

Angry Crowds Protest Delays in Reopening Kashmir Border

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ISLAMABAD, [Pakistan](#), Nov. 7 - Protests on Monday marred the partial opening of one of five planned crossing points along the line of control dividing the Pakistani- and Indian-administered portions of Kashmir, Pakistani officials said.

Hundreds of Kashmiri men who had gathered on the Pakistani side grew angry when officials blocked them from crossing into Indian-controlled territory, Pakistani officials said. At one point, two men ran toward the boundary with their children but were arrested. Later, the police fired tear gas and shots in the air to disperse protesters, who had begun chanting, "We want an independent Kashmir."

The protests emerged at what was supposed to be the first step in the gradual opening of a military boundary that has slowed some earthquake relief efforts and divided families in Kashmir for the last 58 years. Instead, it served as a testament to the lingering rivalry and mistrust that exists between the two nuclear-armed neighbors.

A Pakistani official said security concerns on both sides were slowing the opening. He said each country feared that the other would use the boundary opening to plant spies or insurgents. The two have fought two wars over Kashmir. "Fifty years of distrust doesn't go away with a wishing wand," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he feared reprimand.

After the earthquake on Oct. 8, which killed 73,000 people in Pakistan and 1,300 in [India](#), and after three weeks of wrangling, India and Pakistan agreed to open five crossing points on Monday as a "humanitarian gesture" to victims of the earthquake. Individuals would be allowed to cross after going through a security screening by both countries.

But Indian officials announced Saturday that because of logistical problems, only one would be opened. On Sunday, both Indian and Pakistani officials privately stated that only aid goods would cross the boundary because the two sides had not yet exchanged the names of the Kashmiris who wished to cross.

Still, hundreds of anxious men arrived at the crossing point that was to open, between the Pakistani-controlled town of Rawalakot and Indian-controlled town of Poonch, Pakistani officials said.

Two trucks from each side then backed within a few feet of each other, and porters tossed aid goods from one vehicle to the other. In all, 25 truckloads of aid went from India to Pakistan and one truckload of aid went from Pakistan to India. When the carefully

scripted ceremony appeared to be over, the frustrated Kashmiri men made their move. The clash with the police ensued.

Indian officials said two more border crossings would open Wednesday and Thursday. It is not clear whether Kashmiris, many desperate to meet relatives they have not seen for decades, will finally be allowed to cross.

Hari Kumar contributed reporting from New Delhi for this article.

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