

Home they come, at long last

The much-awaited, twice-postponed, repatriation of Chakma refugees from evacuee camps in India's Tripura State, began yesterday. Amid official ceremony on both sides of the border, and emotional scenes among reunited members of long-separated families, the return of the first batch of 282 refugees belonging to 77 families marked the first step towards an eventual solution of the long-simmering problem that has not only strained relations between Dhaka and Delhi but also caused immense problems for the people and successive governments in Bangladesh. Our Chief Photographer AKM Mohsin was there to capture the occasion for the readers of The Daily Star.



A long line of Chakma refugees, carrying their humble belongings, cross over to Bangladesh from Sabroom in Tripura at the Ramgarh border point in Khagrachhari Hill District yesterday.



Refugees walking in to the reception camp built for them at Ramgarh of Khagrachhari Hill District yesterday.



A woman with her three children, all born in evacuee camps on the Indian-side of the border, returning to their homeland yesterday after long eight years.



Expectation and apprehension writ large on their faces, some of the refugees wait anxiously for the next step in their long journey back to their ancestral homesteads in Bangladesh. The picture was taken at the Kathalchhari transit camp in Sabroom.



An elderly Chakma returnee being helped across the wooden bridge over the Feni river, the border between Bangladesh and India, by a relative and a BDR man yesterday.



Bangladesh Communications Minister Oli Ahmed (left foreground) who headed the special parliamentary team assigned to ensure the return of the Chakma refugees being presented a bouquet by Indian Union State Minister P.M. Saeed (bearded) at Sabroom in South Tripura district yesterday. Also seen are Tripura Chief Minister Dasarath Deb (in cap) and Governor Kamesh Bhandari (right).



Indian and Bangladesh government leaders, as well as leaders of the Chakma tribes, addressed a gathering in Sabroom marking the start of the repatriation of Chakma refugees yesterday.