

Program to rescue boat people

Immigration Minister Flora MacDonald has announced that Canada will be one of the 13 initial participating countries in an international program to rescue Vietnamese boat people in the South China Sea.

"Canada has always taken a lead role in providing a home for Vietnamese boat people," said Miss MacDonald "but I see this program as something more than just resettlement. It will save lives," she added.



Flora MacDonald

Canada's participation in the Rescue at Sea Resettlement Offers Program (RASROP) began April 1 and will involve accepting up to 450 boat people a year as part of the federal government's 1985 refugee quota of 3 700 Indo-Chinese. This represents an increase of 700 over the 1984 level.

RASROP was organized by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in response to reports that merchant ships operating in the South China Sea were deliberately avoiding rescuing boat people, abandoning them instead to face starvation, drowning and pirates. The 13 countries involved in RASROP are committed to accept up to 2 500 people.

Miss MacDonald said the promise of resettlement by Canada and the dozen other countries to 2 500 people "will provide motivation for ships from countries which can not provide resettlement of many refugees to rescue the boat people".

Teleguide service in Japan

Infomart of Canada has signed a licensing deal to establish the first commercial public-access videotex system in Japan.

Robert McConnell, Infomart president and chief executive officer, announced the agreement with Mitsui and Company to operate a system in Tokyo similar to Infomart's Teleguide system in Toronto, San Francisco, Sacramento and Phoenix, Arizona. Teleguide is a computer service in public places that provides information on everything from sports and entertainment events to weather.

Mitsui, a general trading company, will place 50 terminals in busy pedestrian areas of Tokyo by May.

Additional Canadian troops join NATO forces in Europe

Defence Minister Erik Nielsen and External Affairs Minister Joe Clark have announced that an additional 1 200 troops are being sent to Europe to join the established 5 900-member complement.

The troops are scheduled to arrive in Europe this summer and are expected to be in place by the summer of 1986.

Mr. Nielsen and Mr. Clark described the move as "a first, early step toward meeting our commitments in Europe to our North American Treaty Alliance (NATO) allies".

In addition to sending more troops, Mr. Nielsen said, an infantry battalion group in Canada will be designated to fulfil Canada's commitment to the multi-national Allied Command Europe Mobile Force, which is intended to reinforce Europe during a crisis.

This battalion will be separate from the Canadian Air-Sea Transportable Brigade Group (CAST), which is committed to reinforcing northern Norway in the event of

Soviet attack. The Canadian commitment to CAST will be maintained.

Of the 5 900 military members of Canadian Forces Europe, about 5 500 are stationed at Canadian forces bases in Lahr and Baden-Soellingen in West Germany. The remainder are located throughout Europe at various NATO formations, including those in Belgium, the Netherlands, and Norway.

Another 2 200 Canadian and 900 German civilians are employed by Canadian Forces Europe.

The two principal military formations are 4 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group, based in Lahr, and 1 Canadian Air Group, based at Baden-Soellingen to operate three squadrons of fighters.

Mr. Clark said increasing the number of Canadian troops demonstrates "the constancy of the Canadian position" as a member of the NATO alliance.

Various sectors represented at economic conference

Canada's first National Economic Conference, which was aimed at finding consensus on the country's major economic problems, was held in Ottawa, March 22-23.

Chaired by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, the two-day conference was attended by 136 delegates and included leaders from labour, business, politics and consumer groups. Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke addressed the conference at the request of Mr. Mulroney because he hosted a similar conference two years ago.

The conference marked the first time in the country's history that business and labour representatives, women's groups, the voluntary sector, the poor, native groups and religious leaders met in a public forum to advise the prime minister and his cabinet on major economic issues.

Employment, chosen as the conference theme, was the focus of three televised plenary sessions at the city's Congress Centre. There were also ten workshops, on such subjects as social programs, labour standards, changing work patterns, regulation and incentives.

Finance Minister Michael Wilson opened the conference by predicting the deficit will be almost \$1 billion higher than his November forecast of \$34.5 billion as a result of lower-than-predicted government revenues. Mr. Wilson told the conference it is essential that the deficit be brought under control if economic growth is to occur.



Prime Minister Brian Mulroney (right) greets Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke, a guest speaker at the economic conference.

Speaking at the opening dinner of the conference, Mr. Mulroney promised that the people represented would play a major part in determining the direction his government will take. He outlined the problems he believed Canada faced and he spoke about what he called the promise inherent in reaching a new national understanding.

Delegates to the meeting agreed that more jobs are needed in Canada and interest rates should be allowed to fall.