

PAKISTAN

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

March 19, 1976

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

I am writing to you in the spirit of friendship and mutual understanding which has traditionally characterized exchanges between our two Governments. During your visit to Washington last year, we held very productive discussions and reached broad areas of understanding on matters of mutual interest. I am encouraged by the openness of our relationship to approach you quite candidly on Pakistan's plans to acquire certain sensitive nuclear facilities, a matter which is of deep concern to my Government.

I know from my discussions with you that you share our fear over the threat to the general peace posed by the unrestrained spread of nuclear explosives technology. My Government has welcomed your forthright assurances that Pakistan will not divert its civil nuclear development efforts into an explosives program, and that Pakistan's nuclear activities will be devoted exclusively to peaceful purposes.

You should be aware, however, that there is considerable apprehension in this country and elsewhere over the spread on a national basis of the nuclear technology associated with the development of nuclear explosives -- specifically, uranium enrichment, heavy water production and chemical reprocessing. Secretary Kissinger stated at the UN General Assembly last September the view of this Government that the further spread of nuclear reprocessing facilities under national control would seriously aggravate the problem of nuclear proliferation.

For this reason we welcomed Korea's decision to forego acquisition of a national reprocessing plant. For the same reason I am now writing to you to ask that you give serious consideration to the broader implications of this matter for stability both in your region and in the world. At this juncture,

I believe your Government has an opportunity to make a highly important contribution to worldwide efforts effectively to forestall further nuclear proliferation.

My concern is not the reliability of the assurances of your Government. It is that the establishment of sensitive nuclear facilities under national control inevitably gives rise to perceptions in many quarters that, under circumstances which perhaps cannot even be foreseen today, non-peaceful uses may be contemplated. Whether justified or not, such perceptions could be by themselves destabilizing and undermine the mutual confidence and sense of security which must be created if we are to build a system of international peaceful nuclear cooperation.

These perceptions are heightened in Pakistan's case by the lack of a persuasive economic justification for obtaining sensitive nuclear facilities. For example, the experience of the United States, as well as of all countries with major nuclear power programs, is that reprocessing of spent reactor fuel is only economic within a very much larger reactor program than Pakistan could contemplate for the foreseeable future.

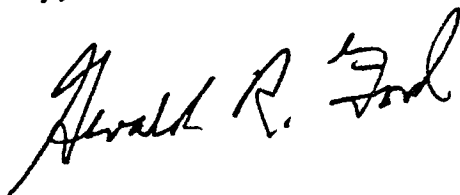
I know that Secretary Kissinger has already expressed similar views to you on this matter, but I want to underline to you my deep personal concern over the possible effect of your actions in this area on our ability to sustain support in public opinion here for our close cooperation on a broad range of issues of interest to both our governments. I fear that many in this country will be critical of Pakistan's actions and skeptical regarding its intentions. Friendship with Pakistan has enjoyed broad popular support in this country among the public and in the Congress over the years. However, Pakistan's acquisition of these sensitive facilities would, I believe, arouse considerable criticism and could erode this support.

With these considerations in mind, I hope that you will give serious consideration to foregoing present plans to acquire reprocessing and heavy water facilities until your future nuclear program is sufficiently developed to establish a clear need and until other alternatives, such as a multinational venture, are thoroughly explored.

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I believe that I understand the difficulties that my request to you will present to your Government. I would not raise this matter with you, however, if I did not consider it to be of the utmost importance. I would be grateful if you would let me have your views on the points I have raised.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Gerald R. Ford". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

His Excellency  
Zulfikar Ali Bhutto  
Prime Minister of the  
Islamic Republic of Pakistan  
Islamabad