

CITIZENSHIP ISSUE
SPGRC to lay siege to Pak HC
Nov 16

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Stranded Pakistanis General Repatriation Committee (SPGRC) yesterday protested the non-holding of a meeting between its delegation and Pakistan Prime Minister Shaikat Aziz for resolving their citizenship issue.

The SPGRC began a fast unto death programme in the city on Friday demanding a meeting with Shaikat Aziz who came here to attend the just concluded Saarc summit.

Speaking at a press conference at Geneva camp at Mohammadpur, the SPGRC leaders also protested what they said 'sarcastic' remark of Pak envoy in Dhaka who termed the stranded Pakistanis as 'Bangladeshi Biharies.'

The SPGRC will march to Pakistan High Commission in Dhaka on November 16 to lay a siege to the commission office and register their protest.

In a written statement, committee presidium member Nesar Ahmed said they contacted Pakistan High Commission here for a 10-minute meeting between a delegation of their group and the Pak PM on November 9 but they [high commission] 'bluffed' us on different lame excuses.

He demanded a tripartite meeting to resolve the longstanding issue of stranded Pakistanis and withdrawal of the comments of Pak envoy which he claimed has made the settled issue of stranded Pakistanis a controversial one.

Speaking on the occasion, committee President Abdul Jabbar Khan said, "We have been getting justice from neither Bangladesh nor Pakistan for last 34 years."

"Either give us relief from our confinement or shoot us," he urged both Bangladesh and Pakistan governments.

The SPGRC also demanded of Bangladesh government for immediate restoration of suspended relief, stoppage of demolition of their camps and ensuring safety and security of stranded Pakistanis throughout the country.

SPGRC General Secretary M Shawkat Ali, Vice-president Nezam Uddin Khan, presidium member Md Mahmud Khan and Harunur Rashid were present at the press conference.

NGO SERVICE DELIVERY PROGRAMME

GP to donate mobile phones to paramedics

UNB, Dhaka

The GrameenPhone (GP) has agreed to donate mobile phones to skilled paramedics currently piloting home-based safe-delivery services as part of the USAID-funded NGO Service Delivery Programme (NSDP).

With this generous donation, families will find it much easier to ensure the presence of trained medical providers at childbirth. And the midwives themselves will be able to easily contact hospitals or other emergency obstetric care centres should the need arise.

In Bangladesh, 90 percent of births take place at home -- many attended by unskilled traditional birth attendants, family members, or no-one at all, said a press release. Only four percent of deliveries in very poor families are attended by skilled health personnel.

Bangladesh's maternal mortality rate is currently between 320 and 400 per 100,000 live births, one of the highest in the world. Use of skilled birth attendants holds much promise in helping to meet the UN Millennium Development Goal of reducing that rate to 143 by 2015.

The NSDP plan aims to increase the use of skilled birth attendants by making paramedics from Smiling Sun clinics available after hours, and by improving their skills and providing other logistical support, including clean delivery kits.

Since the Smiling Sun NGOs serve mostly poor families, the Grameen assistance is vitally important. Since few poor families will have a phone available to call for a skilled health worker to conduct a normal delivery, or to call an ambulance for a complicated delivery.

Providing mobile phones to community-based paramedics will help reduce the numbers of complicated deliveries where women never reach a hospital for emergency management.

NSDP (the NGO Service Delivery Programme) is a consortium of international development partners, which provides technical assistance and support to a network of 35 Bangladeshi health care NGOs.



PHOTO:AFP

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia addresses the closing session of the 13th South Asian Association for Regional Cooperations (SAARC) Summit yesterday as Maldives President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom and Bhutanese Prime Minister Lyonpo Sangay Ngedup look on.

Biman to ferry 18,000 ballottee Hajj pilgrims

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Biman Bangladesh Airlines will ferry 18,000 ballottee Hajj pilgrims to Saudi Arabia under government management at a cost of US\$ 950 per person.

The government has taken the decision in view of the lack of adequate aircraft in the Biman fleet. Also, flights were not available even after floating tenders.

The decision was taken at a meeting held at the residence of State

Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Nasiruddin in the city yesterday.

The meeting was told that the Biman will carry non-ballottee pilgrims alongside the ballottee ones and to this end it will avail aircraft of different airlines and fix a reasonable fare for the pilgrims.

Nasiruddin chaired the meeting attended by State Minister for Religious Affairs Mosharef Hossain Shajahan, Secretary Rafiqul Islam,

Civil Aviation Secretary AKM Zafarullah Khan, Civil Aviation Authority Chairman Air Commodore Harun Chowdhury and Managing Director of Biman Mahmudur Rahman.

Manmohan's wife visits Sikh temple on DU campus

UNB, Dhaka

Gursharan Kaur, wife of Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, yesterday visited Gurudwara Nanak Shahee, a Sikh temple located on the Dhaka University campus.

Gursharan, accompanied by officials of the Indian High Commission, arrived at the temple at 4:25pm. She joined a special prayer session and listened to religious songs during her 40-minute stay.

A tight security blanket was thrown around the entire campus during her visit to the temple. Policemen, Rapid Action Battalion members and plainclothes police were deployed under the coordination of Special Security Force (SSF).

Mathbaria journals to boycott AL programmes

UNB, Pirojpur

Journalists of Mathbaria upazila in the district yesterday decided to boycott all Awami League programmes as local AL leaders misbehaved with two local newsmen on Saturday night.

The local journalists said AL leader Afzal and poura chairman M Ferdous called Mujibur Rahman and Abdus Salam Azadi, district correspondents of Sangbad and Jugantar, at their offices on Saturday.

They reportedly misbehaved with the newsmen as the name of local Awami League secretary was not in their report on the founding anniversary function of Bangladesh Awami Jubo League.

Later, Mujibur and Salam lodged GDs with local police station in this connection.

The journalists yesterday at an emergency meeting at the local press club decided not to cover AL programmes.

ATTACK ON BRAC OFFICE

Galib relieved of charges

UNB, Naogaon

Asadullah Al Galib, leader of Ahle Hadith Movement, and seven others were yesterday relieved of the charges of bomb attack on Brac office early this year.

District and Sessions Judge Abdul Hakim Mondal relieved them of the case as the prosecution, during the hearing, failed to probe their involvement in the bomb attack.

Police had accused 59-year-old Galib and seven others of bomb attack on Brac office at Porsha in Naogaon on February 16 this year that left four people injured.

Galib, also head of the Arabic Department of Rajshahi University, faces more than half a dozen similar cases in different districts.

Others relieved of the case are SM Azizullah, Principal Abdus Salam Salafi of Al Salafi Dakhil Madrasa, Gangni Degree College Administrator Nurul Islama, Shafiqul, Apel Mahmud, Mahubb Alam and Shafiqullah.

Withdrawal of RU admission form price hike demanded

RU CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Pragatishil Chhatra Jote (PCJ) of Rajshahi University (RU) yesterday demanded withdrawal of increased price of the admission forms under 2005-2006 academic sessions.

They submitted a memorandum to RU Pro Vice Chancellor Prof Mammunul Keramat with their two-point demand that also includes ensuring residential facility for each admission seekers in the dormitories.

They threatened to go for an indefinite student strike from tomorrow unless their demands are met.

PCJ, a conglomerate of four left leaning student organisations, also held a rally on the central library premises.

They said the increased price of admission form, which rose to Tk 90 from previous Tk 75, adds to the miseries of the students already burdened with increased prices of educational materials and different fees.

Thus the authorities are making it difficult for the students to continue studies, they said.

SCF President Shusantho Singha presided over the rally.

PCJ leaders told newsmen that RU Pro VC assured them to discuss their demand with the university authorities.

Smarter kids may live longer: study

REUTERS, New York

Smarter children may enjoy longer lives, the results of a new study suggest.

The study, which followed elderly adults deemed gifted by childhood IQ tests, found that the higher their early IQs were, the longer they lived -- up to a point, at least. The survival advantage began to plateau after a childhood IQ of 163, an intelligence level few people reach.

Dr Laurie T Martin and Laura D Kubzansky of the Harvard School of Public Health report these findings in the American Journal of Epidemiology.

Though the reasons for the link between IQ and longevity are not clear, it does not appear to be merely a reflection of income and social position. As children, the participants were from affluent families and most were white. Yet childhood IQ was still a factor in their lifespan.

Similarly, in an earlier study of Americans with more varied childhood IQs and family incomes, Martin found that IQ was related to health problems independently of socio-economics.

This, she told Reuters Health, suggests that IQ affects longevity among lower-income people as well.

As research has already linked IQ to mortality, the current study, according to Martin, was in part an attempt to see how far the IQ-health advantage extends. The researchers expected there to be a cutoff at which a high IQ no longer brought any extra health benefits.

And there was. But, Martin said, they were surprised at how high that cutoff turned out to be.

IQs of 163 or higher are not often seen; the average IQ score in the general population is 100 (by definition), and children who score above 130 are considered 'gifted.'

The current study is based on data from 862 men and women followed since childhood, starting in 1922, until 1986. All had childhood IQs of 135 or higher, with the average being 151.

The researchers found that, up to the cutoff point of 163, participants' risk of dying during a given period decreased as their IQ increased; for example, those with a childhood IQ of 150 had a 44 percent lower risk of death than those with an IQ of 135.

Proposal to set up Saarc parliament

Badruddoza meets Manmohan Singh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former president and Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh Chief Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury paid a

courtesy call on Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh at his hotel suit in the city yesterday.

During the 25-minute meeting, Prof Chowdhury placed an 11-point

proposal to the Indian premier for strengthening the Saarc

(South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation)

The proposals included formation of a Saarc parliament like that of European parliament and enhancing cooperation among the member countries to eliminate terrorism and poverty from the region.

Manmohan Singh showed interest in Chowdhury's proposal for a Saarc parliament, said a Bikalpa Dhara press release.

The Indian premier said he would continue his endeavour to make the Saarc more effective in future.

Dr Singh invited B Chowdhury to visit India which was accepted by the former president.

Bikalpa Dhara Secretary General Major (Retd) Abdul Mannan, Organising Secretary Mahi B Chowdhury MP and Office Secretary Major (Retd) Nadir Ahmed accompanied Prof Chowdhury.

State Minister for External Affairs of India E Ahamed, Secretary of External Affairs Shyam Saran and Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Veena Sikri were present on the occasion.

Woman 'murdered'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A young housewife was allegedly murdered for dowry on Saturday night at Uttara area in the city.

On information from in-laws, Uttara police recovered the body of Sheikh Julfiara Akhter Sonia, 18, from her in laws' house on Khair Street in East Azampur and sent it to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for autopsy on the same night.

"My daughter has been killed for dowry," alleged Sonia's father Sheikh Abdul Zabbar, who rushed to Dhaka from his house in Moulavibazar yesterday morning after hearing the news.

Zabbar further alleged that Sonia's husband Selim Bhandari as well as his parents used to torture Sonia mentally and physically for dowry since her marriage in February this year.

"We have given gifts worth more than Tk three lakh, but they have been insisting for a cash of Tk eight lakh for the last three months for sending Selim to Europe," Zabbar said.

However, police quoting Sonia's in-laws said she committed suicide hanging herself from fan.

Police also said an unnatural death case was filed with Uttara police station.

But, Zabbar while receiving his daughter's body told reporters he will file a murder case accusing her husband and four members of her in-laws. Boy kills himself

In a separate incident a 12-year old boy committed suicide yesterday noon in the city's Pallabi area. Pial, a student of class-V, hanged himself following his mother's reprimands.



Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad called on Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at Hotel Sheraton in the city on Saturday.

Abbas struggles with Arafat's Palestinian legacy

REUTERS, Ramallah

At least one change is evident in the Palestinian corridors of power since Yasser Arafat died a year ago -- the new coat of paint.

But President Mahmoud Abbas is finding it much harder to break with the deeper legacy of Arafat's chaotic rule or revive statehood talks with Israel than to transform the miserable compound where the former guerrilla spent his declining years.

True, a breakthrough on a ceasefire allowed a smooth Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Gaza Strip. Abbas has also helped the Palestinians back to diplomatic centre stage.

But much still needs doing to address the internal problems eating away at the Palestinian Authority -- growing insecurity, defiance from militant groups, corruption, deep poverty, and intrigue among an entrenched old guard.

"If you don't get your own house in order, you can't really ask anybody in

the international community to come and support you," Abbas's chief of staff, Rafiq Hussein, told Reuters.

Meanwhile, Israel looks in neither the mood nor a position for statehood talks as it heads towards elections.

Abbas, a grey-suited businessman of 70, avoided the collapse into anarchy that many feared after the death on November 11, 2004, of Arafat, the autocratic symbol of the fight for a state.

On the surface, the Arafat chapter is closed. Neatly furnished rooms in Arafat's Muqata headquarters, cleared of the musty reek that lingered from his last years spent under Israeli siege.

Abbas, widely known as Abu Mazen, swiftly marked a change of direction by securing a truce with Israel in February and getting militants to agree, helping Israel leave Gaza quietly and securing a testing ground for Palestinian statehood.

That is where it gets much more

complicated. NO DISARMAMENT While militants agreed to "maintain calm" until the end of the year, they absolutely refuse to disarm under a US-backed peace "road map", and Abbas shies from confronting them in fear of civil war. Sporadic violence with Israel continues.

Just as damaging internally: the plethora of armed groups, particularly from Abbas's own Fatah movement, lay down gun law on the streets in parts of Gaza and the West Bank. More than 170 Palestinians have died this year in crime or local strife.

Abbas's efforts to sweep away security commanders seen as corrupt and ineffectual have not brought complete change. The same goes for the political front. The cabinet that Arafat bequeathed remains largely the same.

"It's all just groping in the dark and improvisation. Abu Mazen has not stamped his own views or personality on Palestinian politics," said Israeli analyst Mark Heller.

"He's not willing to put his strength to the test without a clear conviction he will prevail, and he doesn't have that." Crunch point is the parliamentary election set for January.

Aides say that Abbas hopes to use the vote to help clear out old faces and bring into the mainstream the powerful Islamic militant group Hamas, which he would then try to compel to give up its weapons.

A new parliament, the argument goes, would give Abbas greater legitimacy and a stronger base for reform.

FATAH CONFLICT But that also places Abbas in conflict with many in Fatah who do not want to lose their privileges and fear that Hamas -- standing for the first time -- will do well as voters seek an alternative less tainted by corruption.

Those worried at the prospect of a ballot could still manage to get it shelved. Administrative delays are common. Any major new violence could provide an easy excuse.

"The landmark is the election," said Palestinian analyst Ali Jarbawi. "The only thing that matters is whether the election is going to be held."



PHOTO: STAR

Barisal Bibhagh Unnayan Parishad forms a human chain on the Ashwini Kumar Hall premises in Barisal city yesterday demanding resumption of Biman's Dhaka-Barisal flight service.

WEATHER TODAY
Dry weather likely
UNB, Dhaka
Weather is likely to remain dry over the country till 6:00pm today. Night temperature may rise slightly over the country during the period, Met Office said. Highest temperature 30.8 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 15.0 degree Celsius at Satkhira. The sun sets in the capital at 5:13pm today and rises at 6:13am tomorrow. Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

Table with 4 columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius (Max, Min), Humidity in percentage (Morning, Evening). Rows include Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar.