

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 (PBCP-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 (PBCP-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 Chhtra League (BCL)

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

At his Jugipara village in Saikupa 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 1997 over a gunfight with Islami Chhatra 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.

Later, Rab dubbed him as a 'top cadre' of Janajuddho faction of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-ML). This sparked widespread protests in the district on the next day. The district Awami League and BCL brought out processions in protesting the arrest of Gias and demanding his release.

But Gias was killed in 'crossfire' on the night of December 27. Police later said he was killed in a shoot-out with his followers when Rab members took him to Joy Bangla intersection to recover firearms.

Against the backdrop of 'crossfire' incidents, arrests by police were also resisted by people, fearing that the arrestees might be killed in custody.

On December 7, Awami League

activists joined by local people kept the Mirpur police station in Kushtia besieged for the whole night for 'safety' of two arrested party men.

Rab-4 arrested AL Mirpur upazila organising secretary Kamarul Arefin and Jubo league leader Zahid Hossain from Dhaka on December 6.

Rab-4 handed them over to Rab-12 in Kushtia, who handed them over to Mirpur police.

As the news spread, AL activists brought out processions in Kushtia town and Mirpur upazila headquarters. A large number of people took part in the processions as both the arrestees were popular leaders in the area.

Mirpur police station was besieged for 14 hours till the two were sent to court on the following day (December 8).

Jessore Sadar upazila Jubo League (youth front of Awami League) activist Masum Billah and former commissioner of Kushtia municipality Zahidul Islam Zahid were killed in Rab custody last year. These killings also sparked protests by people.

Allegations have it that no activists belonging to BNP led 4-party alliance was killed in crossfire in last two and half years in the region.



PHOTO: STAR

Diarrhoea patients being treated on the floor at Sirajganj Sadar Hospital as there is no accommodation on beds.

Diarrhoea, pneumonia kill 4, attack 1000 in Sirajganj

GOLAM MOSTAFA JIBON, *Sirajganj*

Diarrhoea, pneumonia and other cold-related diseases have broken out alarmingly in rural areas of nine upazilas in Sirajganj district.

At least four persons including a child were killed and about 1000 attacked with the diseases in last seven days, official sources said yesterday.

Osman Gani, 45 and Safia Khatun, 2 of Silongdaho village in Tarash upazila died on Friday. The rest two victims were from Raiganj and Chowhali upazila, but officials

at the Civil Surgeons office could not give their details.

The affected people have been admitted to different health complexes, hospitals and clinics.

The officials said the diseases are spreading rapidly as a fallout of the cold wave now sweeping the county.

The figure of affected persons is increasing day by day in different hospitals and clinics as the necessary steps were not taken by the concern authorities in proper time to protect the poor people from cold.

A doctor at Sirajganj sadar Hospital seeking anonymity told this

correspondent that most of patients admitted to the hospital were victims of river erosion in Char (shoals) areas.

On the other hand, patients are facing accommodation and medicare problem at hospitals, some of them said.

Dr. Awal, Residential Medical Officer of Sadar Hospital, said shortage of saline is hampering treatment of patients.

Sirajganj Civil Surgeon MiZanur Rahman said cold related diseases are increasing in the district every day but they have no support to prevent it.

12 tonnes of urea seized in Sylhet

4 arrested while selling the fertiliser in black market

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Sylhet*

Twelve tones of urea fertiliser in 240 bags, lifted from Fenchuganj Natural Gas Fertiliser Factory (NGFF), were seized while allegedly being sold in the black market Tuesday evening.

The truck carrying the fertiliser was also seized and its driver, helper and a fertiliser trader were arrested.

Lokman Ahmed, owner of Time Traders, a leading fertiliser dealer in Fenchuganj, lifted 84 tonnes of urea on January 14. As per rule, he informed local UNO.

The UNO went to his godown at Palbari area for a spot visit.

Seeing a truck loaded with the said fertiliser standing in front of the godown, the UNO asked about its destination.

The dealer's men informed him that the truck would go to Sadia Traders at Biswanath upazila in Sylhet district but the chalan (documents) showed that the fertilizer was to be dispatched to Govindaganj in

Chhatak

upazila of Sunamganj district.

Finding the irregularity and suspecting smuggling, the UNO seized the truck.

He also sealed the godown of Time Traders as the total quantity of the lifted fertilizer was not found there.

Only 33.8 tonnes (676 bags) of fertiliser were found against the total lifted quantity of 84 tonnes (1680) bags.

Employees of Time Traders failed to give satisfactory reply to the UNO's questions.

The 'missing' 50 tonnes of fertiliser had been sold in the black market, it was apprehended.

But no action was taken against the fertiliser dealer.

Police immediately arrested the truck driver Shamim, helper Sohel Rana and transport trader Sankar Saha.

On information, Sylhet Deputy Commissioner Jamal Hossain Majumder visited the godown. The arrestees were sent to the jail from Magistrate court.

Outlaws threaten to kill journos, blow up press clubs in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

A newly formed underground party--Purbo Banglar Mission Juddho (PBMJ)--has threatened to kill eight journalists-- six of them Paikgacha upazila correspondents of six local Bangla dailies and two of Dhaka dailies.

The underground party has also threatened to blow up press clubs at Paikgacha Sadar and Kapilmuni union in Khulna district.

Presidents of these two press clubs received letters from the so-called outlaws on Monday, sent by post. The letters were signed by one Abir Hasan, who identified him as a 'regional leader' and Faruque Rashid 'operation commander' in charge of Khulna district of the underground party.

The underground PBMJ earlier threatened to kill some journalists in Rupsha and Dumuria and blow up press clubs there by bombs.

The letters said PBMJ is determined to 'take revenge' for killings of outlaws in crossfire by killing journalists as part of its struggle against 'class enemies'.

When asked, Khulna Police Superintendent Dr Nazmul Karim said operation is going on to identify the extremists and arrest them.

BDR,BSF trade fire in Satkhira as push-in bid foiled

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) traded gunfire on Taluigachha and Kushkhali border areas in Satkhira Sadar upazila Tuesday night after BDR foiled a BSF attempt to push in about 30 Bangla speaking Indian nationals into Bangladesh through Taluigachha border.

BSF gunned down an Indian cattle trader on Amudia border opposite to Taluigachha in the evening before its troops attempted the push-in bid, according to reports received from across the border. BDR sources also corroborated the information.

The deceased Indian national was identified as Balaram Das, 40, son of Ananda Das of Amudia village under Swarupnagar police station in North 24 Parganas district in West Bengal.

BDR sources said BSF of Amudia Camp in Swarupnagar attempted to push in the Bangla

speaking Indian nationals through Taluigachha border.

As BDR foiled their attempt, BSF fired 30 shots targeting Taluigachha and Kushkhali BDR camps at, forcing Bangladesh border guards to return shots. BDR fired 81 shots, they said.

BSF of Khalisha camp under Swarupnagar police station in North 24 Parganas district, opposite to Kushkhali in Satkhira Sadar upazila, fired five shots bullets targeting BDR camp at Kushkhali in the same evening, forcing BDR to reply with 10 shots.

After the incident, BSF reinforced its strength in all its outposts and increased patrol.

BDR has also been put on alert, the BDR sources said.

The trading of shots by BDR and BSF created panic among people in border areas.

On contact, Lt. Col. Asif Abdur Rouf, commanding officer (CO) of 41 Rifles Battalion, confirmed BSF's push-in bid and exchange of fire.

PHOTO: STAR

A team of Workers Party from Dhaka along with party men in Gaibandha distributed warm clothes among the poor in Shah Para union in Gaibandha district on Monday and Tuesday.

7X3

4X2

12X3