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India/Pakistan

Vajpayee Must Respond Positively to Musharraf's Offer

- IV Online magazine - 2002 - IV337 - January/February 2002 -

Publication date: Saturday 9 February 2002

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IN his televised address yesterday, President Musharraf has come out strongly against religious fundamentalism and terrorist violence. He has banned Pak-based militant organisations like Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad and has once again called for a negotiated political settlement of the Kashmir problem. We call upon the Vajpayee government to make a positive response and engage Pakistan in a serious and comprehensive dialogue.

On its part, the government of India must stop whipping up war hysteria and Army officials must not be allowed to make provocative announcements to the media. War of any kind is not an affordable or acceptable option to the people of either India or Pakistan. Both countries must be prevented from going to war and pressurised to return to the negotiating table.

There is absolutely no need for any third party intervention, and least of all American intervention, in the bilateral affairs of India and Pakistan. We call upon the Vajpayee government to reverse its present policy of weakening diplomatic relations with Pakistan in the name of mounting a diplomatic offensive. India must restore direct and full-scale diplomatic ties with Pakistan and stop treating the US as the arbiter of Indo-Pak relations.

We appeal to the peace-loving people of both India and Pakistan to oppose the forthcoming visit of Colin Powell, the self-appointed American mediator, to our subcontinent. In India CPI(ML) will organise countrywide Powell-Go-Back demonstrations on January 18.

CPI(M-L) General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya, January 13