



Long queues of vehicles near Shimulia Ghat in Munshiganj. Vehicles continued to face delay at the ghat where ferry operations resumed yesterday after remaining suspended for nearly 17 hours due to strong currents of the Padma.

PHOTO: STAR

## Losing links to the roots

FROM PAGE 20  
speaking Telegu, Jangli (a form of Bangla), Sadri and Oriya, were brought from the Indian states of Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Jharkhand and Orissa, respectively.

The cultural affairs ministry on March 23 published what it called a list of Bangladesh's small tribal communities.

The Tantis were not recognised as a community on that list.

The United Nations, estimating that an indigenous language disappears every 2 weeks, has dedicated this year's International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples on August 9 to indigenous peoples' languages and marked 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages.

Yet, the seniors of the tea worker communities of Sylhet are struggling to keep their native language and tradition alive.

Septuagenarian Veronika Kerketa, a retired tea worker of Bormachhara

tea garden in Srimangal upazila of Moulvibazar, still remembers her mother tongue, Kharia.

"A couple of us spoke this language, but many had died. Only two or three people now interact in Kharia," she said, claiming Sadri was the most prevalent tongue in the tea gardens.

Pius Nanuar, 35, of the Kharia community in the area, said, he does not speak or understand Kharia.

"The government published books in Sadri language for pre-primary level. It is not my mother language, but it is easy to read and used widely in our area," he said.

Sheer poverty also discourages the present generation of tea workers from learning their native languages.

"The British are gone, but our plight has not changed much. With an income of Tk 102 a day, we are on the verge of losing our language and cultural identity," said Gita Rani Kanu, president of Bangladesh Tea Workers Women Forum. She belongs

to the Kanu community, which speaks Deshwali.

"The government recognised 50 communities without mentioning us. Even some indigenous leaders do not acknowledge us," she said.

AFM Zakaria, head of anthropology at Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, expressed concern about the disappearing cultural identities of the tea workers because of their isolation and status as minority.

"The government will have to protect the small indigenous groups and their cultures. Otherwise, their original identities may disappear," he said.

Makhon Lal Karmakar, president of Bangladesh Cha Sramik Union central committee and member of the Karmokar community, demanded constitutional recognition of all the communities of the tea estates and establishment of an Indigenous Tea Workers' Language and Cultural Academy, with an objective to preserve their native languages and cultures.

## Experts fear conflicts in the region

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BBC has reported that Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan has vowed to fight India's decision to revoke Indian-administered Kashmir's autonomy, including at the UN Security Council.

"I am afraid that [India] will now carry out ethnic cleansing in Kashmir," Khan told Pakistan parliament on Tuesday, adding that the removal of the special status would allow India to change the demographic make-up of the Muslim-majority state.

China termed India's decision unacceptable. Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said India continued to hurt Chinese sovereignty by unilaterally changing domestic law, and that India's claim over Ladakh, as part of Kashmir, involved Chinese land.

Experts say India has so far failed to win over the Kashmiris and address their concerns. Now, revoking the state's autonomy without any consultation with Kashmiri lawmakers, arrest of its leaders and a new clampdown by suspending telephone and internet services have aggravated the situation.

"The question at this stage is whether the latest measure by India will help establish peace and stability in Kashmir. I don't think so," said Prof Imtiaz Ahmed of international relations at Dhaka University.

The way of revoking autonomy

of Jammu and Kashmir was undemocratic as the lawmakers of the state were not consulted and there was no referendum, he said.

"Things might have been different if there was a referendum" Imtiaz Ahmed told The Daily Star on Wednesday.

Many Indians, including politicians, are also opposing the Indian decision on Kashmir considering that the Indian culture of unity in diversity is no more there, he said.

Munshi Faiz Ahmad, chairman of Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies, said the distance between Delhi and Kashmiris that has been there for long is now further widening -- something that may create instability within India as well as in the Indian sub-continent.

"Thousands more troops have been deployed. If repression against the Kashmiris goes on, it might flare up new conflicts," Faiz Ahmad told The Daily Star.

The conflict, if escalated, may spread beyond India. The Muslim sympathisers in the sub-continent may resort to violence, he added.

Former ambassador Munshi Faiz said it was important to observe how the BJP government, which has large support of the Hindus, handles the situation in Kashmir.

Security analyst Brig Gen (ret'd) Shakhawat Hossain said though India

claimed Kashmir to be an internal issue, it actually was not.

Pakistan fought three wars against India over Kashmir. China too fought a war in 1962 against India over border conflict in the Himalayan region.

He termed dangerous the Indian Union Home Minister Amit Shah's comment on Tuesday in the Lok Sabha that Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and Aksai Chin were parts of the state and were integral parts of India.

He also said the government leaders were ready to sacrifice their lives for the state.

"There is no other region in the world where three neighbours have nuclear power. If the conflict escalates, none in the region would be spared," he warned.

With the BJP in power for two consecutive terms, there is a trend of rising Hindu nationalism in India -- a situation that may encourage militant elements among the Muslims, Shakhawat Hossain said.

It's no wonder if the militants having international links become active on the Kashmir issue, he added.

"BJP government must keep the aspects in mind," the security expert said.

All three experts opined that Kashmir issue would not have any impact on the diplomatic relations between Bangladesh and India.

## India PM defends Kashmir decision

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"Pakistan is not looking at the military option. We are rather looking at political, diplomatic, and legal options to deal with the prevailing situation," Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said at 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.

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan displayed his rage in a series of tweets calling for international action to stop India.

"What should be obvious is the joint community will be witnessing the genocide of the Kashmiris," Khan posted in one tweet.

United Nations chief Antonio Guterres yesterday called on India and Pakistan "to refrain from taking steps that could affect the status of Jammu and Kashmir".

"The Secretary-General has been following the situation in Jammu and Kashmir with concern and makes an appeal for maximum restraint," his spokesperson said.

In India, a petition was filed to the Indian Supreme Court by an activist challenging the curfew in Kashmir, which was imposed to suppress any unrest in

response to the loss of autonomy.

Activist Tahseen Poonawala and lawyer ML Sharma asked the Supreme Court to lift the lockdown and release people who have been detained as part of the crackdown.

University professors, business leaders and activists are among the 560 people rounded up by authorities and taken to makeshift detention centres -- some during midnight raids -- in the cities of Srinagar, Baramulla and Gurez, the Press Trust of India and the Indian Express reported.

ANI news agency also reported that the leader of the opposition in the upper house, Ghulam Nabi Azad from the Congress party, was turned back at Srinagar airport when he flew to the city.

Pakistani Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai, who was shot in the head by the Taliban in 2012, yesterday tweeted that she was "worried about the safety of the Kashmiri children and women, the most vulnerable to violence and the most likely to suffer losses in conflict".

"I believe we all can live in peace," she added, in comments that were supported and criticised by Twitter users from India and Pakistan.

Tens of thousands of Indian troops are enforcing the lockdown which includes no internet or phone services, and are allowing only limited movement on streets usually bustling with tourists flocking to the picturesque valley.

Experts warn that the valley is likely to

erupt in anger at the government's shock unilateral move once the restrictions are lifted, which could come on the Muslim festival of Eid on Monday.

Late Wednesday India's aviation security agency advised airports across the country to step up security as "civil security has emerged as a soft target for terrorist attacks" on the back of the Kashmir move.

## Scientists

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of an EU-funded project, by scientists at the Free University of Brussels and University of Cambridge.

Prof Bram Vanderborght, from the Free University of Brussels (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), who is leading the project, told The Guardian: "Over the past few years, we have already taken the first steps in creating self-healing materials for robots.

"With this research we want to continue and, above all, ensure that robots that are used in our working environment are safer, but also more sustainable.

"Due to the self-repair mechanism of this new kind of robots, complex, costly repairs may be a thing of the past."

The scientific advance would be welcome in the agriculture industry that currently utilises grabbers for fruit.

This shift is part of a wider future trend in which lower skilled jobs in the future are likely to be replaced by robots.

## Resentment over ban on cattle import from Myanmar

Traders call for withdrawal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A sudden ban on cattle import from Myanmar has drawn criticism from traders in Cox's Bazar, with many saying it would trigger a price hike.

They called for removal of the ban. Importers were bringing cattle through the Shah Pari island corridor in huge numbers to meet the demand for sacrificial animals during Eid-ul-Azha. But on instruction from the fisheries and livestock ministry, the district administration enforced the ban on Tuesday.

The next day, at the regular law and order committee, the deputy commissioner (DC) faced criticism from many of the members including President of Cox's Bazar Chamber of Commerce and Industry Abu Murshed Chowdhury.

Terming the sudden decision ill-advised, they said it would cause a cattle crisis in the market, and tarnish the government's image.

President of Teknaf cattle importers association Abu Syed said the ban will affect most buyers and leave an adverse impact on the market because the cattle from Myanmar cater to people in all parts of the country including Dhaka.

Trader Shahidul Islam said import increases manifold ahead of Eid, and it was no exception this time too. "But the sudden ban upset everything," he said.

Another trader, Md Ismail, said many traders may face losses because they already paid the sellers in Myanmar in advance. "If import stops, they may not get the money back."

The district livestock officer, Wahidul Alam, however, defended the decision. He said it was done to protect the local farmers. Besides, the district has got a stock of 1.08 lakh cattle against a demand for 1.05 lakh, the official said.

DC Kamal Hossain said, "Since we have enough of cattle, if we import more than the demand, it will financially hurt the local entrepreneurs and dairy farmers."

Abdullah Monir, another cattle importer, however, claimed that the government estimated the demand without considering the Rohingya refugee population.

The demand for them would be no less than 50,000, he said, adding that some organisations are already buying cattle for them.

There are about 11.2 lakh displaced Rohingyas living at different camps in Cox's Bazar.

According to Teknaf customs officer Mayez Uddin, 3,935 cattle were imported in the first three days of August, 10,095 in July, and 10,177 in June.

Meanwhile, despite the ban being in force, a batch of 300 cattle arrived in Teknaf yesterday, said local traders.

## Charges

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She was declared dead by doctors at Katiadi Upazila Health Complex after she was taken there.

Shahinor was a nurse at Ibne Sina Hospital in the capital.

On May 7, her father Gias Uddin of Baherchar village in Bajitpur filed a case with Bajitpur Police Station accusing Nuruzzaman, Lalon, Al Amin, Abdullah Al Mamun, and several other unnamed persons.

Police dropped charges against Al Mamun because his involvement in the incident was not found, Sarwar added.

## HC refuses

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Additional Attorney General Momtaz Uddin Fakir, advocate for the government, told the court that Minni cannot get bail in the sensational murder case.

Five accused in the case, including Minni, recorded their confessional statement before magistrates and the investigation is still on, Fakir added.

Minni, who is now in jail, submitted the bail petition to the HC on August 5 through her lawyers citing different grounds on which the HC may consider her bail.

In the petition, Minni said she was innocent and not involved in the murder in any way.

She also said that she had been made accused with an ulterior motive and on the instructions of a vested quarter.

Earlier, two courts in Barguna rejected Minni's bail on July 22 and July 30.

Police arrested Minni after a daylong interrogation on July 16. A court placed her on a five-day remand the following day. Three days later, a Barguna court recorded her statement.

On June 26, Rifat Sharif, 25, an internet service provider, was hacked to death in broad daylight in Barguna town.

In a footage of the incident that went viral on social media, Minni was seen screaming and trying to save her husband from the attackers.

Rifat's father filed the murder case with Barguna Sadar Police Station against 12 people on the day of the murder.

Prime accused in the case, Nayan Bond, was killed in a "gunfight" with police on July 2.

## Hajj begins today

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unchanged since the founding of Islam 14 centuries ago.

"Islam united us. We are all together... so that's why I'm very happy," said Leku Abibu, 46, a Ugandan mechanic who wore a beige salwar kameez.

"I'm enjoying it here."

This year's hajj takes place amid tensions in the Gulf region exacerbated by a series of attacks on oil tankers, drone strikes and interceptions of maritime traffic on the high seas.

Saudi, the Gulf's leading power, and its ally Washington accuse Iran -- Riyadh's regional rival -- of being behind the attacks and sabotage operations against commercial shipping.

Tehran has denied responsibility.

Despite the absence of diplomatic ties between Saudi and Iran, some 88,550 Iranian pilgrims are due to take part in the hajj this year, according to the Tasnim news agency.

Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam and Muslims must perform it at least once in their lives if they can afford to.

"There are all nations of the world, all languages. There are no differences between us," said Nurul Jamal, a 61-year-old pilgrim from India.

Makkah, closed to non-Muslims, is home to the Kaaba -- a cube structure draped in black cloth embroidered in gold located at the heart of the mosque.

The Great Mosque of Makkah with its Ottoman minarets sits amid skyscrapers that host upmarket malls and luxury hotels.

Muslims face toward the Kaaba when praying the prescribed five-times daily.

Pilgrims circle the Kaaba seven times and perform a number of sacred rites.

While waiting for the beginning of the hajj, worshippers roam the esplanade or pray in the mosque in stifling heat.

Temperatures can surpass 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) and some pilgrims carry sun shades.

Large misting machines installed at the holy sites help to make the heat more bearable.

"The mosques are air conditioned, water is readily available, you just have to protect yourself from the sun," said Algerian Kamal Bouslimani, 57.

Men wear two pieces of unstitched cloth called "ihram" that leaves one shoulder exposed.

Pilgrims move together in large groups, led by guides holding their national flags.

The vast gathering also presents major logistical and safety challenges.

In 2015, some 2,300 worshippers were killed in the worst stampede in the history of the hajj.

Since then Saudi Arabia has sought to reassure pilgrims, deploying tens of thousands of security officers and installing cameras to oversee every corner of the holy sites.

## Bharat Ratna

FROM PAGE 20  
-- iconic singer Bhupen Hazarika and Nanaji Deshmukh, one of the founding members of Bharatiya Jan Sangh, which later evolved into the BJP.

Mukherjee's term as president of India, a post enabled by the Congress, ended in 2017.

But the leader -- who dubbed himself Citizen Mukherjee after stepping down -- had made headlines, most notably last year with his controversial decision to attend an event of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the ideological mentor of the BJP.

The 83-year-old had served as senior ministers in the Congress governments headed by Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh.

His proximity to the Gandhis and his ability to get opposition parties to the negotiating table during tricky impasses, made him one of the most respected political leaders across party lines.

Many considered him the sharpest mind in Manmohan Singh's cabinet, with a deep understanding of Indian politics, economic policies and strategic issues.

As a president, he had been a model of constitutional propriety, but still managed to speak his mind on contentious and even divisive issues.

After coming to office, Narendra Modi had more than once acknowledged him as a mentor. The two had shared a cordial relation -- one that was reflected in their warm praise of each other when Mukherjee stepped down from the nation's highest office.

In his tweet congratulating Mukherjee after the Bharat Ratna awardee -- recommended by his government -- was announced, PM Modi posted: "Pranab Da is an outstanding statesman of our times. He has served the nation selflessly and tirelessly for decades, leaving a strong imprint on the nation's growth trajectory. His wisdom and intellect have few parallels. Delighted that he has been conferred the Bharat Ratna".

## File an FIR

FROM PAGE 20  
court's letter has arrived, but it has not yet been opened. We will work according to the directions given there."

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 General Railway Police (GRP), office staffers of the Khulna Railway Police Station, along with night guards and shopkeepers [at the railway station]."

He said they also spoke to and took statements from the woman's family members.

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

Primarily, the railway police's probe committee found negligence of duty of GRP police members, Firoz said.

Meanwhile, the woman's family was preparing to file a case against OC Osman Gani Pathan and sub-inspector Nazmul Haque of Khulna Railway Police Station, family sources said.

Bangladesh Human Rights Implementation Agency was providing legal assistance to the woman.

Mominul Islam, co-coordinator of the agency, told The Daily Star that the overall preparations for the case filing

have already been taken.

"We do not have enough time to file the case before Eid. After Eid, we will give logistical support to the victim [in this regard]," he said.

On Wednesday, the OC and SI were withdrawn and closed from Khulna Railway Police Station over the allegations and were attached to Pakshey Railway Police Lines.

On Friday evening, the 30-year-old woman was detained inside a train by Railway Police in Khulna's Phultala Railway Station.

She was then taken to Khulna Railway Station and then to a residential building for members of GRP where she was gang-raped by the OC and four other policemen, the woman's sister said.

The next day, the alleged rapists filed a case against the victim for possessing five bottles of Phensedyl, after which a court sent her to jail.

On Sunday, the victim filed a bail petition with the district's additional chief judicial magistrate's court. She also filed a complaint against the policemen with the court that day.

The incident has sparked outrage.

Earlier, the OC had denied his involvement in the rape, terming the allegation false and baseless. He even claimed not being present at the police station that night.

## 'Drug peddler'

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elite force challenged a group of drug peddlers around 4:00am in Jagua-Choupashar Pole area of the city.

At one point, the criminals opened fire, forcing the law enforcers to retaliate, he added.

Fakir sustained bullet injuries during the "gunfight". Later, Rab members rushed him to Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead, the Rab official claimed.

The body was then sent to the medical college morgue for autopsy.

Rab also claimed to have recovered a foreign pistol, two one-shooter guns, nine bullets, 725 yaba pills and Tk 2120 in cash from the spot.

The Daily Star, however, could not independently verify the law enforcers' claims.

Meanwhile in Teknaf upazila of Cox's Bazar, police recovered two bullet-hit bodies.

The dead are Kabir Ahmed, 40, and Rubi Akter, 25, hailing from the upazila's Pallanpara, were sibling and spouse of notorious Rohingya robber Abdul Hakim, said police.

Proddip Kumar Das, officer-in-charge of Teknaf Police Station, said the duo might have been killed in a "gunfight" between Hakim Bahini and their opponents.

Police recovered the bodies around 10:00am receiving information from the locals, he added.

The bodies were sent to Cox's Bazar General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Our Barisal and Cox's Bazar correspondents contributed to this report.

## Heavy rains

FROM PAGE 2  
this month. Following this, a short-term flood may happen in some northern and northeastern districts by the end of this month, said the FFWC forecast report.

Also, water of the Teesta river may raise rapidly in the middle of this month due to heavy rainfall in the country's northern region and its adjacent northern region of West Bengal in India.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) yesterday advised the maritime ports of Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Mongla and Payra to hoist danger signal No 3 until further notice due to rough weather caused by the depression in the Northwest Bay.

Besides, all fishing boats and trawlers in the North Bay have been asked to stay close to the coast, according to the BMD's forecast.

In its daily weather forecast, the BMD said light to moderate rain or thunder showers accompanied by temporary gusty and squally wind is likely to occur at many places in Khulna, Barishal, Chattogram and Dhaka divisions and at a few places in Rajshahi, Rangpur, Mymensingh and Sylhet divisions with moderately heavy to heavy falls at places over the country today.

Yesterday's maximum rainfall in Dhaka was recorded 102mm, which was heavy to very heavy rainfall, according to weather experts.