

22 villages under threat as Surma dyke vulnerable

MINTU DESHWARA, back from Doarabazar

People of at least 22 villages of Doarabazar upazila under Sunamganj district are passing days amid panic as the swelling Surma river threatens different places of its embankment.

The authorities should take immediate steps to repair the damaged parts of the embankment to save the entire area, said Md Abdul Bari, chairman of Doarabazar Sadar union parishad.

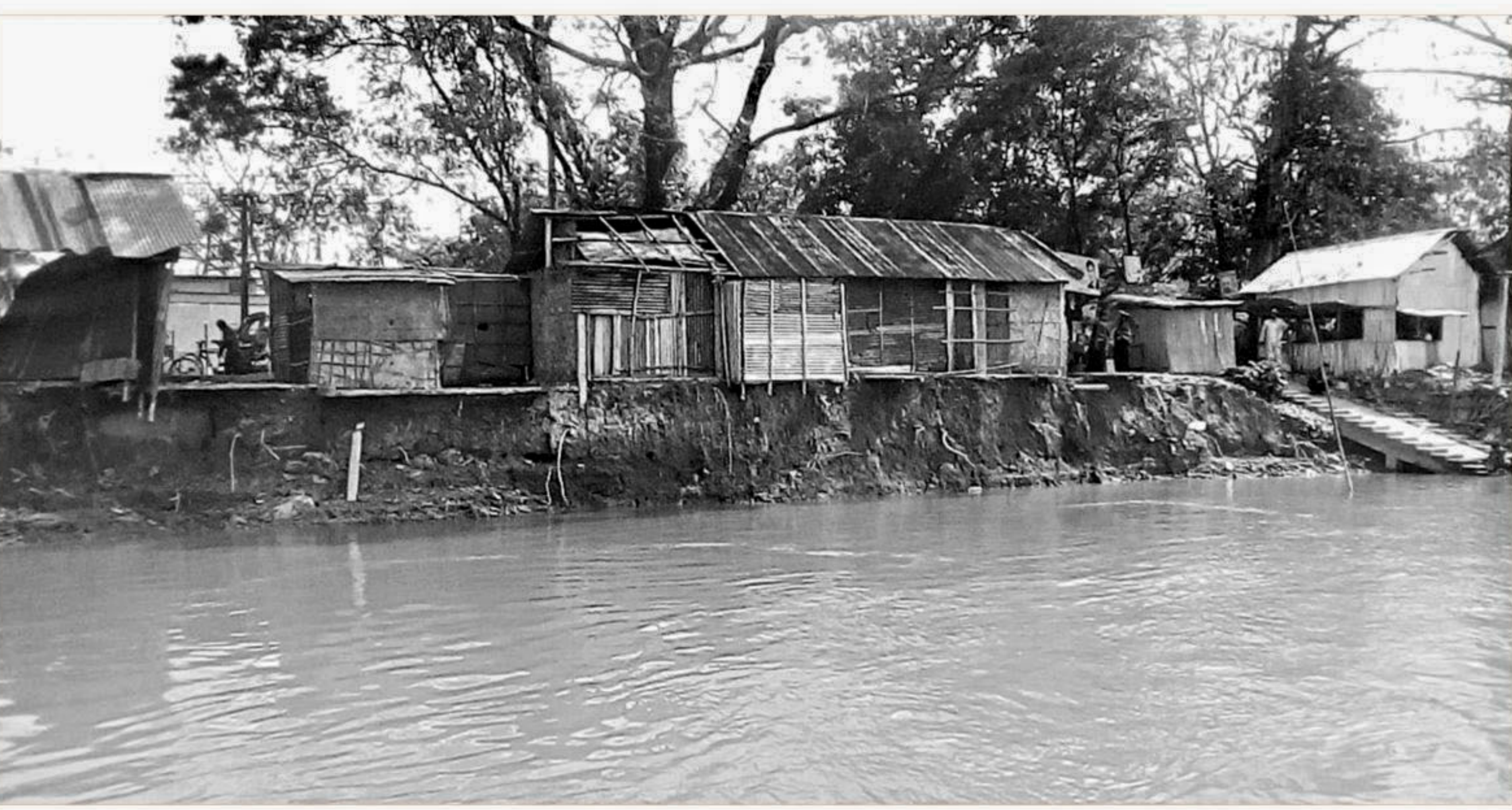
The villages threatened by river erosion are Majergaon, Muradpur, Purbo Masimpur, Paschim Masimpur, Idonpur, Azampur, Haripur, Nanipur, Monglargaon, Sharifpur, Doarabazar Sadar, Tegonga, Teblai, Borbon, Bajitpur, Bhandargaon,

Batartek, Doalia, Protappur, Katakhal, Potiposi and Nurpur.

"We keep watch on the embankment by turns at night in fear of collapse," said Jalal Ahmed, 45, of Sharifpur village.

"Farmers had to count losses as their boro paddy and vegetables in vast areas have been flooded. We earlier demanded repair of the risky flood control embankments but to no effect," said Principal Md Idrish Ali, chairman of Doarabazar upazila chairman.

Md Afsar Uddin, executive engineer of Water Development Board in Sunamganj, said the river is flowing just below the danger level but they have no funds to repair the embankments immediately.



Erosion by the swelling Surma river poses threat to different places of Doarabazar upazila in Sunamganj. The photo was taken from the upazila town area last week.

PHOTO: STAR

Man to die for killing schoolboy

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

A court here yesterday sentenced a man to death for killing a 12-year-old schoolboy for ransom in 2012.

The convict, Ashraf Ali, 32, is son of Akbar Ali of Halsha village.

Natore District and Sessions Judge Rezaul Karim delivered the verdict in presence of the convict.

According to the case statement, Ashraf and his cohorts kidnapped Ananta Chakrabarti, son of Ashok Chakrabarti of Halsha village, also a Class VI student at Halsha High School, and demanded Tk 5 lakh as ransom from his family for his release.

As Ananta's family members failed to pay the huge amount of money the kidnappers killed the innocent boy and dumped his body.

DINAJPUR BOILER BLAST Another dies

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Another victim of Wednesday's rice mill boiler blast in Dinajpur Sadar upazila died yesterday, raising the death toll to three.

Dinajpur Deputy Commissioner Mir Khairul Alam yesterday formed a five-member committee to investigate the explosion that also burnt 27 others.

The committee, headed by Additional District Magistrate Mahbubur Rahman, has been asked to file their report within three working days. Other members of the committee are Kazem Uddin, additional superintendent of police, Liakat Ali, assistant director of Fire Service and Civil Defence, Humayun Kabir, its boiler inspector, and Anwarul Islam, senior vice president of Dinajpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The boiler of Jamuna Automatic Rice Mill at Gopalganj of Dinajpur Sadar went off around 11:30am Wednesday when around 50 workers were at the mill.

Thirty people were badly burnt and two of them died shortly afterwards while Shafiqul Islam, 45, succumbed to his injuries at Rangpur Medical College Hospital (RMCH) yesterday morning. The 27 others are being treated at RMCH and M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital in Dinajpur.

The mill's staff alleged that the boiler had crossed the expiry date but mill owner Subal Ghosh was using it despite repeated complaints.

This correspondent tried to reach Subal Ghosh for his comment but he did not receive the phone calls as of 5:15pm yesterday.

Priority to cattle smugglers!

Dahagram-Angorpota people have no free access to take their cattle through Tinbigha corridor to mainland markets

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Farmers of Dahagram-Angorpota in Patgram upazila have no free access to take their cattle through the Tinbigha corridor to mainland markets while certificates are allegedly being issued to the smugglers to sell cows.

The people alleged that the union parishad (UP) chairman and members issue only 60 certificates to take cows to mainland through Tinbigha corridor at Dahagram in the district.

Camp Commander of BGB 15 Battalion Nayek Shamsul Haque said the Dahagram UP chairman and members have been authorised to issue certificates to the farmers to take their cows to the mainland markets.

Nayek Shamsul said 60 cows are allowed to be taken through the corridor a week.

Dahagram UP Chairman Kamal Hossain Prodhhan said there are 2,700 families in the union, each of whom rears five to fifteen cows. There are

around 26,000 cows here, he added.

Shahedul Islam of Mahimpur village said he owns eight cows, but cannot sell them in the mainland markets without permission of UP representatives and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB).

Farmer Alfad Hossain of Angorpota said he could not sell his cows during the last two months as the UP representatives were not giving them certificates for the purpose. The UP representatives sell the certificates to the smugglers, depriving them, he said, adding that the smugglers take smuggled cows to the mainland market through the Tinbigha corridor showing the certificates.

Shahidul Islam of Dahagram said of the 60 certificates for 60 cows, 30 go to the smugglers, adding that the UP men earn Tk 10,000 from each certificate by selling them to the smugglers. Shahidul alleged that they were not allowed to enter mainland markets through the corridor along with their cows without certificates as the certi-

icates were given to the smugglers.

A cattle trader at Dahagram said they are to spend Tk 10,000 for obtaining a certificate from the UP. He said they purchase a cow for Tk 10,000 to Tk 20,000 in the Indian markets and sell those for Tk 45,000 to Tk 65,000 in the Bangladesh markets.

Dahagram UP member Rasimuddin Mia said they never sell certificates to the smugglers for selling cows, but some people do this business by taking certificates from them in the name of selling their cows. "We are now giving certificates after checking," he said.

UP Chairman Kamal, admitting this as a problem in his union, said genuine farmers are now getting certificate for selling their cows in the market.

Nayek Shamsul said the BGB and India's Border Security Force jointly decided that 60 cows would be allowed from Dahagram to the mainland markets through the Tinbigha corridor a week with a view to checking cattle smuggling.

Father hands over addict son to police

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A man handed over his drug addict son to police in Sariakandi upazila of the district yesterday.

Later, police produced the addicted youth before the court of Executive Magistrate, also Upazila Nirbahi Officer, Md Moniruzzaman at noon. After a hearing, the court sentenced the youth to imprisonment for one year.

The convict is Jafor Iqbal Bappi, 28, son of trader Bazlur Rashid of Hindu Kandi area of Sariakandi municipality.

Sub-inspector of Sariakandi Police Station Enayet Hossain said Bappi was sent to a Bogra jail after the verdict was delivered in the afternoon.



Staff of fisheries department spreading medicines in the contaminated haor water to save rest of fishes in Mohanganj upazila of Netrakona.

PHOTO: STAR

BRUTALITY ON ETHNIC COUPLE Prime accused still at large, cop drive on

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

The prime accused allegedly involved in shaving the heads of a couple at Hatilet Dublakhola village in Phulbaria upazila are yet to be arrested, seven days after the incident.

Last Wednesday, some village arbitrators shaved the heads of Laxmi Rani Cooch, 30, and her husband Koyes Cooch, 35, both day labourers from a small ethnic community of the village, alleging Laxmi's relations with a person of the same area.

The allegation was found baseless, said ward member Sekandar Ali Akanda, quoting locals.

After making the couple walk around the village with shoes hung around their necks, the arbitrators also ordered them to pay a fine of Tk 40,000.

A mob allegedly led by Kalimohan Barman and Naren Barman perpetrated the heinous act. They also beat up the couple with shoes in front of

hundreds of villagers.

Laxmi filed a case against 12 named people, including three women, with Phulbaria Police Station on Sunday evening.

Talking to the Daily Star, Koyes said he has to maintain a family of four members, including two daughters - Bristi, a Class III student, and Beauty, 7, who is physically challenged.

"As I was beaten up badly, I am taking medicines and not physically fit to go out for work," lamented Koyes. "I got financial help of Tk 6,000 so far, including Tk 5,000 from the local union parishad," he added.

Police on Monday arrested Dukhiram Cooch, 45, of the village for his alleged involvement in this brutal torture, but he was not named in the case, police said.

Police drives are on to arrest the accused, said Rifat Khan Rajib, officer-in-charge of Phulbaria Police Station.

Over 50 trees sold without tender

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Over 50 roadside trees on Kalaiya-Showla road in the district that were uprooted in the recent storms were allegedly sold without tendering.

Locals alleged that Md Ruhul Amin, acting forest officer of Baulal upazila, sold the trees to timber trader Faruq Hossain of Kalaiya area for Tk 90,000.

Sohrab Hossain, driver of a saw mill, said Faruq took the trees to the mill to make planks.

This correspondent tried to contact Faruq but failed as his cellphone was switched-off. One of Faruq's co-traders said Ruhul sold the trees as they were blocking the road.

Another timber trader said Ruhul sold the trees for only Tk only 90,000, though the market price was at least Tk 1.5 lakh.

This correspondent tried to contact Ruhul but his cellphone was switched-off.

Divisional Forest Officer Ajit Kumer Rudhro said he was looking into the matter and action would be taken against the culprit if the allegation is true.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Baulal Mohammad Abdullah AL Mahmud Zaman said trees belonging to the government could not be sold without auction.

Tk 18 cr fish damaged in Netrakona flood

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

The huge damage in the fisheries sector due to flashflood has left some 14000 fishermen of Khaliyajury and Mohanganj in Netrakona in deep crisis.

Over 2500 tonnes of fishes, worth around Tk 18 crore, were damaged in the upazilas, said fisheries department sources.

The damage was caused by oxygen deficiency due to rotting of boro plants, it said.

Around 7300 fishermen were affected in Khaliyajury while the rest were in Mohanganj, said the sources.

Fisheries department are spreading lime and OXY-A in the contaminated water to purify and increase oxygen supply in the water to save the rest of the fish, said Tanbir Ahammed, upazila fisheries officer.

"Primarily we made an assessment that some 530 tonnes of fishes, worth around Tk 15, 90, 00000 (15 crore 90 lakh) died in Khaliyajury flashflood," Tanbir said, adding that the figure is increasing everyday.

Not only fish but also crabs and snails were found dead in Dingapota haor of Mohanganj, said Dilip Kumar Saha, Mohanganj upazila fisheries officer.

They are also telling the people not to fish now to bring the water to its normal level, he said.

SCANTY RELIEF SUPPLY

Relief distributed in flashflood affected haor areas so far is very scanty, said flood victims.

Government relief of 76 tonnes of rice and Tk 30,000 has been distributed among the flood-hit people so far, said Khaliyajury Upazila Nirbahi Officer Mohammed Tofael Ahmed.

Three OMS centres have been opened at the upazila headquarters since Sunday and every centre has an allotment of one tonne of rice and one tonne of wheat per day, he said.

We have also made proposals for immediate starting of VGF (vulnerable group feeding) and rice meant for poor people at Tk 10 per kg, informed the UNO.

But the far away flood victims cannot avail the relief as they have to spend around Tk 100 to reach upazila headquarters, said Nazim Uddin Sarker, chairman of Krishnapur union, some 10-kilometres from upazila headquarters.

"To feed some 20,000 flood victims in the union, I need some 300 tonnes of rice per month but I received a relief of 10.50 tonnes in last 15 days," he said.

The flashflood also damaged around 48670 out of 184,320 hectares of land targeted for boro cultivation in eight upazilas of Netrakona, said Bilash Chandra Pal, deputy director of local DAE.

'Robber' killed in 'gunfight'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

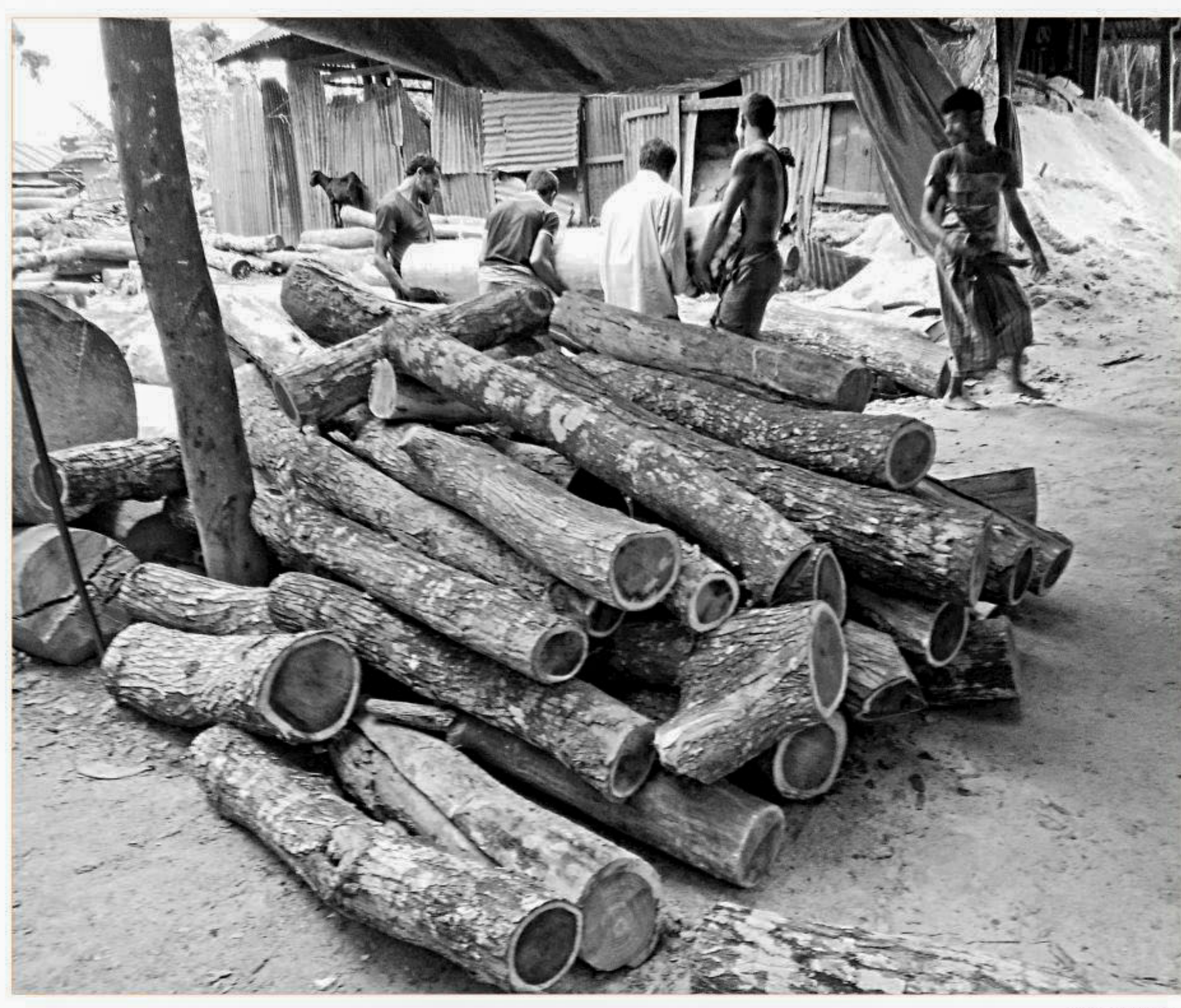
An alleged robber was killed and one of his close aides sustained injuries in a 'gunfight' at Deuli village in Keshabpur upazila of Jessore early yesterday.

The deceased, Younus Hossain, 40, was son of Mokbul Hossain of Monipur village in Ashashuni upazila of Satkhira.

The gunfight took place on Keshabpur-Sagardari Road between two rival groups of robbers around 3:25am that left Younus dead and another injured, Officer in-Charge Shahidul Islam of Keshabpur Police Station said.

Police recovered a shutter gun and two machetes from the spot, the OC said, adding that injured Ashraf Hossain, 28, was admitted at Jessore General Hospital.

Younus was an accused in at least three to four cases with the police station, including for robbery, added the OC.



Trees that were uprooted in a storm in Baulal upazila of Patuakhali being cut to size at a saw mill in Kalaiya area.

PHOTO: STAR