

18 May 1979

## ~~/\$13m aid~~ given to Vietnam

By SIMON MACKLIN

BRITAIN last night announced an aid package for Vietnam designed to try to improve economic conditions and prevent more boat people from leaving the country and setting out for Hongkong.

The Minister for Overseas Development, Mrs Lynda Chalker, said £1 million (HK\$13.15 million) would be made available immediately to British aid agencies working in Vietnam.

A further unspecified amount would be given to agencies to provide 50 per cent of funding for projects designed to aid areas where boat people were coming from.

Mrs Chalker said the funds were a response to a recent initiative by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, designed to quell the flood of people illegally leaving the country.

"Under the scheme we will meet 80 per cent of the cost of agreed humanitarian and economic programmes put forward by British non-government organisations," she said in answer to a parliamentary question.

In particular the cash would go to projects in Hanoi, Hai Phong and Quang Ninh, the three towns in the north of the country from where most boat people in Hongkong have come.

But she pointed out two-thirds of this year's arrivals had come from the south of the country.

In view of this it had been decided to make Vietnam eligible for participation in the Joint Funding Scheme, under which Britain would pay 50 per cent of the cost of approved aid programmes run by British organisations throughout the country.