

Pakistan's ruling coalition on verge of collapse

The ruling coalition of Pakistan has been pushed to the brink of collapse in the wake of a serious standoff between the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) on the reinstatement of deposed judges, the media reported Wednesday.

The News quoted an unnamed minister, who belongs to the PML-N - a junior partner of the coalition - as saying that his party was left with no option but to quit the cabinet.

'We have been pushed to the wall where we have no alternative but walk out of the cabinet,' the minister told the newspaper.

PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif departed for Dubai Tuesday to make a last-ditch effort to save the coalition after his representatives failed to convince PPP co-chairman Asif Zardari to agree to the reinstatement of the deposed judges.

'However, Sharif's mission has few chances of meeting with success,' The News said. 'He is going to finally convey to Zardari that it would be impossible for him to keep his nominees in the cabinet if the dismissed judges did not return as committed by both the parties in the Murree Declaration (signed in March). He will dilate on the massive loss of face for renegeing on the pledge.'

But the newspaper said that the PML-N would not sever cooperation with the PPP at all levels. 'It will assure the PPP that despite walking out from the cabinet, the PML-N would continue to support the government so that it might not cave in.'

'But the PML-N's decision will herald problems for it as well, as the governments in Sindh, the NWFP and Balochistan in which the PML-N has no share will snub any violent movement of the lawyers' community to protest the non-restoration of the deposed judges by the appointed deadline of April 30,' the newspaper predicted.

What the PML-N's policy and attitude of its administration in the Punjab to any such agitation will be is the question in many minds. If the PML-N government chooses to be a silent spectator to any such agitation, it will run into trouble for failing to maintain law and order.

As per its policy and public commitment, the PML-N is required to be part of the lawyers' movement. But naturally it would be extremely difficult and implausible for it to do so because it will have to behave as a government does, said the newspaper.

'We will decide whether or not our ministers in the PML-N-led Punjab cabinet would continue if the PML-N shows extreme reaction,' a PPP leader said.

The PPP ministers in Punjab have already amassed a bundle of complaints, saying that they were not being accommodated by the PML-N, particularly in transfers and postings of senior police and other officials in districts.

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