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APPROVED BY NEA:SSOBER
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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, IN, PK

SUBJECT: INDO-PAK PRESS REACTIONS TO BHUTTO VISIT

PASS ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON

1. SUMMARY: INDIAN AND PAKISTANI NEWSPAPERS HAVE GIVEN WIDE COVERAGE TO BHUTTO'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON AND TO A POSSIBLE CHANGE IN U.S. ARMS SALES POLICY FOR SOUTH ASIA. PAKISTANI PAPERS HAVE FOCUSED ON PRESIDENT FORD'S REAFFIRMATION OF CONTINUING U.S. SUPPORT FOR THE INDEPENDENCE AND INTEGRITY OF PAKISTAN. INDIAN MEDIA HAVE EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER THE REPORTED U.S. MOVE TO LIFT THE ARMS EMBARGO. END SUMMARY.

2. INDIAN AND PAKISTANI MEDIA ARE ARTICULATING EXPECTED SENTIMENTS ON THE BHUTTO VISIT AND THE POSSIBILITY OF A

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LIFTING OF THE U.S. ARMS SUPPLY EMBARGO. NEWSPAPERS IN BOTH COUNTRIES HAVE GIVEN THE VISIT PROMINENT, FRONT-PAGE COVERAGE.

3. PAKISTANI PAPERS HAVE PLAYED UP PRESIDENT FORD'S REAFFIRMATION OF U.S. SUPPORT FOR THE INDEPENDENCE AND INTEGRITY OF PAKISTAN. THEY HAVE ALSO GIVEN PROMINENT COVERAGE TO THE POSSIBILITY THE U.S. WILL LIFT THE

ARMS EMBARGO AND REPLAY BHUTTO'S EMPHASIS ON PAKISTAN'S DEFENSIVE NEEDS. SEVERAL PAK PAPERS HAVE STRONGLY CRITICIZED INDIA FOR ITS REACTION TO THE NEWS FROM WASHINGTON.

4. THE INDIAN MEDIA HAVE ALSO TAKEN UP PREDICTABLE THEMES AND HAVE BEEN A SOUNDING BOARD FOR STATEMENTS COMING FROM MRS. GANDHI AND OTHER INDIAN OFFICIALS. THE PRIME MINISTER HAS EXPRESSED "HOPE" THAT ANOTHER WAR WILL NOT BE THRUST ON INDIA. DEFENSE MINISTER SWARAN SINGH HAS ASSERTED THAT U.S. ARMS FOR PAKISTAN WILL CAUSE "NEW TENSIONS" IN THE INDIAN OCEAN, ADVERSELY AFFECT THE SIMLA PROCESS, AND PROVE A SETBACK TO INDO-U.S. RELATIONS. GOI RADIO HAS CRITICIZED "THE PAKISTANI CRAZE FOR GATHERING ARMAMENTS", ASSERTING THAT PAK DEFENSE FORCES ARE STRONGER THAN IN 1971 AND THAT BHUTTO'S RECENT ACTIONS ARE "REMINISCENT OF PAST HOSTILITY". ALL-INDIA RADIO HAS ALSO MADE REFERENCES TO ALLEGED PREVIOUS AMERICAN "COMMITMENTS" AND "CATEGORICAL ASSURANCES" TO INDIA ON THE ARMS SUPPLY ISSUE AND HAS WARNED THAT U.S. ARMS FOR PAKISTAN WILL "RETARD THE PROGRESS IN INDO-U.S. RELATIONS." INGERSOLL

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*** Current Classification ***

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