



Logs get loaded onto a truck at Kagujirup in Baufal upazila under Patuakhali district for transport to other places as the region sees random tree felling in the absence of adequate action by the authorities concerned.

Patuakhali forests shrink as random tree felling on

Hard-pressed locals sell trees even before they mature

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Unscrupulous timber traders have continued random tree felling throughout the district, especially in remote chars (coastal islands), to sell it to brickfields, match factories and furniture shops at different places.

The situation seriously affects forest resources in the coastal district where only seven percent of the land area is now covered with forest, said sources at Patuakhali forest office.

Around 30 trucks and 10 trawlers are used to carry about 300 tonnes of logs daily from the district to different places including Dhaka and Chittagong, local sources said.

Eight to ten trucks and trawlers loaded with logs, mostly of rain tree, chambol, karai and mango,

daily start from Baufal upazila for certain places or company, said Farid Mridha, 30, of Kagujirup area under the upazila.

On an average each vehicle carries 10 tonnes of logs, he said.

Buyers feel interested to buy wood from remote char lands as poor people of these areas sell trees at very cheap rates.

Often hard-pressed villagers sell the trees before they mature.

The tree which now sells at only Tk 500 would be worth Tk 5000 to 6000 if they are allowed to grow for five years more," said Babul Gazi, 50, of Diarakachua, a remote char.

Most people of the remote areas became jobless during this time of the year and they often sell trees to maintain the fam-

ily, he said, adding that some local people work as brokers and arrange the sale.

"Rural people are not so aware of the harmful effects of random tree felling on our environment. The number of trees planted is much smaller compared to the number of trees felled every year. If anyone cuts one tree he should plant at least two trees," said Uttam Kumar Ganguly, chief of Baufal upazila nursery.

The existing law requires permission from the local forest office if anybody wants to cut tree but the law is often neglected.

Random tree felling leads to deforestation that raises the occurrence of various disasters like flood, cyclone, storm, heavy

rainfall or drought, an official of Baufal forest office said.

Environmentalists suggest keeping forest on at least 25 percent of a country's land area to keep ecological balance but only seven percent of the land area of Patuakhali district is now covered with forest.

When contacted, Divisional Forest Officer Gobindo Roy said, "Random tree cutting must be stopped to protect forests. We have already asked all upazila officers to make local people aware to obey the relevant law. If anybody wants to cut trees even on his personal land he should take permission from the local officer concerned.

He emphasized political and social commitment as well as public awareness for success in this regard.

25 hurt as BCL, Shibir clash at Dinajpur Govt College

Dorm burnt, institution closed for indefinite period

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Dinajpur

At least 25 people including 4 policemen were injured and a private dormitory was burnt as activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Islami Chhatra Shibir got locked in a clash in Dinajpur Government College on Tuesday night.

The academic council of the college in a meeting presided over by Principal Ahmed Hossain yesterday decided to shut the college for indefinite period to avert further clash between the two student organisations.

The authorities also asked resident students to vacate five dormitories of the college within 3:00pm yesterday.

Witnesses said BCL activists led by a BCL leader beat up three Shibir activists at Suihari in Dinajpur town at around 8:30pm on Tuesday.

In reaction to the incident, Shibir activists at around 10:30pm threw brickbats targeting Ajoy Hall, a dormitory resided by BCL men.

Consequently, the two groups locked in a clash with brickbats, sticks and sharp weapons, creating panic in the area.

At around 11:20pm, BCL activists set fire to a private-run dormitory named 'Himi Chhatrabas' at Khalpara near Dinajpur Government College. Mostly Shibir men reside at the dormitory.

The fire burnt all the 12 rooms of the dormitory. Fire fighters rushed to the spot and doused the fire.

The clash left 25 people injured. They were admitted to Dinajpur Medical College Hospital, from where Shibir activist Nazmul Alam, 23, was shifted to Rangpur

Medical College Hospital with serious injuries.

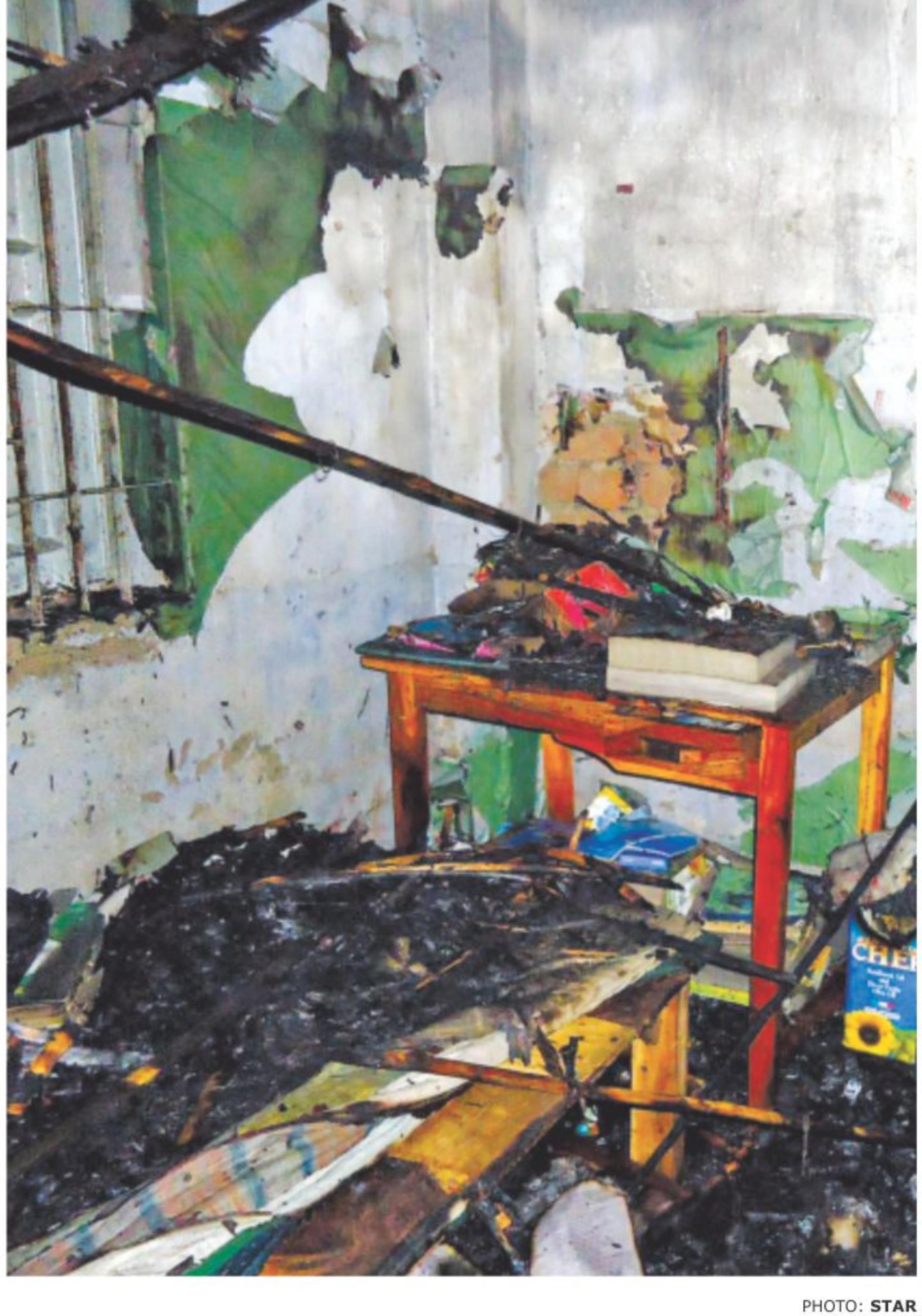
At around 12:00am, police arrived at the spot and used eight tear gas shells and rubbers bullets to control the situation.

Aslam Iqbal, officer in charge of Dinajpur police station, said, "The Chhatra League activists attacked our supporters as a sequel to

the clash at Rajshahi University. They looted the private dormitory before setting fire to it."

However, tension was prevailing on the campus.

When contacted, Md Motiur Rahman, president of Dinajpur town unit of Islami Chhatra Shibir, said, "The Chhatra League activists attacked our supporters as a sequel to



A room of private-run dormitory Himi Chhatrabas at Khalpara near Dinajpur Government College bears testimony to Chhatra League activists' vandalism and arson attack during their clash with Islami Chhatra Shibir activists on Tuesday night.

TORTURED BY POLICE, MAN DIES

Hartal observed in Basail upazila, four cops closed

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Tangail

A daylong hartal was observed in Basail upazila yesterday, protesting the death of a man due to torture by police.

The protesters brought out a procession and held a rally at Basail bus stand in the morning and blocked the road by burning tyres demanding punishment to the cops responsible for the death of a man of Sunna village under the upazila.

Locals said a group of Jubo League activists led by Jony and Jewel picked up Kayes from in front of Model High School in the town at around 8:00pm and took him to Ukipara area.

They beat up Kayes and stabbed in different parts of his body, leaving him critically injured.

Being informed, police rushed to the spot, rescued Kayes and took him to Feni Sadar Hospital. The JCD leader was shifted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital the same night as his condition deteriorated.

JCD Feni district unit Publicity Secretary Salauddin protested the attack on Kayes. He demanded immediate arrest of the Jubo League men involved.

No case was lodged with Feni Sadar Model Police Station in connection with the incident as of 5:00pm yesterday.

ATTACK ON COPS
500 BNP-Jamaat men sued in Gaibandha

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Gaibandha

Over 500 leaders and activists of BNP-Jamaat have been sued on charge of attacking police in Sunderganj upazila.

The accused include upazila Jamaat secretary Shahidul Islam Manju, upazila BNP secretary Abdul Matin, municipal councillor Mazedur Rahman Runu, Abdus Satter and Satter Mia.

Gokul Chandra Barman, sub-inspector of Sunderganj police station, filed the case on Monday afternoon.

Police arrested nine people, including Nuruzzaman Sarker, Belka union secretary of Jamaat, in connection with the attack, said Jalaluddin Ahmed, officer in-charge of the PS.

On Sunday, upazila BNP-Jamaat brought out a procession, protesting a US-made anti-Islam film.

At this, police intercepted the protesters at Amtali point and charged batons to disperse the crowd.

A chase and counter chase took place between the law enforcers and the protesters, leaving at least 23 people injured including eight policemen.



Buddhists form a human chain at Shapla Chattar in Khagrachhari town yesterday protesting the barbaric attack on the people of the community at Ramu in Cox's Bazar and Patiya in Chittagong districts on Saturday and Sunday.