

Pakistan Welcomes Returning Citizens

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HOME-COMING : Returning Pakistani citizens approaching a Reception Centre at Meherpur in Kushtia district (above) and at Satkhira in Khulna district. (below)



Ever since the partition of the Subcontinent, there has been considerable movement of people between the newly independent states of India and Pakistan. For instance, nearly 10 million Muslim refugees were pushed into Pakistan by India in 1947 in a bid to smother the young State in its very infancy. In the reverse traffic, about 7 million non-Muslims too went into India and this inflow and outflow has continued ever since: East Pakistan has received more than a million and a half persons from West Bengal, Assam and Tripura. Every time a communal riot breaks out in India (according to Indian papers, there have been 3,477 communal riots in India since 1951, with 7,476 persons dead and 32,445 injured) thousands of Muslims are forced to take refuge in Pakistan, mostly through unguarded unofficial routes to get round the Pakistan Government's general ban on entry of refugees from India.

As communal riots are a frequent occurrence in India—there were 519 of these during the year 1970-71 alone, according to a statement in the Indian Parliament itself—the influx of refugees from India is more or less a continuing process. The larger the magnitude of the carnage—of which the most recent instances were those at Ahmedabad, Maharashtra—the greater the flooding in of refugees from India.

India's Policy of Encouraging Exodus

In sharp contrast to Pakistan's policy of discouraging inflow of refugees, the Government of India has followed a deliberate policy of inviting Hindus from East Pakistan. The temptations offered have included promise of lump sum payments, land and industrial units.

Economic experts believe that the smuggling of gold and other movable property by members of the minority community has resulted in large-scale transfer of resources from East Pakistan to India and became one of the major factors retarding the economic growth of East Pakistan. Actually during the last election campaign, many East Pakistan political parties regretted the fact that while Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his Awami League criticised what it called the transfer of resources from East Pakistan to West Pakistan, they remained suspiciously silent on the much larger flow of national wealth across the border into West Bengal.

This process touched its peak in the earlier part of this year when Awami League rebels and their collaborators carried away to West Bengal not only massive stores of foodgrains and other essential supplies, but a very large number of trucks, buses, jeeps and other vehicles. They even restored the railway line between East Pakistan and West Bengal, un-used since partition, to remove locomotives and rolling stock.

This is the context in which the current refugee problem, exploited by India all over the world, needs to be viewed.

Arbitrary Figures

There is no denying the fact that a very large number of Pakistani citizens left the country during March and April 1971. It is not possible to give the exact number as no machinery existed on either side of the border to keep a count.

Recently when a Member of the Canadian Parliament mentioned a figure of 5 or 6 million, the wife of the famous British author, Professor Rushbrook Williams, asked him sharply, "How do you know, did you count?" She had an equally pertinent question to ask in respect of the stories related by some of these displaced persons. "Did you understand their language", she asked. "If not, who provided the interpreters? The Indians? Didn't they?", she asked; and the MP had to concede that they had to depend on interpreters provided by the Indian authorities.

Whatever the precise number, it is well worthwhile determining the reasons which brought about this movement across the border.

India's Bid to Break Up Pakistan

The reasons may be traced back to India's designs to break up Pakistan through external pressure and internal subversion. Her objective was clearly spelled out by Mr. Subramanyam, Director of the Indian Institute of Defence Studies, in an address to the Institute of International Affairs on 7 April 1971, when he said: "What India must realise is the fact that the break-up of Pakistan is in our interest, an opportunity the like of which will never come again".

The method used to achieve this objective was stated just as bluntly by Mr. K.K. Shukla, General Secretary of the West Bengal Unit of the All India Congress Committee who, addressing that Committee on 4 April, 1971 declared that "Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was fighting India's war".

Apart from India's direct involvement with secessionists in East Pakistan, and her incessant racist propaganda instigating the people of East Pakistan in the name of 'Bengali' race, language and culture, and enticing them with offers of safe

transit and warm welcome to Indian sanctuaries across the border, there were certain other factors which also contributed. Beginning 1 March 1971, there was widespread looting, burning and killing of racial minorities and political "non-conformists" by the India-backed Awami League and its collaborators. A general breakdown of law and order ensued as a result of the massive civil disobedience movement launched by the Awami League Chief, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Jail Breaks and Massacres by Awami Leaguers

The entire administration having been paralysed, there were a number of jail breaks throughout East Pakistan resulting in the release of confirmed criminals including murderers, thugs and goondas who roamed the countryside at will, murdering, robbing and raping.

The massacres carried out by the India-oriented Awami League storm troopers throughout the province during March-April 1971, also forced a large number of people to run across the border to escape slaughter.

During the period after 25 March 1971, there were clashes between the Army and the armed rebels and deserters. This made certain areas insecure for ordinary citizens. The armed rebels themselves, numbering nearly 200,000, lost the fight and fled across the border into India to escape retribution.

Besides the armed rebels, other Awami League leaders and workers, who were too far committed to secessionist designs, also made good their escape.

All the while, there was a tirade of vicious and persistent Indian propaganda from Calcutta Radio. This propaganda succeeded in spreading panic particularly among the Hindu minority, and added substantially to the exodus which was encouraged by repeated Indian announcements that the border was being kept open.

The Indian aims in encouraging a massive movement of people were partly to disrupt the economy of East Pakistan, and partly to discredit the Government of Pakistan by showing that large numbers of people were unwilling to live under the conditions prevailing in the province. Even as India brought about the formation of secessionist regime in exile, it appeared to be in her interest to magnify the extent of human displacement to attract both international attention and sympathy.

Pakistan's Attitude

The Pakistan authorities were initially preoccupied with the restoration of law and order, and the rehabilitation of the administrative machinery that had

been paralysed by the armed rebellion. Only after re-establishing their authority throughout the province were they able to initiate measures to attract the citizens who had left, back to their homes. Among these measures were appeals to the citizens to return, along with an amnesty to restore a feeling of confidence among them.

On 21 May 1971, the President of Pakistan made a fervent appeal urging the *bona fide* Pakistani citizens, who had left due to disturbed conditions in East Pakistan, to come back home. In a statement broadcast by all stations of Radio Pakistan, and also carried by a number of foreign news media, the President said that law and order had been restored in East Pakistan, and life was fast returning to normal. He urged the people not to be misled by the false propaganda mounted by anti-state elements, and to return to carry on their normal functions. He gave a categorical assurance that "there is no question of withholding permission to the return of law-abiding citizens of Pakistan to their respective homes".

It was unfortunate that the Government of India had gone on circulating a highly exaggerated and distorted account of the events which led to these border crossings. The number of persons who crossed into India from East Pakistan had been inflated by adding to these the figures of the unemployed and the homeless of West Bengal where, in Calcutta alone, the number of those who live and sleep on the pavements exceeds two million. It was obvious that India was deliberately playing up the question of refugees not only to threaten Pakistan, but also to justify her own continuing interference in Pakistan's internal affairs. "It is most regrettable", as the Pakistan President put it, "that instead of treating the question of genuine refugees on humanitarian basis, a callous campaign has been launched by India to exploit this issue for political purposes".

The President reiterated this at his press conference in Karachi three days later, on 24 May 1971, and assured the displaced persons that necessary assistance would be provided to them for their return and resettlement.

On 29 May 1971, an official spokesman reiterated the Pakistan President's offer, and said that all genuine Pakistanis, who were forced to leave Pakistan under threat or duress, or were forcibly driven away from their homes by rebels and miscreants, were completely free to re-enter Pakistan, subject of course to routine checks simply to ensure their Pakistani nationality.

Reception Centres Set Up in East Pakistan

Simultaneously with these announcements, Reception Centres for the returning Pakistani citizens were set up at a number of places on important routes

from India into Pakistan, with full arrangements for the reception, relief and return of the people to their homes.

Initially, these Centres were established at Satkhira in Khulna, Benapole in Jessore, Chuadanga and Meherpur in Kushtia, Godagari, Rohanpur and Dhamoirhat in Rajshahi, Khanpur, Thakurpur and Kaliganj in Rangpur, Nalitabari and Durgapur in Mymensingh, Jaintiapur, Kulaura and Chunarughat in Sylhet, Akhaura and Bibirbazar in Comilla, Feni in Noakhali, and Teknaf in Chittagong. Additional centres were set up later on to suit the convenience of returning Pakistanis. At present 29 Reception Centres are fully operating in East Pakistan.

Deserters Allowed to Join Their Families

On 4 June 1971, in an official announcement made from Dacca, Pakistan held out an assurance that the deserters from the armed forces and police could join their families if they surrendered voluntarily. The announcement explained that a number of serving personnel, including some from East Bengal Regiment, East Pakistan Rifles and the Police were misguided by the extremists and disloyal leaders, and made to desert from the units, border outposts and thanas for participation in anti-State activities during the disturbances in March-April 1971.

The majority of such persons, as borne out by their service records, were loyal and patriotic but the circumstances created by a few ambitious, greedy and self-seeking elements had forced them to take a wrong path, and they were separated from their families. "Understanding the circumstances under which such elements were made to deviate, an opportunity is provided to them voluntarily to surrender to the nearest military authorities or police stations with or without their weapons. They can rest assured that for such voluntary surrender, their cases will be considered compassionately. They should remember that this would help them to join their families in their homes and to live as free citizens of the State", the announcement added.

Pakistani Citizens Start Returning to Their Homes

These positive pronouncements and actions had a salutary effect and Pakistan nationals started returning to their homes in large numbers. On 6 June 1971, about 1,000 East Pakistanis crossed over into Pakistan territory near Meherpur in the Kushtia district, and immediate arrangements were taken in hand for their speedy rehabilitation. On 8 June 1971, another 70 families returned to their homes in East Pakistan in the Phulbari area of Dinajpur district. On 9 June 1971, about 4,000 persons arrived in Dinajpur, followed by 150 at the Godagari Reception Centre in Nawabganj sub-division of Rajshahi, and 200 at Meherpur and Chuadanga sub-

divisions of Kushtia district. On 10 June 1971, the *Pakistan Observer*, Dacca, reported that “more people have started trickling into western districts of East Pakistan from across the border. One hundred and fifty persons reported at Rajshahi, 500 at Dinajpur, and 120 at Satkhira”.

With experience gained from the physical requirements as well as psychological needs of those returning after such traumatic events, the arrangements and facilities at the Reception Centres were reviewed and suitably altered and improved. It was decided that each Reception Centre should provide covered accommodation for approximately two to three thousand people, catering for a daily inflow of between 500 and 1000 people, with adequate arrangements to provide food, accommodation and medical cover to those returning. They were also to be provided transport to take them to their homes. Receiving time at the border was from 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. daily, and all *bona fide* Pakistanis were advised to take recognized routes while re-entering Pakistan, so as to avoid unnecessary hardship.

General Amnesty Announced

On 10 June 1971, the Governor of East Pakistan, General Tikka Khan, announced general amnesty to all people who had gone away from their homes under the influence of false and malicious propaganda, and urged them to return to their homes.

The amnesty covered all classes of people, such as students, labourers, businessmen, industrialists, civil servants, armed forces and other law enforcing agencies (EBR, EPR, Police, Mujahids and Ansars etc) as well as political workers and leaders who were all welcome to join their families and resume their normal vocations in life. “It is appreciated”, the general amnesty announcement said, “that they are, without necessity, undergoing the risk of malnutrition and disease. They should return and come forward to participate in national reconstruction as equal partners with the rest of their countrymen”.

2000 Services Personnel Surrender

The offer by the Pakistan Government to the deserters of East Bengal Regiment and East Pakistan Rifles to surrender themselves with or without their weapons, met with good response and about 2000 personnel of different categories surrendered themselves in various parts of East Pakistan. These included 26 officers, 29 Junior Commissioned Officers, and over 1800 other ranks.

By the middle of June 1971, all the Reception Centres were effectively operating in East Pakistan for the returning Pakistani citizens. Apart from about 10,000 returning Pakistani citizens who had reported at these Reception Centres,

another 4000-5000 had come through unrecognised routes, as by now India had started initiating measures to prevent the return of these Pakistani citizens back to their country.

UN High Commissioner Visits Reception Centres

On 9 June 1971, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan arrived in Dacca. He visited a number of Reception Centres in East Pakistan and saw for himself the arrangements made for the returning Pakistani citizens. He also talked to the inmates of some of these Centres.

On 14 June 1971, in a statement issued simultaneously from Geneva and Islamabad, it was announced that the UN High Commissioner for Refugees "was assured of the full cooperation of the Government of Pakistan and visited some Reception Centres which the Provincial Government in Dacca had set up following the statement issued by the President of Pakistan on May 21 urging the persons who had left East Pakistan to return to their homes".

The statement also announced that the UN High Commissioner for Refugees would provide assistance to Pakistan in arranging the return and rehabilitation of displaced persons returning to East Pakistan. The Government of Pakistan agreed that a representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees should be stationed in Dacca to maintain contact with the local authorities in East Pakistan.

On 20 June 1971, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees said that he would visit Pakistan again in due course to see the rehabilitation work of displaced persons in East Pakistan. In a press interview before leaving Pakistan for Geneva, he said that he would shortly appoint a representative for the rehabilitation of the displaced persons in East Pakistan after consultation with the Pakistan Government. He also said that the displaced persons have to decide themselves whether they want to go back to East Pakistan or not, and remarked: "I think that all the displaced persons want to return to their homes in the East Wing".

The approval of the Government of Pakistan to the appointment of Mr. John Kelly, formerly Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in London, as the UNHCR Representative in East Pakistan, was announced subsequently, on 14 July 1971.

Following these arrangements, a number of countries have started providing bilateral assistance in cash and kind to Pakistan for the relief of the displaced persons in East Pakistan. In addition to aid from the United Nations this assistance is in response to the appeal made by the UN Secretary General, U Thant, for the displaced persons in East Pakistan. The office of the UN High Commissioner for

Refugees has been designated by the Secretary General to work as the focal point for the co-ordination of assistance from the organisations of the UN family.

Routine Checks to Establish DP's Nationality

Meanwhile Pakistan Government started working out a proposal seeking India's cooperation to facilitate the return and rehabilitation of displaced persons in East Pakistan. The proposal envisaged a request to India to give facilities to Pakistani social workers to visit camps along the East Pakistan-West Bengal border to collect data regarding the number and particulars of persons wishing to return home, and prepare the ground for their rehabilitation. By drawing up lists at the camps of *bona fide* Pakistani citizens, the social workers would be able to save time at the receiving centres in East Pakistan and speed up the task of rehabilitating them. They would also be able to check upon mounting reports that India is forcibly preventing the return of Pakistani citizens to their homes. Their very presence in the camps, it was hoped, will reassure returning citizens.

The BBC, in a commentary broadcast on 18 June 1971 referred to this "Pakistani proposal for settling the refugee problem by joint Indo-Pakistani action", and said: "At the beginning of June (1971), the Pakistan Government confirmed President Yahya's assurance that all genuine Pakistanis will be welcome home. It added that routine checks to establish nationality would be required. The latest plan goes further. Under it, Pakistan aid officials would enter refugee camps in India. They would collect data of those who want to return, draw up lists of *bona fide* citizens and prepare the ground at receiving centres in Pakistan in order to speed rehabilitation. Such a plan, if offered, could embarrass the Indians seriously. It implies that many of the refugees may not be allowed to return. It will be difficult for India to accept such a proposal, since it would not seem to guarantee absolutely the position of the refugees once they return. But it is a plan which many countries might endorse". In view of India's prevailing attitude, this proposal could not be pursued further.

Indian Brutalities Cited

The returning Pakistani citizens had their own stories of Indian brutalities to tell. At one of the Reception Centres in Jhikargacha, near Jessore, over a dozen Pakistani nationals were interviewed by a correspondent of APP on 16 June 1971 and they corroborated what was already being reported in the foreign press on the basis of information trickling out of the refugee camps on the Indian side of the border. They narrated the tales of atrocities, intimidation, coercion, looting, molestation and beating by volunteers and local inmates of the camps whenever anyone attempted to leave the camp to return to Pakistan.

Some of those returning, victims of hoodlums, showed fresh marks of injuries on their persons while talking to the newsmen, and testified that a round-the-clock vigil was being kept on Pakistani nationals in 'refugee camps' in India to prevent them from returning to Pakistan.

Earlier, according to reports reaching Dacca on 6 June 1971, an Indian army patrol had apprehended 16 Pakistan nationals from the area opposite Comilla and seized all their belongings. The Pakistan nationals were returning to their homes in East Pakistan.

On 10 June 1971, the Indian authorities were reported to have arrested the Sub-Divisional Food Controller of Dinajpur, Choudhury Motiur Rahman, and prevented him from returning to East Pakistan. Mr. Rahman had crossed the border during the recent disturbances, and wanted to return to his homeland along with a number of his countrymen. But Indian authorities did not allow them to do so.

On 14 June 1971, some of those returning reported that the Indians were torturing a number of East Pakistani officials, including Dr. Farooq, Director of the Swedish Technical Institute at Kaptai, East Pakistan, who was misled by Indian propaganda into crossing over to India and was arrested by the Indian Police.

On 15 June 1971, the Dacca correspondent of APP reported: "I watched for two hours at the reception centre in Meherpur the caravans of disillusioned men, women and children trekking through the meandering routes amidst paddy fields. The returnees wore a look which spoke for itself of how the Pakistani nationals, particularly Muslims, were treated in the Indian camps for whom the Indian government have by now amassed nearly twenty crore (200 million) rupees from the world community in the name of humanity by exploiting to the maximum her propaganda machinery.

“ Maltreatment, Torture, Molestation ”

“Scores of returnees interviewed by me narrated woeful tales of maltreatment, torture, and molestation suffered at the hands of ‘volunteers’ and Hindus, mostly from the border areas of India sheltered in the so-called ‘refugee camp’. Mir Ayezuddin, a middle-aged resident of Meherpur Town, said that he had gone to India with 10 members of his family. He was influenced by false and mischievous propaganda. ‘But to my utter dismay’ he said with tears in his eyes ‘those camps are a hell for the Pakistani Muslims’.

“Another returnee was Zillur Rahman, of the same area, (Meherpur) who said the Betai Camp in Tehatta Police station was his abode for two months. He was very sore about the fact that whatever money and belongings he could carry to

India were looted by the locals and the 'volunteers'. He said that he and his family members were on starvation rations. He said that no clothes were given to them, nor were they provided medical care".

A 26-year old school teacher of village Sranpur under Monirunpur Police Station in Jessore District, Mr. A. Rahim, said in an interview on 16 June 1971, that his two months' stay in Mama Bhane camp unfolded to him how India had been bluffing the world, giving highly exaggerated figures of Pakistani displaced persons and the economic burden caused to her. He said that during his meetings with the camp inmates he found at least 50 per cent Indian nationals from the slum area of Calcutta and the unemployed population from the border areas.

Mr. Ram Boiragee, a Hindu young man of village Solok, under Uzirpur Police Station in Barisal district, also confirmed these stories. He said that he had to leave Jessore town, where he was staying, in sheer panic. He was taken to Bangoan camp in India where several hundred persons were huddled together in the worst sanitary conditions. Cholera broke out soon and a number of people fell a prey to the deadly disease. He was living almost half starved, and he decided to return home. While he was leaving the camp, his personal assets, which he had carried with him, were snatched away by one of the volunteers and a dirty *dhoti* which he was wearing was all that he could carry back with him.

Meanwhile, foreign press correspondents quoting Indian sources, reported that the exodus of refugees from East Pakistan had stopped. On 14 June 1971, the correspondent of the London *Times* said: "A senior (Indian) officer, who extensively toured areas of the southern regions of West Bengal, told me today (13 June 1971) that the exodus had ended in this section almost as suddenly as it had begun". He added: "Officials from border towns to the north also claim that the exodus has decreased dramatically".

As the inflow of Pakistani citizens from across the border increased in response to general amnesty and the return-home call by Pakistan, the Government of Pakistan initially sanctioned a cash grant of Rs. 3.9 million as gratuitous relief, and Rs. 1.1 million as house-building grant to the persons affected by the disturbances in East Pakistan. Besides, 80,000 maunds of wheat were distributed free among these people. More substantial grants have since been made as the tempo of the movement back home has picked up.

President Reassures All, In Particular Minorities

On 18 June 1971, the President of Pakistan, in a statement released in Rawalpindi, referred to the fact that on 21 May 1971, he had issued a personal message to all Pakistan nationals who had, due to various reasons, gone to India, to return to

their homes in East Pakistan and resume their normal activities. "It is gratifying to note" he said, "that, despite hindrances put by the interested parties, many Pakistanis have returned and are now on the way to their respective homes. I am certain that many more will follow them. As I said before, there is no question of withholding permission to the return of our own citizens. In fact, East Pakistan Government had made adequate arrangements to receive them and to extend full assistance in their rehabilitation".

The President specially mentioned the minority community and said: "My appeal was addressed to all Pakistan nationals irrespective of caste, creed or religion. Members of minority community should have no hesitation in returning to their homes in East Pakistan. They are equal citizens of Pakistan and there is no question of any discriminatory treatment. I urge them not to be misled by mischievous propaganda being conducted outside Pakistan".

Apart from cooperating fully with the United Nations, the Government of Pakistan took additional steps to demonstrate the importance attached by them to this problem.

On 14 July 1971, the President of Pakistan appointed a distinguished East Pakistani, Dr. A.M. Malik, as his Special Assistant for displaced persons and relief and rehabilitation operations in East Pakistan. In his capacity as Special Assistant, Dr. Malik has the status of a Cabinet Minister, and would report directly to the President on the progress and implementation of relief operations.

Indian Subterfuge

Unfortunately, however, India's attitude, unhelpful at the best of times, was not only grievously antagonistic to Pakistan but also downright hypocritical on the strictly humanitarian question concerning the return of Pakistani citizens.

For one thing, Indians gave out fantastic figures of the displaced persons from East Pakistan. They took advantage of the presence of foreign correspondents and diplomats, who were taken to some of these camps for "sample" check, and the world was made to believe that what one group saw at one place could be automatically multiplied by factors of upto one thousand to arrive at what India gave out as the actual figure of such displaced persons! There has so far been no actual census of these DP's under international auspices, and in the absence of such a census, India's unilateral figures are to say the least, arbitrary. A good example of this was provided when three British MP's admitted at a Press Conference at the London airport on 5 July 1971 that they had prejudged the situation and their opinions were based on talks they had with the 'refugees' in West Bengal *through Indian Government interpreters*.

Secondly, the Indian authorities while making a great deal of noise about the displaced persons from East Pakistan, left no one in doubt about their real intention not to let the DP's return to their homes in Pakistan. As early as 3 June 1971, India's Defence Minister Jagjivan Ram said in a speech in Asansole: "We will not send these evacuees to Yahya Khan's Pakistan but will only allow them to return to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Bangla Desh". This Indian design was given further credence when the Indian Prime Minister herself said at Handwara, near Srinagar, on 20 June 1971 that her Government wanted "not to allow them to become victims of the Pakistan Army". "We shall not push them out to be mowed down", she said, which was sheer political euphemism, meaning that she would not let the Pakistanis return to their homes!

Thirdly, India started shifting more and more of East Pakistani DP's into the interior as far away as Madhya Pradesh. Observers noted that since more foreign correspondents and diplomats were visiting these refugee camps, India was finding it difficult to show the refugees in such fantastic figures as claimed by Indian propagandists. That is why the refugees were being taken away to different states on the pretext of better accommodation. In the process, *bona fide* Pakistani citizens were removed from the border areas to far away places, thus making their return almost impossible. No wonder that, as reported by Reuter news agency from New Delhi on 10 June 1971, "the West Bengal Health Minister said the State Government was taking a serious view of the fact that some of the refugees were unwilling to move from the borders and some were jumping off the trains along the route after boarding them".

Inflow of DP's Hindered

Finally, on the ground, India is making it more and more difficult for Pakistanis to return. According to reports received in Dacca from the border areas, all sorts of hindrances are being put to stop the displaced Pakistanis from returning to their homes in East Pakistan. A Dinajpur report on 22 June said that 250 displaced Pakistanis who had attempted to cross the Pakistan border in the afternoon of 17 June 1971, were stopped by Indian BSF and taken back to an Indian camp in Hili. An Advocate from Comilla, who returned from Agartala, revealed in a statement to the press on 22 June 1971, that East Pakistani refugees in India were being screened and those who wanted to return were stopped from doing so and even threatened to be killed. Eye-witnesses also reported that a Member-elect of the National Assembly, Mr. Ghaffar, was arrested by the Indian authorities while he was trying to return to East Pakistan.

In an interview at Dacca on 14 July 1971, a visiting Member of Australian Parliament, Mr. Leonard Stanley Reid, said that he had seen the

situation on the border from both sides and the responsibility lies with India to remove tension which is preventing the return of the Pakistani nationals who had gone across the border to India. Mr. Reid added that he had visited a number of Reception Centres set up by the East Pakistan Government and he found that adequate facilities for accommodation and medical care were being made available to the returning people and every effort was being made for their quick rehabilitation.

Home-Coming Progressing Steadily

Despite hindrances put by various interested parties across the border, displaced Pakistanis—both Muslims and Hindus—are returning to East Pakistan in increasing numbers through recognised and unrecognised routes. But many of them are preferring unrecognised routes and travel during night to avoid obstruction by the Indians and their agents. This explains the discrepancy in the number of people actually registered at the Reception Centres, and those announced in Government statements as having returned to East Pakistan.

In the last week of June 1971, 1650 more displaced Pakistanis returned to their homes from across the border. Of these persons 100 re-entered Sylhet district through Katalamora BOP, 360 arrived in Dinajpur district, and the rest reported at different reception centres. Among those who crossed over into Satkhira there were as many as 238 members of the minority community. In Rangpur, 80 per cent of the displaced Pakistanis from the district have already returned to their homes.

In other sectors too, the return of DP's continued. 700 such returnees crossed over into Chuadanga sub-division of Kushtia district. 900 more displaced persons returned, including 670 at Khanpur, Thakurgaon and Panchgar in Dinajpur district, 175 at Jhikargacha, and the rest at Satkhira and Chagachi. Among the displaced Pakistanis who reported at these Centres there were a substantial number of men, women and children of the minority community.

The inflow of returning Pakistani citizens has been steadily increasing. According to figures available in Dacca on 17 July 1971, over 75,000 Pakistani nationals had returned to their homes in East Pakistan. Of these more than 60,000 came through *unrecognised* routes and the remaining 15,000 or so through recognised routes.

Indian Motives in Obstructing Return

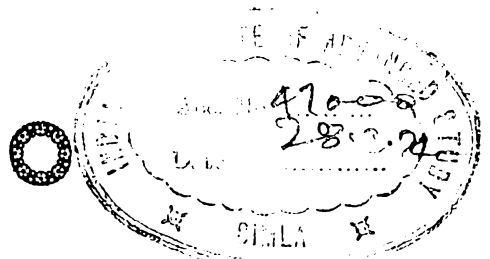
What is India's motivation in preventing the return of these Pakistani citizens? It must be remembered that India has already received a sum of Rs. 120 million in

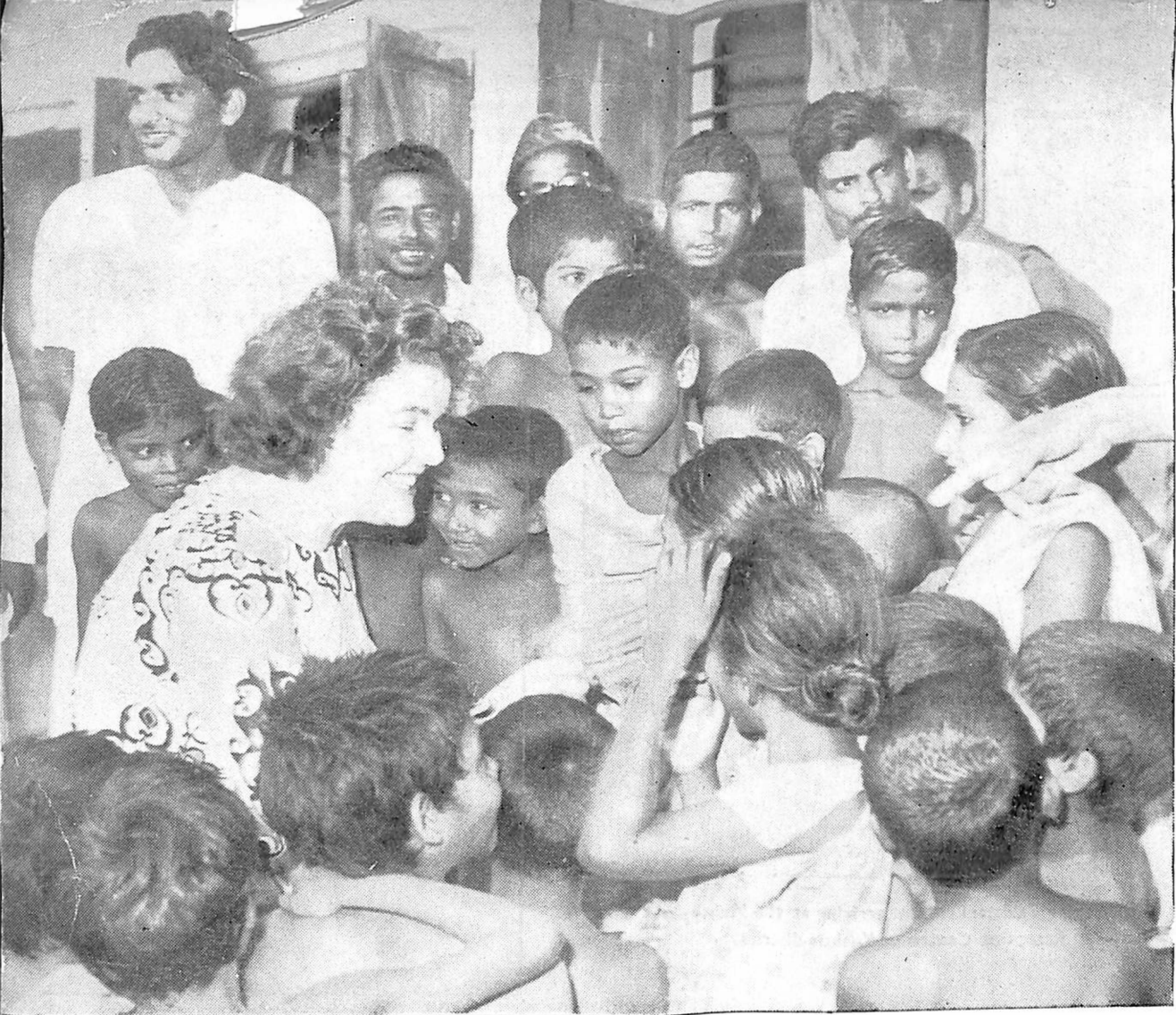
foreign currency on the pretext of feeding these displaced persons from East Pakistan. This amount is part of Rs. 200 million in foreign exchange India is expecting to get overtly on humanitarian grounds but covertly to make good her foreign exchange deficits. Foreign news media have already reported that India is swelling the number of people in the refugee camps, by putting in there her own unemployed population from West Bengal and other neighbouring states. This was confirmed by the London Daily *Telegraph* correspondent, Peter Gill, who disclosed in a despatch published in the paper on 6 July 1971, that "West Bengal destitutes in Calcutta were dumped in these refugee camps". The correspondent quoted Major S.K. Deb, a retired Indian Army Officer incharge of a group of camps in Salt Lake area of Calcutta's suburbs, as testifying that "penniless Indians, living and sleeping in their thousands on unwholesome streets of Calcutta, are seeking admission to the East Pakistani refugee camps on the outskirts of the city". The correspondent added: "What attracts them to refugee camps is the lure of free food, as each adult refugee is entitled, on production of a slip, to 400 grammes of rice per day as well as 100 grammes of vegetables and 300 grammes of pulses. This represents a diet far more varied and generous than enjoyed by many of Calcutta's inhabitants".

India thus sees both economic and political advantages in keeping the 'refugee' bogey alive and in obstructing and sabotaging Pakistan's persistent efforts to ensure their speedy return to their homes in East Pakistan. The Indian game apparently is not to let the issue be resolved, in order to build more and more pressure on Pakistan. This, in their assessment, will make up for the failure of their earlier efforts to break Pakistan through an India-backed armed rebellion in March-April 1971.

Pakistan's Resolve


While taking all measures necessary to facilitate the return of its citizens, with the full cooperation and participation of the U.N., the Government of Pakistan cannot countenance interference in its internal affairs. It is necessary to appreciate that a humanitarian problem is being used by India to justify political intervention to the point of trying to dictate the future set-up of Pakistan. The Government of Pakistan is anxious to see all its citizens back in their homes, and attaches the highest priority to their return and rehabilitation. However, the Government can never permit the problem of displaced persons, which assumed its present proportions due to India's own policies and propaganda, to be turned into an instrument of political blackmail.





Mrs. Jill Knight, a member of the British Parliamentary delegation which visited East Pakistan, is seen with the returning Pakistani children at Jhikargacha Reception Centre in Jessore district.

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