

Pakistan's coalition government will last full term: partners

The major partners in Pakistan's ruling coalition Sunday reaffirmed they would stick together for the government to continue for five years, and said they would work for democracy and for the well being of the people.

'This government will work for five years and will work only for people's welfare,' Nawaz Sharif, former prime minister and head of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), said at a press conference with Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) chief Asif Ali Zardari.

Zardari said all members of the coalition had consensus on issues of national importance. He said though the ministers in the cabinet will be from different coalition parties, they would work in harmony with one another and under the leadership of Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani.

Before addressing the press, both leaders held a one-on-one meeting at Sharif's farmhouse, some 20 kilometres from Lahore. This was their first meeting after the prime minister took oath of office last week.

Replying to a query, Zardari said some of the names for the cabinet were finalized and sent to the cabinet division. He did not give the names, saying they were published in some newspapers.

A PPP leader said Shah Mahmood Qureshi would be foreign minister while Sherry Rehman will be information minister.

The other names from the PPP include Syed Khursheed Shah, Najamuddin Khan, Raja Pervez Ashraf, Senator Farooq Naek, Qamar Zaman Kaira, Nazar Mohammad Gondal, Chaudhry Ahmed Mukhtar and Mir Hamayon Aziz Kurd.

Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan from the PML-N will be the senior federal minister while Senator Ishaq Dar, Ahsan Iqbal, Khawaja Saad Rafiq, Khawaja Asif, Shahid Khakhan Abbasi, Sardar Mehtab Abbasi, Tahmina Daultana and Rana Tanveer Ahmed will take oath as federal ministers.

The ministers from Awami National Party (ANP) will be Ghulam Ahmed Bilour and Khwaja Mohammad Khan Hoti, from JUI (F) it will be Rehmatullah Kakar and from FATA Hameedullah Jan Afridi will be a federal minister.

The PML-N's Ishaq Dar, who is tipped to become finance minister, told the press conference that it was because of the wrong policies of the previous government that several major budgetary targets were not met during the current financial year.

'The budget warrants special measures and a new strategy to remove various economic distortions that were created by former rulers,' he said, adding the trade deficit had increased to more than \$12.5 billion in the first eight months of the financial year.

Similarly, he said, the fiscal deficit target that was set at four percent of the GDP could not be met. Food inflation had increased continuously and needed to be brought down immediately.

Dar said the incoming government would be inheriting a ruined economy and it would take time to

set things right. He said he had informed the prime minister about various measures required for improving the state of economy.

'I have started consulting the officials concerned to firm up a new economic policy to be pursued by the new government during the next five years,' Dar remarked.

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