

Multiple attacks kill 50 in Pakistan



Pakistani residents gather along a road as smoke billows after a twin blasts at a market in Parachinar

Peshawar

Multiple blasts and a gun attack killed more than 50 people and wounded at least 170 in three Pakistani cities on the last Friday of Ramadan, Islam's holiest month, as officials warned the toll could rise.

Authorities said 37 people were killed and more than 150 wounded when twin blasts tore through a market in Parachinar, capital of Kurram district, a mainly Shiite area of Pakistan's tribal belt.

Local official Nasrullah Khan said that the first blast detonated as the market was crowded with shoppers preparing for the Eid ul-Fitr festival marking the end of Ramadan.

"When people rushed to the site... to rescue the wounded, a second blast took place," he said.

Basir Khan Wazir, the top government official in Parachinar later said that apparently both the blasts were carried out by two suicide bombers.

"We have transported 15 injured to Peshawar but condition of 15 to 20 injured people were critical," Wazir said and warned that the death toll could rise.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif called for security to be beefed up as he condemned the attack, saying that no Muslim could ever imagine committing such a "horrific" act.

Local lawmaker Sajid Hussain Turi, the owner of the market, said bazaars in Parachinar had been

barricaded off and vehicles banned from the area.

Parachinar was the location of the first major militant attack in Pakistan in 2017, a bomb in a market which killed 24 people in January and was claimed by the Pakistani Taliban. In March a second Taliban attack killed a further 22 people.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility.

Improved security?

The twin blasts in Parachinar followed a bombing earlier in the day in southwestern Quetta that killed at least 13 people. Investigators said the attack targeted police. It was claimed by both the local affiliate of the Islamic State group and by Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA), an offshoot of the Pakistani Taliban, according to the SITE monitoring group.

Officials at the city's Civil Hospital said at least 13 people were killed and around 20 injured, mostly by shrapnel. Police officials said nine policemen were among the dead.

At the hospital in Quetta, worried children stood by the bloodstained cots of wounded relatives, and Pakistani soldiers visited injured colleagues.

Stunned survivors could give few details about the attack. "I was sitting

on a chair. There was an explosion. I got injured and fell down," said one victim, Gulzar Ahmad.

Separately, gunmen on motorcycles Friday shot dead four policemen sitting at a roadside restaurant at SITE area in southern port-city Karachi.

Asif Bughio, a senior police official, said that four attackers wearing helmets fled the scene. (AFP)



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