

*South Asia – India, Pakistan,  
Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal,  
Afghanistan and Myanmar (Burma)*

The South Asia region contains approximately one billion people, about one-sixth of the world's population. Many of Canada's immigrants come from this area. India, the tenth largest industrial nation in the world, has a growing middle class of over 100 million people and is the predominant power in the region.

The long-festering Kashmir dispute between Pakistan and India flared up again in January 1990; troops along the border exchange gunfire regularly, and the danger of serious conflict is very real. Canada has actively encouraged both sides to come to the negotiating table.

The defeat of Rajiv Gandhi's Congress Party by the National Front Coalition led by V. P. Singh brought domestic initiatives on the Punjab and some hope to the smaller countries of the region with the promise of improved relations. The Indian Peacekeeping Force left Sri Lanka in March at the request of the Premadasa government and gestures were made that would eventually lead to the settlement of the year-long trade dispute with Nepal. In Nepal itself, the people took to the streets to demand limitations on the

King's absolute power that would lead eventually to a more democratic form of government.

The end of the year saw an artificial calm in Sri Lanka. Physical elimination of the southern rebel leadership provided a short-term solution to that insurgency, while the rebellious Tamils in the north and northeast bided their time during the withdrawal of the Indian forces.

In Afghanistan, after the withdrawal of Soviet troops, the search for a solution continues. A stable Afghanistan, with a freely elected government, will contribute to stability in Pakistan and in the entire region. It will also encourage the more than five million refugees to return home. Canada has contributed to this end by providing a number of teams, both men and women, to train returning refugees in mine recognition, clearing and awareness.

Canada seeks to encourage regional stability through economic growth and regional cooperation through its bilateral relations, trade and immigration programs and by providing development assistance to most countries of the area. The annual senior officials' consultations with Pakistan and Bangladesh, held in Canada in 1989, provided a good opportunity for an exchange of political and economic views