

South Asia

The provision of development assistance continued to dominate Canada's relations with South Asia in 1975. During this year, Canada implemented decisions announced in 1974 at the United Nations and the World Food Conference to increase substantially its aid in food and fertilizer and for agricultural development. Because India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, and to a lesser extent Pakistan, had been among the countries of the world most severely affected by the increased energy import costs, world food shortages and inflation, and because all to some extent had recently suffered a succession of natural calamities, a major share of Canada's additional pledge was given to the countries of the subcontinent. Thus, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh were the largest net recipients of Canadian aid in the world. This aid was transferred both bilaterally and through international organizations like the United Nations and the Commonwealth.

As a result of India's nuclear-explosive test on May 18, 1974, the partnership developed since 1956 by Canada with India and Pakistan in the field of peaceful uses of nuclear energy became a controversial aspect of Canada's program of co-operation with countries of South Asia, a program designed to foster economic and social development. In Canada's view, the test had a seriously destabilizing effect on international efforts, which had been actively supported by Canada, to limit and control the proliferation of nuclear-explosive technology. Canada's reaction to the event was to suspend nuclear co-operation and place under review certain other aspects of its aid program to India that might contribute indirectly to India's nuclear effort, pending satisfactory bilateral discussions on the implications of the explosion. Food and agricultural assistance were not affected for humanitarian reasons. Consultations with Indian officials in New Delhi, Bombay and Ottawa during 1975 achieved a clearer understanding of each government's nuclear policies, but at the end of the year there remained a number of unresolved differences. Basic decisions concerning the future aid relation with India have, accordingly, been seriously inhibited. Also because of the Indian explosion, concurrent talks were held with Pakistani officials concerning the upgrading of safeguards on Canadian-supplied nuclear facilities in that country. These discussions had not concluded by the end of 1975.

In the multilateral context, Canada was represented at three international conferences held in the region in 1975. A delegation of Canadian provincial and federal parliamentarians attended the 1975 spring meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, held in Colombo from March 31 to April 5. The group then visited Pakistan as guests of the National Assembly of that country. From October 26 to November 10, Canadian parliamentarians participated in the twenty-first conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, held in New Delhi. A founding member of the Colombo Plan, Canada attended the twenty-fifth annual Colombo Plan official and ministerial meetings, held in Colombo in November and December.