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Press Release

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"At the Stroke of Midnight"

Chairman Shirley Ann Jackson
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
at the
Indian Independence Day Celebration
Gymkana International Club
Potomac, Maryland
August 16, 1995

- Thank you, Raji, and good evening, ladies and gentlemen.
- I am pleased to be your guest tonight as you celebrate 48 years of political independence on the Indian subcontinent. I understand that this special observance of Indian Independence Day has been organized by NRC employees who trace their heritage to the Indian subcontinent - it is a pleasure to see so many of you here this evening, not only those of you who are maintaining your cultural ties to your native lands but also those, like me, who are experiencing, perhaps for the first time, the hospitality and heritage of the Indian subcontinent.
- I have never traveled to India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, or Sri Lanka, although I hope I will have an opportunity to do so during my tenure as Chairman of the NRC. This evening, however, through the pleasant conversation and excellent food that we have just had, you have made me feel as close to being familiar with the subcontinent and its people as it

is possible for a non-visitor to feel, and I want you to know how much I appreciate that. I am also delighted that I have had the opportunity to meet the distinguished representatives of their respective countries, Ambassador and Mrs. Ray of India, Ambassador Kabir of Bangladesh, and Minister and Mrs. Kariyawasam of Sri Lanka.

- At the stroke of midnight on August 14, 1947, the world's largest democracy was created, an event noted with particular interest and anticipation halfway round the globe in the world's oldest existing democracy, the United States of America. Despite some differences in political views and in aspects of our respective economic systems since then, Americans have maintained a close affinity for the nations of the Indian subcontinent and, in particular, for the Indian experiment in democracy. This is, of course, no surprise since our countries share much in common, including:
 - the shared experience of a colonial background
 - emergence as independent nations through an indigenous revolutionary movement
 - diverse, multicultural societies
 - shared constitutional provisions (the Indian constitution of 1947 is based on the U.S. Constitution)
 - adoption by the U.S. civil rights movement of the non-violent protest techniques of India's Mahatma Gandhi
 - increasing influence of modern technology in economic growth and development
 - increasingly similar views on the importance of participating in the global economy
 - reliance on nuclear power as an important source for generating electricity
- Of course despite these and other common elements, there are substantial differences between our two countries as well. Yet developments in both countries in recent years have tended to promote closer relationships between the U.S. and India, culminating in President Clinton's and Indian Prime Minister Rao's inauguration in 1994 of a new era in relations between the two countries by pledging to "expand the pace and scope of high-level exchanges on the full range

of political, economic, commercial, scientific, technological, and social issues."

- Of particular interest to the NRC is India's ambitious nuclear power program, which has united India's scientific capability and technological infrastructure in constructing and operating nine nuclear power plants and associated fuel cycle facilities. The Indian nuclear power program is a justified source of national pride since it was largely developed without foreign assistance.
- NRC's focus and perspective on the Indian nuclear program is the same as it is in other countries - our objective is to enhance international nuclear safety by exchanging safety-related information, by promoting safety consciousness in nuclear power operations, and in encouraging the development and strengthening of independent national nuclear regulatory bodies in each country with a nuclear power program. These, by the way, are the same objectives that govern our own civilian nuclear power program.
- In pursuit of these objectives and as a result of the 1994 U.S. - India accord, the NRC in July 1994 joined a Presidential mission to India led by Department of Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary, in which the possibility of cooperation in the area of nuclear safety was discussed.
- In September 1994, the NRC and India's Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) exchanged letters opening an informal, reciprocal nuclear safety dialogue based on material from public sources. Among the exclusively safety-related subjects agreed upon for discussion and joint study were the following:
 - development of symptom-based emergency procedures
 - technical exchanges on design issues
 - nuclear power plant fire safety
 - materials aging and in-service inspections
- In October 1994, AERB Chairman Gopalakrishnan visited the NRC and various nuclear facilities in the U.S.
- In February 1995, my predecessor as NRC Chairman, Dr. Selin, visited New Delhi and Bombay to further develop discussions of safety-related issues of mutual interest.
- Dr. Chidambaram, Chairman of the Indian Atomic Energy Commission, is scheduled to visit the U.S. this fall at the

invitation of DOE. His agenda will include discussions with the NRC and tours of NRC-licensed facilities.

- As the NRC's new Chairman, it is my hope and intention to continue to develop this promising dialogue in the nuclear safety field. The absence of detailed information on the causes and responses to nuclear safety-related events anywhere in the world creates concerns that similar or worse events could happen elsewhere when they could have been prevented with appropriately shared information. Every country benefits from an open exchange of publicly-available information on operational experience and regulatory experience.
- I look forward to working with the Indian Atomic Energy Regulatory Board and other Indian nuclear power officials to make this dialogue an effective tool in increasing the level of safety of our respective nuclear power programs.
- I have had a wonderful time and I thank you very much for your hospitality.

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