



**DEPARTMENT OF
FOREIGN
AFFAIRS**

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PRIME MINISTER WELCOMES NEW DELHI AGREEMENT

The Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Whitlam, today welcomed the news that agreement had been reached at New Delhi for the resolution of some of the issues that have remained outstanding between India, Pakistan and Bangladesh since the war in 1971.

Mr Whitlam said that the agreement to repatriate almost all of the Pakistani prisoners of war and civilian detainees, and to allow Bengalis in Pakistan to return to Bangladesh and some people in Bangladesh desirous of doing so, to go to Pakistan, would help to alleviate major humanitarian problems resulting from the conflict of 1971.

It was understood that over a quarter of a million people were involved in the proposed exchanges.

The achievement of the Indian and Pakistani negotiators at New Delhi was in accordance with the resolve of their respective Governments expressed in the Simla Agreement that "the two countries put an end to the conflict and confrontation that have hitherto marred their relations and work for the

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promotion of a friendly and harmonious relationship and the establishment of durable peace in the sub-continent".

Mr Whitlam noted that Bangladesh, which had been consulted, had concurred in the agreement now achieved at New Delhi.

Australia, which enjoyed friendly relations with India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, hoped that the way would now be clear for normalisation of relations between all the countries concerned.

The Australian Government, Mr Whitlam said, would continue to take a sympathetic interest in developments.