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Modernising Border Management: Lessons from India-Bangladesh Border



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Introduction

India is moving forward in the world economy as a significant player with an aim to engage the multipolar world with its rightful weight and, at the same time, is also working towards uplifting its population and ensuring that its 138cr plus population receives the basic economic necessities of life that are important for strengthening social security—Jan-Dhan Bank account, Aadhaar (identity proof) and Mobile & Broadband connectivity upto the village level, electricity, water & roads for all, besides assured food security (public distribution system [PDS]) and now housing & health insurance as also basic education. India needs to have a stable neighbourhood before it achieves its aim of a \$5 trillion economy by 2024 and long term aim of becoming the second largest economy by

Key Points

- Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar are considered safe and porous borders while challenges remain with Pakistan, China and Coastal Security. Bangladesh offers multiple lessons for the Border Guarding Forces looking towards incorporating technology and modernising their functions.
- The Border Guarding Force (BGF), to execute its task, needs a modern approach enabling movement of people and trade smoothly while dissuading any security threats and nefarious activities, it also needs synergy with various central and state agencies besides the border guards of the neighbouring country and also sometimes the Interpol.
- India- Bangladesh relations have seen an upswing and eased many irritants in the border management due to political signalling backed by a whole of government approach, the cooperation between Border Security Force (BSF) and Bangladesh Border Guards (BBG) is an exemplary methodology from which other border guarding forces can learn.



2050. Therefore, it is important to first have an effective and sustainable border management paradigm.

This issue brief tries to unravel the complexities of the border management issues and recommend steps to modernise border management while focusing on replicable examples for other border guarding forces especially the India-Bangladesh border.

A Brief Overview

India is located in a strategic position in South Asia and occupies a dominant position in the Indian Ocean. India has a coastline of 7516.6 km and 1382 small and big offshore islands. India's land border is about 15,000 km which it shares with seven countries; 70% of the world shipping trade and 80% of global energy transits through the IOR. India's internal security challenges are invariably linked with the security of India's borders especially when India faces adversary in its Northern and Western Sector.

Border security is an essential driver for economic growth because it makes trade more efficient and helps attract Foreign Direct Investments. In a report titled "A Glass Half Full: The Promise of Regional Trade in South Asia", the World Bank estimates India's potential trade in goods with South Asia at \$62 billion against its actual trade of \$19 billion, which is a mere 3% of its global trade. Deeper regional trade and connectivity can reduce the isolation of Northeast India, and give Indian firms better access to markets in South Asia and East Asia. It also recommends an approach of open regionalism, and views intra-regional trade as complementary to, and as a stepping stone for deeper global integration.

India follows the principle of "One Border One Guarding Force". The Border Management Division within the Ministry of Home Affairs coordinates with various stakeholders to ensure the security of the borders— Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar are considered open borders while challenges remain with Pakistan, China and Coastal Security.

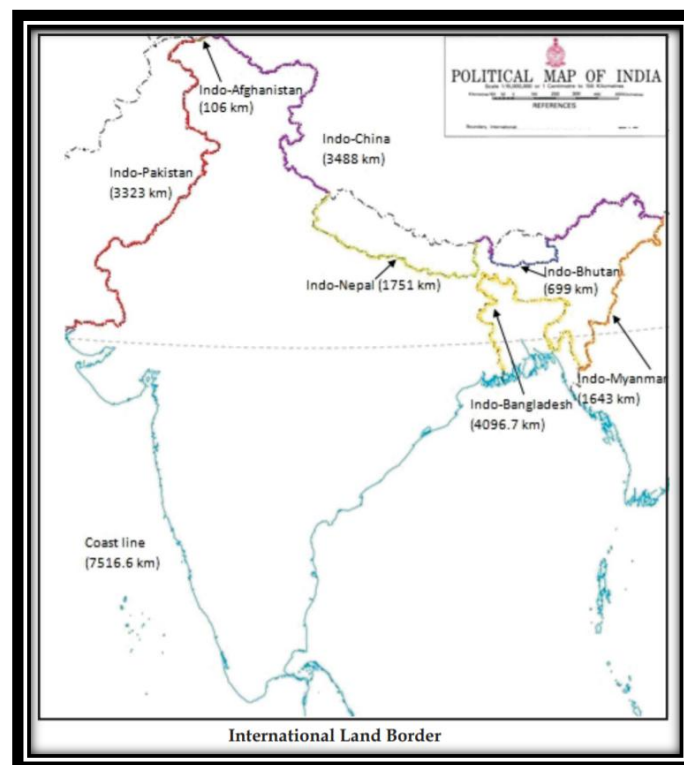
Department of Border Management (BM), Ministry of Home Affairs

In order to secure the borders and to create appropriate infrastructure in the border areas of the country, the Department of Border Management has undertaken construction of fences, flood lights and roads along the India-Pakistan and India-Bangladesh borders;

development of Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) at various locations on the international borders of the country, construction of strategic roads along India-China, India-Nepal and India-Bhutan borders have also been undertaken by the Department. In addition, various developmental works in the border areas have been undertaken under the Border Area Development Programme (BADP) as a part of the comprehensive approach to border management.

BM-I Division deals with issues related to strengthening of international land borders—their policing and guarding which encompasses management of land borders by creating and improving infrastructure works. BM-II Division deals with matters relating to Border Area Development Programme (BADP), Coastal Security Schemes (CSS) and Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI).¹

Map1: Indian Borders



Source: MHA Annual Report 2019²

Responsibility. Domination of each border has been entrusted to a particular Border Guarding Force (BGF) as under: -



- Bangladesh and Pakistan Borders: Border Security Force (BSF).
- China Border: Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP).
- Nepal and Bhutan Borders: Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB).
- Myanmar Border: Assam Rifles.
- The Indian Army is guarding land borders along the LoC (India-Pakistan border) along with BSF and LAC (India-China border) along with ITBP.
- The Indian Navy is responsible for overall Maritime Security which includes coastal and offshore security. The Indian Coast Guard has been additionally designated as authority responsible for coastal security in India's territorial waters including areas to be patrolled by the Coastal Police.

Achieving Synergy

The government is following the concept of Border Protection Grid (BPG) of each border which is different from the past practice of erection of physical barriers and patrolling of the border by the Border Guarding Forces (BGFs). This approach entails setting up of BPG in the States to detect and tackle intrusions, keep a watch on suspicious activities and to have a proper response mechanism. The Grid comprises elements ahead of the fence, on the fence/border and behind the border, technology elements (Hardware & Software) which includes border guarding structures, deployment, systems, institutional arrangements, BGF, state police, Army, Intelligence Agencies and other state agencies. Almost all states and UTs barring Delhi, Chandigarh, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana and Jharkhand have either land border or coastal states and hence are important stakeholders in the Border Management function.

Coastal Security Scheme (CSS)

90% of Indian trade, by volume, is by shipping. In case of the coastal border line, the territorial boundary is defined up to 12 nautical miles. This zone is India's sovereign territory and other countries need to take permission from India to enter this area. In continuation to this zone is the contiguous zone or the 'zone of hot pursuit' which extends up to 24 nautical miles. Infringement of customs, sanitary, immigration and fiscal regulations in this zone can attract punishment.

The Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) extends from the outer limit of India's territorial sea upto 200 nautical miles. Coastal states hold the right to exploit the natural resources and economic resources like minerals, oil and fisheries in this zone. Ships of other countries can



pass through this zone, only if they are not seen as a threat to the coastal state. This zone falls under the umbrella of the United Nations Convention for the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Coastal security is provided by Coastal Police, Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and Indian Navy (IN). The jurisdiction of Coastal Police is up to 12 nautical miles (NM) from the baseline. ICG is also designated as the authority responsible for coastal security in territorial waters including areas that are to be patrolled by Coastal Police. Beyond 12 NM, both ICG and IN are responsible for the security of the maritime zones of India.

There are 1382 small and big offshore islands. Government has initiated a 'Holistic Development of Island' scheme for islands along with an Island Information System geo-portal (IIS) which enables surveillance of islands upto a resolution of 2.5 m.

The CSS has enabled activation of 10 Marine Operational Centres, 131 Marine Police Stations, 73 coastal police stations, 97 check posts, 58 outposts, 204 interceptor boats, 60 jetties, 150 boats (12 Tons), and 75 special category boats/RIBs.³

The state fishermen have been asked to follow a specific colour scheme and have been given communication sets for smooth communication with the coastal police. The fishermen have been distributed 65,72,523 NPR ID cards and 11,71,616 Fishermen ID Cards. All the sailing vessels above 20 metres length are mandatorily required to be fitted with Automatic Identification System (AIS) equipment.

On a daily basis, around 50,000 boats sails in the Indian waters which need to be monitored. The Maritime Domain Awareness is an important facet to ensure India's coastal security and economic interests in its islands and EEZ. The coastal radar stations have also been networked. Maritime operation control centres have been opened at Gurugram with links to Mumbai , Vishakhapatnam and Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

Multi-Agency Centre (MAC)

MAC was set up as a multi-agency intelligence coordination mechanism for counter terrorism. Its mandate is to share terrorism related inputs on a day-to-day basis; 24x7 Control Rooms were set up at New Delhi (MAC) and Subsidiary Multi-Agency Centres (SMACs) were set up at State Levels and at Headquarters of Intelligence Wings of other agencies, to ensure timely sharing of information and better co-ordination between intelligence agencies.



MAC aims to establish connectivity between the national capital, twenty-five Central member agencies and all the State capitals to be extended upto district level in consultation with the state. A dedicated and secure electronic network for real-time sharing has been extended across the country, with two custom built software platforms viz. the Threat Management System (TMS) and the National Memory Bank (NMB) for sharing and data basing intelligence. MAC has also been designated as the nodal point for sharing of intelligence with Bangladesh and Myanmar.

National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID)

The NATGRID has a mandate to connect 10 approved User Agencies (UAs), leading Central Intelligence & Law Enforcement Agencies, and 21 Data Providing Organisations (DPOs) such as airlines, banks, railway, telecom etc. with a view to enhance the capacity of the country to counter terrorism and crime. The Data Centre and Business Continuity Plan at New Delhi and the Disaster Recovery Centre at Bengaluru have already been established.

Land Port Authority of India (LPAI)

LPAI provides 'single window' infrastructural facilities such as warehouses, development of Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) examination sheds, parking bays, weigh bridges etc. for cross-border movement of passengers and goods at designated locations along the international land borders of India with Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan. LPAI undertakes this by setting up Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) at the existing Land Custom Stations.⁴

Space Segment

The incorporation of space based applications has been approved by the MHA with short-term plan of hiring of imagery through the existing RISAT constellations of ISRO and hiring bandwidth for communication and in the mid-term within five years to launch a satellite for border security. The MHA is looking at utilising space for island development, border security, communication & navigation, GIS based operational planning and border infrastructure development.⁵

US-Mexico Border: Lessons Learnt

Post 9/11 the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) (US) was made responsible for border security. Thereafter, a safe border initiative net (SBI net) program poured millions



of dollars into a technology which was not yet developed, ultimately, setting up an example of how not to do things, similar fate was in store for Trumps Mexico Wall program. The American appetite for cheap labour and drugs and the reverse flow of money and guns continues, and no immigration policy or the wall or sensors has withstood the tide of economic migrants and people fleeing cartels for a safer life in the States. US continues to wrestle with border management issues And now steps are being taken with Mexico to block the arrivals of migrants from the Central America.

The Arizona Border Surveillance Technology Plan (ATP) is a better example of effective utilisation of technology. In 2011 Elbit System of America, at a cost of US\$ 145 million, came out with ATP which focused on a combination of fixed and mobile technology, that was effective in the local conditions and could be procured in a phased manner to make it cost effective.⁶ It was soon found out that the best of surveillance and border guard responses are ineffective unless backed by intelligence and cooperative mechanisms between the stakeholders on both side of the border.

The 2020 US Border Patrol Strategy is an innovative approach towards achieving Operational Control of the border with three essential elements vis. **Situational Awareness** that is collecting and assessing information and integrating the intelligence output into operations; **Impedance and Denial** that is stopping illegal crossings or slowing them down to allow additional response time; and **Response and Resolution** that is rapidly responding to threats (of any degree) determined in the areas of highest risk.⁷

Information exchange, modern shipping infrastructure & technology, and intelligence cooperation ensures that many threats are intercepted early. Trusted trader programs and trusted-traveler programs have been expanded in recent years to facilitate and reduce costs for the crossing of legal goods and persons.

There is a need to upgrade the border infrastructure within Mexico and USA to reap the benefits of zero-tariff trade. Roughly 80 percent of US trade with Mexico crosses the land border by truck, rail, or pipeline.⁸ Time consumed because of infrastructure inefficiencies increases the trade cost.

The Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has contributions to border infrastructure projects. Instead of asking one country to pay for border security upgrades, the need is to work with both countries, and their private sectors, in order to modernise their security and trade infrastructure at the same time.



Lessons from the India-Bangladesh Border (IBB)

Overview: India-Bangladesh Relations

India's Look East Policy started in 1991 which was converted to Act East Policy in 2015 with an impetus in improving connectivity and trade. The implementation of Land Border Agreement in 2015 between India and Bangladesh brought an end to many misunderstandings in India-Bangladesh relations. Simultaneously, resolving the Maritime boundary also enabled smoother relations between the two nations.

Bangladesh shares almost 94% of land border with India— it has been a reliable partner in helping India's counter insurgency efforts in Assam. Bangladesh today is a natural partner with minimum complications therefore, this strategic relationship should be developed further. Seamless connectivity to North East through Bangladesh will benefit people of both countries hence finalisation of the transit trade agreements are crucial. North East trades could be accessed through Bangladesh Ports rather than Indian ports. The North East could also be developed as a manufacturing hub by creating Special Economic Zones.

Shared ancestry, cuisine, language and standard of living of the people of both the nations led to opening up of the borders which had suffered disconnectivity since the 1965 War.

Political Relations

Both countries maintain close contact, including at the highest levels. Prime Ministers of both the countries have met 9 times in the past 5 years. Bangladesh is now India's largest trade partner in South Asia and India is the second largest trade partner of Bangladesh. Trade has tripled over the last decade to USD 10 billion. India has also extended concessional credits amounting to almost USD 10 billion to Bangladesh.⁹

Connectivity

Both sides are making concerted efforts to enhance transport and connectivity with each other, and the North Eastern Region through Bangladesh. The focus has been on railway, road, coastal as well as riverine connectivity.

Railway. At present, five out of the six pre-1965 rail links have been restored.¹⁰

Table 1: Railway Links India and Bangladesh

Sr. No	India	State	Bangladesh	Status
1.	Petrapole	West Bengal	Benapole	Operational
2.	Gede	West Bengal	Darshana	Operational
3.	Radhikapur	West Bengal	Biral	Operational
4.	Singhbad	West Bengal	Rohanpur	Operational
5.	Haldibari	West Bengal	Chilahati	Operational
6.	Mahishashan	Assam	Shahbazpur	Under Progress
7.	Agartala	Tripura	Akhaura	Under Progress

Source: Annotated by Author

Shipping. After the signing of the second addendum to the Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade in May 2020, the number of river routes has increased to 10¹¹, and it also connected Tripura to the Indian National Waterways. Bangladesh and India shares 54 transboundary rivers.

Bus Service. There are four bus services approved between India and Bangladesh, though they are suspended temporarily due to the ongoing pandemic. The routes are Kolkata-Khulna, Dhaka-Kolkata, Dhaka-Agartala and Dhaka-Shillong-Guwahati. Routes to Darjeeling and Gangtok are also planned.

Air. More than 100 flights per week have been approved to operate between India and Bangladesh. However, presently an air bubble is operationalised with 56 flights each week.¹²

Digital. The broadband connectivity to Agartala has been extended through Bangladesh, enabling the vision of 'Digital India' for the North East States.

81 High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDPs). 81 HICDPs in areas of education, health, water, culture, urban development, disaster management and community welfare etc. are also being implemented.¹³

Defence Cooperation

Holding of the Annual Defence Dialogue, high level exchanges at the level of Service Chiefs and conduct of annual service specific Staff Talks have contributed to significant improvement in bilateral defence cooperation.¹⁴



Security and Border Management

The 51st round of Director General Level Talks (DGLT) between Border Security Force (BSF) and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) was held in December 2020 in Guwahati.

Training and Capacity Building

Since 2014, approximately 1500 Bangladesh judicial officers and 5600 civil servants have been trained at Indian institutions covering areas like administration, police, customs, narcotics detection, nuclear science etc.¹⁵

Cultural and People to People Relations

Indian art and cultural forms are promoted through the Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre (IGCC) in Dhaka. The total number of visas issued has increased to 1.6 million a year in 2019.¹⁶

Treaty/Agreement

Mutual Legal Assistance in criminal matters agreement is in force with Bangladesh besides MoUs in security cooperation, narcotic drugs and other related fields; on human trafficking and for transfer of sentenced persons. The Foreigners Regional Registration Offices (FRROs) deported 230 people to Bangladesh in 2019.¹⁷

Border Management Mechanism

A three-tier bilateral institutional mechanism was set up between India and Bangladesh in 1994 to resolve security and border management issues. The *first* level talks are between the Director General (DG), Border Security Force (BSF) and DG, Border Guards, Bangladesh (BGB); the *second* is a Joint Working Group (JWG) at the level of Joint Secretaries of both the countries and the *third* is at the Home Secretary level. In addition to the three-tier mechanism, Home Minister level talks between India and Bangladesh are also held to address the security concerns of both the countries.

Integrated Check Posts (ICP)

The ICPs are envisaged to provide all the facilities required for the discharge of sovereign and non-sovereign functions to enable smooth cross border movement of



individuals, vehicles and goods within an integrated complex. This, in turn, would facilitate the process of immigration, customs, security, quarantine etc.

Table 2: Integrated Check Posts : Bangladesh Border

Sr. No	Location	State	Status
1.	Agartala	Tripura	Operational wef 17 Nov 13
2.	Petrapole	West Bengal	Operational wef 17 Nov 13
3.	Dawki	Meghalaya	Under development
4.	Sutarkandi	Assam	Partially Operational
5.	Ghojadanga	West Bengal	Identified
6.	Changrabandha	West Bengal	Identified
7	Fulbari	West Bengal	Identified
8	Mahdipur	West Bengal	Identified
9	Hili	West Bengal	Identified
10	Kawar Puchhuah	Mizoram	Identified

Source :Annotated by Author

Incidents of Concern

Incidents on the India-Bangladesh border was due to misunderstandings or mis-adventurism leading to a saga of casualties on both sides of the border. It is one of the sensitive and emotive issue, besides water sharing, which are pin-pricks in an otherwise model relationship in the sub-continent showcasing mutual respect, mutual trust and mutual commitment on a rules based order.

As per the Dhaka Tribune, the Bangladesh Foreign Minister informed the press, post the virtual summit between PM Modi and PM Sheik Hasina, that no lethal weapons will be used along the border. The Bangladesh Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal had informed the parliament on 11 June 2019 that, the number of persons killed on the border in 2016, 2017 and 2018 was 25, 17 and 03 respectively.¹⁸

On 30 August 2021, a BSF patrol, at around 3.35 am at Changrabandha BOP in Cooch Behar (West Bengal), was encircled by 18-20 Bangladeshi smugglers which led to two fatal casualties when the patrol had to fire in self-defence. Thereafter, a protest note was handed over to the Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB).¹⁹



On 17 October 2021, BSF foiled a smuggling attempt in 24 Parganas of West Bengal against a gang of ten to twelve smugglers; the BSF jawans were attacked with stones and batons leading to two jawans sustaining injuries, a seizure of 250 Phensedyl cough Syrups based bottles was made.²⁰

Between 01 January 2020 and 31 December 2020, total of Rs. 20.7 Crs consisting of cattle heads, Phenasedyl, Yaba tablets, Sukhi tablets, Ganja, opium and other contraband items were seized.²¹

Table 3: Incidents of Concern: Bangladesh Border²²

Sr. No	Year	BSF Jawans Injured	Fence Breached	Cattle Seized
1.	2017	937.	445	119299
2.	2018	1274	414	63716
3.	2019	2014	746	77410

Source: Annotated by Author

Border Security Force (BSF)

The Border Security Force was raised in 1965 and in 2019 it had 193 Battalions including 04 NDRF Battalions with a strength of 2,65,173 (with 5215 women) and budgeted for 759.34 Crs (BE 2019). The Force Headquarter is in New Delhi. Its field formations includes 02 Special Directorates General (Spl DsG) i.e. Spl DG (Eastern Command) and Spl DG (Western Command) and 01 Addl. DG Command HQ (Spl Ops) Raipur, 13 Frontiers and 46 Sector Headquarters, Water Wing, Air Wing and other ancillary units.²³

The Indian side of the India-Bangladesh Border passes through West Bengal (2216.7 km), Assam (263 km), Meghalaya (443 km), Tripura (856 km) and Mizoram (318 km). The entire stretch consists of plains (West Bengal, Assam- Barak Valley, Tripura), riverine belts (200 km of southern extremity of West Bengal and 61 km of Assam), hills and jungles (Meghalaya). The area is heavily populated and is cultivated right upto the border.

Border Out Posts (BOPs). BOPs are the main workstations of the BSF along the borders. These are self-contained defence outposts with specified area of responsibility. Each BOP is provided with the necessary infrastructure for accommodation, logistic supports and combat functions. In 2019, a total of 1,062 BOPs were held by BSF along the India-Bangladesh Border with sanction for additional 326 composite BOPs to be constructed to reduce the inter



BOP gap to 3.5 kms; presently 89 BSF battalions are deployed. BSF is a disciplined force with 'zero tolerance' to Human Rights Abuse. However, sometimes the patrolling parties have to fire on trans-border criminals in self defence exercising their own right to life but a non-lethal strategy is in place.

Fencing. A total of 3063.24 kms has been completed; 148 villages are located completely ahead of the fence while 137 are located partially ahead of the fence with 126 houses that touches the zeroline; there is hence a need to bring these villages behind the fence or conversely need to take the fence forward to the zero line.

Border Electronically Dominated and QRT Interception Technique (BOLD-QIT). A virtual fence with infra-red and laser-based intrusion alarm system along with optical sensors & sonar sensors and drones, connected to the command & control centres through microwave, DMR and OFC links, were operationalised in March 2019 as part of the Phase-I pilot project along the 61 km riverine border in Dhubri, Assam.²⁴ For areas where physical barriers are not feasible, technological solutions proposed are Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS) which integrates manpower, sensors, networks, intelligence and command & control systems to improve the situational awareness at different levels of the hierarchy, to facilitate prompt and informed decision making and quick response to emerging situations.

Border Floodlights. There has been a total sanction of 2698.6 km of border floodlights, out of which 2411.263 km has been completed.

Roads. There has been a total sanction of 4223.04 km roadways out of which 3697 km has been completed.

Border Area Development Projects (BADP). BSF representatives are part of each border district development council and they carry the voice of the marginalised villages to ensure their rightful share of the development projects besides conducting projects through BADP. A snapshot of the budget²⁵ is as below:

**Table 4: BADP Expenditure: Bangladesh Border**

Sr. No	State	2018-19 (in Crs)	2019-20 (in Crs)
1.	West Bengal	85.40	115.21
2.	Assam	49.50	63.30
3.	Meghalaya	22.69	16.02
4.	Tripura	49.70	44.64
5.	Mizoram	32.20	30.96

Source: MHA Annual Report 2019

Home Guards. In border States, the Border Wing Home Guards (BWHG) Battalions have also been raised, which serves as an auxiliary to the Border Security Force (BSF).

Cooperation with BGB. Besides flag meetings on ground, various hotlines and structured talks at frontier levels, besides DG level, are held regularly. A coordinated day-night patrolling is conducted and spot verification of major trans-border crime incidents is in place. Most important is the focus on non-lethal strategy while curbing transborder crimes; 20 scholarships are also provided every year for wards of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) personnel to study in India.

Government Notification Extending BSF Jurisdiction

The Home Ministry, through a notification published on 11 October 2021, amended the BSF Act of 1968 and accorded extension of jurisdiction of the Border Security force (BSF) up to 50 km inside the international borders in Punjab, West Bengal and Assam. The BSF's powers which includes arrest, search & seizure were until now limited only upto 15 km in these States.²⁶

This extension can be directly related to the likely instability in Afghanistan, use of drones and concerns regarding illegal migration, cattle smuggling, human trafficking and narcotics as well as smuggling of fake Indian currency (FICN) along the Bangladesh border. The BSF however has clarified that, only the State Police has the power to investigate, lodge FIR and take up prosecution, hence, the objections from state governments in Punjab and West Bengal are unfounded and the BSF needs to operate jointly with the state police to ensure prosecution of the offenders indulging in smuggling and transborder crimes.



Modernising Border Management: Way Ahead

Smart border management requires a balanced use of humans and technology to facilitate the movement of people and goods across borders, while controlling and preventing malicious acts such as infiltration, cross-border terrorism, illegal immigration and smuggling. It entails a coordinated and focused approach by various agencies of the nation. Adopting modern technology can immediately smoothen the border management and ensure better connectivity and trade opportunities.

- **Non-lethal Strategy.** There is a need to have a humane approach towards border guarding and ensuring right to life of the border population (non-lethal strategy) and also enabling a strong state administration to deliver the basic needs of the population and deter transborder crime syndicates from exploiting the economically weaker population.
- **Ease of Living, Trusted Trade and Trusted Travelers.** Smooth movement of people and trade can be implemented by adopting technologies like use of Biometric data, (facial recognition) which is used at smart borders to identify people and run random security checks. Advance information on trade and travelers reduces the waiting time by enabling better planning and reducing costs.
- **Electronic Sensors.** Responsive intelligence network, supported by disruptive technologies like AI powered data bases, will enable smooth and monitored movement of people and trade along the borders.
- **Command Centres.** Cognitive analytics with behaviour prediction using AI/ ML is an essential tool for the border guarding forces. Quick interception can be enabled only if correct decisions are made and right force packaging is done for quick interception well in time.
- **Drones and Counter Drones.** Private sector indigenous drones have already been inducted into the Indian Army. The BGF can replicate the procurement rather than going in for a separate procurement cycle. But also essential is the counter Drone technology i.e. both detection and interception capability which is already under development by the DRDO.
- **Anti-Smuggling Syndicate Measures.** Synergy between various stakeholders enables prosecution and deportation of transborder criminals. The NDPS act provides for proactive detention of known criminals upto a year and establishing fast track courts by the state governments can help securing convictions and issue of red



corner notices and disincentivising transborder crimes. A federal approach towards transborder threats is needed to achieve a high degree of cooperation.

- **Technological Training.** Maintaining and sustaining new technological solutions will require upgradation of skill of the existing manpower to be bridged by use of contractors in the interim and also reviewing the recruitment intake.
- **Gender Sensitisation.** The BGFs, dealing with the border population, needs to be gender sensitive and more responsible. Hence, incorporation of Mahila Police is an essential component.
- **Strategic Communication Strategy.** An adverse incident can snowball out of proportion in both countries, hence narrative building and force sensitisation of the nuances of border management are essential to achieve a strategic communication strategy.
- **Budgeting.** A three to four fold increase in the Capital outlays is required for the BGFs to modernise and adopt Smart Border Management solutions augmented by a quick responsive force and legal cooperation with the respective state agencies.

Conclusion

Good political relations enables better coordination between border guarding forces and ease of living in the border population and expansion in trade. A coordinated and strong state administration on the border augmented by the border guarding forces, will prevent the exploitation of economically marginalised by transborder syndicates; a responsive intelligence network supported by disruptive technologies like facial recognition cameras and AI powered data bases will enable smooth and monitored movement of people and trade along the borders.

While there will always be trans-border crimes and both nations, through political signaling, should ensure a positive strategic communication strategy to prevent snow balling of a negative event by opportunists on both sides. The growing cooperation on the India-Bangladesh Border underscores the ability of the Indian Union to grow stronger through better connectivity, smooth trade and people to people movement by following the principal of 'mutual respect, mutual trust and mutual cooperation'.



End Notes

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