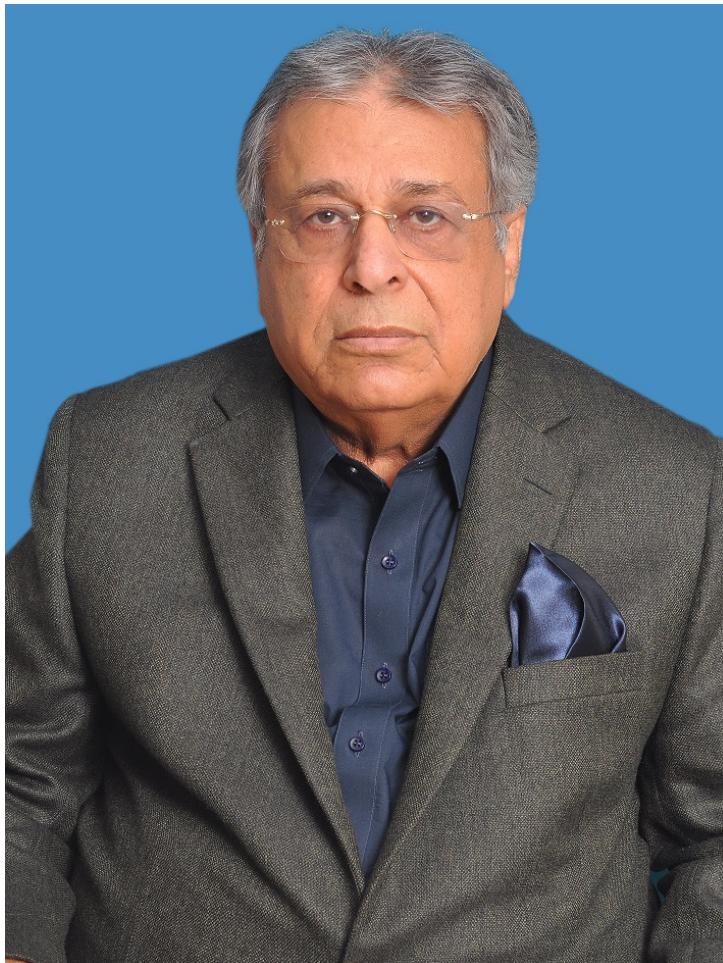


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BNP Senator Qasim Ronjo steps down after voting against party line



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Senator Qasim Ronjo, a dissident member of the Balochistan National Party (BNP) Mengal, has resigned from his position in the Senate. Sources indicate that Ronjo submitted his resignation to the Senate Secretariat, following his dissent from the party's policy by voting in favor of the 26th Constitutional Amendment. Yesterday, Balochistan National Party-Mengal (BNP-M) chief Akhtar Mengal instructed the party's two senators to resign immediately after they voted in favor of the 26th Constitutional Amendment in the Senate on Sunday. Mengal directed Senator Naseema Ehsan and Senator Qasim Ronjho to submit their resignations, warning that if they fail to do so by tomorrow, they would be expelled from the party. The two BNP-M senators had supported the government's amendment, which passed with a two-thirds majority, gaining 65 votes. Senator Ehsan arrived in the Senate wearing a face mask, while Ronjho was brought in a wheelchair. Although efforts were made to seat them with government members, they returned to the opposition benches. Earlier at the Parliament House, Mengal said his party has lost contact with its senators. "We are here to find our senators. We've checked their lodges, but they are not there," he stated. The comments came as Pakistan's federal cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, approved the draft of the 26th constitutional amendment. Additionally, JUI-F leader Maulana Fazlur Rehman assured the government of his party's support for the amendment. Speaking to the media outside the Parliament House after session, Mengal stated, "What you have

witnessed today is a disgraceful joke, played with the country's parliament and constitution." He questioned the motive behind the amendments, asking, "Which forces are being appeased by these changes? Will these amendments improve Pakistan's economic situation? Will they address the longstanding injustices faced by the smaller provinces?" Mengal also accused political parties and intelligence agencies of working tirelessly to safeguard their own political interests. "Day and night efforts were made to save their politics," he remarked. The BNP leader highlighted his party's commitment to political engagement within the framework of the constitution but expressed frustration over being marginalised, leading him to resign from his seat. However, he added, "I never closed the doors of communication." Mengal alleged that BNP senators were pressured regarding the amendments and revealed that the husband of one of their female senators had been abducted. "Was the 1973 Constitution created by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto for this?" he questioned.