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TEA GARDEN WORKERS Losing links to the roots

MINTU DESHWARA

After centuries of discrimination, the communities of tea plantation workers in Sylhet region are on the verge of losing their native languages and traditions.

The majority of workers in Sylhet, Habiganj and Moulvibazar districts are descendants of people who were brought to the plantations from different parts of India by the British colonists about 150 years ago, according to the Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD).

Disconnected from their ancestors' land, many have lost touch with their roots and cannot remember their history or their language.

"As a child, I had learnt a couple of words from my paternal grandfather, but I have forgotten those due to lack of practice," said 45-year-old Lakhan Tanti, a worker at Amu tea estate in Habiganj's Chunarughat.

Lakhan, who went to a local primary school, has been using Bangla since childhood.

Another Tanti community member, Sanjoy Tanti, 30, a resident of Holichhara tea estate in Moulvibazar's Kulaura, said, "We have even forgotten most of our traditional songs, rituals, cuisines and costumes."

Although the Tantis are mostly Hindus, they used to have their own rituals, he said, adding that his community people had forgotten them and observed the worship rituals of local Hindus.

The SEHD in 2016 identified 80 ethnic communities in 156 tea estates in Sylhet, Habiganj, Moulvibazar, Chattogram and Rangamati.

According to its study, four distinct groups of Tantis,

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A truck loaded with goods tries to overtake another near a turn on Dhaka-Sylhet highway in Narayanganj's Rugganj area recently. Overtaking at such places is prohibited as it carries risks of accidents.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Heavy rains to cause flash floods again

Met forecasts for northern districts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country's northeastern and northern regions may witness flash floods in the middle and at the end of this month due to heavy rainfall.

Floodwater may stay from one to three days in the northeastern districts -- Sylhet, Sunamganj, Moulvibazar, Habiganj and Netrakona -- in the middle of this month.

Its duration may be extended from three to five days in the northern districts, Kurigram, Gaibandha and Bogura, and northeastern district Jamalpur towards the end of this month.

The Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) has recently come up with the forecast report of August.

"Moderate to heavy rain may continue in the country's different regions due to ongoing depression in the Bay of Bengal. It

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Pranab receives Bharat Ratna

NDTV ONLINE

Pranab Mukherjee - former Indian President and a life-long Congressman respected across party lines -- has received India's highest civilian award, the Bharat Ratna, from his successor President Ram Nath Kovind.

The award ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhawan yesterday evening was attended by top leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who hailed him as the "outstanding statesman of our times" when the names of the recipients were announced in January.

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SCRAPPING OF KASHMIR'S SPECIAL AUTONOMY Military option not on cards

Says Pakistan a day after downgrading ties with India; Delhi warns against interference; 560 detained in J&K

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan will not resort to military action in a row with nuclear-armed India over Kashmir, its foreign minister said yesterday, as tensions soared over New Delhi's decision to tighten its grip on the disputed region.

The statement from Pakistani foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi eased fears of an all-out clash between the South Asian neighbours, who have already fought two of their three wars over the Himalayan region -- but none since they both gained nuclear weapons.

On Monday Delhi stripped the Indian-held portion of Kashmir of its special autonomy, bringing it under its direct rule and deepening animosity with Pakistan, igniting days of debate over how the country should respond.

"Pakistan is not looking at the military option. We are rather looking at political, diplomatic, and legal options to deal with the prevailing situation," said Qureshi during a press conference in Islamabad.

Tensions remained high, however, with Qureshi's comments coming on the heels of a decision by Islamabad to downgrade its diplomatic ties with India, suspend bilateral trade, and expel the country's envoy.

Pakistan has also promised to take the matter to the United Nations Security Council, while its military says it "firmly stands" with Kashmiris.

Delhi has dismissed Pakistan's "alarmist" reaction and warned against

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Experts fear conflicts in the region

PORIMOL PALMA

Scrapping of Jammu and Kashmir's autonomy by the BJP-led government may fuel conflicts in India and beyond, international relations and security experts have observed.

Indian-administered Kashmir witnessed for long separatist insurgency leading to thousands of deaths over the last three decades. India accuses Pakistan of supporting insurgents -- an accusation Pakistan denies, claiming it gives only moral and diplomatic support to Kashmiris demanding self-determination.

Many of the Kashmiris believe they were not given full autonomy as enshrined in the Indian constitution. Some of them fought to join Pakistan and some wanted independence of Kashmir, experts said.

Now, as part of an electoral pledge, the BJP government revoked the special status of Kashmir aimed at fully integrating its only Muslim-majority region with the rest of the country.

The decision means cancellation of a bar on property purchases by people from outside Jammu and Kashmir. It also means state government jobs and some college places will no longer be reserved for state residents.

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Scientists develop self-healing robots



MAIL ONLINE

Scientists are developing self-healing robots that can feel pain, sense damage, and even repair themselves without any human intervention.

The soft robotic hands are made through 3D printing and able to carry out a wide variety of applications, from grabbing delicate and soft objects in the food industry to performing minimally invasive surgery.

They could also play an important role in creating lifelike prosthetics.

However, the soft materials also make them susceptible to damage from sharp objects or excessive pressure.

But now researchers have developed new polymers that can heal themselves, by creating new bonds in 40 minutes, with the end goal making the healing automated.

The robotics have been developed as part

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'Drug peddler' killed in a 'gunfight'

Two bodies recovered in Cox's Bazar

STAR REPORT

A suspected drug peddler was killed in a "gunfight" with members of Rapid Action Battalion in Barishal city early yesterday.

The dead Malek Fakir, 35, was accused in at least 15 cases related to drugs, said Nurul Islam, officer-in-charge of Barishal Kotwali Police Station.

Raisuddin, additional superintendent of Rab-8, claimed a team of the

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PRAYERTIMINGAUGUST9
Fazr Juma Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-20 12-30 5-00 6-47 8-15
JAWA 4-55 1-15 5-15 6-50 8-45

SOURCESLAMKFOUNDATION



A CHAR VISITOR

Two black-headed munia spotted in Rajshahi Padma char area recently. The passerine bird forages in the chars and breeds during Monsoon.

PHOTO COURTESY: ALI ASHRAF BHUIYAN

KHULNA GANG RAPE File an FIR against the accused cops

Court orders railway police

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The two probe committees formed to investigate rape allegations against railway police members yesterday interrogated the alleged rapists and other staffers of the GRP (general railway police) yesterday.

Two committees are now in Khulna to investigate the incident and have also spoken to the woman, who made the allegations, at the Khulna Jail gate.

Meanwhile, based on the woman's complaint to the chief judicial magistrate's court, it directed the superintendent of railway police to file an FIR (First Information Record) against the accused, in line with the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, 2013, court sources said.

Speaking to The Daily Star over phone, Police Super of Pakshey Railway Nazrul Islam yesterday said, "The court's letter has arrived, but it has not yet been opened. We will work according to the directions given there."

About the ongoing investigation, Firoz Ahmed, assistant superintendent of police (Kushtia Railway Circle) who is leading the probe committee formed by the Railway Police to investigate the allegations, said, "We already spoke to members of the GRP, office staffers of the Khulna Railway Police Station, along with night guards and shopkeepers [at the railway station]."

They also spoke to and took statements from the woman's family members.

"We are talking to whoever can give us related information and status of the incident," he said, adding, "It is not the proper time to talk in details about what the investigation has achieved so far, but we are trying to find the facts."

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