

FOR PRESS

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RELIEF FOR EAST PAKISTAN REFUGEES IN INDIA

Statement by the Prime Minister, Mr. William McMahon

The Government has been following closely developments in the region of East Pakistan. Great distress has been caused by the fighting there and by the resulting economic and social disruption. Large numbers of people have crossed the border into India where they have claimed refuge. This has caused a serious problem for India.

The Government has always had a deep concern for the plight of refugees and victims of emergencies. Similar humanitarian considerations have influenced the Government in deciding to contribute to the international relief effort which is being organised by the United Nations for East Pakistani refugees in India.

The Government has decided to provide half a million dollars in relief for the refugees. Emergency aid worth \$200,000 will be provided immediately. This will consist of \$50,000 in cash and the despatch by air to the official Indian Government relief agency in Calcutta of vaccines, medicines and materials to provide shelter from the monsoon - which is expected to break shortly.

The further \$300,000 of supplies, to be made available subsequently, will be shipped as soon as possible.

The Government has already been in touch with relief organisations in Australia and will provide them with any information and advice received from international bodies and other authorities which are concerned with the relief operation in India.

CANBERRA
27 May 1971