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Karzai to support Sayyaf as presidential candidate

August 14, 2013

President Hamid Karzai has recommended Abdul Rab Rassoul Sayyaf, a powerful ex-jihadi leader, to be declared a candidate in the presidential election slated for April 5.

Karzai named his choice during a meeting with political party leaders, including opposition, and former jihadi leaders at the Presidential Palace last week, Syed Fazl Sancharaki, the National Coalition Party spokesman, told a local media outlet.

Sayyaf, the Dawat-i-Islami party chief, Mohammad Qasim Fahim, first vice-president, Atta Mohammad Noor, the governor of Balkh, and Ismail Khan, the water and energy minister, were present at the meeting chaired by Karzai, he said.

The president urged the meeting participants to extend their support for Sayyaf, all, except Noor, endorsed the call, he said.

Mohammad Daud Kalkani, a leader of the Sayyaf party, also confirmed the meeting, but denied Sayyaf had been discussed.

He said Sayyaf only talked about a grand meeting his party planned to organise in Kabul on how to forge a national consensus ahead of the elections.

Sayyaf will present his plan at the two-week long gathering aimed at achieving a national consensus on the elections, the lawmaker from Kabul told Pajhwok Afghan News.

President Karzai and all political parties, including the National Coalition of Afghanistan, and influential figures from across the country had been invited to attend the meeting, he said.

All those invited had accepted the invitation and the decision to hold the gathering was final, he said.

A month back, several political leaders, who met at the residence of Qasim Fahim in Kabul, announced the candidacy of Sayyaf in the presidential fray.

That meeting was attended by Sayyaf, Fahim, Ismail Khan, the national coalition leader Abdullah Abdullah, former speaker Yonus Qanoni and other jihadi leaders.