

Pakistani Americans urge unity with India

BY IVAN PEREIRA

As leaders in both Pakistan and India go back and forth over who was to blame for the attacks in Mumbai last week, Pakistani-Americans in Queens are urging their leaders to be cooperative and prudent to avoid ruining the prospect for peace

between the two nuclear power neighbors.

Pakistani immigrants have grown very concerned about the future of their homeland, especially since the Indian government has been contending that Pakistani-based militants were the masterminds behind the attack, according to Mo-

hammad Asif, a Pakistani businessman and community leader who has lived and worked in Queens for years.

Pakistani leaders have publicly condemned the terrorist attack and denied accusations that their government was involved, but they said their nation would cooperate with the

investigation, Reuters reported.

Asif said he and his fellow nationals had grown confident that Pakistan and India would finally end through diplomacy the hostility that has been a constant since partition in 1947 created a Muslim-dominated Pakistan and

Continued on Page 31

Continued from Page 5

Hindu-dominated India. But the terrorist attack, which has left nearly 200 dead and hundreds more wounded, crushed their dreams.

"We had very high hopes," he said. "People ... don't know what tomorrow will be."

The 10 men who began opening fire at posh tourist spots, a Jewish center and a railroad station in Mumbai Nov. 26 are allegedly part of a Pakistan-based militant group known as the Lashkar-e-Taiba, Indian investigators have told Reuters. The group has been fighting for years over the disputed region of Kashmir, located near the border of Pakistan and India, according to the wire service.

Asif, who runs an Indian movie theater called Bombay Theater in Fresh Meadows and is a member of the Pakistan League of

USA, said his fellow Pakistanis have been saddened by the attacks, since Mumbai is full of Muslim immigrants from Pakistan and other nations.

He noted that the incident was one of several attacks that have become common in the last couple of years within the nation.

"At the end of the day, we're all human and there is no excuse for attacks like this," he said.

The businessman, who immigrated to Jamaica 25 years ago, was critical of the Indian government for rushing to point blame at Pakistan for the attacks, but he urged his homeland's government to cooperate fully with the investigation. Asif said emotions needed to be kept in check if the leaders wanted to end sectarian violence in both countries.

Others shared Asif's sentiment.