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Bangladesh Evict Biharis

NARAYANGANJ, Bangladesh (AP) — Thirty thousand Biharis, beleaguered for more than a month in the world's largest jute mill, began moving out this weekend under police and Indian army protection.

The Biharis, a hated minority in Bangladesh, previously made up much of the mill's labor force. They have been ordered from their homes in the mill compound to make way for Bengali workers.

The Adamjee jute mill, owned by a West Pakistani family, has been taken over by the Bangladesh government, which hopes to get it running again soon.

Buses and trucks are taking the Biharis to a military cantonment adjoining Dacca airport which, until their recent

transfer to India, housed thousands of Pakistani prisoners of war.

Those who moved this weekend had few belongings with them. The huge mill closed down two months ago and since then they have received no pay. Many have sold what little they owned to buy food.

Flour has been sent in by the government and the Red Cross has provided milk powder. But relief supplies were inadequate and children have died of starvation.

"We are informed of one or two malnutrition deaths every day and probably there are others we don't hear about," reported an Indian army doctor, Capt. Surain Singh.

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As he spoke, thousands of hungry women and children queued up for free tins of powdered milk. As more and more arrived to collect their ration, the queue became a stampede.

Women with babies in their arms fell as they fought and struggled to get through a narrow factory gate to reach the distribution point.

When the milk gave out, Indian soldiers brandished their rifles and put to flight a crowd of hundreds of children who had not been served.

The Biharis—there are nearly 2 million in Bangladesh—fled to this country from India at the time of the partition of the subcontinent in 1947. Many of them collaborated with the Pakistani military authorities before Bangladesh became independent.

Dr. Hazir Ahmed, a medical officer at the Adamjee mill for 12 years, said many Biharis want to go back to their jobs at the mill but were forced out. Others, probably a majority, want to go to West Pakistan "or any country that will have them," he added.

As the evacuation got under way, joyful Bengalis crowding round the entrance moved in to snap up the household belongings of the Biharis at bargain prices. They came out carrying cooking pots, mattresses, furniture and clothing.

There are Biharis in a similar plight at Mymensingh, a rail junction 80 miles north of Dacca. More than 100 families are camped at the station, hoping to get trains to the capital. They claim that when they board the trains they are dragged off again, but local officials deny it.

These Biharis virtually monopolized jobs on the railroad before independence but most of them now are out of work. They are crowded together in a teeming slum close by Mymensingh station.

Most Bengalis have little sympathy for the Biharis. When what is now Bangladesh was part of Pakistan the Biharis remained aloof from the Bengali majority, refused to learn Bengali and sided with the ruling West Pakistanis against Bengali nationalists.

When Pakistani troops were driven out of Mymensingh by Bangladesh nationalists last April at the start of the civil war, several thousand Biharis were slaughtered, the Biharis claim.

The Pakistani army moved back later the same month and those Biharis who survived spearheaded vengeance killing, the Bengalis claim.

The Pakistani army lost to the Indian army Dec. 16 and once again the tide of fortune has turned against the Biharis.