

One Crossing to Open Now in Kashmir

The New York Times

November 6, 2005

By HARI KUMAR

NEW DELHI, Nov. 5 — Indian officials announced Saturday that only one crossing point instead of five would be opened Monday along the so-called Line of Control separating the Indian- and Pakistani-controlled portions of the disputed territory of Kashmir. Indian officials attributed the delay to logistical difficulties.

“As things are getting ready, they are being opened,” said Navtej Sarna, a spokesman for the Indian Foreign Ministry.

Pakistani officials also played down the change, which altered the terms of an agreement reached last Sunday. “These are just hitches on the ground and not a setback,” said Tasnim Aslam, a spokeswoman for the Pakistani Foreign Ministry.

The two countries gave differing timetables for further openings. Ms. Aslam said that all five crossing points would be open on Wednesday; Mr. Sarna said that one would open Wednesday and one Thursday, and that dates for opening the other two had not yet been determined.

After three weeks of wrangling, the two countries reached a deal last Sunday to open five crossing points along the line of control on Monday.

The move was described in a joint statement as a “humanitarian gesture” to the victims of the Oct. 8 earthquake centered in Kashmir, which killed more than 73,000 people in Pakistan and 1,300 in India.

Some three million people have been left homeless in the quake-ravaged areas, according to the United Nations, which says that it has received pledges of only 25 percent of the \$550 million it needs for relief efforts from international donors.