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## Kabul closes border over wheat ban

By Saleem Shahid



CHAMAN: A paramilitary soldier stands guard as flour-laden trucks are stopped at the border checkpoint of Chaman as part of government's move to stop smuggling of wheat and flour to Afghanistan.—AFP

QUETTA, Jan 15: Afghanistan closed its border with Pakistan on Tuesday, stopping all kind of traffic and movement of people.

The Afghan border authorities suddenly closed the Friendship Gate at Chaman and deployed extra army personnel.

They said the border would remain closed for an indefinite period.

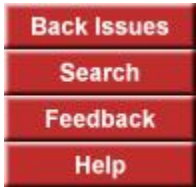
Afghan border commander at Spin Buldak Abdul Raziq Panjsheri said various cities and towns in southern Afghanistan were facing an acute shortage of flour after wheat and flour

supply from Pakistan was stopped.

He said the situation would worsen if the ban was not lifted.

“Border with Pakistan at Chaman would remain closed till the decision to ban the supply of wheat and flour is withdrawn,” he said.

Hundreds of trucks and other vehicles carrying various goods, other than wheat and flour, were struck on both sides of the border.



Fuel supply to Nato forces was also suspended as dozens of oil tankers were also stopped at Chaman.

Thousands of Pakistani and Afghan businessmen in Vesh and Chaman could not cross the border.

Frontier Corps IG Maj-Gen Saleem Nawaz said the Afghan officials closed the border because the FC had stopped smuggling of wheat and flour and the Pakistan government had also stopped their export through private channels.

“We will not allow smuggling and export of wheat and flour to Afghanistan at any cost,” he said, adding the decision had been taken in view of shortage of wheat and flour in the country.

“Our own people are not getting enough flour due to its smuggling across the border,” Gen Nawaz said, adding that the FC was allowing supply of wheat by the World Food Programme to Afghanistan.

He said the supply of wheat sent by the Pakistan government under its commitment to Kabul was not being stopped.

“The Afghan government has not informed us about the closing of its border,” the IG said.

It is learnt that the price of wheat has gone up manifold in southern Afghanistan.



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