

## Government to table constitutional amendment in Senate tomorrow

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The ruling coalition has decided to present the 26th Constitutional Amendment in the Senate tomorrow, as confirmed by Senator Irfan Siddiqui, the parliamentary leader of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) on Thursday. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif hosted a luncheon in honour of the government's senators, where the upcoming amendment was discussed. Speaking to the media after the luncheon, Senator Siddiqui stated, "The constitutional amendment will be brought to the Senate tomorrow." He also mentioned that the prime minister briefed the senators on conversations held with leadership from other parties regarding the amendment. Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar provided an in-depth briefing on the draft of the proposed constitutional amendment. In addition, a meeting of the federal cabinet has been called tomorrow, during which the 26th Amendment is expected to be approved. Following cabinet approval, the amendment will be presented in both the Senate and the National Assembly. Notably, PML-N and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) have withdrawn their support for the establishment of federal constitutional court. According to sources, a special parliamentary committee meeting chaired by Khursheed Shah discussed the draft of the 26th Amendment. It has

been agreed among coalition parties and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) to drop the proposal for constitutional courts and instead focus on forming constitutional benches. Meanwhile, the draft for 26th Constitutional Amendment is entering its final stage, with several key proposals coming to light, according to sources. The draft suggests the establishment of a 5 or 9-member constitutional bench in the Supreme Court, while provincial benches would not be formed. The judicial commission would be responsible for forming the constitutional bench and appointing its head, with the Chief Justice of Pakistan no longer having the authority to make changes to the bench. One significant proposal includes setting a term limit for the constitutional bench. Additionally, the draft seeks to curtail the Supreme Court's suo motu powers. Another major recommendation proposes that the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court should be appointed from the three most senior judges. The process for appointing the Chief Election Commissioner is also set to be changed. If the Prime Minister and the Opposition Leader fail to agree on a candidate, a parliamentary committee would make the appointment. The draft further calls for the complete restoration of the 18th Constitutional Amendment and the abolition of the 19th Amendment. Under the proposed changes to Article 63A, a vote cast in line with party policy would be counted. Amendments to Article 48 are also part of the draft. Another notable proposal states that any advice sent to the President by the Prime Minister and federal cabinet cannot be challenged. Furthermore, no institution, court, or authority would have the power to investigate or act on the advice given to the President.

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