

South Asia

ASEAN

The first meeting of the Canada-ASEAN "Dialogue" was held in Manila in February and a second meeting was held in Ottawa in late October and early November. They were conducted at the level of senior officials. Much of the discussion at both meetings centred on the improvement of economic relations between the Association and Canada and the identification and implementation of regional development-assistance projects. Consideration was given to the development of a Canadian industrial co-operation program with the ASEAN countries. It was agreed in principle that an Ottawa consultative group composed of representatives from the ASEAN diplomatic missions and of Canadian officials be established to discuss matters of mutual concern. The growing significance of ASEAN as a trading partner was evidenced by the fact that two-way trade with Canada was \$495 million in 1977, compared to \$414 million in 1976.

In 1977 Canadian relations with the countries of South Asia were varied and active, although not in the formerly important field of nuclear co-operation. The program with India had been terminated in May 1976 because of divergent views on safeguards. For similar reasons the Pakistan program has been dormant since early 1977.

Development assistance through bilateral and multilateral aid agencies continued to be a most important aspect of Canada's relations with South Asia. In 1977, as in previous years, Canada's three largest programs were directed to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Assistance to Sri Lanka and Nepal continued to increase and a promising new program was developing in Afghanistan. Educational and cultural links with India were nourished by the Shastri Institute, supported by both governments and by Canadian universities. In particular, it encourages and enables Canadian scholars to work in India. Personal links between the area and Canada continued to grow through a large immigration program in which family relations are of growing importance.

The vigorous traditions of parliamentary democracy were demonstrated in India and Sri Lanka by a change in government after general elections in each country in 1977. Delegates from the parliaments of both countries attended the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference in Ottawa in September.

After a highly-destructive cyclone in the Bay of Bengal in November, Canadian Government and private relief aid become swiftly available.

In May, Rear-Admiral M.H. Khan, Deputy Chief Martial-Law Administrator of Bangladesh, visited Canada for discussions on the Law of the Sea Conference and Canada's aid program in Bangladesh.