

REFUGEES WORRY INDIAN OFFICIALS

Disruption Feared as Influx
From Pakistan Increases

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CALCUTTA, India, April 24 — Several hundred thousand refugees fleeing the Pakistan Army have poured into India from East Pakistan, and Indian officials are expressing increasing concern that they may soon become a serious disruptive influence.

The Indian Government is welcoming the refugees as friends in distress and has assumed the costs of food, shelter and basic medical care. Yesterday, however, it appealed for United Nations refugee aid.

Privately, officials are worried that if the refugees stay for any length of time, the pressure for jobs, permanent housing and farming plots will arouse antagonism among the local people who are now their hosts. There are reports that some of this antagonism has already come to the surface.

"It will be impossible for the state government, or the central Government for that matter, to provide rehabilitation for these people," said a high official of the West Bengal State who asked for anonymity. "If they stay long, there will be frictions. Where are the jobs, where are the homestead plots to give them?"

Most Are in West Bengal

West Bengal State is receiving the bulk of the refugees and this compounds the problem, because nearly a quarter of the state's population of 45 million is of earlier refugee origin—most of them Hindus who were unhappy in predominantly Moslem East Pakistan.

This earlier influx has placed tremendous pressure for ownership of scarce farming land and has thereby been the tinder for considerable social strife in this politically unstable state.

The new refugees have come over in the month since the civil war began, most of them in the last two weeks as the Pakistani Army stepped up its offensive to crush the Bengali independence movement.

They are largely Moslems and this presents another irritant—the religious friction between Hindu and Moslem that was the reason for the 1947 partition of the subcontinent into Hindu India and the two Moslem wings of Pakistan.

No Official Complaints

So far, few Indians, and no Indian officials, are publicly complaining about the refugees. There is widespread Indian support for the independence movement and genuine sympathy for the refugees, but the struggle for existence is almost as hard in West Bengal as it is in East Pakistan. And, with more people competing for jobs and land, officials fear the social abrasions will soon appear.

Perhaps the main reason that clashes have not taken place is the common ethnic origin of the East Pakistanis and the people of West Bengal. Both are Bengalis, with the same language, culture and fish-and-rice diet.

East Pakistan's 1,500-mile, roughly semicircular land border is ringed almost entirely by India's West Bengal State, Assam State and the Union Territory of Tripura.

Number Put at Half Million

West Bengal officials say that more than half a million refugees have crossed into their state, although independent observers believe this figure has been somewhat inflated with a view of getting more money from the central Government for refugee support.

Nevertheless, these observers, who include representatives of Western relief organizations, think it possible that the total figure for the entire border region might be half a million and could conceivably reach a million in a short time.

India, in appealing for United Nations aid, put the total at over half a million.

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