

Gang clashes spike over control of 'territories' for drugs, protection money

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KUALA LUMPUR: After lying low for about two years following a major police crackdown in 2013, underworld gangs are making a comeback to regain lost "territories" and revive their illegal activities.

The recent months saw a spike in the activities of secret societies, particularly Indian-based gangs attempting to regain lost turf.

The turf wars have led to more than a dozen gang members being killed or maimed.

The growing use of firearms has also left police concerned as to whether the problem, dealt with in 2013 under operation *Ops Cantas Khas*, had returned with greater intensity.

Federal police CID assistant director and head of anti-vice, gambling and secret society (D7) SAC Datuk Roslee Chik told *theSun* that it all boiled down to the enormous gains from drugs and protection money.

"These gang members not only sell drugs but also consume it. That is why things turn very violent and ugly as they are under its influence.

"The gangs clash and kill each other for control of a particular area. The guns they carry are supplied by the drug syndicates. For a certain amount of drugs they buy, the syndicates throw in a firearm with ammunition for the gang members to protect their interests. It is like a package when the deal is cut.

They know if they are caught with the drugs it will be the death sentence. Hence, the firearms are also to protect themselves. Then there is more to be made from extorting protection money from traders." he said.

He said gangland activities mainly involving Indian secret societies are rampant in Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Johor and Negri Sembilan.

In the Klang Valley, the Gang 36, Gang 08 and Gang Satu Hati are responsible for most of the crimes linked to secret societies.

Roslee said police are aware of their activities.

"We have a plan in place to contain it as in *Ops Cantas Khas*," he said, adding although the operation is ongoing with many held in Negri Sembilan, they will intensify it soon by going after kingpins and core members of the gangs.

They will use the Prevention of Crime Act (POCA) like in Negri Sembilan where 15 top gangsters were detained and held without trial as they lacked the hard evidence to charge them in court.

Roslee said the CID is determined to deal with this growing menace together with the Special Task Force on Organised Crime (Staffoc) formed two years ago.

He said the recent mayhem at the Selayang wholesale market where a local gang clashed with immigrants during which a toddler and a man, both Myanmar, were seriously wounded was also due to a fight over control of drug operations in the area.

The repeal of preventive laws such as the Emergency Ordinance (EO) and Internal Security Act (ISA) in April, 2012 brought freedom to thousands of criminals in detention with some turning over a new leaf while a large number returning to their old ways.

In August 2013, *Ops Cantas Khas* was launched after the Home Ministry declared 49 gangs as illegal. This led to dozens of gang leaders and their members fleeing the country while about 44,000 suspects were detained for being involved in organised crimes.

The POCA was instrumental in locking up hardcore criminals who escaped the court action due to technicalities and the lack of evidence.

Last December, Federal Police CID chief Commissioner Datuk Mohmad Salleh said more than 700 suspected criminals and underworld gang members were detained under Poca.

He also disclosed that Gang 36 and Gang Satu Hati were behind various crimes such as drug pushing, luxury car thefts and hijacking.