

South Asia

The provision of development assistance continued to be the main element in Canadian relations with South Asia in 1976, but developments relating to nuclear co-operation were of particular significance. Chief among these was the decision by Canada to terminate its program of nuclear co-operation with India, thereby removing a potentially-troublesome obstacle in the path of normal relations in other fields. As explained by the Secretary of State for External Affairs when announcing the decision on May 18, 1976, Canada's nuclear co-operation with India began in the context of the Colombo Plan and was aimed at the development of nuclear power for peaceful purposes. India's detonation of a nuclear-explosive device in 1974 revealed that Canada and India had profoundly different views concerning the scope for the peaceful application of nuclear energy by states that were not already in possession of nuclear weapons. As an early and vigorous supporter of international efforts to limit and control the proliferation of nuclear-explosive technology, Canada recognized no technical distinction between nuclear explosions for peaceful and non-peaceful purposes. India did not accept this position and insisted that all countries should be free to use all phases of nuclear technology for whatever they viewed as peaceful purposes.

During lengthy negotiations, both sides made earnest efforts to bridge these differences. Canada insisted that any co-operation in the nuclear field be fully covered by safeguards that would ensure that its assistance would not be diverted to nuclear-explosive purposes. The decision to terminate nuclear co-operation was taken when it became evident that this object could not be achieved.

Simultaneous negotiations with Pakistan concerning the improvement of existing safeguards on Canadian nuclear facilities in that country remained inconclusive at the end of 1976. However, the Secretary of State for External Affairs announced on December 22 new upgraded standards of safeguards, which Pakistan, like all other recipients of Canadian nuclear exports, would be required to meet if nuclear co-operation was to continue.

The countries of the subcontinent continued to receive a major share of Canadian development assistance, transferred both bilaterally and through international organizations. For instance, in 1976 as in previous years, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh were the three largest net recipients of Canadian assistance in the world, and bilateral aid to Sri Lanka increased significantly.

Canada was host to two important visitors from South Asia in 1976. In February the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, accompanied by his wife Begum Nusrat Bhutto, paid an official visit to Ottawa and Toronto. The visit provided the opportunity to hold wide-ranging discussions on a number of topics of mutual interest, including nuclear relations, trade, development co-operation and international affairs. In October, V. C. Shukla, Indian Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, visited Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa on the occasion of the opening of an Indian film festival. Mr. Shukla toured facilities of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the National Film Board and Crawley Films, and discussed the possibilities for exchanges between Canada and India in the areas of films and broadcasting.