

## Grand 'jirga' of tribal chiefs to discuss Balochistan

Islamabad - The scion of the Kalat family that once ruled large tracts of territory in what is now Balochistan has Thursday convened a grand jirga, a meeting of tribal chiefs, for the first time in 130 years to discuss the turmoil in Pakistan's largest province.

Khan Suleman Daud's initiative comes four weeks after the killing of Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti, the controversial chief of the Bugti tribe, a development that has unleashed violence and anti-government sentiments in Balochistan.

The News International quoted the Khan as saying that he had not invited any 'pro government' sardar (tribal chief), but pointed out that his younger brother Faisal Daud is a provincial minister in the coalition government in Balochistan.

This would be the first jirga of Baloch tribal chiefs after 130 years -- the last one was held in 1876 and convened by the then Khan Mir Khuda-e-Daad Khan.

The newspaper quoted Suleman Daud as saying that 85 sardars had been invited to Quetta, the provincial capital, for the jirga.

The congregation will discuss the issues that Nawab Bugti and Kalat's rulers have raised over the past years. These include greater autonomy and a larger share of royalty from natural resources, including gas that flows out of Balochistan.

Suleman Daud said the jirga would discuss the problems and resources of the Baloch nation, in addition to Bugti's killing in a military operation and its aftermath.

He said all out efforts would be made to implement whatever decisions are made by the jirga.

The state of Kalat, Balochistan's largest princedom, was founded in 1638. The territories controlled by the erstwhile state fluctuated over centuries, but were eventually established by treaties with the British Agent Robert Sandeman in the late 19th century.

Parts of the state to the north and northeast were leased or ceded to form the province of British Balochistan, which later gained the status of a chief commissioner's province.

When independence and India's partition became imminent, the then Khan of Kalat, Abdur Rahim, wrote to the British monarchy that Kalat should be placed on par with Nepal in terms of treaty arrangements with the British.

He was not heard. On March 31, 1948, Kalat acceded to Pakistan and went on to form the states union on Oct 3, 1952, with three neighbouring states.

Khan Abdur Rahim and his successors opposed the Pakistani authority and led a separatist movement for several years.

Kalat is a district now with an area of 6,621 sq km. The population of the district was estimated at 316,787 in 1995. Eighty-nine percent of the population speak Brahvi language and 10 percent

Balochi.

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