
Senate committee demands action on internet slowdown within two weeks

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The Senate Standing Committee on Information Technology has given authorities a two-week deadline on Thursday to address widespread issues with internet connectivity and social media disruptions. The committee is seeking a detailed report on the financial impact of these disruptions. The decision followed a meeting where committee members highlighted the severe effects of internet and social media slowdowns on businesses across Pakistan. The session, led by Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Senator Palwasha Khan, saw participation from IT ministry officials and representatives from the Pakistan Telecommunications Authority (PTA). Senator Afnan Ullah Khan of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) expressed frustration over the significant losses to e-commerce businesses, estimating a cost of at least Rs500 million. Senator Mohammad Humayun Mohmand from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) criticised the authorities, warning that

the slowdown harmed employment and business investments. “You’ve jeopardised people’s jobs. If this continues, it will devastate the entire sector,” he remarked. In response, IT Ministry Secretary Aisha Humera Chaudhry attributed the disruption to a possible technical issue affecting mobile network operators, noting that the problem does not extend to Wi-Fi services. The PTA official, however, claimed they had not received any complaints about the service issues. The committee also intended to discuss firewall issues, but this was postponed due to the absence of PTA officials. This in-camera session was meant to provide insights into firewall details, which are believed to involve new filters aimed at controlling social media content. Earlier, the Wireless and Internet Service Providers Association of Pakistan reported that internet speeds had dropped by 30% to 40% due to increased security measures. This has severely impacted both businesses and individuals who rely on stable internet connections. The disruption is attributed to the testing of a new internet firewall designed to filter and block specific online content.