

JUI-F unveils own draft but remains flexible

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ISLAMABAD:

The JUI-F has presented its draft regarding constitutional amendments before a special committee of the National Assembly and proposed to leave a way open for altering the appointment, re-appointment or extension of the services chiefs' tenures if the government decides to give constitutional cover to the same in its 26th constitutional amendment bill. The JUI-F draft also proposes, among other things, to constitute a constitutional bench within the Supreme Court instead of creating a separate Federal Constitutional Court (FCC); repeal 19th constitutional amendment; end riba (interest) at state level; and ensures that copy of a bill laid in either of house of parliament shall immediately be forwarded to the Islamic Ideology Council. The JUI-F's proposals have come on the heels of a complete draft by the PPP and an incomplete one by the ruling PML-N as it has so far only shared judiciary-related amendments before the committee. All the three parties have so far given different suggestions regarding constitutional court as the PML-N wants it at the federal level only, the PPP proposes to have it at both the federal and provincial levels while the JUI-F only wishes to establish a constitutional bench in the Supreme Court. Following the proposals of the three major parties, the committee

headed by PPP's Khursheed Shah decided on Saturday to constitute a sub-committee and tasked it to deliberate on the proposed drafts submitted so far and prepare a working paper, which should be presented before the committee on Monday. The committee members said that the PTI was also expected to soon present its proposed draft before the committee. Though the extension in the tenure of services chiefs, especially of chief of army staff, has remained a sensitive subject in Pakistan, the JUI-F through its 24-point draft has proposed an amendment in Article 243 of the Constitution by adding clause 5 to it. The proposed clause states: "The Appointment, re-appointment, extension in service, removal as services chief's shall be in accordance with the laws relating to Armed Forces, but once appointed, re-appointed or an extension in service is made, the same shall not be altered unless such question is placed before a special committee of both the houses with equal strength having regard of each parliamentary party; duly constituted by the chairman Senate and the speaker of the National Assembly and the said committee suggests so to the President of Pakistan." When approached, JUI-F leader Kamran Murtaza said the party has responded to the amendment proposed by the government in the original draft, which the government failed to table last time?after it failed to persuade JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman to direct his party to vote for the government-proposed amendments. Murtaza while talking to The Express Tribune said the JUI-F has just tried to dilute the proposal and proposed a way to leave some space for reopening the matter.

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