

Law and order slides in 10 southwestern districts

53 murders, 24 bomb blasts last month against 41 and 14 in previous month

AMANUR AMAN, *Kushtia*

Law and order situation in ten southwestern districts made a nosedive last month with at least 53 people killed.

The figure was 41 in August, 46 in July and 32 in June, according to police records.

Incidents of bomb blasts in the region during September also increased to at least 24 from 14 in the previous month.

However, other crimes including abduction, robbery and rape declined during the period, police said.

A number of high officials of police seeking anonymity admitted the deterioration in law and order. It is a 'sudden phenomenon' they said and expressed the hope that the situation will improve soon as they have intensified their anti-crime

drive in the region.

Talking to this correspondent, they suspected that the breakaway faction of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) and gangsters are responsible for the killings.

The victims include businessmen, political leaders and activists, farmers and outlaws.

Of the victims, 17 were businessmen, killed for not paying toll to outlaws; and 15 were leaders and activists of different political parties.

At least 12 outlaws were killed by their rivals. The rest were innocent people.

The 10 districts are Kushtia, Meherpur, Chuadanga, Jhenidah, Magura, Jessore, Narail, Bagerhat, Sakhira and Khulna.

Kushtia topped the list with 13 murders, followed by 12 in Jessore, 10 in Khulna, 9 in Chuadanga, five in Jhenidah, 4 in Bagerhat, 3 in Narail,

2 in Magura, 5 in Meherpur and one in Sakhira.

The sudden rise in murders raised a question among law enforcers and people whether drastic anti-crime drives including crossfire incidents would check targeted killings, mostly by outlaws or criminal gangs engaged in extortion.

According to police records, nine crossfire deaths took place in the 10 districts last month, raising the figure to 345 since June 2004.

Among them, 158 people were killed during June-December 2004, 108 in 2005 and the rest were killed this year.

Law enforcers blamed outlawed parties for the killings. Some sources said outlaws vowed to avenge 'crossfire' killings, terming it 'cold-blooded' murder.

At least 13 outlawed parties including a newly floated one are

active in the region with about 10000 cadres. These are four factions of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP)-- PBCP-ML, PBCP-Janajuddho, PBCP-Red Flag and PBCP-Communist War--, Biplobi Communist Party (BCP), New Biplobi Communist Party (NBCP), Banglar Communist Party (BCP-Laltu) Gono Mukti Fojj (GMF) and Gono Bahini (GB), Socialist Party (SP), Biplobi Anuragi, Chhi-nnomul Communist Party (CCP) and the Sharbahara Peoples Manch (SPM), launched last month.

The source claimed that outlaws increased their activities taking the scope of alleged law vigilance by law enforcers in recent days. They said officials and personnel of different law enforcement agencies are now busy lobbying with authorities for transfer in 'good place' at the tag end of the government's tenure.

2 killed in Kushtia, Chuadanga

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Kushtia*

Two persons including a widow were killed in two separate incidents in Kushtia and Chuadanga yesterday and on Sunday.

The widow is Banuara Khatun, 55, of Dhubail village in Mirpur upazila, Kushtia.

Criminals chopped her to death after snatching Tk 20,000 early yesterday. She was on way to Mirpur Police Station to get release one of her relatives, Nazir Hossain, who was arrested on Sunday, family sources said.

Earlier, a 'source' in the police station suggested Nazir's father Bahar Ali Fakir Bahar to go to the police station to get release his son on payment of Tk 20,000.

On Bahar's request, his relative Banuara was going to the police station with the amount in the morning. Two relatives, Ranjana Khatun and Tulona Khatun, accompanied her. As they reached near Dhubail mosque at about 5.30 am, the criminals swooped on the three and chopped them indiscriminately before snatching the entire amount from Banuara. She died on the spot and her two relatives were admitted to Kushtia General Hospital with severe injuries.

Victim's son Jalal termed the incident 'pre-planned' saying a police source was involved in the incident.

In Chuadanga, a gang of criminals stormed into the house of a farmer named Abdul Gafur, 35, at Jagannathpur village in Damurhuda upazila on Sunday.

They picked him up at gunpoint and took to Shibnagar field, 2-kilometre away from his house where they slaughtered him.

Family sources said, the gang demanded Tk.50, 000 from the victim as illegal toll a few days ago.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Chuadanga Sadar Hospital.

BNP aspirants engaged in mudslinging

Mayma Ching claims to be 'fittest' candidate while Zeri vows to run independent in Bandarban

SHANTIMOY CHAKMA, *back from Bandarban*

Intra-party feud in Bandarban district BNP widened further as Saturday's scheduled party council could not be held due to rival factions' stand-off.

The council was planned to resolve the years-long dispute but it was not held despite the rival factions' written agreement and promise to party high-ups to hold it on the scheduled date, party sources said.

One faction is led by district BNP president and Bandarban District Council Chairman Mayma Ching and the other by senior party leader and former local government council chairman Sachin-gpru Zeri.

The feud has intensified now as the factions are blaming each other for violating the agreement.

Political circles in Bandarban said the feud in BNP has made Awami League's chance of bagging the parliamentary seat for the fourth time in the coming election.

AL's Bir Bahadur won the seat in 1991, 1996 and 2001 elections due to intra-party feud in BNP, they said.

He is likely win the coming election again if the feud in BNP can not be mended, they said.

Dedicated leaders and activists of the party have become frustrated as resolution of dispute between the factions has become uncertain, party sources said.

On August 31, leaders of the feuding groups signed an agreement on a stamp to hold the council on September 30. They also met with BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuyan and assured him of resolving the dispute at the September 30 council.

It was stated in the August 31 agreement that all the leaders and councilors would select their candidate for the coming election through secret ballot at the September 30 council.

The agreement also provided that the rival factions would refrain from criticising and accusing each other on different issues, party sources said.

"But none is abiding by the agreement", a senior party leader told this correspondent yesterday



Mayma Ching

seeking anonymity.

"They met with Mannan Bhuiyan in Dhaka recently", he said. BNP leader Moazzem Hossain Alal MP came to Bandarban during party's founding anniversary programmes and held a meeting with leaders of the feuding groups to mend the differences but he failed, the sources said.

Talking to this correspondent, Mayma Ching claimed that she is the fittest candidate to get nomination as she polled much higher votes than two other party candidates in previous elections.

"I am optimistic about getting nomination because I am in the mainstream of BNP for long.

"I lost to Awami League candidate with a narrow margin (853 votes) in last election. In 1991 and 1996 elections, our candidates KS Pru and Sachingpru Zeri lost to AL with big margins", she said.

Replying to a question, Mayma Ching said, "I am always ready to hold party council. But our party high command is yet to give any directive in this regard".

She alleged that district BNP secretary Kazi Mohitul Hossain and senior vice-president Zeri are engaged in making false propaganda against her.

"We are not violating the agreement. The Zeri-Mohitul faction is violating the agreement by making false propaganda".

She however said she will work for the party nominee.

Sachingpru Zeri, senior district BNP leader and son of Bomang



Sachingpru Zeri

Circle chief King Aungsoi Pru Chowdhury, blamed Mayma Ching for not taking any step to hold party council despite a 'verbal directive' by party secretary Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan. As district BNP president she should call a council, Zeri said.

"She keeps us out of all party activities", he alleged.

"Mayma Ching is not holding council fearing defeat as two-thirds of the party men are in my favour. All our activists are in favour of holding of council," Zeri claimed.

"I am hundred per cent sure that the party high command will give me nomination in the coming election. If party high-ups mistakenly give nomination to Mayma Ching, I will contest as an independent candidate from the constituency", Zeri said.

Zeri contested the 2001 election as independent candidate and got 14000 votes while Mayma Ching was defeated by AL candidate Birbahadur by only 853 votes. Bir Bahadur got 39,000 votes.

Party sources said the feud between Sachinpru Zeri and Mayma Ching, the two key leaders in Bandarban BNP, persists for 16 years. Bandarban district BNP was divided into two groups in 1990.

The two groups worked together in the last Bandarban municipality election but fell apart when the AL candidate won the 2001 election.

Rail links in 2 Mymensingh routes snapped

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Mymensingh*

Train communication from Jamalpur to Dhaka via Mymensingh and Mymensingh to Netrakona via Bhairab was disrupted as two goods train derailed here yesterday afternoon, railway sources said.

Three wagons of a Bahadurabad-bound goods train coming from Mymensingh derailed at Chhayabani railway crossing in the district town.

In another incident, 19 wagons of a goods train derailed at a place between Gouripur and Biska railway stations.

Train communication from Mymensingh to Bhairab, Kishoreganj, Netrakona, Mohanganj and Jaria remained snapped till filing of this report at 7 pm yesterday.

However, a relief train reached the spot to salvage the goods train.



PHOTO: STAR

Supports of Ilyas Ali MP barricaded the Dhaka-Sylhet highway at Lalbazar near Sylhet city yesterday protesting cancellation of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's visit to the district.

PATUAKHALI-3 Seven BNP men vie for ticket

SORAB HOSSAIN, *Patuakhali*

Feud over nomination has shattered BNP's prospect for regaining the Jatiya Sangsad seat in Patuakhali-3 constituency. At least seven BNP contenders will seek nomination from the constituency comprising Galachipa and Dashmina upazilas, party sources said.

In 2001 election, BNP's Shahjahan Khan was defeated by Awami League candidate former state minister for textile AKM Jahagir Hossain. Jahangir got 75,138 votes and Shahjahan got 62,310 votes.

Party sources claimed that BNP lost the seat due to non-cooperation by two other nomination aspirants.

Shahjahan Khan was elected from the constituency in the "controversial" election held on February

party sources said.

The rift widened during 2001 election as Shahjahan Khan was nominated again.

"The four party alliance will lose this seat (Patuakhali-3) to the opposition if Shahjahan Khan is nominated again because he has become unpopular for ill treatment with people and party men", Golam Mostafa said while talking to this correspondent.

Failing to get nomination in 2001, Golam Mostafa allegedly worked against the BNP candidate, who lost with a small margin of only 12,828 votes.

This correspondent talked to many local BNP leaders regarding the intra-party feud and pre-polls scenario. They include upazila BNP secretary Abu Taleb Mia, vice-



Shahjahan Khan

15, 1996.

The simmering discontent in party rank and file started long ago and the rift surfaced after BNP lost the seat in 2001. The rival functions observed party's founding anniversary on September 1 separately.

A section of the party led by Galachia upazila BNP president Shahjahan Khan organised a discussion meeting and brought procession in the upazila town to mark to the founding anniversary.

Other function led by upazila BNP secretary and former pourasabha chairman Abu Taleb Mia and joint finance secretary of Karisak Dal industrialist Golam Mostafa brought out a separate procession in the upazila town and held a street corner meeting.

Golam Mostafa is also a nomination aspirant in the coming election.

There are other aspirants also. They are Golam Mortuza, law secretary of central Tanti Dal Afzal Hossain, Shah Alam Bhuiyan and Syed Harun-or-Rashid.

All of them are engaged in mass contact in the constituency.

They are holding small rallies, casting aspersions on each other. The infighting has spread to grassroots level, frustrating workers,



Golam Mostafa

president Abu Kalam Md. Esha, convener of Galachipa Muktiyoddha Sangsad Nazrul Islam and Galachia town BNP president Ayejuddin Mia.

They said, industrialist Golam Mostafa is an honest and popular leader. Abu Taleb Mia, secretary of upazila BNP said, "We believe party highups will nominate Golam Mostafa from the area if they want to regain the seat."

"If Shahjahan gets nomination, most BNP leaders and workers in BNP vote banks in shoal area in Galachipa and Dashmina will not support him," he added.

When contacted Shahjahan Khan, president said, "I am still popular in my constituency. I have done many development works in the upazilas during the tenure of present government. Those who are criticising me are newcomers in the party and they do not have any base among grassroots level party workers," he claimed.

He called Golam Mostafa a 'seasonal bird,' who was not known to people earlier. "He (Golam Mostafa) is an outsider", he added.

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