

India and Pakistan agree to hold talks on Kashmir issue

by Susan Maitra and Ramtanu Maitra

The sixth round of talks at the foreign secretary level, held in New Delhi on Aug. 16-18 between India and Pakistan, was a distinct improvement over the previous ones: Islamabad unexpectedly proposed to resolve the Kashmir issue within the framework of the Shimla Agreement signed in 1972 by the two late leaders, Shrimati Indira Gandhi and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. In addition, Pakistani Defense Minister Ghous Ali Shah, talking to journalists in Rawalpindi, Pakistan on Aug. 16, ruled out any "possibility of armed conflict between Pakistan and India on the Kashmir dispute." He also made clear that "both countries have a desire to negotiate and decide issues by putting forward their cases, rather than taking decisions by force." In addition, Pakistan's chief of the armed services, Gen. Asif Nawaz Janjua, has accepted a formal invitation to visit India.

On arrival at New Delhi, Pakistani Foreign Secretary M. Shahryar Khan confided to reporters that he was carrying a letter from his prime minister for Indian Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao. He said Pakistani Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif, in his letter, has invited India to start talks on the Kashmir issue exclusively under Article VI of the Shimla Agreement. Sharif, he said, regards the Kashmir dispute as the core issue to be settled in order to normalize the relations between the two countries.

Article VI of the Shimla Agreement relates to a heads of state and representatives' meeting to be convened at a convenient date to find, among other things, "a final settlement of [the state of] Jammu and Kashmir."

The Indian side, elated by the fact that Pakistan has finally come around—after years of ignoring India's invitation to resolve Kashmir based on the Shimla Agreement and, instead, engaging in various international forums with efforts to resolve the dispute through the U.N. resolutions of 1949—was also a little unsettled by the Pakistani demand. India's former Indian high commissioner to Pakistan, Foreign Secretary J.N. Dixit, pointed out that it is not possible "to isolate individual articles of the Shimla Agreement." In other words, the Indian position is that the Shimla Agreement had to be viewed in its entirety, the main objective of which is the creation of an environment in which all outstanding issues can be resolved. Besides the Kashmir issue, a number of

irritants have soured the relations between the two countries and have resulted in minor armed conflicts, including: disputes on water-sharing; lack of delimitation of a maritime boundary in the Kutch area; a dispute over the boundary in the Siachen Glacier in northern Kashmir; and the problems created by drug trafficking and smuggling.

At the end of the sixth round of talks, it was agreed that despite significant differences between the two sides in determining the modalities on the application of the Shimla Agreement, both sides will continue to discuss how to resolve the thorny Kashmir issue. The Indian prime minister will soon respond to Prime Minister Sharif's letter, and it is expected that the two leaders will meet in Jakarta, Indonesia when they attend the upcoming Non-Aligned Movement heads of state conference in September.

New Delhi's cautious optimism

Although Islamabad has made clear that it has not abandoned its quest for resolving the Kashmir issue through the United Nations, Pakistan's proposal for bilateral talks is a definite change in stance, a shift with various causes. Pakistan has come to realize that Kashmir cannot be pried out of India simply by backing various militant activities within the Indian part of Kashmir, and that Punjab militancy has also lost its sharp edge (see p. 35). In addition, with the dissolution of the Soviet empire, Islamabad's bilateral equation with Washington has undergone a change. In fact, Washington's withholding of economic and arms aid to Pakistan because of the latter's alleged covert nuclear weapons program, has further strained relations between the U.S. and Pakistan. In earlier days, Washington had been a consistent backer of the Pakistani proposal to resolve the Kashmir issue based on the U.N. resolutions.

What, however, has not been pointed out here is Islamabad's growing uneasiness over the trend of the present movement in Kashmir and the support it is receiving from Britain (see *EIR*, Feb. 21, "British-Sponsored Crisis around Kashmir Gathers Momentum"). It could be Islamabad's realization that the Kashmir issue is now being used by the British, through the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) to carve out an independent Kashmir.

Optimism notwithstanding, it is evident that New Delhi will move cautiously on the future talks. The following may be the reasons for such circumspection:

- Pakistan has continued to deny involvement with the Kashmiri and Punjabi militants, even when it is accepted in various capitals, including Washington and Beijing, that Islamabad is aiding, abetting, and arming militants who seek secession from India.

- There is uncertainty over the negotiations, since the present Pakistan government is highly unstable and the Sharif government could collapse.

- By raising Article VI, Pakistan is probably trying to bring to the fore the very issue of Kashmir's accession to India in 1947; this may lead to a renewed demand for a plebiscite to determine who has sovereignty over Kashmir.

- Pakistan is also under great pressure because of the backlash from the Afghan war, terrorism in Sindh, and instability in its North West Frontier Province.

- New Delhi would like to see how Islamabad discusses the Kashmir issue in the domestic as well as in the international arenas.

Enter the Carnegie Endowment

Precisely because India and Pakistan have agreed to continue with talks, the British interest in the Kashmir issue will not wane quickly. This became evident when it was reported on Aug. 16 that the senior fellow of the Carnegie Endowment for Peace, James Clad, has floated a proposal to resolve the Kashmir dispute. Clad, a former New Zealand diplomat, who had worked as a correspondent of the Hong Kong-based weekly *Far Eastern Economic Review*, with a stint at Oxford between jobs, was based in New Delhi as the weekly's correspondent in 1990. According to news reports, Clad had visited India recently and claimed to have had detailed discussions on his proposal with senior Indian diplomats and defense officials.

Clad's proposal, which reportedly has Washington's blessing, calls for both parties to accept the effective border, known as the Line of Actual Control, as their international boundary.

In addition, Clad suggests that India yield a chunk of land in northern Kashmir enabling Pakistan to secure its strategic highway with China, provided Pakistan, in return, accede some land to India in southern Kashmir; India will neither frustrate nor sabotage any future deal between China and Pakistan regarding Kashmir territory; and once the India-Pakistan border issue is settled, India should open dozens of transit points along the 2,912 kilometer border, which currently has only one such transit point.

So far, both the Indians and the Pakistanis have brushed aside the proposal as "vague" and "academic." They also do not see why such a land swap is necessary to resolve the issue. Nonetheless, it has not been denied that Clad was in India discussing his proposal with senior officials.

Sri Lanka: shedding light, casting shadow

by Ramtanu Maitra

Only Man Is Vile: The Tragedy of Sri Lanka

by William McGowan

Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, New York, 1992

398 pages, hardbound, \$25

William McGowan's book is immensely readable, having the colorful blend of compassion, frustration, anger and romanticism. Nonetheless, the journalistic treatment of a complex ethnic history, further complicated by the centuries of colonial rule in the region, does not provide an outsider, whose concept of Sri Lanka as a nation is not more than a dot on the map, the necessary understanding of why violence continues on this small island.

In his treatment of the Sri Lankan tragedy, McGowan dealt with the five-year period, beginning with the massacre in the capital of Colombo in 1983, ending in mid-1988, when he left the island. The subsequent period—the book was published in 1992—has been summarily treated in a 13-page epilogue. As a result, many important developments, elucidation of which could have helped the reader acquire a bit more insight on the Sri Lankan tragedy, have received summary comments of the author—a fact which makes the book less of a "compelling account of a society consumed by the implacable hatreds of race and class," as the dust jacket suggests, and more of a travelogue with a superficial account of the society consumed in almost four decades of violence.

British role misrepresented

That is, however, not to say that McGowan did not look at various factors which have played a major role in bringing about the turmoil. His write-ups on *1956: Cultural Revolution* and *The Sinhalese South* are useful. His treatment of Buddhism and the British is not only inadequate but highly misleading. It is misleading because it gives the impression that the British, besides training and "westernizing" a small group of wealthy Sri Lankan elite, had left the island, lock, stock, and barrel, without leaving behind institutions through which they could continue to intervene into the Sri Lankan situation. The readers could have gotten a better sense of such interventional capability of the British if McGowan