

# Kyrgyz crisis

THE reverberations of the violence in the Central Asian state of Kyrgyzstan — specifically in the city of Osh — are being felt in the international community. Two Pakistanis — a female medical student and a male engineering student — have reportedly been killed in the country as clashes between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz continue to raise tensions. At the time of writing, 10 Pakistanis were said to have been taken hostage. However, the Pakistani foreign minister denied this, saying that a number of stranded students had reached safer venues in the city. Instability has dogged Kyrgyzstan since April, when former President Kurmanbek Bakiyev was ousted. However, violence has flared over the past few days; more than 100 people have reportedly been killed while at least 1,000 have been injured. Between 1,200 to 1,500 Pakistanis — mostly students — are said to live in Kyrgyzstan. Many had returned home for the sum-

mer holidays but according to reports several Pakistani citizens remain stranded in the troubled Central Asian nation. Considering the volatility of the situation, their fate should be a matter of utmost concern to the Pakistani authorities.

The Foreign Office has said that the embassy in Bishkek, the Kyrgyz capital, is trying to gather all Pakistani nationals at the airport in Osh. In normal circumstances Pakistani missions abroad are expected to come to the aid of nationals in distress. In times of instability and violence, the missions' responsibility increases manifold. So far, it appears the authorities are handling this situation in a responsible manner. However, we wonder whether the Foreign Office has permanent evacuation plans in place for Pakistani citizens, especially those working and studying in countries where there is political instability. Considering these turbulent times, such plans are the need of the hour.