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Senate Committee approves Bill to increase Supreme Court

Judges



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ISLAMABAD:

The Senate Standing Committee on Justice has approved a bill proposing an increase in the number of judges in the Supreme Court from 17 to 25. The bill managed to get approved despite opposition from the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI). During a committee meeting chaired by Senator Farooq H. Naek, the bill was presented by Senator Abdul Qadir. He argued that a rise in population and crime rates has led to an overwhelming backlog of cases, often taking decades to resolve. Qadir emphasised that the number of Supreme Court judges remains the same as it was in the 1990s, despite a substantial increase in caseloads. Senator Kamran Murtaza pointed out that seats in the high courts remain vacant and noted that Supreme Court proceedings were slow until October 25, although recently the court has been hearing more than 30 cases per day. However, Senator Hamid Khan opposed the bill, comparing Pakistan's Supreme Court to India's, where the number of judges stands at 34. Khan attributed delays in cases to internal conflicts within the court and argued against increasing the number of judges, suggesting that the judiciary itself should be consulted on the matter. Senator Anusha Rahman raised financial concerns, questioning why utility bills for Supreme Court judges are covered by the government and why pensions continue to be paid to retired judges. Khan further contended

that the 26th Amendment weakened the judiciary, suggesting that increasing the number of judges could be perceived as an attempt by the government to influence the judiciary. Senator Kamran Murtaza of JUI expressed similar concerns, saying the government might use the increased majority in the judiciary to sway decisions. Despite these objections, the committee passed the bill. The approved proposal stipulates a total of 25 Supreme Court judges, including one Chief Justice.