Custodial deaths up by 41% since 2004: Report
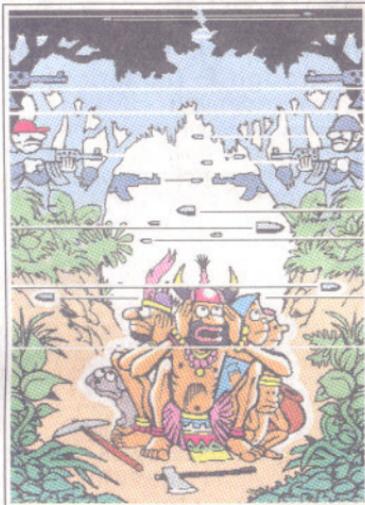
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Slamming the government for its inability to check custodial deaths, a human rights group on Tuesday said the number of deaths had increased by 41.66% since the UPA government came to power in 2004. This includes 70.72% increase in deaths in prison custody and 12.60% increase in deaths in police custody. Incidentally, Maharashtra has to its shame the highest number of custodial deaths followed by Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat.

The Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR) in its report 'Torture in India 2010' also said that among armed opposition groups, Naxalites were the worst human rights violators and regularly resorted to "violence to life and person in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture" in blatant violation of international humanitarian laws.

JUST LIKE THAT
AJIT NINAN

In the war between anti-nationals and anti-Naxals, it's us tribals who are the sitting ducks.

Elaborating on the report, ACHR director Suhas Chakma said the torture of American journalist Joel Elliot by Delhi Police in October 2009 was a case in point. "If a European could be subjected to such torture, what would happen to the common man. The government has failed to address the concerns of the aam aadmi," he said.

Chakma said torture in India was systematic, institutionalised and rampant. The report said Maharashtra had the highest number of custodial deaths (246) in 2009 followed by UP (165), Gujarat (139), West Bengal (112) and Andhra Pradesh.

ACHR has, however, appreciated the government's move to introduce the Prevention of Torture Bill but has demanded that the proposed legislation should be put to a public debate and sent to the select parliamentary committee. "Though the Cabinet approved the decision to introduce the Prevention of Torture Bill, 2010, in Parliament and ratify the United Nations Convention Against Torture, the bill is being treated as a state secret," Chakma said.