



Dead branches of trees are set at paddy fields, where birds perch and eat insects, minimising pest attacks on the crop. The photo was taken from Badhal village in Bagerhat's Kachua upazila a few days ago.

PHOTO: PARTHA CHARABORTTY

Perching method attracts farmers in Bagerhat

The eco-friendly way proves effective to check insects in crop fields

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Use of perching method sees a gradual rise among farmers of the district as they are opting for environment-friendly ways to check harmful pests as well as reduce the use of pesticides.

In the perching method, farmers set bamboo poles and branches of trees on crop fields at regular intervals so that pest-eating birds can sit there.

Magpie, martin, owl, sparrow and parakeet sit on the branches and eat different types of pest. As a result the harmful pests are decreasing and the birds are increasing day by day.

About 60 percent of paddy fields in the district has been brought under this perching method, said Aftab Uddin, deputy director of Department of Agricultural Extension, Bagerhat. During a recent visit to different villages in Kachua upazila, this correspondent found the birds sitting on the branches at the paddy fields to eat pests.

Meanwhile, the farmers are resisting the hunters to kill the bug-eating birds as it helps them increase the agricultural production and decrease the use of pesticides.

Farmer Abed Sheikh of Badal village in the upazila said he has been getting good result

since he set 40 branches on his three bighas of crop land after planting seeds over a month ago.

Besides helping to produce chemical-free healthy food crops, the perching method is reducing his production cost as he does not need to spend money for using chemical pesticides, said Abed.

It is a matter of joy that the number of birds is increasing day by day due to the environment-friendly way to check harmful pests, he said.

Another farmer Sanata Das said he is also using the same environment-friendly method on his crop land to check the pests. The process is cheap and easy.

Minimum facilities far cry for them

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

While the government has come up with a vast array of development programmes to upgrade people's life standard, some 300 residents from two indigenous communities are still deprived of getting minimum government facilities.

Around 55 families of Khaira and Santal communities at bordering Krishnochura village in Moulvibazar's Sreemangal and Habiganj's Chunarughat upazilas do not have proper medicare, education and other basic needs.

Most of the children at the remote village are left out of the government's vaccination programme. However, some of them were lucky as they were fortunately vaccinated while visiting their relatives' houses in other areas.

"Our children remain unvaccinated as health workers don't visit here as it is located in remote area," said Lobin Santal, 43, a resident of the village.

There are only three latrines and two tube-wells for the villagers. Most of the people go to nearby jungle for defecation. It causes different types of disease among the residents.

The word 'Digital Bangladesh' seems meaningless to them as the village is yet to

be connected with electricity. They are completely unacquainted with Information and Communication Technology, internet and other modern amenities.

Literacy rate is very low here as there is no school in the area. Children have to walk over three kilometres daily to reach Jamburacherra Government Primary School in Sreemangal.

A Class V student of the village said long distance is one of the factors but language barrier is another major challenge to continue her study.

"It's tough for me to understand the subjects as our teachers conduct class in Bangla language," she added.

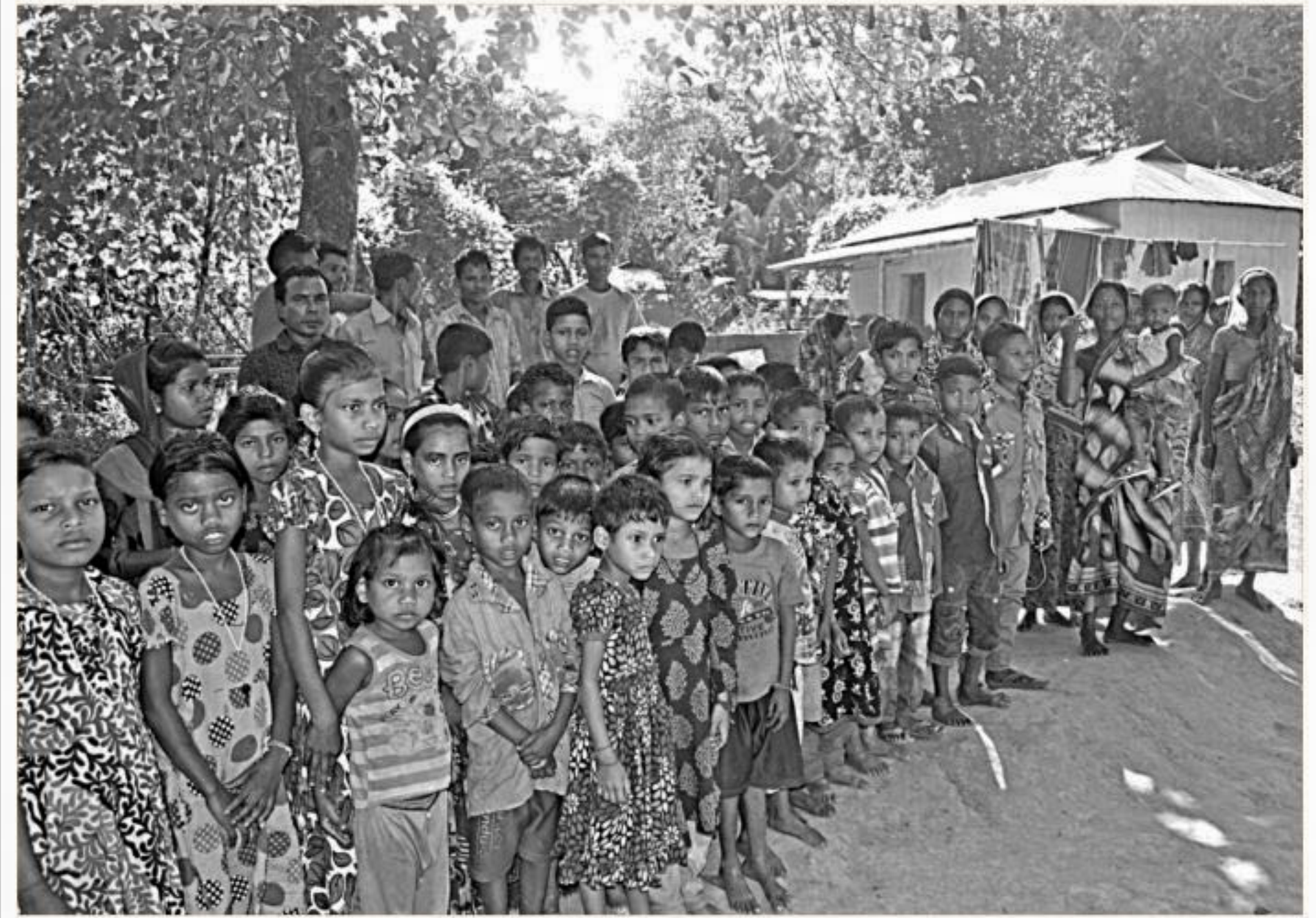
The villagers are mainly dependent on paddy, pineapple and lemon cultivation, said locals.

Nurul Mumin Faruk Chowdhury, chairman of Ranigaon Union Parishad in Chunarughat upazila, said the village has been neglected for many years due to its remoteness.

"I am trying to get special allocation for the development of the village," he said.

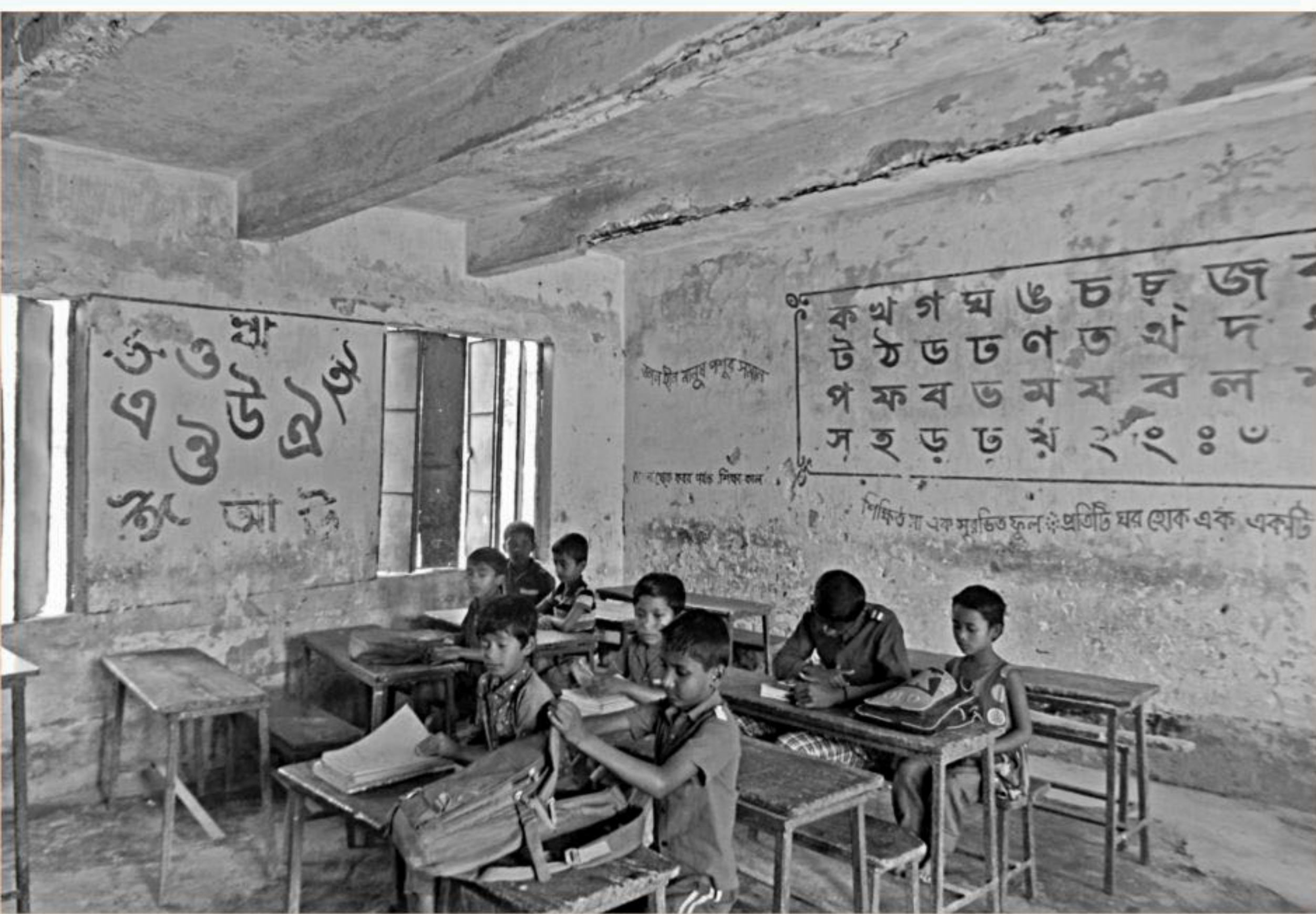
Joyal Abedin Titu, health and family planning officer of Sreemangal upazila, said he did not know about the matter that vaccination programme did not reach the village.

He will inquire into the allegation, said Titu.



A section of people belonging to underprivileged Khaira community at Krishnochura, a bordering village in Sreemangal upazila of Moulvibazar.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA



Students of Dakkhin Talikhali Government Primary School in Patuakhali Sadar upazila attend class in a risky building.

PHOTO: STAR

Classes in risky schoolhouse

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Students of Dakkhin Talikhali Government Primary School in Sadar upazila are attending their classes amid risk of accident due to the dilapidated condition of the schoolhouse.

The school building comprising two rooms saw no renovation work since it was constructed in 2001.

Established in 1994, the school has 85 students and five teachers, said Headmaster Md Jalilur Rahman.

The building may collapse any time as several cracks have developed in the roof and the exposed iron rods rusted, said teachers, adding that plaster falls off the sidewall regularly.

Nayeem Fakir, a student of Class V, said they have to attend classes amid risk of accident as the school building has turned too risky for use.

There is also a two-room tin-shed house adjacent to the building. Especially in monsoon, it is tough to attend classes in the schoolhouse as it also saw no renovation work since long, said students.

Despite repeated pleas, the authorities concerned are yet to take any steps in this regard, said the headmaster.

New school building should be built immediately considering interest of the children, he said.

Md Shahidul Islam, district primary education officer, said they have already informed the higher authorities about taking steps to renovate the structure or build a new building there.

Labourer killed as glass sheets falls

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

A labourer was killed when stacks of glass sheets fell on him while unloading those at a shop in the town on Wednesday night.

The deceased, Abir Sheikh, 21, who used to load and unload goods for different warehouses and shops, was son of Aslam Sheikh of Masimpur area in Pirojpur Sadar municipality.

Witnesses said the incident occurred when Abir and three to four other labourers were unloading sheets of glass from a truck for 'Sunmoon Traders' in front the Sadar Police Station around 10:15pm and suddenly huge stacks of glass sheets fell on him.

Though fellow workers somehow managed to save themselves, Abir died on the spot.

On information, a team of fire fighters from Pirojpur Fire Station rushed to the spot and after one and a half hours frantic efforts they rescued Abir from underneath the glass stacks and sent him to Pirojpur Sadar Hospital where the doctors declared him dead.

An unnatural death (UID) case was filed with Sadar Police Station in this regard, Officer in Charge of the PS SM Ziaul Haque said.

Stolen baby rescued after four days

Relative, two other arrestees admit to the crime, say police

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

An 11-day-old baby boy, allegedly stolen from Netrakona General Hospital on Monday, was rescued from Netrakona town yesterday.

Police also arrested the baby's aunt Jharna Begum, 36, and Sheuli Begum, 50, and Sheuli's husband Fayzul Haque, 55, of Netrakona's Aatpara upazila, in this connection.

During primary interrogation, the arrested couple said they bought the baby from Jharna. Later, they took the baby to Dhaka where they work.

To avoid police arrest, the couple came to Netrakona with the baby and left him in a plastic bag on the hospital premises around 5:00am yesterday, said Mohammad Fokrujjan Jewel, additional superintendent of police.

On information, a police team rushed to the spot and rescued the baby and detained the couple while they were fleeing. According to their confessional statements, police later arrested Jharna.

Doctors at the hospital said health condition of the baby was good.

Babita Akter, 35, wife of farmer Abul Kashem of Panchgaj village, gave birth to a baby through a caesarean delivery at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital on February 15. She was released from the hospital on February 20.

On Monday, she came to Netrakona General Hospital to have her stitches removed. When she entered a room at labour ward, her mother-in-law Jayeda Akter kept the child.

"When I was waiting in front of the labour ward, a burqa-clad young woman came to me and began exchanging pleasantries with me. She took the baby in her arms and fled the scene when I was absentminded," said Jayeda.

Dr Tajul Islam Khan, civil surgeon of Netrakona, said no such incident occurred at the hospital.

The baby's father later filed a general diary with Netrakona Model Police Station in this connection.

Kuakata beach-goers falling prey to illegal toll collection

Municipality mayor said he didn't authorise the act

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

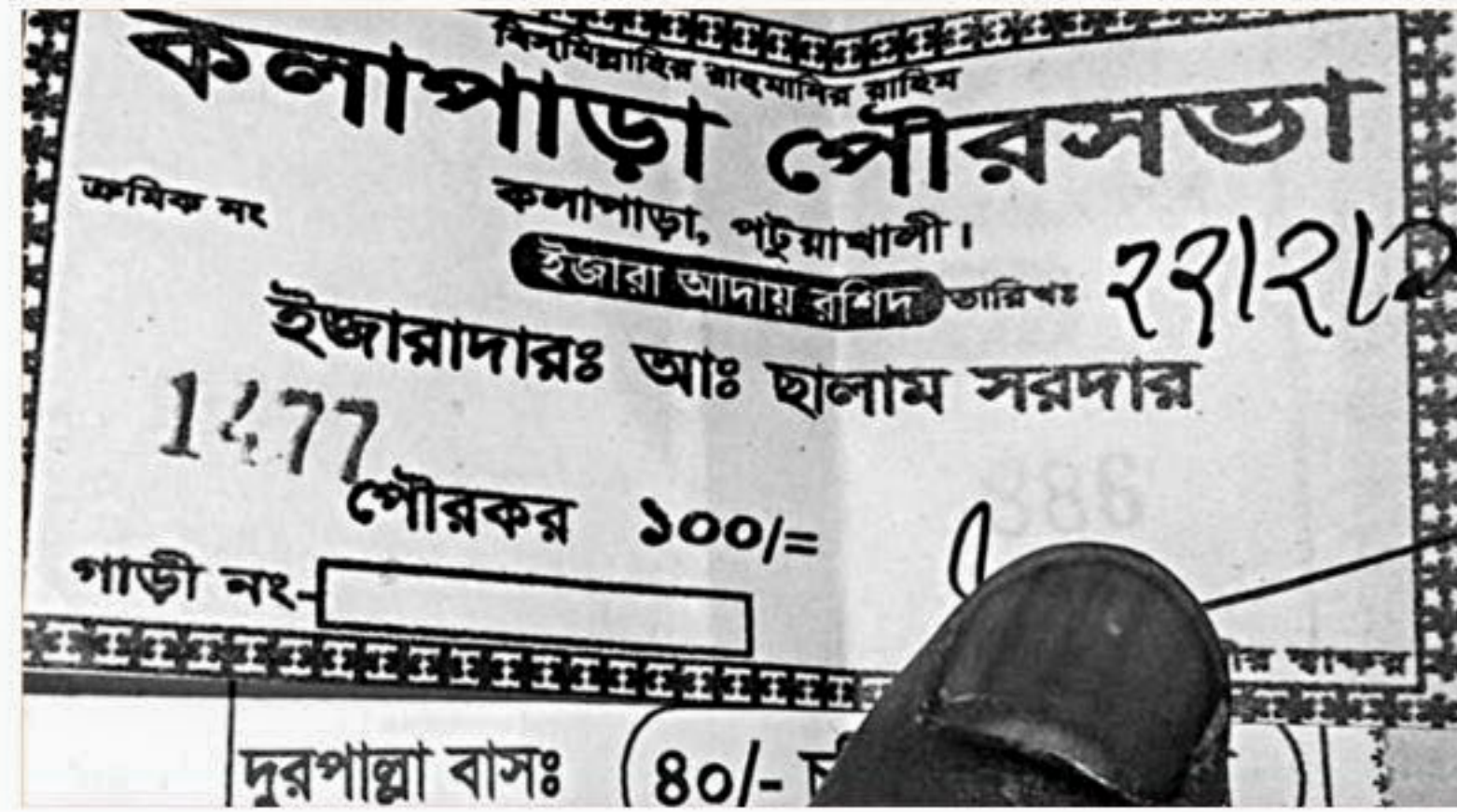
A gang of criminals has been collecting toll illegally from vehicles on Kuakata Road towards Kuakata sea beach.

They stop Kuakata-bound vehicles between Sheikh Kamal Bridge and Nachnapara area under Kalapara municipality and forcibly collect Tk 100 to 200 from each vehicle after handing out a fake receipt inscribed with "Kalapara Municipality".

The total money extorted by the group every day is estimated at Tk 40,000 to 50,000, said locals.

Wishing not to be named, the locals also said one Sohel from Chakamoiya area in Kalapara upazila leads the gang, while its members identify themselves as members of Awami League or its affiliated bodies.

Kuakata beach draws a large crowd of tourists during dry season, especially on Fridays and Saturdays,



The fake toll receipt of 'Kalapara Municipality'. It was given to a bus driver after he was forced to pay Tk 150 for crossing a bridge recently.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

and the forcible collection of illegal tolls on the road is making a dent on their minds about the beach, they said.

Alamgir Hossain, driver of tourist bus Emon Paribahan from Khulna, said before crossing

Sheikh Kamal Bridge in the morning of last Friday, a group of people "stopped my bus and demanded Tk 200 for crossing the bridge. They gave me a receipt [number 1477] for only Tk 100, after I paid them Tk 150."

More than 500 tourist buses arrive at Kuakata on Fridays and Saturdays from different parts of the country and all the buses have to pay the illegal toll, he said.

After this correspondent made repeated requests, Sohel, the alleged gang leader, refused to make any comment over the accusations made against him and his henchmen.

Kalapara Municipality Mayor Bipul Hawlader told this correspondent that there is no scope for the municipality to collect toll from buses. "We collect toll only from users of our bus terminal. The ones collecting the toll [from the road] are liable for their own act."

Contacted, Monirul Islam, officer-in-charge of Kalapara Police Station, said they did not receive any complaint on the matter. "If any one files a complaint, we will take necessary legal action."