

Redistribute VGF cards withdrawn from Sidr victims

Political leaders in Patuakhali appeal to govt to give over one lakh cards to deprived ones

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Political leaders, local body representatives and Sidr victims have appealed to the authorities that government VGF (vulnerable group feeding) cards withdrawn from affected areas in Patuakhali and Barguna because of duplication due to similar doles may be distributed among affected people who did not get any such relief.

A total of 1,02,783 VGF cards distributed among Sidr victims in Patuakhali and Barguna districts have been withdrawn by the districts administrations as the beneficiaries got food relief from Save the Children, an international organization and another partner NGO.

The withdrawn cards are now at district relief offices, sources said.

Of the cards withdrawn, 53,499 are in Patuakhali and the rest 49,284 are in Barguna.

Official sources said the duplication in distribution of relief was due to coordination gap.

Talking to this correspondent, the local leaders and affected people said many Sidr victims are facing food crisis due to loss of Amon crop but they are yet to get any relief from any source.

Sources in Patuakhali and districts relief and rehabilitation office in Patuakhali and Barguna district sources said.

A total of 3,59,462 VGF cards were distributed in seven upazilas of Patuakhali district and another 2,10,000 in five upazilas of Barguna among Sidr victims.

The operation is being assisted by World Food Program (WFP). Each VGF card holder gets 15 kilo-

grams of rice per month. The program began on December 14 last year and will continue till February.

In Patuakhali district, 16,266 out of 59,731 VGF cards were later withdrawn in Sadar upazila; 7,943 out of 45,750 in Kalapara; 5,095 out of 30,000 in Mirzaganj; 5,439 out of 70,000 in Baufal; 500 out of 30,000 in Dashmina; 1,095 out of 20,000 in Dumki; 700 out of 5,000 in Galachipa municipality; 75 out of 4,250 in Kalapara municipality and 50 out of 5,000 in Patuakhali municipality areas.

The cards were withdrawn after about one month as Save the Children introduced another program to provide food supply among Sidr victims in the district.

The organisation distributed special cards among Sidr victims and every card holder is getting 30 kilograms of rice, 9 kilograms of lentil, two litres of vegetable oil, one kilogram of salt and 10 packets of biscuits per month.

Save the Children distributed 79,487 cards among Sidr victims in Patuakhali, sources at DRRRO (district relief and rehabilitation office) said.

"We took back the VGF cards to avoid overlapping" Abul Maleq, Patuakhali DRRRO said.

"The donor agency complained that a good number of Sidr victims were getting food help under both programmes. So we took away VGF cards from persons who got both", he said.

Major portion of Amon crop in Patuakhali was badly damaged by the Sidr and most people in the affected areas are facing food shortage, other officials said.

According to officials of Agriculture Extension Department

(AED), Amon paddy on at least 4,93,505 acres were damaged-- 1,19,794 acres totally and 3,73,711 acres partly--in Patuakhali district.

Over 10,37,994 people of 2,5,300 families in Patuakhali were affected by the Sidr but all the victims yet to be brought under food relief programme, the officials said.

Rashid, 45, a day labourer in Karamjatala village in Patuakhali sadar upazila said, "I did not get any card either under VGF programme or from Save the Children though I am a Sidr victim".

Humayun Kabir, chairman of Auliapur Union Parishad in Sadar upazila said, "The government should provide food help to all Sidr victims by redistributing the VGF cards among victims who did not get any relief". He said many affected farmers are passing hard days but can not seek relief out of shame.

Talking to this correspondent, Patuakhali district Awami League secretary Khan Mosharruf Hossain said there is no point in taking away the VGF cards from the affected areas. Many affected people are yet to get any relief while the Irr-Boro crop is about four months away. The returned cards should be distributed among the affected people, who are not responsible for lack of coordination in distribution, he said.

Acting secretary of BNP Maksud Ahmed Bayejid Panna said there are many unemployed affected people who can not buy rice as prices are high. They should be given assistance till the next crop.

In Barguna, 49,284 VGF cards have been taken away. According to officials, 55,000 cards were distrib-

uted in Sadar upazila; 55,962 in Amtali; 41,000 in Pathorghata; 37,040 in Betagi and 20,000 in Bamna upazila.

After about a month, SUSHILON (Sundar Kajer Anushilon), a local partner NGO, distributed relief cards to 72,381 people in the district with assistance from WFP. Each card holder gets 30 kilograms of rice, 9 kilograms of lentil, two litres of vegetable oil, one kilogram of salt and 10 packets of biscuits per month.

In the district, 5,14,556 people were affected by the Sidr but all were not brought under food relief. Freedom fighter Harun-or-Rashid Sikder, of Barguna town said, it is hard to find any family in the district which was not affected by Sidr. A good number of them are yet to get any help.

"I did not get VGF or SUSHILON card though my house was damaged by Sidr".

"There are many like me who can not stand in the long queue for relief though they are passing hard days".

Samsiddin Shekh, Deputy Director (DD) of AED in Barguna said most people in the district are facing food crisis as Amon on 1,69,539 hectares was damaged. The damaged areas account for about 90 per cent of Amon paddy, he said.

Md. Shkawat Hossain, acting Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Barguna, said, "We took back the VGF card as per government's directive".

He however refuted any coordination gap in distribution.

Asked if the returned VGF cards could be distributed among victims he said it depends on government decision.



Blooming palash, heralding the spring, adorns the premises of Rajshahi College.

PHOTO: STAR

Father, son hurt in Jhenidah bomb attack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Three persons were injured when some unidentified criminals hurled a bomb at a motor spares shop at Chuadanga bus stand in Jhenidah town yesterday evening.

Police and locals said, the bomb was hurled at Raj Motor at around 7-30 pm when its owner Razzak Mia, 60, and his son Jahangir, 28, were at the business establishment.

The father and the son and pedestrian Ruhul Kuddus were injured. They were rushed to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital in critical injuries in their legs.

Officer-in-Charge Sayed Iqbal Ali of Jhenidah Sadar police station said the incident could be sequel to a feud. A case will be filed after investigation, the OC said.

Rangpur trade fair opens

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

A month-long Rangpur trade fair began at Police Lines School and College ground yesterday.

Brig Gen Abu Sayed Khan of 72 Infantry Division inaugurated the fair as chief guest.

Deputy Commissioner Khondker Atiar Rahman, joint forces commander Lt. Col. Kazi

Kaisar Hosen, Police Superintendent Hasif Aziz and president of Rangpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry were also present, among others.

A total 156 stalls, some of them by Thai, Iranian and Pakistani companies, have been set up in the fair.

Bangladesh-born British MP visits Sharankhola

UNB, Bagerhat

Visiting Bangladesh-born British MP Baroness Pola Manzila Uddin yesterday visited two Sidr-hit villages in Sharankhola upazila.

Pola, the first Bangladeshi in the House of Lords, during her visit in Bagi and Tapalbari villages, assured the Sidr-affected people of all-out cooperation from her government.

Later, she inaugurated a programme, organised by local NGO Rupantar, for distributing sanitary materials among 6,000 Sidr-affected families at Tapalbari village.

Pola, who arrived Bangladesh on Saturday, is scheduled to meet Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed and Foreign Adviser Iftakhar Ahmed Chowdhury on Monday.

ACC case against SCC chief engr, wife

Tk 12.5 illegal wealth detected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) has filed a case against Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) chief engineer of Saiful Islam and his wife Rozina Sultana Rumi for illegally accumulating wealth worth over Tk 12.5 crore.

Sylhet ACC Deputy Director Md. Nasir Uddin filed the case with Kotwali police yesterday afternoon as the couple possessed the wealth beyond their known sources of income.

Saiful earned the wealth during his service from March 1990 to 2007 as executive engineer of the then Sylhet pourashava and as the chief engineer of SCC since 2003.

He owns several plots and flats in the capital, a petrol pump in Sirajganj and a vast land property in his home town and other places. Some of the assets are in the name of his wife, ACC sources said.

Hailing from Sherpur, Saiful



SAIFUL ISLAM

had been residing at a house in Sylhet city's Housing Estate area since he joined SCC.

Joint forces caught him in April last year from his SCC office on allegations of corruption.

Within hours of arrest, the chief engineer admitted his corrupt practices before law enforcers. He also narrated how he earned the

huge property through corruption during his service with the SCC and other postings at places.

Asked by ACC, Saiful and his wife had submitted wealth statement, but that did not show actual figures, SCC sources said.

The couple showed only the buying cost of the properties, not the accurate value, ACC officials said. The actual value would be at least four times the estimate shown in their statements, the official said.

Saiful had been in jail hajat since his arrest in April last year. He was given detention days after of his arrest.

Recently, a High Court Division Bench declared his detention illegal, but he was not freed as he was shown arrested in the ACC case. His wife is absconding, police said.

ACC detected that he earned wealth worth Tk 12,05,66,193.67 by illegal means.

SERIAL BLASTS IN KHULNA Court summons 3 PWs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Khulna Special Tribunal No 4 Judge Md Barezuzzaman issued summons against three prosecution witnesses (PWs) of a serial bomb blast case to appear before the court.

The summons was issued on Thursday against Batiaghata police station sub-inspector (SI) Monir Hossain, also complainant of the case, Md Abdul Hakim Gazi and Masuda Begum.

SI Monir filed the case accusing 17 activists of the outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) under Explosive Substances Act. The JMB activists exploded bombs in front of a residential hall in Khulna University on August 17, 2005.

Police seized splinters of bombs and JMB leaflets from the place of occurrence as evidence.

Batiaghata police station officer-in-charge (OC) Mahbubur Rahman, also investigating Officer (IO) of the case pressed charges in court against them on November 15.

Eleven chargesheeted accused are still at large while four of them are in Khulna jail.

Two others, JMB kingpin Shaikh Abdur Rahman and second-in-command Siddique Islam alias Bangla Bhai were hanged to death in another bomb blast case. Two judges of Jhalakati court were killed in the blast.

The next date for deposition of PWs was fixed on March 10.

IRRIGATION WATER

One killed, 30 hurt in clash in Chandpur

A CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

A farmer was killed and 30 others including a woman were injured in a clash between musclemen of landlords and landless farmers following a feud over bringing water from a river for irrigating paddy field at Terashikandi shoal in Haimchar upazila yesterday, police said.

The deceased is Giasuddin Howlader, 40, they said. He died on way to hospital while seriously injured Nasima Begum, 26, and 18 others are undergoing treatment at Chandpur Sadar Hospital.

The clash occurred at about 1 pm following failure of a bid to settle the dispute at Eashanbala between Jahangir and Nasir, leaders of landlords and landless farmers respectively, the injured said at the hospital.

Witnesses said, both the clashing groups used lethal weapons during the clash. Tension is prevailing in the area till filing of the report yesterday afternoon.

On contact, Haimchar police station officer-in-charge (OC) confirmed the incident.

Unsung language heroes



PHOTO: STAR

Unsung Language Movement heroes: Clockwise, late Nasirul Islam Abu Mia, Khan Ziaul Huq, Aminul Islam Chandu Mia, late Ali Ahmed, late Abdus Salam and late AKM Hamiduzzaman Ehiya.

HOSSAIN SERAJ, Magura

Several glorious sons of the soil, who contributed to spreading the spirit of February 1952 Language Movement among people in the then sub-divisional town Magura, are yet to get their recognition from the state.

Many of them faced captivity and torture during the Language Movement in 1952, said two of the veterans who are still alive.

"No political or socio-cultural organisations here hold any programme to pay tribute to the Language Movement soldiers in the area. Most of them have already passed away unsung and un-honoured," Khan Ziaul Huq, a leading Language Movement veteran in the area and educationist, told The Daily Star.

Initiative to make them known is needed to inspire our new generation to make sacrifice during any national crisis, he said.

Another veteran, Aminul Islam Chandu Mia, said, "The government should take rapid and effective step so that language heroes can get state honour at least posthumously."

After students in capital Dhaka took the leading role in Language Movement, its wave rapidly touched the then sub-divisional town Magura as well as many other parts of the country.

At the very beginning of the Language Movement in the town, local student leaders along with general students of the then Islamic College (now Government Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy College) embarked on

the movement to establish 'Bangla' as a state language. Afterwards, they also started campaigns to spread the movement in remote areas of the then sub-division.

Student leaders Nasirul Islam Abu Mia, Khan Ziaul Huq, Abdul Jalil Khan, Aminul Islam Chandu Mia and Azim Dewan led the movement.

On February 21, 1952, police picked up Khan Ziaul Huq, Chandu Mia and several other persons when they brought out a procession from Nomanai Maidan area and moved towards Chourangi Square in the town, said Ziaul Huq and Chandu Mia.

A student leader from the then Iqbal Hall of Dhaka university, Mirza Shawkat Hossain came to Magura and held meetings at different educational institutions and played a key role to mobilise general students' support in favour of the language movement.

AK Hamiduzzaman Ehiya, another student leader of Raicharan High School with cooperation of the then headmaster of Sreepur High School Abdur Rahim Joarder started organising the students of different institutions in the then Sreepur thana. At that time Abdus Salam, Abdur Rashed, Ali Ahmed and Jitendranath Ghosh, among others, cooperated with Ehiya, said the Language Movement veterans.

Under the leadership of Nasirul Islam Abu Mia, different programmes including rally were held at Magura on February 21 of 1952.

On that day students of Raicharan High School placed floral wreath on a bamboo-made Shaheed Minar prepared by themselves.

82,000 Golapganj voters to give fingerprints again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A staggering 82,000 people out of 1,65,500 voters in Golapganj upazila of Sylhet will have to go to the registration centres again for getting their fingerprints taken.

The errors had taken place due to faults in laptops and scanners, officials said, adding that works for taking fingerprints will be done on February 17 and 18 in Golapganj pourasava and on different dates till February 29 in unions under the upazila.

Voters' registration with photograph in Golapganj pourasava and

11 unions under the upazila ended in the first week of January and the draft voter list for Golapganj pourasava was published on February 5, showing 15,491 voters.

On completion of the whole process of registration and photo taking of 1,65,500 voters in the upazila, officials checking the matter found that fingerprints of over 82,000 voters were either faulty or not taken at all.

The voters will have to give their fingerprints again for preparation of National Identity Cards, said an official.

Primary and Mass Education

Adviser Rasheda K Chowdhury during a meeting with district officials at Sylhet Circuit House on Saturday expressed concern over such a large number of faults in fingerprints of voters in a single upazila.

Expressing annoyance over the matter, several voters said they are facing the trouble to attend the registration centres for the second time due to 'inefficiency of the operators and absence of proper supervision'.

Acting chairman of Golapganj pourasava and chairman of union parishes in the upazila sat at a

meeting with the officials who later decided to take fingerprints of 4,194 voters in Golapganj pourasava on February 17 and on 18. Dates have also been fixed.

The voters of 11 unions under the upazila, who have been detected with faulty fingerprints or no fingerprints at all, will have to go to registration centres concerned on fixed dates till February 29.

Earlier in January, 26,500 voters from three unions in Beanibazar upazila had to give their fingerprints for the second time as faults were detected on the scanning machines.

The solar project at Baghachola village in Barkal upazila in Rangamati is virtually of no use.



PHOTO: STAR

PWD solar power plant in Rangamati of no use

Tk 4 lakh spent for salary a month

SHANTIMOY CHAKMA, Rangamati

The solar power plant installed by Power Development Board (PDB) at Baghachola village under Barkal upazila in Rangamati at a cost of Tk-8 lakhs is virtually of no use because of lack of proper maintenance.

It was set up there about one year ago under Chittagong Hill Tracts Solar Photovoltaic Electrification Project (CHTSPVEP) to supply power and safe water among households.

The technology does not benefit the villagers allegedly due to lack of maintenance by PDB officials, locals told this correspondent during a visit.

Three other such plants were also installed in remote areas where safe water and power are dreams of poor hill people. Their fate is unknown.

Former deputy minister for CHT affairs Moni Swapan Dewan inaugurated the project on October 12, 2006 during four-party alliance government.

About Tk 4 lakh is being spent for salary of 29 staff engaged for their maintenance, sources said.

Rahim Afroza Renewable Energy Limited provided the technical support in implementing the project, sources at PDB's CHT rural electrification project (CHTREP) office said.

The plant at Baghachola has 30 solar modules (SM) with a capacity to

produce 60 kilowatt power to supply power and safe water.

But the water supplied from the plant is 'absolutely unsafe for drinking', not to speak of power, the locals said. It supplies water only to a Buddhist temple there through a deep tube well, they said.

Initially, it was planned that about 200 households water and power from the plant, they said. There are 40 families in Baghachola village.

The plant is virtually lying idle and due to lack of management, villagers alleged.

The government took the initiative to install small solar power plants to ensure safe water and electricity in CHT as the two things are major problems for hill people.

The villagers said that they could get water, power for domestic use and also for irrigation herd the plant been properly maintained.

"We procure drinking water from another tube well nearby as the water supplied from the deep tube well (under the project) is unfit for drinking", said Bodhipriya Mohathore, chief monk of Baghachola Gaynadoy Buddha Bihar.

"We need power also," Bodhipriya said.

He said there was a plan to construct a big water reservoir near the plant to supply pipeline water to all

the villagers. "But all went in vain". "No body from PDB came to see it since its installation", he said.

Mintu Bikash Chakma of Baghachola village said, "I do not think a big technology is needed to supply water to a temple. We (villagers) will be benefited if the authorities take steps to provide pipeline water. There is good scope to supply electricity to the village from this solar technology, he added.

Octogenarian Palokya Chakma said the plant raised great hopes among people including school children who dreamt of reading in rooms lighter with electricity. But nothing happened.

Project Director of CHTREP, Uga Pru Marma, said the technology is capable to supply 20,000 to 30,000 litres of water per hour. He said each SM can produce 1.8 kilowatt (kw) electricity.

Uga Pru however claimed that the plant was installed only for water supply to the temple on the basis of demand of villagers.

"It will be lengthy process if we want to fulfill demands of villagers as we have to send a proposal to the head office".

It can not be said whether it will be approved or not, he said.