

Enslaved kids at enclaves

2,000 deprived of primary education as there is no school in 33 Bangladeshi enclaves

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Over 2,000 children in 33 enclaves under the district are deprived of primary education as there is no school in these Bangladesh territories surrounded by Indian lands while Indian schools refuse to enrol them.

Even worse, Indian authorities prevent their movement to Bangladesh mainland for attending schools although most of the Bangladeshi enclaves are situated within one or two kilometres from the border, said quite a few residents of the enclave areas.

There are 33 Bangladeshi enclaves with areas from a little over one acre to about 1400 acres in Patgram, Hatibandha, Aditmari and Sadar upazilas under Lalmonirhat district.

As per the universal primary education policy, the government arranges tuition waiver, free textbooks and stipend for all the children enrolled in government primary schools in Bangladesh.

The enclave people are Bangladeshi by birth, but they are virtually denied basic citizens' rights including children's education facilities offered by the

government, said several guardians, expressing frustration over the future for their children.

"Seeing my two sons' eagerness to learn, I took them to an Indian school named Sree Ramganj Primary School in Jolpaiguri district early January this year but the school authority did not agree to enrol my kids because they are

Bangladeshi," said Sobarot Ali, 45, an inhabitant of Kuchlibari enclave under Patgram upazila.

Showing the same reason, Gidaldah Primary School in Cooch Behar district declined to admit one Fatema Khatun to class I on January 1 this year, said the girl's father Delowar Hossain, 35, an inhabitant of Kisamot Batri Gachh

enclave under Aditmari upazila.

Atiar Rahman, 42, another inhabitant of the same enclave, said his sons are not allowed to read in Bangladeshi school in the mainland as Indian Border Force does not allow them to cross the border.

Afzal Hossain, Mansur Ali, Salam Miah, Joynal Sarker, Hafizur Rahman and

other inhabitants of Jot Nijam enclave under Patgram upazila also have similar woes to share.

Shamsul Haque, 78, Budaru Shaikh, 82, Sattar Munsir, 75, and several other senior people at Sitan Bari enclave under Patgram upazila said inhabitants of Bangladeshi enclaves inside India are sometimes not allowed to step into Indian Territory even for shopping or healthcare needs, said.

Contacted, Lalmonirhat District Primary Education Officer Nobez Uddin Sarker said, "Bangladeshi enclave children cannot read in Indian schools although Indian enclave children easily get the opportunity to read in Bangladeshi schools. We do not have any plan to build primary schools at Bangladesh enclave areas as the matter involves high-level official decision of the two countries."

Enclave people still believe that the governments of Bangladesh and India could reach an understanding to make ensure enclave children's access to schooling. The children should either be enrolled in Indian schools or allowed to move freely to attend nearby Bangladeshi schools, they said.



PHOTO: STAR

Denied the basic rights of schooling, Mizanur Rahman and his brother Sohag Islam of Bonsua Kumar enclave under Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila carry dry sticks for sale, bearing testimony to the woes of the residents of Bangladesh enclaves inside Indian territory.

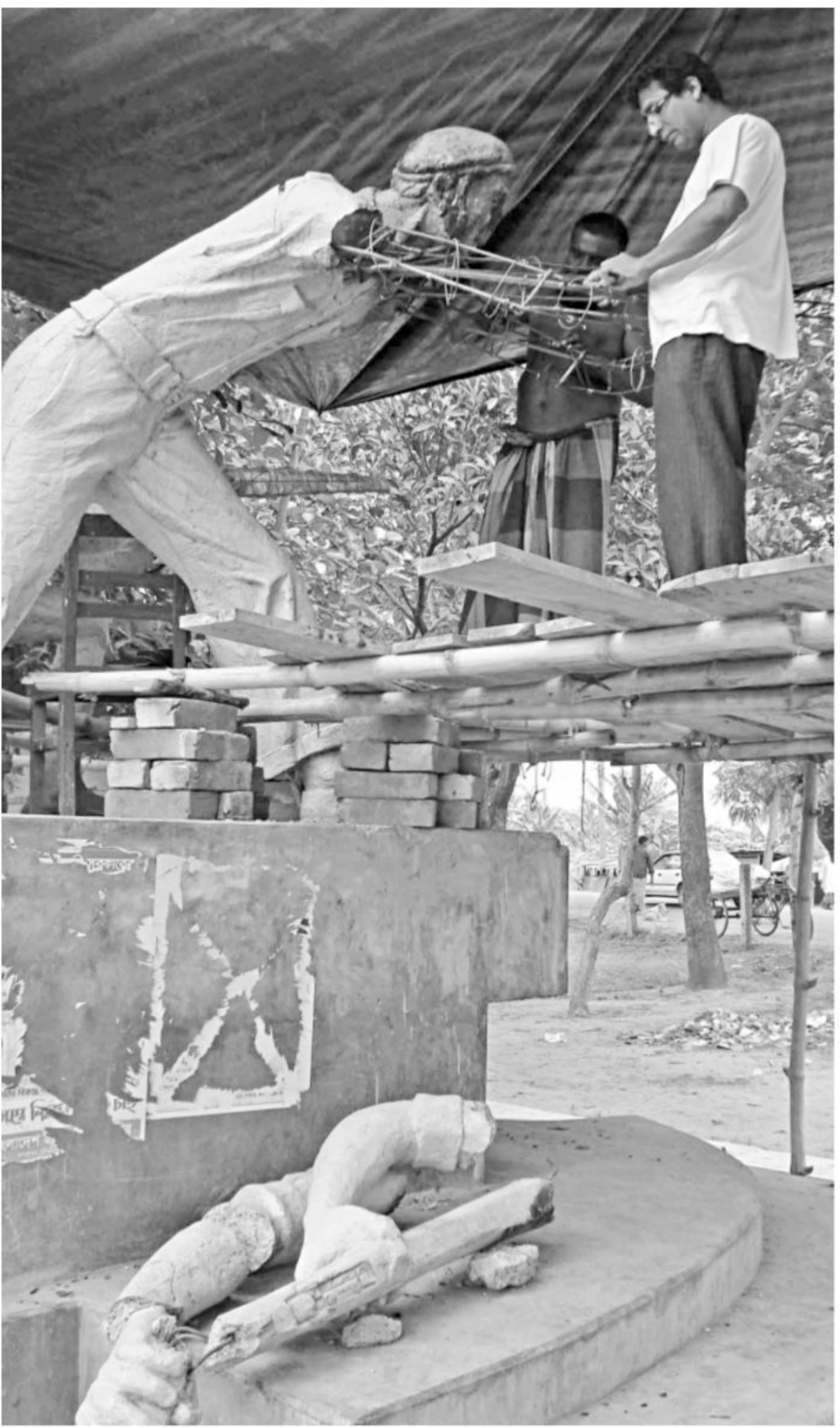


PHOTO: STAR

A Liberation War memorial statue, damaged by Jamaat-Shibir men at Bishoykhali Bazar in Jhenidah Sadar upazila during February 28 hartal, is being repaired by Prof Zillur Rahman of fine arts department of Rajshahi University.

SNIPPETS

BCS test in Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

The preliminary test of the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examination will be held for the first time in the city today. The 34th preliminary examination will begin at all 14 centers in the city along with Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet at 10:00am. A total of 16,643 applicants will sit for the examination here, said Jagadish Chandra, assistant director of Rangpur zonal office of PSC.

Four Shibir men held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaajpur

Four Shibir men were arrested while pasting posters of Hefajat-e-Islam in Biral upazila headquarters yesterday morning. The arrestee are Nur Mohammad, 16, son of Liakat Ali of Pachakandor village, Sakirul Islam, 15, son of Ramzan Ali of Saboil village, Iqbal Hossain, 25, son of Abkar Ali of Pachakandor village, and Siddiqur Rahman, 17, son of Arifur Rahman of Bajitpur village in the upazila. Police said they arrested the four Shibir men while they were pasting poster on walls at Biral Bazar at around 6:00am.

Imam killed in clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

An imam of a local mosque was killed and four others were injured during a clash between two groups of villagers at Lotabar village under Kaliganj upazila of the district on Wednesday. The deceased was identified as Hafez Jahangir Alam, 49, of Lotabar village and also the Imam of Lotabar Jame Masjid. Locals said two groups of villagers clashed over capture of portion of a road at the village to dry boro paddy in the morning. Imam Jahangir Alam and four others sustained injuries during the clash. Critically injured Alam was taken to Rangpur Medical College Hospital where he died soon after admission. The remaining four injured people are undergoing treatment at Kaliganj Upazila Health Complex. A murder case was filed with Kaliganj Police Station yesterday, accusing 15 people.

One killed in tree collapse

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A man was killed and two others were injured when a tree fell on a teashop at Joysree bus stop on Barisal-Dhaka highway in Uzirpur upazila during a storm yesterday morning. The dead is Matiar Rahman Hawladar, 65, of Atipara Senbari village in the upazila. Police said Matiar took shelter under the shade of a makeshift teashop during the storm that lashed the area at around 10:30am. Suddenly, a roadside tree collapsed on the shop, killing Matiar on the spot and injuring teashop owner Yusuf Ali and shop employee Tanvir. They received minor injuries and took first aid at a local clinic.

Municipal staff end strike

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Bogra municipality employees' work abstention has been withdrawn following an assurance by the authorities of taking step to resolve the problem. The decision to call off the programme was taken at a meeting with the municipality mayor on Wednesday night, said Jibon Krisno Jadob, a leader of the employees. Earlier on the day, the employees went on an indefinite work abstention, protesting 'an intentional action' against a doctor. On May 2, an altercation took place between ward councillor Aminul Farid and Dr Abdullah Al Mamun of the municipality over a trivial matter. Following the incident, the authorities put the doctor on forced leave for one month and sent a letter to the ministry seeking his transfer on May 16, said the municipality sources.

Land grabber's goons kidnap 4, damage their houses

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaajpur

The hired goons of a land grabber abducted four members of a poor family and vandalised their house in Battoli area under Birampur municipality of the district early yesterday.

The victims are Aminul Islam, 40, his wife Amizan Begum, 35, and their son Barik Ali, 20 and daughter Papiya Begum, 10. Police rescued them from Chatakpur forest in the upazila at around 6:00pm yesterday. Their hands and legs were tied up, police said.

Witnesses said the hired criminals of Md Anisur Rahman, brother of Dinaajpur district Jamaat Ameer Anwarul Islam, vandalised the house at around

4:30am and beat up Aminul, his wife and their two children. The gang picked up the four in a microbus and left the scene, locals added.

According to locals, Anisur recently put pressure on Aminul to sell his eight decimal land adjacent to his (Anisul) one bigha of land. As he refused to do so, Anisul with the help of his relative Md Delwar Hossain, also Jubo League district unit president, hired a gang of criminals to grab the land, evicting Aminul and his family, they said.

During the attack, Aminul's daughter Papiya went to Birampur Police Station and sought help of the law enforcers, but they did not respond, locals alleged. They demanded

proper investigation into the incident and punishment to the culprits.

Refuting the allegation, Officer-in-Charge Md Nasiruddin of Birampur Police Station said no such complaint was filed with the police station.

Contacted, Anisur Rahman claimed that he purchased the land from one Md Hafizur Rahman of the area. "I urged Aminul several times to quit the land, but he did not pay heed to my request," Anisur said.

No one was arrested in connection with the incident as of 7:00pm yesterday. The OC told this correspondent that they would take necessary steps after filing of a case by the victims.



PHOTO: STAR

Dhalai River continues to devour homesteads in an area under ward No 5 of Kamolganj upazila in Moulvibazar district.

Girl trafficked to India rescued

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

An abducted college girl of Sadar upazila in Panchagarh district has been rescued from traffickers in India.

Family sources said Md Selim, 28, of Magura Prodhannara village, developed a relationship with the girl last year.

Promising to give a lucrative job, he picked up the girl, 20, from the area and took her to Satkhira in October last year.

Later, Selim trafficked the victim to India with the help of his accomplices Selim, Faruk and Liakat and sold her to a brothel of Haidarabad in India.

After a few weeks, the girl was detained by Indian police along with a customer. She was then freed by the customer who later

demanding a big sum from her family members over phone.

Receiving the phone call, elder brother of the victim filed a case with Sadar police station accusing Selim, Ashiqur and Saju in connection with her abduction.

On December 10, a team of Sadar PS, led by sub-inspector Mohinul Islam, arrested Selim in the capital and he confessed to trafficking the girl.

On information, Indian police rescued the girl and sent her to a safe home.

On Wednesday, she was handed over to Sigma Huda of Bangladesh Manobadhikar Shangstha, a rights orgnaision. Yesterday, the girl was handed over to her family members, said police.

EMBEZZLEMENT OF REPAID BANK LOAN

Probe into 400 cases starts in Lalmonirhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Authorities on Tuesday formed a committee to probe the alleged embezzlement of a huge amount of agriculture loan repayment money that was collected from farmers by field level staff of Sonali Bank in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

The three-member body headed by Mostafa Mondol, senior executive officer of Sonali Bank Principal Office in Kurigram, has started investigating the allegation in Kulaghat, Mohendranagar and Khuniyagachh unions under Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, bank sources said.

Three thousand five hundred farmers of the three unions in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila took loan for cultivating boro paddy from Lalmonirhat Sonali Bank branch during 2002 to 2010, they said.

The bank authority concerned in Lalmonirhat branch categorised 1500 of the loan receivers as defaulters and served warning notices to them from February to April this year.

But the notice came as a surprise to a good number of 'loan defaulter' farmers as they earlier took back their mortgage land documents from the bank after fully repaying the loan. Some of them submitted written allegations regarding the matter to the deputy general manager of Sonali Bank Principal Office in Kurigram a week ago.

Aminul Islam, 60, a farmer of Dhairkhata village in Lalmonirhat Sadar, said he took agriculture loan of Tk 25,000 in 2002 and in 2011 he repaid the loan and got back the mortgage land document from the bank.

"But the bank declared me as loan defaulter and served a warning notice in February this year. Some bank staff must have embezzled the money that I repaid," he said.

Another farmer of the same village Amzad Ali, 55, who was served a warning notice as loan defaulter in March this year, said he had earlier taken back his mortgage land document from the bank after repaying his loan.

"I have all necessary

documents from the bank regarding my loan repayment. I submitted a written allegation to the bank authority regarding the matter," he said.

"At least 400 farmers among the 1500 loan defaulters are facing such problem. Field workers of Sonali Bank received the repayment from the farmers but the money was embezzled in collusion with dishonest bank officials," said a staff of Lalmonirhat branch of Sonali Bank, seeking anonymity.

Sazidul Islam, manager of the branch, said, "The field workers of the bank did not deposit the loan repayment money to the bank although they collected it from the farmers through giving documents. The probe team will submit their report after inquiry at the field level within a month. The higher authorities concerned will take departmental action after getting the report."

He, however, did not agree to disclose the figure of embezzled money and the number of affected farmers 'in the interest of investigation'.

Lightning kills 7 in 3 dists

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Seven people were killed by lightning in Gopalganj, Barisal and Narail districts yesterday.

At least four people were killed and five others injured by lightning in different areas of Gopalganj district, reports a correspondent.

Of them, Paritosh Mistri, 50, of Khulna and Basak Moral, 22, of Satkhira districts, were struck by lightning while cutting paddy at Televita village in Sadar upazila.

Pabitra Mandal, 22, and Biplab Mandal, 23, were injured during the incident, said locals.

In Tungipara upazila, Sajeeb, 17, was killed by lightning while working at

cropland at his village home Parjhanjhan.

Another farmer Krishna Banarjee, 35, was killed by lightning at his paddy field at Gopalpur village. He was the son of Gopal Banarjee of the village.

Meanwhile, a farmer, Moksed Miah, 16, housewife Arati Barai, 35, and Emdadul Fakir, 20, of Kotalipara upazila, were seriously injured by lightning. They were admitted to the upazila health complex.

Away in Narail, two farmers were killed by lightning in Kalia and Sadar upazilas yesterday, reports our correspondent.

The deceased were identified as Tapos Roy, 34, son of Binod Roy of Poradanga village in Sada upazila and

Asad Mollah, 50, son of Ranga Mollah of Jadoppur village under Kalia upazila.

Locals said the duo were stuck by lightning while they were harvesting paddy in the areas.

In Barisal, a farmer killed and another injured by lightning yesterday at Char Hogla village in Mehendiganj upazila, reports our correspondent.

Abdul Motaleb Jahangir, Mehendiganj municipal councillor, said Khorshed Bepari, 53, son of Hashem Bepari of Bajit Kha village, was killed by lightning while working at Irri block field during rain at about 12:00 noon.

Anwar Shikdar, 44, working near Khorshed, was also injured and admitted to the upazila health complex.