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## Ayub demands immediate announcement of new CJP amid extension rumours

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Opposition leader in National Assembly and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Secretary General, Omar Ayub Khan, has called on the government to immediately announce the name of the new chief justice, replacing CJP Qazi Faez Isa, amid speculations of a possible tenure extension.

Addressing the National Assembly on Monday, Ayub stressed that the government should promptly reveal the new chief justice's name in the current circumstances. He warned of strong protests if any legislation on this matter is introduced. Ayub demanded that the law minister clarify the situation regarding the appointment of the Chief Justice of Pakistan. In response, Federal Minister for Law, Azam Nazeer Tarar, provided an explanation to the assembly. Minister Tarar stated that, under the existing Constitution and laws, a senior judge from the high courts could be appointed as chief justice by the Judicial Commission and Parliamentary Committee. He

noted that a judge from the Lahore High Court, ranked fifth in seniority, had been appointed Chief Justice by the Judicial Commission. According to Tarar, the 18th Amendment mandates that the most senior judge be appointed as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. “The matter of appointing the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court can only proceed in accordance with the Constitution,” he said. Omar Ayub also thanked Speaker Ayaz Sadiq for issuing production orders for Haji Imtiaz Chaudhry, allowing him to attend the session. “This is a commendable tradition, and I want to praise Ayaz Sadiq for it,” Ayub remarked. The opposition leader condemned the recent terrorist activities in Punjab’s Kacha area and called for the dismissal of the Punjab Inspector General of Police. Ayub also announced that the PTI would hold a grand public rally on September 8, regardless of the circumstances. Sources in the ruling coalition had earlier revealed that some crucial legislation is likely to be passed by the PML-N government with the support of its allies in the current sessions. On Thursday, following the Shehbaz-Bilawal meeting, the sources had revealed that the government is bringing some important legislation Monday onwards. However, without sharing details about it, it was said that the PPP was taken into confidence for its support in parliament. The sources said that the ruling coalition is busy contemplating that the retirement age of all superior courts’ judges should be extended by two years to decrease the budget of pensions. The Shehbaz-Bilawal meeting had also come amid reports that the government was

envisaging constitutional amendments to extend Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa's tenure. They said that the legislation will not be CJP-specific but changes regarding the retirement age will be introduced as an "economic necessity" and that will ultimately have an impact on many, including judges, among others. A member of the ruling coalition, however, differed from the information, saying it's "not possible" as any such thing "requires constitutional amendment".

The comment stems from the fact that the government currently doesn't have the required number in the National Assembly to amend the Constitution. The situation had changed after the membership of 23 MNAs elected on reserved seats was suspended. They were elected on reserved seats after the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had refused to give them to the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) and distributed among other parties. The PTI, which is sitting in the parliament under SIC banner, had taken the matter to the Supreme Court, which declared through a majority judgment on July 12 that PTI was a parliamentary party and entitled to get reserved seats. Since the members of the ruling coalition are mostly tight-lipped about the upcoming legislative business, the capital was rife with all kinds of speculations ranging from CJP's extension to ECP giving back seats to the ruling coalition as the newly-passed election law bars it from giving the seats to PTI-SIC. Despite some disagreeing with the rumors making rounds, no one categorically denied if things were not moving in this direction. "No such thing in my knowledge," was the usual

response by members of the ruling party when asked to comment on the situation.