

Sharp rise in violence against woman in southwestern dists

250 killed last year against 65 in previous year: 400 commit suicide

AMANUR AMAN, From Kushtia

Violence against women increased alarmingly in ten southwestern districts last year over that in the previous year.

At least 250 women were murdered in 2006, up from previous year's 65, according to records with police and different NGOs.

Most of the victims were housewives, killed in torture allegedly by their husbands or their family members. Demand for dowry was the main reason for torture, the records said.

Alongside, incidents of suicide by women also marked a rise. At least 400 such cases were detected during 2006 in the 10 districts.

Incidents of rape however declined compare to any previous time.

The abnormal rise in murders and incidents of alarmed high police

officials and civic society leaders in the area.

Talking to this correspondent, some elderly people here said such incidents are increasing due to rise in social unrest for various reasons including poverty.

Records show that 95 women were killed in incidents of violence in the region from January to June last year, which shot up to 155 during June-December.

This was an abnormal rise from 65 murders during 2005, some police officials in Kushtia said seeking anonymity.

The highest number of 86 murders took place in Kushtia during the period. The district also topped the list with 60 murders in 2005.

Murders recorded in other nine districts in 2006 are 28 in Khulna, 32 in Meherpur, 26 in Chuadanga, 31 in Jhenidah, 11 in Magura, 22 in Jessore, 9 in Bagerhat and 5 Narail.

Husbands were responsible for the incidents of violence in most cases. Other family members were also found involved in torture for dowry.

In few cases, poverty was behind family feuds leading to torture by husbands, NGO sources said.

"Violence against women and death from torture is increasing day by day," a doctor of Kushtia General Hospital said.

A large number of incidents of violence against women or suicide remained unrecorded as the victim's relatives avoided filing cases, police sources in Kushtia said. Those were recorded as unnatural deaths, he said.

NGO officials working on violence against women said in many cases, victims' families did not lodge case fearing retaliation by the killers and apprehending alleged harassment by police.

"They (victims' families) also want to avoid unwanted trouble and harassment because in most cases, killers are protected by their influential patrons or a section of law enforcers", said M A Kader, executive director of SETU, a Kushtia-based NGO.

This correspondent also contacted several high police officials in other districts in the region, who shared similar views on the issue.

In Kushtia, only 46 cases were filed against 86 murders last year, police sources said.

Seventeen cases were filed in Jhenidah, 18 in Chuadanga and 14 in Meherpur.

In many cases, killers escape punishment as victim's family does not dare to file case due to intervention by local influentials including political party leaders, said Meherpur Police Superintendent Khondokar Rafiqul Islam.



PHOTO: STAR
Grabbers have occupied the shoreland at Kostura Ghat in Bakkhali river by erecting a railing with poles and are dumping garbage to fill up the encroached area.

Save Bakkhali, punish grabbers

700 illegal structures built in last five years

MUAZZEM HOSSAIN SHAKIL,
Cox's Bazar

The Bakkhali river flowing through Cox's Bazar tourist town is dying fast because of unabated encroachment by land grabbers.

They have grabbed shorelands and built illegal structures at different points on both sides of the river.

According to sources at Cox's Bazar Pourasabha, about 700 illegal structures were constructed on both sides of the river in last five years. Most of the establishments are in Fishari Ghat, Chognomber, Kostora Ghat, Peskarpara, Tekpara and Ander-son Road areas of the town. The grabbers built the structures as the district administration and the municipal authorities played the role of a silent spectator, the sources said.

Cox's Bazar, which was once a flourishing trade centre, is also losing importance as the Bakkhali, its lifeline is gradually being choked, local people and traders

said. It is also losing navigability as silt is being deposited due to encroachment, they said.

Numerous shoals have emerged in the riverbed, they said.

Influentials, most of them businessmen enjoying political clout have built houses and business establishments by grabbing lands on both sides of the river.

They dump garbage to grab lands, which accelerates the deposit of silt.

On contact, Cox's Bazar Pourasabha Commissioner Hellenaz Tahera said she raised the issue at district development committee meetings several times but to no effect as most of the land grabbers are influential people.

The river should be freed from grabbers for survival of the old trade center in the region, he said.

Korshed Alam, a noted businessman said encroachers should be evicted immediately to restore normal flow of the river and promote trade and commerce in the resort

town. Only united efforts by people of all strata of life can save the river from death, he said.

The administration at times take some 'eyewash steps' and evict small illegal structures, but those sprang up again after a few days, they said.

When contacted, Cox's Bazar Pourasabha Chairman Sarwar Kamal, said he is aware of land grabbing, but helpless because the management of the river is vested with the Bangladesh Inter Water Transport Authority (BIWTA).

"We are ready to assist BIWTA if wants to evict the encroachers", he said.

"We want to demolish the illegal structures because those damage the beauty of the tourist town", he said.

The BIWTA authorities could not be contacted for comments despite several attempts by this correspondent.

11 hurt as BCL, JCD clash at RUET

RU CORRESPONDENT

At least 11 people were injured when activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) were locked in a clash on the Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology (RUET) campus Tuesday night.

Five BCL activists and one JCD activist were critically injured. They are Ferdous Ahmed, Rony, Shohan, Imon and Depak of BCL and Babul of JCD. All of them were admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) for treatment, hospital sources said.

The clash ensued when JCD supporters led by the joint convener of the university unit Sabuj attacked a BCL activist named Ferdous Ahmed at Selim Hall on the campus at around 12.30 am.

Being informed, other BCL activists assembled on the Selim Hall compound. At this stage, JCD activists, equipped with knife, iron rod, hockey and bamboo sticks, attacked the BCL activists and left the hall.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA
Joint forces seized 634 bags of banned FMP fertiliser and 1500 bags of uneatable rice in Chowmuhuni in Noakhali district yesterday and arrested a leader of Bangladesh Fertiliser Association and two leading traders.

2X3

14 DMC students held for 'drug peddling'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Police on Tuesday night arrested 14 students of Dinajpur Medical College (DMC) on charge of vitiating the academic atmosphere on the campus by 'drug peddling' and other illegal activities, police sources said.

The arrested are Aminul Islam, Musfigur Rahman, Tareq Al Hossaini, Debasish Sarker, Sabir Ahmed, Sanwar Hossain, Tareq Hassan, Aminur Rasul Jaki, Jamilur Rahman, Anisur Rahman, Ahsanur Habib and Jakirul Faruk.

Police said they were arrested following directives given by the DMCH academic council.

Earlier, 70 students of the medical college brought allegations against them and urged the college authorities to take action against them.

General students alleged that the arrested students led by the college unit JCD president Debasish Sarker, a fourth year student of the college had been engaged in realising extort from the students and in drug trade on the campus for the last two and a half years. The arrested students led by Debasish allegedly beat up a third year student named Julikar Hasan on February 5. Julikar is now undergoing treatment at the hospital.

However, the arrested were released from police custody yesterday afternoon following a written assurance given by them to cooperate with the authorities to maintain congenial academic atmosphere on the campus.

FF laid to rest with state honour

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Freedom fighter Md. Abdul Mazid was laid to eternal rest with state of honor at South Doudpur village in Birampur upazila yesterday, according to sources in the district administration.

Abdul Mojid died Tuesday night after a prolonged illness. He was 70. The body was buried at his family graveyard.

Birampur Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md. Abu Taher Mohammad Masud, leader of upazila unit of Freedom Fighters Council Delwar Hossain, other freedom fighters and local elite were present during the burial.

8x3

10x4