

5,000 Pakistanis on voter list in Saidpur

E A M ASADUZZAMAN,
Nilphamari

Over 5000 stranded Pakistanis living in 22 'Geneva Camps' in Saidpur have been enrolled in the draft voter list.

A large number of Pakistanis living outside the camps are also on the list, according to opposition political leaders and locals in different areas in Saidpur town.

The political leaders seeking anonymity alleged that stranded Pakistanis living in and outside the camps have enrolled themselves in the draft voter list by hiding their identity. This has been done at the behest of ruling 4-party alliance leaders to increase their vote bank, the opposition leaders alleged.

Most of the Pakistanis who enrolled themselves in the voter list did so by claiming themselves as Bangladeshi citizen by birth. They cited a High Court verdict in this regard.

But sources at the district election office said that there was no

official order from the Election Commission (EC) in Dhaka to enroll them in the voter list.

When contacted, District Election Officer Faridul Islam admitted that stranded Pakistanis have been enrolled but could not say the exact number as their names were not kept separately.

Asked, he said a group of stranded Pakistanis showed him a High Court verdict given in 2003. In the verdict, the court said stranded Pakistanis born after liberation of Bangladesh should be treated as Bangladeshi citizens with the right to be enrolled in voter list.

Asked about any order from the EC in this regard, he said declined to elaborate, saying, "This is official secrecy".

In 2003, 10 youths of stranded Pakistani families filed a writ petition with the High Court, praying that they should be recognised as Bangladeshi citizens as they were born and brought up in Bangladesh and had never been to Pakistan.

In its verdict the court also

ordered the EC to include the petitioners in voter list.

The HC verdict is being interpreted in different ways. One group says the court verdict is applicable to the 10 youths while the another group claims that the verdict has in fact established the right of all young stranded Pakistanis to be enlisted in voter list.

The Saidpur unit General Secretary of Stranded Pakistanis General Repatriation Committee (SPGRC), Riaz Akbar, criticised the enrollment of stranded Pakistanis in the draft voter list.

He said they protested the bid in February this year when the enrollment process began. "We are Pakistanis and would like to remain the same till death", he said while talking to this correspondent.

He said his community does not want to be used in Bangladesh politics.

But Quiyum Khan, General Secretary of another organisation styled Stranded Pakistanis Youth Repatriation Committee (SPYRC)

said that as they got court verdict to be the citizen of Bangladesh, its members should be on the voter list.

As per official records, about 60,000 stranded Pakistanis live in 22 'Geneva Camps' in Saidpur. But in reality, most of them are not confined in camps. They live in different parts of the town, doing different jobs.

Now, only about 3000 stranded Pakistani families with a population of around 20,000 live in the camps.

Election office sources said there are 1,52,564 voters in the draft voter list this year in Saidpur upazila, which was 1,28,669 in the last list prepared ahead of the 2001 parliamentary election.

A survey conducted by a group of local newsmen found that 30 per cent of voters in Saidpur upazila are Urdu speaking people and their number is over 40,000.

BNP leader Amjad Hossain was elected from Saidpur constituency in the last parliamentary election.

Hartal observed in Bogra

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A dawn to dusk hartal was observed peacefully in Bogra and its adjoining areas on Sunday.

Bogra unit of the 14-party Opposition Combine enforced the hartal in protest against harassment to their activists by filing false cases.

All modes of transport remained off the road during hartal hours. Rickshaws were also thin on different roads.

However, the financial institutions operated normally by closing their front gates.

Police arrested eight Jubo League and Chhatra League (BCL) activists for their alleged involvement in damaging nine vehicles during hartal period.

Bogra Awami League (AL) yesterday afternoon held a meeting in Shatmatha area protesting the arrests. BNP also held a public meeting at Altafunessa playground condemning destructive activities of the 14-party opposition.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Satmatha crossing in Bogra town during yesterday's hartal called by 14-party opposition alliance protesting police action on party activists earlier.

Farakka Long March day today

IFC programme in Bhuapur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

The International Farakka Committee (IFC) will observe today the 30th anniversary of historic Farakka Long March led by veteran public leader Maolana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani.

This day in 1976, Bhasani started a long march towards Farakka to protest unilateral withdrawal of Ganges water by India. He had started the long march from Rajshahi Madrasa ground at around 10:00am with about one lakh people. The marchers reached the bank of Pagla river in Kansat border next day.

This year, the day will be observed as 'Anti Water Aggression Movement Day'. Besides Bangladesh, the IFC will observe the day in New York, Rome, Montréal and London, said its Tangail unit president Bulbul Khan Mahub at a press conference in the town on Sunday.

The programme includes a token long march in Bhuapur and a rally at a shoal in Jamuna river.

PLATINUM JUTE MILL

High alert in Khalishpur as workers agitate for arrears

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

Security forces have been put on high alert in Khalishpur industrial belt following agitation by workers and employees of stateowned Platinum Jubilee Jute Mill for payment of arrears wages and salaries.

The mill authorities said they need Tk 12 crore to pay 32 weeks' arrears. The mill is closed.

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) are also keeping an eye on the situation there to go into action whenever called, sources said.

Over 5,000 workers and employees of the mill held a rally at Khalishpur yesterday. Speakers at the rally warned security forces of severe consequence in case of any action against workers agitating for wages and salaries.

They said their families were hungry and they are agitating for wages to buy food.

They also urged the DGM not to leave Khulna and try to resume production until payment of arrear wages and salaries are made.

Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) Commissioner Khan Saeed Hasan told this correspondent that any violence would be severely dealt with if situation demands.

On Sunday, workers and employees laid a siege to the administrative building at the mill and confined 40 officials including the Deputy General Manager (DGM) to their offices for about ten hours from 1-30 pm. The workers had locked the offices.

The workers released all but DGM Mujibar Mallick from confinement at 12:30 am. The DGM was

released at noon yesterday following his commitment that he would convince the government for allocation of funds for payment of arrears wages and salaries.

Agitated workers also put up barricades on four entry points to the mill and torched some unused wooden electricity poles. They snapped power connection to the administrative building, which was not restored till 5:30 pm yesterday.

The DGM said police tried to arrest CBA (collective bargaining agent) leaders of the jute mill but they were absconding.

On the other hand, workers alleged that payment of their arrears wages has been stopped following a secret negotiation between the management and the CBA leaders.

20 children sick after taking polio vaccine

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

At least 20 children fell in to sick allegedly after taking polio vaccine in Sirajganj town in last three days.

They are now undergoing treatment in several hospitals and clinics in the town.

Of them, condition of Eram Ali, 4, son of Rafikal Islam and Santona Rani, 4, daughter of Dr Suresh Singh in the town are critical. The two babies are now undergoing treatment at Avicenna Hospital.

Talking to this correspondent, some victims' families said, their children fell sick within half an hour after taking polio vaccine administered by government health workers.

They started vomiting and had pain in the belly. All the victims showed the same symptoms, it was gathered.

When asked, Dr. Sohel Akhter of Sadar hospital said these are symptoms of food poisoning.

Eran Ali took the vaccine at Sirajganj Sadar Hospital while Santona took it at the Mother's Club in the town, their parents said.

Hospital sources said the affected children are suffering from pain in belly, which might have been caused by food poisoning.

This correspondent visited three affected children at Community Hospital, one at Sadar Hospital and two children at Moyenuddin Memorial Hospital in the town.

When asked, Civil Surgeon Dr Mizanur Rahman said, "We are investigating the matter. A team is working. Nothing can be said before they complete the investigation".

Take up job-oriented training plan in N-dists

Workshop in Rangpur told

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Speakers at a workshop here yesterday urged the government to take up programmes for job-oriented training in northern districts to benefit the poor and the unemployed.

Such programmes can be taken up by the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Department of Youth Development, they said.

Held at the RDRS auditorium, the workshop on Market Assessment Training and Needs was jointly organised by UNDP and the Department of Youth Development.

Director General of the Department of Youth Development presided over the workshop while

Chief Technical Advisor of UNDP/UNOPS moderated it.

The United Nations Development Programme has funded a preparatory assistance project to facilitate the government in formulation of a full-fledged project titled Employment and Empowerment of Women and Youth in support of the PRSP.

The proposed project gives emphasis on market and employment driven approach. It suggests strategic partnerships among government agencies, private sector and NGOs. The speakers appreciated the government sponsored employment generating training programmes in northern districts, particularly in Rangpur and Kurigram.

BNP MAN MURDER Principal among 9 chargesheeted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Charge sheet of Daulatpur BNP leader Mizanur Rahman Bablu murder case has been submitted to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) court.

Investigating officer (IO) Inspector Chillya Ranjan Pal of Detective Branch of Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) filed the charge sheet on Sunday, court sources said yesterday.

Nine people have been chargesheeted in the case. They are principal of Daulatpur Day and Night College SM Abu Saeed, Daulatpur thana Chhatra Dal general secretary Arifuzzaman alias Tila Arif, Mamun, Touhid, Khora Liton, Shahin, Mizan, Commander Babu and Rezaul alias Shahid.

Of the nine chargesheeted accuse, principal SM Abu Saeed and Tila Arif are on bail and the rest are absconding.

Mizanur Rahman Bablu, BNP general secretary in Ward no. 5 in Daulatpur was killed in a bomb attack on the night of October 23 last year at a shop in front of Daulatpur Day and Night College.



Mosharaf Hossain Shamim

SUST student buried in Netrakona

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

Shahajalal University of Science and Technology (SUST) student Mosharaf Hossain Shamim was buried at his family graveyard at Damodarvita in Purbadhala upazila Sunday night.

Shamim succumbed to his injuries he sustained in a police firing in Sylhet Friday night.

Son of Hakmat Ali of Damodarvita, Shamim was a final year BBA student of SUST.



PHOTO: STAR

A succour in water-scarce CHT hills...people through a ring-well at Ali Kadam in Badarban for drinking water. It was sunk by Sonne International, an Austrian NGO recently.

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