

THE STAR 27/12/88 MS 24

## Pakistan: Indian aircraft bombed our territory

**PESHAWAR:** Pakistan says Indian aircraft crossed into its territory and dropped bombs without causing casualties, in the latest escalation between the nuclear-armed rivals since a deadly attack on Indian troops in the disputed Kashmir region sent tensions soaring.

Maj-Gen Asif Ghafoor, a military spokesman, yesterday said the Indian "aircrafts" crossed into the

Pakistan-controlled Muzafarabad sector of Kashmir, which is split between the two countries but claimed by each in its entirety.

He said Pakistan scrambled fighters and the Indian jets "released payload in haste" near Balakot on the edge of Pakistani-ruled Kashmir.

Balakot police chief Saghir Husain Shah said he had sent teams to the area, which he described as a mostly deserted wooded area.

"There are no casualties, there are no damages on the ground because of the dropping of the bombs," he said.

The incursion could have been in retaliation for a deadly Feb 14 suicide bombing in India's half of Kashmir that killed at least 40 troops.

The Pakistan-based militant group Jaish-e-Mohammad claimed responsibility. The bomber, who

made a video before the attack, was a resident of Indian Kashmir.

It was the worst attack on Indian forces since the start of the 1989 insurgency in Kashmir.

Insurgents have been demanding either outright independence or union with Pakistan.

India routinely accuses Pakistan of arming and training militants who cross the mountainous Himalayan region. — AP