

During the past several days a number of questions have been raised with regard to the nature of the Government's response to requests from the Government of India and the UNHCR for assistance in providing relief for refugees from East Pakistan. The House will recall that on May 18 the Secretary-General of the United Nations issued an appeal calling for urgent humanitarian assistance to relieve the plight of these refugees and sought the co-operation of governments and private organizations in a co-ordinated effort through the United Nations to alleviate their suffering.

The Government accepts without hesitation that the financial burden of providing relief cannot be borne by India alone. To help meet the urgent human needs in West Bengal and other border states, the Government is providing two million dollars in relief supplies including foodstuffs, medicines, medical supplies and cash contributions. This two million dollars is a supplementary contribution to the international emergency relief appropriation and will not affect the bilateral development assistance programme for India.

It is most important that relief be provided in as effectively co-ordinated a manner as is possible. We are consulting closely with the United Nations in order to ensure that Canada's contribution will complement the contributions of other governmental and private donors who have indicated their willingness to contribute.

The longer-term needs arising out of the presence of the refugees in India are not yet known. This contribution is designed to help meet the immediate needs of the situation.

The Government shares with Members on all sides of the House and Canadians generally the urgent wish to help bring relief to the suffering in East Pakistan. Adequate funds, needed supplies, means of transportation and the right kind of experts are all available. We are continuing, through the World Bank and other international organizations, to seek a way to deal with the problem. Our High Commissioner in Islamabad is urging upon the Government of Pakistan the need to admit relief supplies under proper international supervision and control. I regret that I cannot at this time report any significant progress.