maleeha Lodhi, Tassaduq Hussain Jilani and Ishrat Hussain have been doing the rounds as candidates expected to be elevated to the slot of the caretaker Prime Minister, the Express Tribune reported.

Shah has hinted at getting elevated a ‘female PM’, giving rise to speculation that the name of Lodhi, Pakistan’s top diplomat at the United Nations, may have been agreed upon.

Another female candidate whose name is under consideration is that of a former governor of the State Bank of Pakistan Shamshad Akhtar, the report said.

The government had proposed names of former secretary of Election Commission of Pakistan Ishtiaq Ahmad Khan and former Chief Justices of Pakistan Jawad S Khawaja and Anwar Zaheer Jamali, it said.

PTI

Sania Ehsan

The Kootneeti Team - South Asia Monitor

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