

Fate of stranded Pakistanis still hangs in the balance

Repatriation process remains stalled since 1982

UNB, Dhaka

The issue of repatriation of some 2,50,000 stranded Pakistanis gets complicated with the passage of time as Pakistan and relevant organisations simply ignore it and make other issues as their priority agenda, according to a study.

Who will take the responsibility of these stranded Pakistanis? Is it Pakistan, Bangladesh, UN or international humanitarian organisations? Or will the world humanity keep sitting on the sidelines and see them perishing in an inhuman condition in dark camps? the study questions.

Unofficial statistics put the number of the stranded Pakistanis at between 2,37,000 to 3,00,000 sheltered in as many as 70 refugee camps, now reduced to 66, across Bangladesh.

For their early repatriation, the International Red Cross had prepared a list of about 5,00,000 stranded Pakistanis who opted for Pakistan. By 1974, the Pakistan government had transferred 1,08,000 stranded people to Pakistan. The number rose to 1,63,000 by 1981.

In 1982, some 4,600 stranded Pakistanis were repatriated to Pakistan after a year of no publicised plans for official repatriation by the Pakistan government. The US \$1.5 million airlift was financed by Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf states. The operation was done in cooperation with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).

Since 1982, the repatriation process has remained stalled. As per a tripartite agreement signed by India, Bangladesh and Pakistan in 1974, all the remaining Pakistanis staying in camps were to be taken back by Pakistan.

Since then, late Pakistan President Ziaul Huq, former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and incumbent President Pervez Musharraf never declined to accept these Pakistanis. Nawaz and Musharraf even gave categorical assurances to the Bangladesh governments for initiating the repatriation process.

During his official visit to Bangladesh, President Pervez Musharraf gave categorical assurance to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's government to take up this humanitarian issue on priority basis, but no initiative is seen till today, says the study, conducted by NewsNetwork.

About the repatriation of the remaining stranded Pakistanis, former foreign minister Dr Kamal Hossain, who is also a signatory to the tripartite agreement among India, Bangladesh and Pakistan of 1974, said the agreement envisages the provision to take back the remaining Pakistanis in Bangladesh.

"We have created the framework" to send back these people, he said, adding that it needs "political will" of the governments in both Pakistan and Bangladesh to resolve this humanitarian problem.

He feels that the two governments should make it a priority issue and sit across the table with the problem solving approach and settle it through a meaningful discussion.

Analysts and researchers said there has not been any sustained move by Islamabad and Dhaka to take it up as a humanitarian crisis. Both the governments should immediately sit and settle the matter given the existing good relation between Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Some also think that since most of these stranded Pakistanis have technical skills and since oil-rich Middle Eastern countries need skilled and semi-skilled workers, a move could be undertaken by the governments concerned to send them to those countries on jobs. If they become well-off financially, their problem would be solved.

Many of these stranded people who became financially sound have already gone to Pakistan and have been living over there without causing any burden to the Pakistan economy.

International organisations such as UNHCR, ICRC and UNDP, which have been providing billions of dollars for the distressed people from Afghanistan to Sudan, could also take a new initiative to help this crying humanity whose weal and woes have so far been ignored.



Although located at the heart of the Chittagong city, Chandgaon Police Station premises remain under knee-deep water during high tide for nearly four hours every day.

DEBATE FESTIVAL BEGINS

3 clubs reach semifinal round

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three debating clubs reached the semifinals in the Third Holy Cross-Coca-Cola and The Daily Star Bengali Debate Festival that began in the city yesterday.

The inaugural ceremony of the debate with the slogan 'May the global conflict be resolved through exercise of logic' was held on the Holy Cross College premises.

The clubs that reached the semifinals are the Dhaka University Debating Society-1, the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology Debating Society and the Group of Debaters.

They defeated the Dhaka Medical College, the Dhaka University Debating Society-2 and the Government Science College in the quarterfinals.

Another semifinalist will be selected from two participants -- Notre Dame College and North South University -- who will take part in the quarterfinal today.

A total of 13 debating clubs of different colleges and universities took part in the first round of the contest and seven of them qualified for the quarterfinals on the first day of the three-day festival.

The motions of the debates were 'Pulling out American forces of Afghanistan is now the demand of time', 'Attack on Iraq is mainly for oil' and 'America failed to establish democracy in Afghanistan'.

The semifinals and an open debate session will be held today and the final of the competition will take place at the city's LGED auditorium on August 12.

WAEPA launched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women having the highest technical degrees are not much involved in professional sector due to social perspective and uncongenial workplace, said the speakers on Thursday.

They blamed the gender disparity, though it is invisible, unwritten and unrecorded both at workplaces and in society, as a major impediment to their involvement in professional fields.

The speakers were addressing the launching ceremony of Women, Architects, Engineers, Planners Association (WAEPA) at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) in the city.

They said WAEPA, first of its kind in the country, has been formed to act as the apex body of women technical professionals.

Ten women scientists awarded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ten women scientists have been awarded the 'Fame of the Hall' for their contribution to science education.

Bangladesh Women Scientists' Association (BWSA) honoured them at its annual conference and general meeting held at the IST auditorium at Dhanmondi, in the city on Thursday.

The awardees are Prof Dr Anwara Begum, Dr Gulroo Begum Sufi, Dr Ayesha A Mumin, Dr Ayesha Khatun, Prof Shahida Khanam, Dr S Nurun Nabi, Dr FS Majid, Hosne Ara Mukbul-e-Khoda, Dr Rowshana Ara Samad and Lutfun Nahar Rashid.

Prof Dr Afrozi Yousun of Jahangirnagar University attended the conference as the chief guest while Association President Dr Gulroo Begum presided.

MAKING CHILDREN AWARE OF LIBERATION WAR HISTORY

Freedom fighters narrate war experiences

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Valiant freedom fighters gathered at a unique function in the city yesterday to narrate their experiences during the nine-month Liberation War to the new generation.

"It still amazes me while recalling the incident that a 13-year-old girl hurled two grenades at the Pakistani army from only 12 to 13 yards away, and thereby saved the lives of 20 freedom fighters, including me," said Major (Retd.) Hamidul Hossain Tareque Bir Bikram at the inaugural ceremony of the programme.

The Muktiyuddha Utsab: Bangladesh organised the programme titled 'Muktijuddher Golpo Shono' (Listen to the story of the Liberation War) at the Liberation

War Museum in the city.

The war heroes also thanked the organisers for taking such an initiative to instil patriotic pride in young generation.

"I convey my thanks to the persons who have taken the initiative at a time when we have failed to project the real picture of the liberation war to the young generation," said Air Vice Marshal (Retd.) Abdul Karim Khandakar, Bir Uttam, while inaugurating the event.

Dr Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, president of Muktiyuddha Utsab, said, "We have launched the programme with a view to making the children aware of the supreme sacrifices of the freedom fighters and their courageous roles during the liberation war."

The programme will inspire the

children and adolescents to uphold the spirit of the liberation war throughout their life, he added.

The day-long programme will also be organised in other cities. In addition, quiz and essay competition on the liberation war history, reception to local freedom fighters and prize giving ceremony will be held as part of the programme.

Freedom fighter Habibul Alam Bir Pratik, Mahbub Elahi, Milly Rahman, wife of martyred Flight Lieutenant Matur Rahman Bir Sreshtha, and many others also spoke.

The trustees of Muktiyuddha Utsab are Dr Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, Dr Yasmin Haque, Major (Retd.) Qamrul Hasan Bhuiyan, Major (Retd.) Hamidul Hossain Tareque and Farid Ahmed.



PHOTO: STAR

Freedom fighter Habibul Alam Bir Pratik narrates Liberation War experiences at the inaugural ceremony of a programme titled 'Muktijuddher Golpo Shono' (Listen to the story of the Liberation War) organised by Muktiyuddha Utsab: Bangladesh at the Liberation War Museum in the city yesterday.

WEATHER
T O D A Y

Light to moderate rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at most places over Barisal and Khulna divisions and at many places over rest of the country till 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy falls are also likely at places over Barisal and Khulna divisions during the period. Met Office said. It said day temperature is likely to remain nearly unchanged over the country.

Highest temperature 35.7 degree Celsius was recorded today at Sylhet and lowest 24.5 degree Celsius at Mymensingh.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:43pm today and rises at 5:27am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	33.7	26.9	70	78
Chittagong	33.0	26.0	73	78
Rajshahi	33.0	27.0	75	67
Khulna	33.0	26.8	79	79
Barisal	31.5	26.2	82	81
Sylhet	35.7	26.8	65	61
Cox's Bazar	--	25.0	85	--

NSU seminar on teaching tips for teachers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Quality teaching in higher education is a must for achieving socio-economic development in the country, speakers at a seminar said yesterday.

Expert teaching at the university helps develop a knowledge-based society, they said.

The North South University (NSU) organised the seminar on 'Teaching Tips for University Teachers' where Dr Ahmed Mustafa of Purdue University of the USA presented the keynote-paper.

He discussed the latest methodology in university teaching and skills necessary for effective and productive teaching.

Prof Dr M Asaduzzaman, chairman of University Grants Commission, and Dr Hafiz GA Siddiqi, vice-chancellor of NSU, were present as the chief and special guests respectively.

Improvement in teaching is a continuous process and a lifelong endeavour, said Dr SAM Khairul Bashar, Pro-VC of NSU, who chaired the seminar.

'Strengthen drive against adulterated food'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a rally yesterday called for strengthening the current drive against adulterated food and unhygienic process of food preparations in different establishments.

They said the common people are becoming victims of different diseases by taking adulterated food and chemical ingredients.

The speakers said 'total discipline in food sector' has broken down and they are now horrified by the standard of food in bakeries and restaurants.

"Our children are going to be a part of sick generation in future," they cautioned.

The rally was organised by Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) at Shahbagh crossing in the city.

The speakers said massive food adulteration and use of harmful chemicals are taking place mainly due to dishonesty of some unscrupulous businessmen and government officials concerned.

They said though late the drive should be extended to all over the country.

The speakers also demanded amendment to existing laws to ensure the consumers' rights to safe food.

Presided over by Prof Dr AM Moazzem Hossain, the rally was addressed by Bapa General Secretary Mohidul Haque Khan, Executive Member Dr Badiul Alam Majumder, Joint Secretary Zakir Hossain, JK Baral, Dr MA Matin, Mihir Biswas, Engineer Kazi Md Sheesh, Dr Shahidul Islam, Sharif Jamil, Dr Golam Mawla of Dhaka University, Dr Nuruddin, Advocate Abed Raja, Ferdousi Sultan Munni, and Ashraf Amir.

Earlier a human chain was formed in the area demanding safe food and stern action against the food adulterators.

Different organisations including SEED, Nagonik Uddog, Hunger Project, Puran Dhaka Paribesh Unnayan Forum, Jubo Nagonik

Odhikar Jote, Work for a Better Bangladesh, Sylhet Division Development Action Forum, Nahar Health Service and Welfare

Association, Srama Bikash O Paribesh Samabay Samity, Cats Bangladesh, and World Peace Forum took part at the programme.

DHAKA
T O D A Y

Briefing

A briefing session on 'Earthquake management and application of building code' will be held with Disaster Management and Relief Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yousuf as chief guest. Venue: Seminar Room of LGED Bhaban, Agargaon. Time: 10.00am.

Seminar

The Centre for Strategic and Peace Studies organises a seminar on 'Water management in Bangladesh: Regional issues and concerns.' Venue: Cirdap Auditorium, Topkhana Road. Time: 10.00am.

BELTA workshop

Bangladesh English Language Teachers' Association holds a practical hands-on workshop for English teachers on 'An interactive guide to lesson planning.' Venue: British Council Auditorium, Fuller Road. Time: 4.30pm.

CWFD workshop

Concerned Women for Family Development organises a workshop on the 'Role of media workers in resisting women's repression at family level.' Venue: Seminar Room of Bangladesh Press Institute. Time: 10.00am.

NEOC discussion

A discussion will be held to mark the 10th founding anniversary of National Election Observation Council. Venue: Bangladesh Federation of Film Societies

Auditorium, 62 Laboratory Road. Time: 10.00am.

Manos discussion

Manos, an anti-drug forum, will hold a discussion titled 'Our responsibility in resisting drug addiction' with City Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka as chief guest. Venue: National Museum, Shahbagh. Time: 11.30am.

Discussion

Women Entrepreneurs Academy organises a discussion on how to increase facilities for women entrepreneurs. Venue: Jubak Hall Room, 53 Purana Paltan. Time: 10.00am.

Prize giving ceremony

Shilpachariya Zainul Abedin Smriti Parishad will hold a discussion and give away the Shilpachariya Award 2004. Venue: BCS Administration Academy. Time: 5.00pm.

Rotary Central

Weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Dhaka Central will be held. Venue: Dhaka Club, Shahbagh. Time: 1.30pm.

Rotary North West

Weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Dhaka North West will be held. Venue: Poolside Lounge of Dhaka Club, Shahbagh. Time: 5.30pm.

SWECHHASEBAK LEAGUE OBSERVES TOKEN HUNGER STRIKE

Govt involved in Aug 21 grenade attack: Zillur

UNB, Dhaka

Awami Swechchhasebak League (ASL) observed a token hunger strike at Bahadur Shah Park in the city demanding fair and transparent international probe into the August 21 grenade attack on an Awami League rally.

The hunger strike, led by ASL president Bahaoddain Nasim, began at 9:00am and ended at 12:00 noon. The family members of the victim's of the August 21 grenade attack participated in the token hunger strike.

Speaking on the occasion, Awami League acting president Zillur Rahman MP accused the BNP-Jamaat alliance government of dishing out "make believe" information on the grenade attacks through the confessional statement of a criminal, Judge Mia.

The alliance government was involved with the grenade attack, he said, adding that without support of the government and the administration, it was not possible to carry out such a savage attack in broad daylight.

"The government has no interest in conducting a fair and transparent investigation as it was involved with the grenade attack," Zillur said.

Referring to the Chief Election Commissioner's dialogue programme with the political parties,



PHOTO: STAR

Awami Swechchhasebak League observes a token hunger strike at Bahadur Shah Park in the city yesterday.

he said that this was "just a blueprint to foil the opposition demand" for reforms of the caretaker government and the election commission. "Our demand is a neutral election commissioner."

AL Joint Secretary Obaidul Kader, Maj Gen (Retd) AMSA Amin, Mirza Abdul Jalil, former ambassa-

dor Momtaz Hossain, Pankaj Devnath, Motaaher Hossain Mollah, Kazi Shahidullah and Pathik Saha also spoke.

Later, Zillur Rahman offered juice to Bahaoddain Nasim to break the three-hour hunger strike programme.

Hasina's return from USA deferred

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, who was due to return home from the USA today, has deferred her return.

A source close to Sheikh Hasina told the BDNEWS that she might stay there for one more week following the advice of her physician in the USA.

The source said that an ear specialist at Orlando tested her hearing on Wednesday. But her right ear is not working properly.

Sheikh Hasina is now staying at the house of her son Sajib Wajed Joy in Washington. But she has to return to Florida following appointment with her physician.

Sheikh Hasina left for the USA for treatment of her ear on July 16.

MoU signed to help acid survivors

Square Toiletries Limited (STL) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Acid Survivors' Foundation (ASF) on 27 July, says a press release.

STL General Manager Md Mahmudul Hoque and ASF Executive Director Munira Rahman signed the MoU on behalf of their organisations.

According to the MOU, Square Toiletries Ltd will donate a portion of the sales revenue generated by Senora Sanitary Napkin to ASF. It will be used for the socio-economic development of survivors of acid violence and to raise public awareness against the acid violence.

4 frauds held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

CID (criminal investigation department) police have arrested four alleged members of an organised gang who were cheating people pretending to be the owners of private and government lands through forged documents.

The arrestees Amulya Chandra Biswas, 57, Humayun Kabir, 55, Hosne Ara Begum, 34, and Rashida Akhter, 75, were held up from the city's Sabuzbagh area on Thursday.

Police said members of the gang as their strategy to carry out the fraudulence activities rented houses in posh areas and allured the customers.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dr Ishtiaq Ahmed Chowdhury, medical officer of Moulvibazar Sadar Hospital passed away due to a cardiac arrest at the Sylhet Royal Hospital and Research Centre on Thursday at the age of 46, says a press release.

Dr Ishtiaq was admitted to the hospital on Wednesday.

He left behind his wife, mother, three brothers, four sisters, one daughter and one son and a host of admirers to mourn his death.

Dr Ishtiaq, eldest son of ex-police official late Golam Rob Chowdhury, hailed from Gopalganj upazila in Sylhet.

He worked as medical officer at Kulaura Upazila Hospital and Monu Union Sub Centre for a long time.

He was laid to rest at the Hazrat Shah Jalal shrine graveyard after Maghrib prayers on Thursday after namaz-e-janaza at the Hazrat Shah Jalal shrine mosque.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil was held at his Gowaipara residence in Sylhet on Friday.