

M I S C E L L A N E O U S

250,000 REPATRIATED IN THE ASIAN SUB-CONTINENT

In its April 1974 issue, the International Review published an article on operations in the Asian sub-continent which, from September 1973 to March 1974, enabled more than 250,000 persons to be repatriated.

The bulletin of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (supplement to No. 6, December 1974), published an article on the subject. A few excerpts are reproduced below:

The rapatriation operation in the South Asian subcontinent which ended on 1 July was aimed at reducing the serious humanitarian sequels to the events of 1971 involving India, Pakistan and the new State of Bangladesh. During the operation UNHCR moved 121,700 Bengalis from Pakistan to Bangladesh, 108,750 non-Bengalis from Bangladesh to Pakistan and 10,850 Pakistanis from Nepal to Pakistan in what has been described as the largest airlift of human beings ever organized. Seven to eight flights a day criss-crossed the skies over the 1,500-mile route, carrying people who through no fault of their own had found themselves stranded minorities.

Eastbound movements to Dacca were virtually completed by the end of March after 121,000 Bengalis had been moved, while the Katmandu-Lahore lift came to an end on 25 March. The last group of non-Bengalis touched down at Karachi on 1 July.

UNHCR personnel stationed at Dacca, Karachi and Lahore to supervise the functioning of the airlift worked closely throughout the operation with government authorities and with the ICRC. The ICRC was responsible for drawing up lists of returnees for clearance by both governments and for the processing and documentation of those who on this basis received permission to move.

Though in the past UNHCR had been involved in organizing repatriation on a substantial scale, the South Asian sub-continent undertaking involved the largest number of people, the longest distances, and the most complex logistical arrangements. It was moreover closely linked, under the terms of the New Delhi Agreement, with the return of 92,000 Pakistani prisoners of war and internees from India. This was completed on 30 April on a bilateral basis under the aegis of the ICRC, thus respecting the principle of simultaneity which was the keystone of the Agreement.

Beyond its immediate humanitarian impact, the operation helped attenuate political tensions in the region. In an agreement signed on 9 April, the Foreign Ministers of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan credited the swift movement of the returnees with having "*generated an atmosphere of reconciliation and paved the way for the normalization of relations on the sub-continent.*"

THE UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY AND CURRENT WORLD PROBLEMS

The main purpose of the fourth session of the United Nations University Council held in Tokyo from 20 to 24 January was to define the broad lines of policy which will enable the rector to present concrete proposals for the programme at the next session, to be held in New York from 24 to 26 June. At the opening session Mr. Amadou Mahtar M'Bow, Unesco Director-General, delivered an address of which the following excerpts contain the substance, especially concerning the problem of peace and international co-operation.¹

...The Director-General then cited a few examples of decisive matters on which the United Nations University, by adopting a scientific, multidisciplinary approach, could advance mankind's knowledge and hence its means of action.

¹ See *Unesco Chronicle*, Vol. XXI (1975), No. 1-2.