

Over 400 killed in 'crossfire' in 10 SW dists in 30 months

AMANUR AMAN, From Kushtia

At least 401 people were killed in 'crossfire' incidents in 10 south-western districts in two and a half years since start of the 'extra judicial killing' by law enforcers in June 2004.

Of those, 158 were killed during June-December 2004, 117 in 2005 and 126 last year, according to police records.

The extra judicial killings' during the rule of BNP-led government were criticised by human rights bodies and other organisations at home and abroad. But in certain areas, killing of hardened criminals and outlaws were hailed by local people in mostly outlaw-infested southwestern region.

In many cases, such killings drew bitter criticism and even protests by local people. People at different times accused law enforcers of their alleged partisan role in arresting leaders and activists of certain political parties and their murder in the name of 'crossfire'.

Several alleged attempts of 'crossfire' involving innocent political party leaders and activists were also resisted by people.

Kushtia, the most outlaw-infested area in the country, topped the list with 135 'crossfire' killings while Magura was the lowest with 12 in the last two and a half years.

Kushtia was also on top of the list with 34 crossfire killings last year, when 27 were killed in Khulna, 14 in Bagerhat, 12 in Chuadanga, 17 in Jhenidah, 11 in Jessore, 7 in Meherpur and 2 each in Narail and Satkhira. There was no such killing in Magura last year.

Law enforcers belonging to police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) were involved in all the 'crossfire' incidents.

Last year, 76 out of 126 'crossfire' incidents took place in the custody of Rab and the rest 50 in police custody.

Abir Hasan, the 'second-in-command' of outlawed Janajuddho, one of the factions of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBPC-ML), was killed in crossfire with Rab. Its 'regional' leader Rezzak and a top cadre Masud were also killed in the same incident.

Hardened outlaws killed last year also included Kadar Ali of New Biplobi Communist Party (NBCP), Sukur Ali and Matiur Rahman of Biplobi Communist Party (BCP), Ishaq Ali of Gono Bahini (GB), Masiul and Sazabul of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBPC-ML).

Local people said they felt relieved at these killings as the outlaws had unleashed a reign of terror in the region and made life difficult by demanding extortion.

On April 13, 2005, Kushtia police arrested Awami League activist Enamul Haq Ena from his Thanapara house.

Police later said Ena was killed on the night of April 16 in an alleged encounter with his men at Renwick near the GK (Ganges-Kabodak) project area when they took him there to recover illegal arms.

Police later branded Ena as a cadre of outlawed Gono Mukti Fouz (GMF).

The incident evoked protests by local people, who claimed that there was no case against Ena with police. There was only a general diary (GD) filed with Kushtia Sadar police over a clash in the village allegedly involving him.

This killing was later investigated by Kushtia district administration following a High Court order after filing a writ petition by Ena's elder brother Naimul Islam, commissioner of Kushtia municipality.

This was the first official probe into 'crossfire' killing in the country.

The probe body headed by the then Deputy Commissioner (DC) recorded statements of 26 members of police and some leaders and activists of the then ruling BNP.

On December 26 last year, Rab-6 arrested former organising secretary of Islamic University (IU) unit of Bangladesh Chhatri League (BCL)

Gias Uddin, 35, from Jhenidah town. Gias was unemployed since he took masters degree from the university in 2002.

At his Jugipara village in Saikupura in Jhenidah, he was among 100 people accused in a murder case that took place there in 2003. While at the IU, he faced two other murder cases in 2004 over a gunfight with Islami Chhatri Shibir (ICS), student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami, in which four Shibir cadres were killed. Gias was among the 200 accused BCL leaders and activists.

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