

## **15 dead as suicide blast rocks Pakistan's Balochistan province**

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At least 15 people, including 8 soldiers, were killed and 40 others injured after a suicide bomber targetted an army truck in Pakistan's southwest Balochistan province Saturday night. The incident took place when the truck was passing through Quetta's Pishin bus stop.

### **Soldiers and volunteers remove a victim after the blast in Quetta. (Image Source: AFP)**

The injured were immediately rushed to Quetta Civil Hospital. Balochistan Home Minister Sarfaraz Bugti said: "We can now confirm that 15 people have died in the explosion today. At least 32 others are wounded."

"A man riding a motorbike came close to the army truck and blew himself up," a senior official of the Bomb Disposal Squad told Pakistan site Dawn. It also reported that around 25-30 kilograms of explosives were used in the suicide attack. The explosion was so loud that its sound was heard across the city.

The intensity of the explosion was such that even the three fire tenders which immediately reached the spot could not control it in time. The site of the explosion is in close proximity to the Balochistan Assembly, Quetta Law College, a private hospital and many offices.

The public relations department of the Pakistan military said that 10 security officials were injured in the attack. "Incendiary explosive was used in the blast due to which nearby vehicles caught fire," the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) reported. It added that the terrorists had used "incendiary explosives" due to which many vehicles in the affected area also caught fire.

No terror outfit has so far claimed responsibility for the attack. Chinese news agency Xinhua reported that two cars, four rickshaws and two motorbikes caught fire in the explosion. The blast site is being investigated by security personnel and an emergency has been declared in the city following the blast.

"It was an attempt to mar Independence Day festivity in the city," Dawn quoted the Chief of Army Staff Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa as saying. He also added that the army's resolve won't succumb to any challenge.

The interior minister will be reviewing the security situation in Quetta during his visit to the blast hit area and would later brief the prime minister about the same, according to a statement made by the Prime Minister House.

Sources told Dawn that a threat alert had already been issued two weeks ago which stated that an explosive-laden vehicle had entered Quetta and there was a possibility of a blast near a crowded place or a market. Since the Independence Day is round the corner, security arrangements had already been beefed up in the area.

Similar incidents have been taking place in the country since the last few months. In June, at least 14 people were killed and 19 others injured after a suicide blast hit the Shuhada Chowk in Quetta's Gulistan Road area. Three security officials were injured in another attack in Johan area of Kalat earlier in June.

In the Jiwani area of Gwadar district, two navy sailors had lost their lives and at least three were left wounded after their vehicle was attacked in June, just two days after the Kalat blast.

Meanwhile Pakistan President Mamnoon Hussain has condemned the Quetta suicide attack.

- With Inputs from IANS and Dawn.com