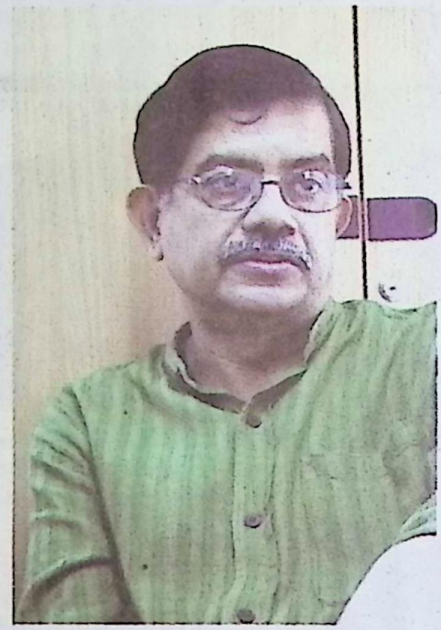
A child born of Urdu-speaking parents was taken to an orphanage after both her parents died. When the orphanage authorities wanted a certificate from the local commissioner the commissioner refused to give it because she was a 'Bihari'.



Dr. CR Abrar says that the identity of the people should be made clear to them.

camp-dwellers is to get the National ID Card. "In our research (carried out by Al Falah Bangladesh in Dhaka, Mymensingh, Khulna and Faridpur) we have found that 70% of the people want to stay in Bangladesh, 17% want to go back to Pakistan and the others are not decided," says Khalid, "Al Falah Bangladesh, AYGUSC and Shamsul Haque Foundation from Faridpur together submitted a memorandum where we pointed out that we fulfil all the requirements of the Citizenship Act of Bangladesh made in the Constitution and we should be registered as voters and we should be able to get our ID cards."

The High Court in 2003 declared that 10 Urdu-speakers who filed a case and those living in all the camps around the country were citizens of Bangladesh. It was the first time that some Urdu-speaking Biharis have been recognised as Bangladeshi nationals. But the law ministry held back the order.

"I agree that our forefathers may have collaborated with the Pakistan army at that time but what about the persons who were not involved and the ones born after 1971, their rights are also very important," says Khalid, "They are Bangladeshis by birth, this fact cannot be ignored, these people cannot be deprived of their fundamental rights. There are some politicians with anti-Bihari mentality who are not letting this happen."

The education rate at the camps is very low and Khalid blames the suspended position of the Urdu-speakers for this. "The government schools don't even take our children, they say that the government money is allocated for the citizens of Bangladesh only and we, as stranded Pakistanis, don't have any right on it."

Khalid talks about a case in Khulna where a man passed his Masters exams and applied for a job at the forest department. "He qualified in the written and viva exams," says Khalid, "but after investigations revealed that he lived in the camp, his government job was cancelled. He points out that if the National ID cards are not provided to them rickshaw-pullers won't get licenses



Like everyone living in the camps, Zubeida (left) lives with three generations in the same room.