

## Refugee Relief Stamps of India

by Dwarkadas Jivandas,  
Box 1553, Bombay 1 BR.

A good deal of interest has been shown by collectors in the REFUGEE RELIEF stamps of India, and it will, therefore, be in order to place before them some relevant information about these stamps.

These stamps were issued for the recovery of a refugee tax levied by the Government to partly meet the heavy burden of maintaining refugees numbering about 10 million who fled to India to escape the Pakistan army.



Refugee Relief Stamps of India (top) first issue overprints; (bottom) current regular issue.

For this, a tax of 5 paise per piece was levied on all postal articles except the post card and registered newspapers, and was payable by affixing to the postal articles a special refugee tax stamp issued for the purpose. This tax came into force on November 1971, and a special stamp for paying it was released on that date.

Being an emergency measure, it was not possible to produce a special stamp at so short a notice, and it was therefore decided to use for it the ordinary 5 paise stamp of the current definitive series (Scott No. 408), overprinting it with the inscription "REFUGEE RELIEF" in English and Hindi. Though these overprinted stamps were released at a large number of important post offices (Bombay, Delhi, etc.) on the due date, Nov. 15, 1971, it was quite impossible to provide supply of the stamp to all the post offices in the country, numbering over 100,000. Consequently, the post offices where supplies could not reach in time were authorized to use their stock of the ordinary 5p stamps for the purpose, and issue them to the public with a rubberstamp inscription of "REFUGEE RELIEF." These overprinted stamps continued to remain in use till the regular stamp now in use was produced. It was issued on December 1, 1971.

In the case of bulk mailings when the postage was paid in cash the postal article

was hand stamped with a round stamp with the inscription "REFUGEE RELIEF TAX PAID IN CASH."

Further to this, the aerogrammes for inland as well as for foreign mail were issued with an extra Refugee Relief imprinted stamp on them on December 1, 1971, and December 31, 1971 respectively.

The handstamped stamps mentioned above having been issued by different post offices were in different styles of type and format, and so they provide for the collector innumerable varieties to vet his thirst for them, and for the dealer fancy prices to fill his pocket with. However with such a large number of post offices in the country, it is virtually impossible for a single collector to acquire all the varieties.