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PML-N Steps Aside to Grant JUI-F Minority Seat in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly

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In a rare display of behind-the-scenes compromise, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) have reached a mutual agreement on the allocation of a minority seat in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) Assembly, avoiding what was previously planned to be a coin toss to determine the winner.

The decision came after discussions between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif of the PML-N and JUI-F leader Maulana Fazlur Rehman. According to party representatives, the deal was made to prevent further controversy surrounding alleged electoral manipulation tactics such

as vote-buying and backroom deals. Despite having a stronger presence in the provincial opposition, the PML-N yielded the seat to JUI-F, citing a need for “clean politics” and unopposed procedural conduct.

Amir Muqam, a senior PML-N figure, stated, *“Despite being the largest opposition party in the K-P, the PML-N has made this sacrifice to allow unopposed elections, to eliminate allegations of vote-buying and horse-trading.”* The move signals the party’s attempt to position itself as a stabilizing force amid ongoing questions of legitimacy in Pakistan’s political process.

This development follows an official order released by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), which had initially withdrawn one women’s seat and one minority seat from the JUI-F. Following adjustments, both the PML-N and JUI-F now hold 17 seats each in the K-P Assembly. That includes 9 seats designated for women and 1 for minority representation for both parties.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Parliamentarians (PTI-P) and the Awami National Party (ANP) also filed petitions related to the allocation of reserved seats, prompting the ECP’s intervention. However, the spotlight remained on the PML-N and JUI-F due to the closely contested minority seat, which nearly led to a random coin toss, a process critics say reduces the seriousness of democratic representation.

While this instance of cooperation might be hailed by some as political maturity, others view it as a calculated move. The ruling coalition, led by the current federal administration, has faced increasing scrutiny for backdoor deals and attempts to influence the political makeup of provincial governments. Detractors argue that this latest decision is less about transparency and more about strategic positioning to maintain influence in an unstable legislative environment.

For now, the JUI-F will take the minority seat uncontested, avoiding a scenario that would have raised further questions about the democratic legitimacy of the reserved seat allocation process. Whether this gesture strengthens or weakens the credibility of the current political leadership remains a question of perspective.