

'Islamic State very much present in Pakistan'

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Islamabad: The Islamic State (IS) is very much present in Pakistan, said a leading daily, contradicting official claims that the group has no presence in the country.

An editorial in The Nation said that in the wake of the horrific Paris terror attacks, the world has been forced to confront the IS question: how dangerous is it, how wide is its influence, and can it be stopped.

The Foreign Office has ruled out the presence of IS in the country, saying no one could be allowed to maintain links with the terrorist group.

Foreign Secretary Aizaz Ahmed Chaudhry's views are acceptable and carry the tone that the situation demands.

"As a statement of fact, the (comment) is not only incorrect but misleading and ultimately harmful," said the editorial.

It added: "The Islamic State is present in Pakistan; there can be no doubt about this."

The Safoora Goth attack in Karachi which killed 35 people is believed to have been carried out by local operatives of the IS.

The link between the attack and the group has been acknowledged by both the government and military personnel.

The daily said that much more tangible evidence of the group's presence had been found.

"Wall chalking bearing the group's name (has) appeared in Peshawar and nearby cities, propaganda pamphlets - in Pashto and Dari - with the group's logo have been found in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and recruiters for the group have been arrested in Lahore.

"The group may not be as influential as it is in other countries like Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Libya, and it may be way down in the pecking order of militants in Pakistan, but it is present - denial will only lead to a false sense of security," it added.

The editorial went on to say that creating a false sense of security seems to be the government's policy regarding the group.

"Downplaying the IS threat has been the default response of the government to any news about the group's activities in Pakistan, whatever the merit or veracity of the report.

"...By denying IS' presence in Pakistan the government is compromising vigilance.

"The law enforcement, the government, the secure agencies and even the common man will keep a lookout for other threats, believing the Islamic State is a distant menace, allowing the group to extend even further."

The daily said: "Now is the time to be vigilant."

- IANS