

CGS PEACE REPORT

an initiative of BPO

CGS CENTRE FOR
GENOCIDE
STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA



Volume 3, Issue 6
November- December 2019*

**Published on 20 July 2020.
Delayed because of Covid-19 pandemic.*



**Crime and Violence in
Bangladesh:
An analysis from BPO**

**Bangladesh-India and
Bangladesh-Myanmar Borders:
Contemporary Issues**

**Cross-Border Issues:A
Global Overview**

**Commentary on Border
Issues: Ishfaq Ilahi Chowdhury
Air Cdre (Retd.)**

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Cover page photo: Fencing of India-Bangladesh border by India.

Source: <https://www.thedailystar.net/world/south-asia/assam-raise-4-battalions-india-bangladesh-border-1329703>

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From the Editor's Desk

Covid-19 pandemic has made national borders somewhat meaningless, particularly in containing the virus, but still we must deal with borders, and often some of the borders are new ones! In fact, there are reasons to believe that the pandemic has created conditions for securing micro-borders more important than securing macro (national) borders. More security personnel are now provided for locking down cities, municipalities, wards and *mohallas*, with residents lining up to seek permission for going in and out of the area, often by signing up their names at the hurriedly made-up gates and barriers. And the sole objective of the micro-borders is to contain the virus so that people can remain alive and healthy! Interestingly, and this has been proven in different parts of the world, the micro-borders have actually helped to contain the virus or at least reduce the infection and flatten the curve of covid-related death. Countries or places which created such micro-borders at the very outset of the Covid-19 scare, such as Vietnam or even Kerala within India, made a difference to their population than the countries or localities which failed to do so. And once the micro-borders have significantly contained the virus, the people of the locked down country or locality could relax, albeit within their respective locations, and start dismantling the micro-borders. There is certainly a lesson from this, and that is, abnormal conditions create borders while normal conditions require their dismantling.

The matter, however, is markedly different at the Bangladesh-India border, where shots were fired and unarmed Bangladeshis killed at the hands of the Border Security Forces (BSF) of India even during the pandemic. This is surprising because the border killing almost came to a halt, in fact, was zero in March 2020 when the pandemic was already on, but then BSF *jawans* (soldiers) killed 4 unarmed Bangladeshis in April 2020. Of course, this is relatively low compared to January 2020, when BSF *jawans* killed 12 unarmed Bangladeshis at the border. Now, why would the security forces of an officially-declared 'friendly country' use live ammunitions to kill unarmed people? There are several theories.

One, the trigger-happy *jawans* who were earlier posted on the western side of India at the Indo-Pakistan border or in the Kashmir region were brought to the eastern side without proper training and, more importantly, without providing adequate facts that Bangladesh-India border is not a hostile territory where the *jawans* ought to shoot anything that moves at night or runs away from them in daylight! If the *jawan* is not fired upon but still decides to shoot then the *jawan* is either suffering from insecurity and got panicked or was trained, if not ideologically motivated, to see borders simply as hostile

territory irrespective of its location, whether in the east, north or west. This certainly would be unfortunate because then it would rob the meaning of a 'friendly country' and the victims would react in an unfriendly manner at the first opportunity.

Two, may be the BSF needed to unmask its macho complex and boost its morale by shooting unarmed people at the border in the midst of one bad news after another. It is true that India's economy dwindled to a less than 5 percent growth in FY 2019-2020 whereas it was above 8 percent in FY 2016-2017. Moreover, before the Covid-19 pandemic in October 2019 the Indian Nobel laureate Abhijit Banerjee warned that the Indian economy was doing 'very badly'. And on the top of this came the Covid-19 pandemic which made economic and social relations even worse, particularly with the hurriedly enforced lockdown in March 2020, and that again, without considering the fate of Delhi's 300,000 street children and the 18 million more all over the country, including millions of people who came from the villages all over India to work in the big cities. In fact, the lockdown led to the reverse migration of millions of people from cities to the villages, which brought terrible hardship to the disempowered masses. Elements within the BSF may have thought that shooting a few unarmed Bangladeshis along the border could display power and relieve the accumulated tensions of their own!

Three, and this is probably the most important one, the impunity with which the BSF *jawans* carry out extra-judicial killing of Bangladeshis at the border. The killing of Felani Khatun, a 15-year old Bangladeshi girl, on 7 January 2011 is a tragic case worth recollecting. Felani, who was working as a domestic maid and presumably residing in New Delhi illegally, was returning to Bangladesh with his father to get married, but when she found her clothes entangled in the barbed wire, while climbing over the fence to cross the border, and no doubt illegally, she started to scream. Her father already had climbed the fence and crossed the border, but before he could do anything, the BSF *jawans* started firing at her. Interestingly, Felani was crossing the border in the opposite direction, that is, she was not trying to *enter* India illegally but trying to *exit* India illegally. Which national or international law permits the firing at an unarmed person with no hostile intent and killing her while *exiting* a country, and that again, a friendly country? None!

Felani's killing was widely protested in Bangladesh, which led to the trial of the BSF constable Amiya Ghosh, but the latter was acquitted on the ground that 'conclusive and sufficient' evidences were not found against him. This not only exposed the limitations of the judicial recourse to such incidents but also the power of India's civil society, including human rights organizations. Indeed, without the voice and activism of the latter nothing

probably will pacify the *jawans* and refrain them from killing unarmed Bangladeshis at the border. But then, the compulsion of national security is such a hegemonic discourse that few in India would see the killing of unarmed Bangladeshis at the border as a serious issue, let alone an issue of extra-judicial killing.

What is to be done then? De-peripheralizing the border, to begin with. There has been some movements on this, including the commissioning of border *haats* (markets), and there are now four of them, where citizens of India and Bangladesh can go once a week and buy goods and meet family members and friends living on both sides of the border. But this needs to be developed further, including establishing joint hospitals, joint schools, even joint entertainment centres for all ages, so that the imaginative verses of Shahid Qadri can be materialized in the not so distant future:

সীমান্তের ট্রেঞ্চগুলোয় পাহারা দেবে সারাটা বৎসর
লাল নীল সোনালি মাছ
(Only red, blue and gold fish
Will guard the trenches on the border the whole year).

Date: 20 July 2020

Imtiaz Ahmed

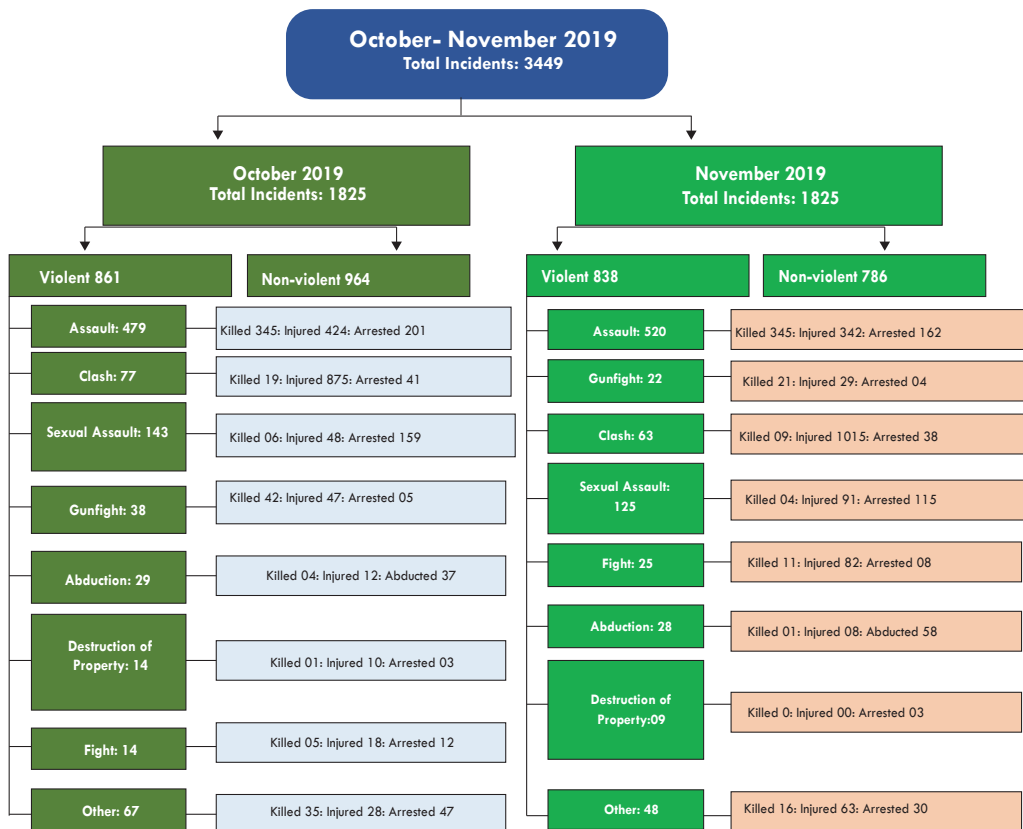
Professor of International Relations &
Director, Centre for Genocide Studies,
University of Dhaka

Violence Update: (October-November 2019)

The Bangladesh Peace Observatory (BPO) brings together different streams of publicly available data on violence using news reports from prominent national dailies. From October 2019 to November 2019, BPO recorded 3449 violent¹ and

non-violent² incidents all over the country. **Figure I** segregates these incidents into some general categories by type of violence. A brief description of each category is available in the Annex.

Figure 1: An Overview of Incidents (October-November 2019)



¹ **Violent Incident:** According to BPO Codebook: The reported incident involved the intentional use of physical force by an individual or group against another individual or group, in a manner that resulted or could have resulted in death, injury or any other form of physical harm to persons or property.

² **Non-violent Incident:** According to BPO Codebook: The reported incident did not involve the intentional use of physical force by an individual or group against another individual or group, in a manner that resulted or could have resulted in death, injury or any other form of physical harm to persons or property, e.g. Arrest, Peaceful Protest, Rescue and Recovery.

This section explores the data extracted from the BPO platform for two consecutive months and attempts to compare it with previous months. In this process, the ascending and descending trends or if anything new comes up during the months in discussion will be visible. In this issue, data accumulated in October and November will be considered and compared with the data of August and September. According to BPO data, the number of total incidents has decreased by 10.35 % in October and November compared to August and September, i.e., from 3847 to 3449. This trend is in contrast to the sharp rise in the previous bi-months of August and September, but have similar trend of descent of the previous bi-months of June-July, April-May, February-March. The changes in the numbers of incidents for different violent categories are varied. Total number of

assaults decreased to 999 from 1147 while total number of clashes increased to 140 from 127. Figure 2 and 3 demonstrate that the number of total deaths were 12.46% less and the total number of injuries increased by 2.28% compared to the months of August and September. Previous enmity, land-related dispute, family feuds, personal and political causes, social issues are the motivating factors in most of the reported cases. There are 97 reported cases of suicide and suicide attempts in October-November which is 65.11% less than the number of reported suicide incidents in August and September, and number of female deaths in these reported incidents has also gone down to 50 from 142 in August and September. Depression, domestic violence, failed/strained relationships, financial issues are the prime motives of suicide.

* A man was killed by his son when he tried to prevent his son from beating up his mother during a family feud in Pabna.³

* In Tangail, a man drowned his wife to death with the help of the deceased's nephew and son to get rid of the loan, which was taken under the deceased's name and also to frame her brother in this murder. The accused husband, son and nephew were arrested and confessed to the crime.⁴

* In Narayanganj, a class eight student was beaten mercilessly by his schoolteacher for seeking permission to drink water for the second time during the class. The student then fell sick. The teacher was in league with the local influential people so no action was taken against him. The incident went viral in the social media.⁵

* A man committed suicide out of shame and humiliation for his inability to pay back loans in Patiya, Chattagram.⁶

³ 'Son kills father in Pabna' 17 October 2019, Cited in- https://epaper.observerbd.com/2019/10/17/8/details/8_r2_c1.jpg , Accessed on- 20 April 2020.

⁴ 'Huaband drowned wife to death to get rid of loan' 18 October 2019, Cited in- https://epaper.jugantor.com/2019/10/18/24/details/24_r7_c2.jpg , Accessed on- 20 April 2020.

⁵ 'Student beaten for seeking permission to drink water' 16 October 2019, Cited in- https://epaper.ittefaq.com.bd/2019/10/16/images/05_103.jpg , Accessed on- 20 April 2020.

⁶ 'Mother and wife was beaten for loan payment by the loaner, man commits suicide due to humiliation' 24 October 2019, Cited in- https://www.edainikpurbokone.net/content/2019/2019-10-24/zoom_view/b09.jpg , Accessed on- 20 April 2020.

Figure 2: Consequences of the Violent Incidents
(August - September 2019)

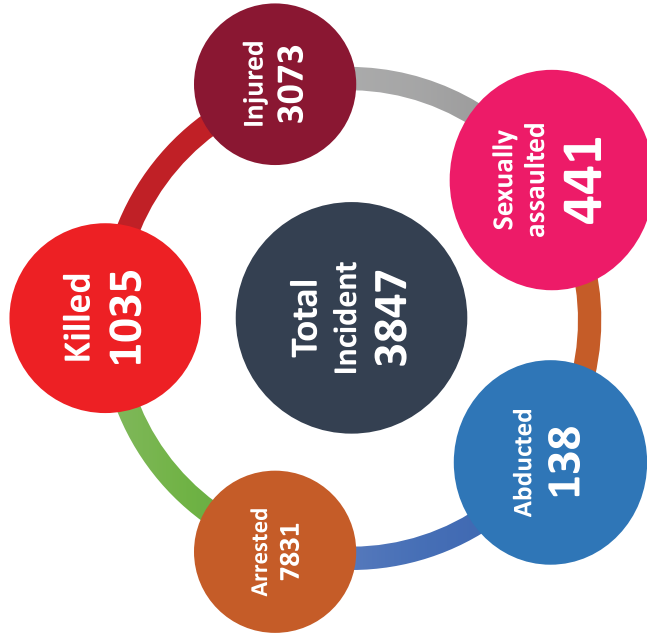
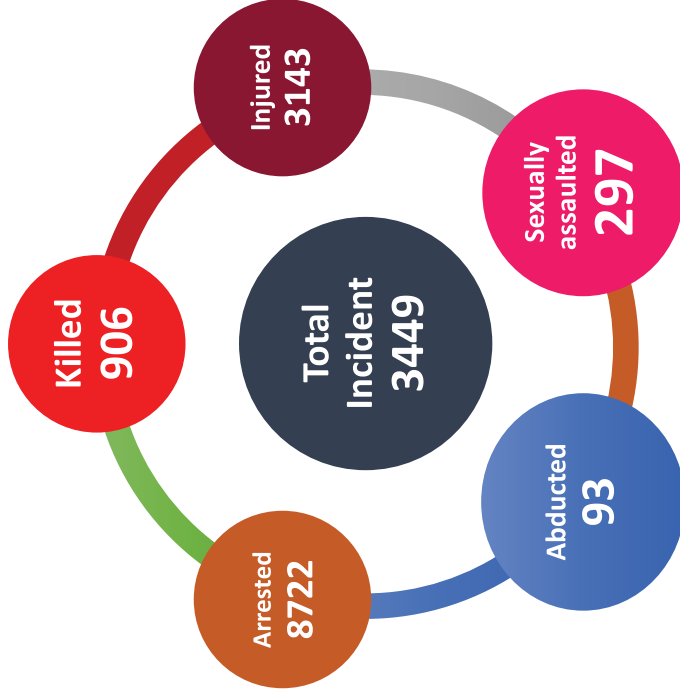


Figure 3: Consequences of the Violent Incidents
(October - November 2019)



Source: BPO

Number of incidents of sexual assault has decreased by 27.57% and the number of victims of sexual assault has also decreased by 32.65 %. In 77.61% of the reported incidents the victims are girls and below 18 years. The perpetrators of these offenses are mostly men of different ages, teachers of educational institutions, family members and relatives, neighbors, local delinquents and stalkers. In 14 cases minor boys were the perpetrators of the sexual assault. Promise of marriage, good job, revenge or personal anger, etc. were used as weapons to make the victims fall into the traps. A total of 274 persons were

* A 17-year-old girl came to Savar with her cousin sister after sister's boyfriend promised to get her a job. The boyfriend and his friends managed an accommodation for the girls for the night. At night, one of the girls was gang-raped by the friends of her cousin's boyfriend. Later six accused were arrested by the police after a case was filed.⁷

* In Dhamrai, a man lured four girls, aged between five to seven years, to a building and tied them up. He raped the girls by scaring them with a knife and also threatened to kill them if they tell anyone about this. The parents of these children were informed but the rapist was a local influential man, so they did not take any action against him. Later, the police got the information and with their help, one of the children's fathers filed a case against the accused. The accused was arrested.⁸

arrested in these reported sexual assault cases.

In **figure 4**, the monthly breakdown of the reported violent incidents is shown which indicates different trends of the incidents. Numbers of assaults and fights increased in November than October but other violent categories show nominal decrease in numbers as October has higher frequency than that of November except for mob violence. The number of mob violence remains the same for both months.

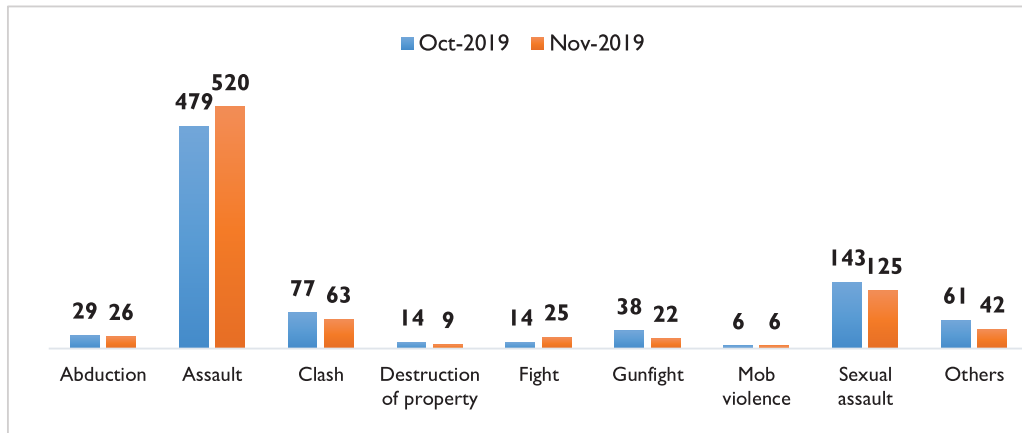
The number of gunfights has maintained the descent in October-November (from 88 to 60) and mob violence has gone down by 52 % in this bi-months. Destruction of property is higher in October. There are six cases in October-November where idols of Hindu temples were vandalized. Social rivalry, previous enmity are the motives for most of the destruction of property cases.

More clashes took place in October than November. 60.13% of the total injured number belongs to the 140 cases of violent clashes. Land-related dispute, rivalry, intra-party tensions and establishing supremacy are the main motives behind these confrontations.

⁷ 'Young woman gang-raped after promised a job in Savar' 30 October 2019, Cited in- https://epaper.ittefaq.com.bd/2019/10/30/images/22_112.jpg , Accessed on- 20 April 2020.

⁸ 'Four girls were raped in Dhamrai, one arrested' 14 October 2019, Cited in- The Daily Prothom Alo, 14 October, 2019, Page- 20 , Accessed on- 20 April 2020.

Figure 4: Number of violent incident (October- November 2019), Source: BPO



The ascending trend of the number of arrests in August-September was observed but it slowed down in October-November. Number of arrests is 11.38 % more in October-November than August-September; while the number of arrests was 60.60% more in August-September

than June-July. **Figure 5** shows that in October more people were arrested than November. In September, the number of arrests was also higher than that of August partially for the initiation of the countrywide anti-gambling raids by the law enforcement agencies.

Figure 5: Comparative analysis of Incidents (October- November 2019), Source: BPO

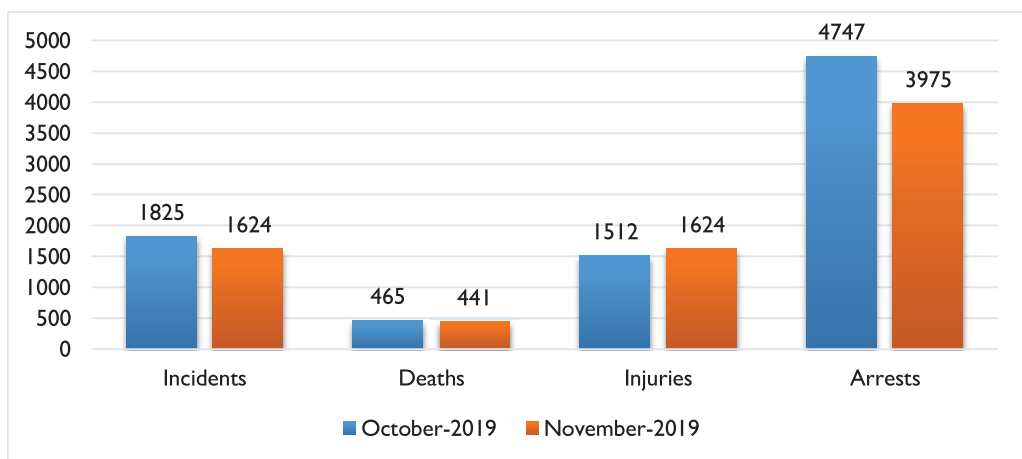


Figure 6: Bi Monthly Divisional Distribution of Incidents (October- November 2019), Source: BPO

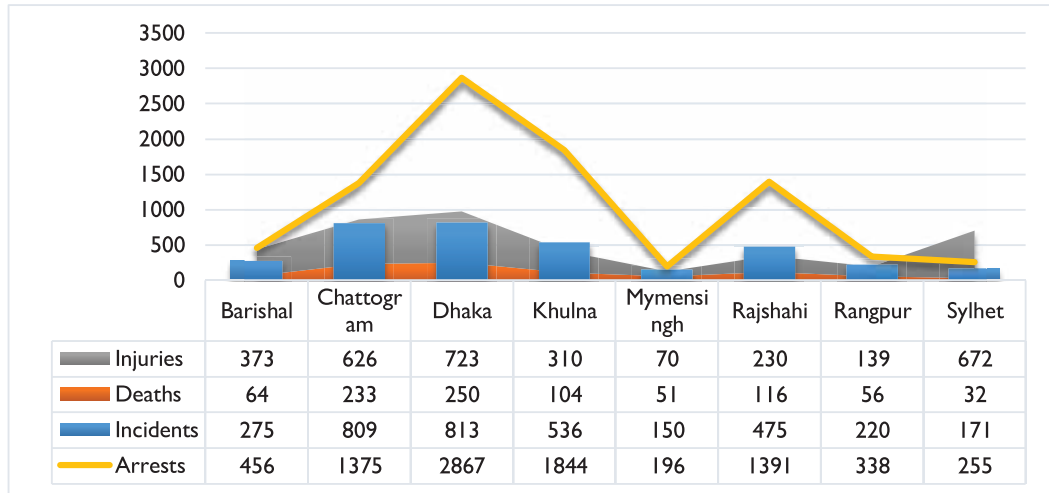


Figure 6 provides a spatial glimpse through the divisional distribution of the recorded incidents in BPO and their consequences. It indicates that Dhaka is at the top in terms of incident prevalence (813) and reported injuries (781), while Chattogram has the second highest incident prevalence (809) and Sylhet has the second highest injury counts (672). These positions were same in previous bi-months. Dhaka and Chattogram, two largest cities in Bangladesh almost always have the highest reported death numbers than the rest of the divisions. In Dhaka division, more deaths were reported than Chattogram division in this bi-months also

but the comparative percentage is lower than August-September.

In August-September, the number of arrests in Dhaka, Chattogram and Rajshahi was more than the number of arrests in rest of the divisions. But in October-November, Dhaka has the highest number of arrests which has surpassed the second highest arrest number (Khulna) by more than 1000. Not only the number of arrests increased by 145.54% in Khulna, also it has the 3rd highest incident number and 4th highest reported deaths. Raids against the criminals and mass arrest from the different areas of the cities increased the number of arrests.

* Police in special drives detained at least fifty alleged drug peddlers from different parts of Dhaka city along with illicit drugs.⁹

* Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) arrested 54 people in charge of illegal trespassing from India in Daulatpur, Khulna.¹⁰

In Sylhet, the number of injured persons is higher than the number of arrests in this division. According to BPO data, out of 171 of the reported incidents, 80 incidents were violent and in 17 cases of clashes, injury count was 582 in October-November. In, August-September, out of 257 of the reported incidents, 153 incidents were violent and in 18 cases of clashes, injury count was 397. In other seven divisions in Bangladesh, a total of 123 clashes took place in October-November and the injury number reported in those incidents was 1308. In Sylhet, there were more than four clashes, which resulted in 50 injuries and one violent clash that claimed 200 injury count. The motives of these massive confrontations between two large groups were establishing supremacy, control over

natural resources, land-related dispute, previous enmity, etc. This trend was prevalent in the previous bi-months in Sylhet. Two cases of clashes took place in Bhola and Noakhali, which resulted in 100 injury counts. From figure 6, it is observable that, Dhaka, Chattogram and Khulna, three big cities in Bangladesh, occupied the top three positions in terms of incident frequencies. However, if the population ratio¹³ is applied to understand the incident prevalence and their consequences, a different picture is observed (Table I).

*In Chhatak, Sunamganj, one person died during a clash between two groups of villagers. The clash occurred when one of the drunk persons started using abusive language to the opponent group. One person protested against the incident. On the following day, the protester was beaten up severely by their rivals. Later, people from two villages clashed and 200 people were injured and one person was killed.¹¹

*In Noakhali, 104 people were injured in a clash between the supporters of two Awami League leaders when the groups were going in procession to attend a party gathering.¹²

⁹ '50 arrested in anti-drug drive' 30 November 2019, Cited in- https://epaper.jugantor.com/2019/11/30/18/details/18_r2_cl.jpg , Accessed on- 20 April 2020.

¹⁰ 'BGB detains over 300 intruders from India' 22 November 2019, Cited in- The Daily Star, 22 November 2019, pg- 20, 17, Accessed on- 20 April 2020.

¹¹ 'Man killed in clash between two villages in Chhatak' 7 November 2019, Cited in- <http://sylheterdak.com.bd/details.php?id=31744> , Accessed on- 20 April 2020.

¹² '104 injured in clash during Awami League gathering in Noakhali' 21 November 2019, Cited in- https://epaper.ittefaq.com.bd/2019/11/21/images/20_107.jpg , Accessed on- 20 April 2020.

¹³ The population data is based on the Population & Housing Census 2011, Bangladesh by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. Cited in: <http://www.bbs.gov.bd/site/page/47856ad0-7e1c-4aab-bd78-892733bc06eb/Population-and-Housing-Census> , Accessed on- 20 April 2020.

Table 1: Bi-Monthly Divisional Distribution of Incidents (October- November 2019)

Division	Incident	Rate pop*	by Death	Rate pop*	by Female Death	Rate pop*	by Injury	Rate pop*	by Female Injury	Rate pop*
Barishal	275	19.82 (2 nd)	64	4.61 (2 nd)	24	1.73 (1 st)	373	26.88 (2 nd)	39	2.81 (1 st)
Chattogram	809	16.65 (3 rd)	233	4.80 (1 st)	68	1.40 (3 rd)	626	12.89 (3 rd)	73	1.50 (3 rd)
Dhaka	813	9.81 (6 th)	250	3.02 (5 th)	86	1.04 (5 th)	723	8.72 (5 th)	70	0.84 (7 th)
Khulna	536	20.50 (1 st)	104	3.98 (3 rd)	32	1.22 (4 th)	310	11.86 (4 th)	42	1.61 (2 nd)
Mymensingh	150	7.92 (8 th)	51	2.69 (6 th)	12	0.63 (8 th)	70	3.69 (8 th)	18	0.95 (4 th)
Rajshahi	475	15.42 (4 th)	116	3.77 (4 th)	45	1.46 (2 nd)	230	7.47 (6 th)	27	0.88 (6 th)
Rangpur	220	8.36 (7 th)	56	2.13 (7 th)	24	0.91 (7 th)	139	5.28 (7 th)	18	0.68 (8 th)
Sylhet	171	10.46 (5 th)	32	1.96 (8 th)	15	0.92 (6 th)	672	41.11 (1 st)	15	0.92 (5 th)

*Rate in per 100000 populations (Projected in 1 year)

By population ratio, Khulna has become the 1st in ranking in terms of incident rates and Barishal, a considerably smaller and less violence prone (based on total number of reported incidents) division, takes the second position in death rate, injury rate and first position in female death

rate and female injury rate. The highest death rate is in Chattogram and the highest injury rate is in Sylhet. Dhaka and Chattogram having the highest incidents in number have been ranked 6th and 3rd respectively according to table 1.

Cross-Border Incidents during Pre- and Post-COVID-19 Lockdown

The BPO Team

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the world to a standstill in 2020 as the virus wreaked havoc in almost every corner of the world. The outbreak originated in China in December 2019 quickly spread in Europe in February 2020 onwards and in the United States in March 2020 onwards. In South Asia, the pandemic crisis is perceived as a slow burner due to low fatality rates and a smaller number of cases in earlier months compared to Europe and the US although there were grim projections and widespread reports of lockdown enforcement failures. In South Asia, Nepal reported the first confirmed case of COVID-19 as early as 24 January 2020 when a China returnee student tested positive.¹⁴ The community transmission of the virus in South Asia came into play in late April 2020 when almost all the countries of the region enforced lockdowns or quarantine, curfews of various levels and scope.

The first known case of COVID-19 in Bangladesh was reported on 8 March 2020.¹⁵ The number of cases remained smaller throughout March but marked a gradual rise from April onwards. Despite taking some steps, which include suspending on-arrival visas of Chinese and European visitors, the Bangladesh government received backlashes initially for not going too far with the travel bans.¹⁶ Domestically, Bangladesh government imposed a nation-wide lockdown on 26th March to restrict community transmission.¹⁷ The lockdown was extended on several occasions until 30th May 2020. Amid the growing number of fatalities and cases, Bangladesh lifted the lockdown on 31st March and entered into Phase Two where full lockdown is only imposed in red zones; areas where infections are rising in alarming numbers. Meanwhile, The Indian government suspended the travel across the border

¹⁴ “Nepal confirms first case of deadly coronavirus” *The Economic Times* 24 January 2020. Cited in <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/nepal-confirms-first-case-of-deadly-coronavirus/articleshow/73590302.cms?from=mdr> (Accessed 20 June 2020).

¹⁵ Ruma Paul. “Bangladesh confirms its first three cases of coronavirus” *Reuters* 8 March 2020. Cited in <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-bangladesh-idUSKBN20V0FS> (Accessed 20 June 2020).

¹⁶ Saleem Ahmed & Tawsia Tajmim, “World shuts borders, we are open: Is it safe?” *The Business Standard* 13 March 2020. Cited in <https://tbsnews.net/bangladesh/world-shuts-borders-we-are-open-it-safe-55618> (Accessed 20 June 2020).

¹⁷ “Bangladesh imposes total lockdown over COVID-19” 25 March 2020. Cited in <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/bangladesh-imposes-total-lockdown-over-covid-19/1778272> (Accessed 20 June 2020).

Checkpoint from 13th March in a bid to stop the spread.¹⁸ Prior to that Tripura, eastern state of India neighboring Bangladesh suspended border *haats* in the border on 11th March.

Bangladesh and India share a 4,156-kilometre-long border; one of the largest land borders in the world. Conversely, Bangladesh shares a 270-kilometre-long border with Myanmar. Due to various socio-political and economic reasons, Bangladesh-India and to some extent Bangladesh-Myanmar border is a hot spot for illegal cattle trafficking, illegal border trespassing, illegal fishing, intermittent shootings by border forces, human trafficking, goods and drug trafficking, and arrests for numerous crimes by the border forces. BPO database mapped 101 reported border-related violent and non-violent incidents from October 2019 to May 2020. (see, Figure 7) The trend seemed to be on the rise in late 2019 and early 2020 as the number of incidents reached its peak (19) in January 2020. The number of deaths in the border was also the highest in January (12). (see, Figure 7). According to the BPO database, there were seven instances in the month of January 2020, where Bangladeshi citizens;

mostly cattle smugglers were shot or beaten to death by Indian border force, the Border Security Force (BSF) (see, BPO Database). On 9th January 2020, two Bangladeshi cattle smugglers were killed and two were injured by the Indian BSF near Shibganj, Chapai Nawabganj.¹⁹ On 10th January 2020, A Bangladeshi youth was beaten to death allegedly by members of Indian BSF along Lalmonirhat's Burimari border in Patgram Upazila.²⁰

With the COVID-19 pandemic the border-related incidents are on the decline since February 2020 (see, Figure 7). After the imposition of lockdown in Bangladesh on 26th March, according to the BPO database, there were only seven border-related incidents; six of which were in April and only one in May. The number of border-related incidents dropped by 82 percent in the period between pre-COVID lockdown and COVID lockdown. There were only nine incidents listed after the closure of border checkpoints on 13th March 2020 (see, BPO Database). From April 2020 onwards during the lockdown in Bangladesh, six out of seven incidents were related to shooting or torture by Indian or Myanmar border forces (see, Box 1). Five of the fatal

¹⁸ "India suspends tourist visas from March 13 to prevent coronavirus spread" *Business Standard* 11 March 2020. Cited in https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/india-suspends-tourist-visas-to-prevent-coronavirus-spread-says-govt-120031101611_1.html (Accessed 20 June 2020).

¹⁹ "BSF kills 2 Bangladeshis in Chapainawabganj" *Dhaka Tribune* 9 January 2020. Cited in

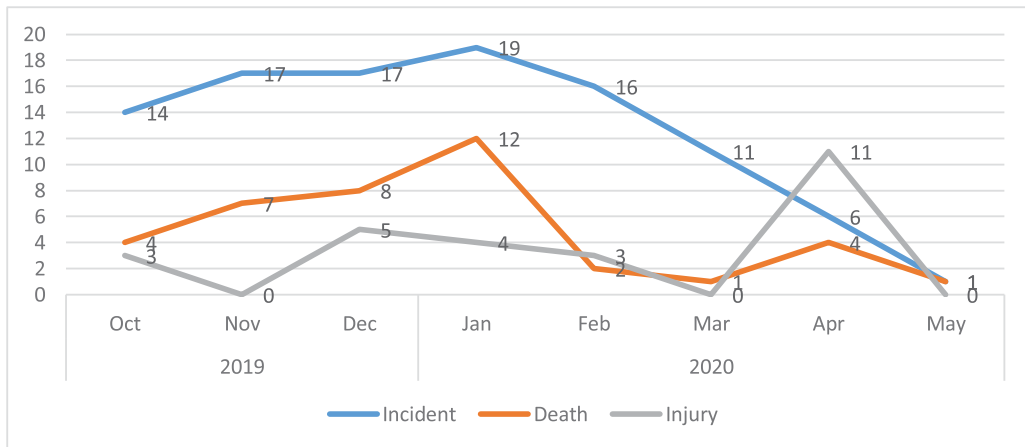
<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/2020/01/09/bsf-kills-2-bangladeshis-in-chapainawabganj> (Accessed 20 June 2020).

²⁰ "Bangladeshi beaten dead by India's 'BSF'" *Daily Prothom Alo* 11 January 2020. Cited in <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/Bangladeshi-beaten-dead-by-India%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%98BSF%E2%80%99> (Accessed 20 June 2020).

incidents were perpetrated by the BSF. One was perpetrated by Myanmar Navy in which six Bangladeshi fishermen were allegedly shot to injury at St. Martin Dwip area, Teknaf Upazila of Cox's Bazar on 7th April 2020.²¹ As a result, the number of deaths (4) and injuries (11) in the border catapulted in April 2020 compared to March 2020 during the lockdown.

Figure 8 shows that the highest number of border-related incidents (42) in between October 2019 to May 2020 occurred in the border areas of Khulna division; followed by Rangpur (22) and Rajshahi (21). The number of deaths was disproportionately higher in the border of Rangpur division (17); followed by Rajshahi (9).

Figure 7: Bi-Monthly Trends of Border-related Incidents (October 2019 to May 2020)



²¹ “Six Bangladeshi injured in Myanmar Navy Shootings (In Bengali)” *Ukhiya News* 8 April 2020. Cited in

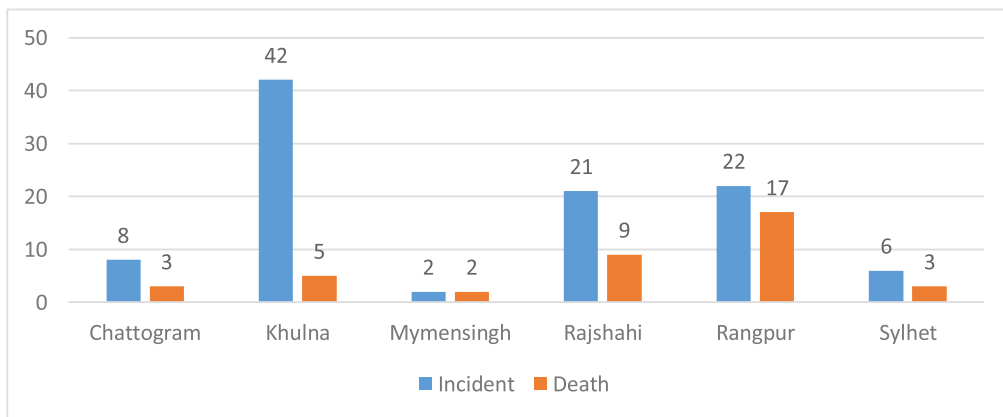
<http://www.ukhiyanews.com/%e0%a6%b8%e0%a6%be%e0%a6%97%e0%a6%b0%e0%a7%87-> (Accessed 20 June 2020).

Box 1: List of Border-related incidents after the COVID-19 Lockdown (since 26 March 2020)

- A Bangladeshi was allegedly beaten to death by the Indian Border Security Force over COVID-19 suspicion in the border area of Akhaura Upazila, Brahmanbaria on 1st April 2020.
- A Bangladeshi national was shot dead by the Indian Border Security Force along Chochpara border in Baliadanga Upzilla, Thakurgaon on 2nd April 2020.
- Six Bangladeshi fishermen were allegedly shot to injury by Myanmar Navy at St. Martin Dwip area under Teknaf upazila of Cox's Bazar district on 7th April 2020.
- Border Guard Bangladesh recovered a body of a Bangladesh citizen from the Indian area near Moheshpur border, Jhenaidah on 11th April 2020.
- A Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinee who was shot and injured by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) members in Panchagarh who later died at Rangpur Medical College Hospital on 19th April 2020.
- Five Bangladeshi people, including a Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) member, were allegedly shot to injury by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) at Burimari border area under Patgram upazila of Lalmonirhat district on 23rd April 2020.
- A man was shot to death by the Indian Border Security Force over the illegal intrusion at Jaflong border, Gowainghat, Sylhet on 23rd May 2020.

*Source: Bangladesh Peace Observatory Database; See at <http://peaceobservatory-cgs.org/>

Figure 8: Divisional Distribution of Border-related Incidents (October 2019 to May 2020)



Bangladesh-India and Bangladesh-Myanmar Borders: Contemporary Issues

The BPO Team

Bangladesh, a sovereign nation in South Asia, shares its land border with two countries, India and Myanmar. The country shares a staggering 4156 km long land boundary with India making it the world's fifth-longest border²² while its border with Myanmar is 270 km long.²³ Border disputes have for long been a contentious issue among the South Asian nations. The border between India and Pakistan is an example of this. Killing of Bangladeshi citizens on Bangladesh-India border has been a major concern for Bangladesh for a long period. In recent years, the number of killings has increased than the previous years. Apart from border killing this write-up will try to focus on other contemporary border issues such as cattle smuggling, drug trafficking and Rohingya crisis.

Border trade

Due to geographical proximity, both India and Bangladesh offer natural markets for each other's export products. In their

mutual trade, both countries enjoy lesser transaction costs and quicker delivery considering their geographical proximity. India exports major items such as foodgrains cotton yarn and fabrics, made ups, machinery, instruments, glass/glassware, ceramics and coal.²⁴ On the other hand, Bangladesh exports goods principally made up of raw jute, jamdani sarees, inorganic chemicals, leather, etc.²⁵ Border haat or border market in remote border regions in India and Bangladesh is an excellent example of government-to-government initiative changing the cross-border relationship among the people of both countries. "The core idea behind the border haat is to provide a formal arrangement of trading between the local communities of two countries who have minimal access to big markets mainly due to long distances."²⁶ One of the main reasons to set up border haats initially was to reduce informal trading-smuggling to be

²² "Row over killings at Bangladesh-India border", 27 January 2020. Cited in <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/row-over-killings-at-bangladesh-india-border/1715390>. Accessed on 2 April 2020.

²³ "Myanmar to fence remaining border with Bangladesh", 9 September 2017. Cited in <https://www.dhakatribune.com/world/2017/09/09/myanmar-fence-remaining-border-bangladesh/>. Accessed on 8 April 2020.

²⁴ Chandrima Sikdar, "Prospects of Bilateral Trade between India and Bangladesh", *Foreign Trade Review*, 2006.

²⁵ *ibid*

²⁶ "Firsthand assessment of makeshift Indo-Bangla border haats". 01 December 2019. Cited in <https://www.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/views/firsthand-assessment-of-makeshift-indo-bangla-border-haats-1575216899>. Accessed on 11 June 2020.

precise.²⁷ Currently, four border haats exist on the Bangladesh-India borders and a memorandum was signed in 2018 between the government officials of India and Bangladesh to set six more border haats.²⁸ In border haats, an equal number of identified traders and vendors from India and Bangladesh, are allowed to buy and sell locally produced goods and crops.²⁹ The importance of the border haat lies in the fact that it also provides an opportunity for family gatherings, and it is becoming attractive tourist destinations. There is no doubt that border haats will act as a bridge between people from both countries and promote friendly relations.

Border Killings

Although both Bangladesh and India have maintained a friendly environment in their border with each other, the killing of Bangladeshi citizens by the Border Security Force (BSF) of India evoked strong public sentiments in Bangladesh in the past. Nine years ago, Felani, a 15-year-old, at Anantapur border of Phulbari

upazila in Kurigram district was brutally killed by the BSF that triggered outrage in Bangladesh and in some quarters of India.³⁰ The image of the 15-year-old's hung body was published in different international media at that time. However, despite demands for justice, the chief perpetrator Amya Ghosh and his superior officers were not found guilty, which again triggered massive criticism on both sides of the border, especially in Bangladesh. Last year in July, during a speech in parliament, the home minister informed that in the last ten years a total of 294 Bangladeshis were killed by the Indian BSF along the border.³¹ Almost in all cases the BSF term such fatalities as "undesirable deaths" rather than describing it as killing. According to the rights watchdog, Ain o Shalish Kendra (ASK) at least 43 Bangladeshis were killed by the BSF in 2019.³² Despite having a friendly relationship with India, Bangladesh over the years has been unable to bring down the death toll in the border, raising eyebrows at different quarters.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ "Bangladesh- India to scout for new border haat in Sylhet", 15 April 2019. Cited in <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/foreign-affairs/2019/04/15/bangladesh-india-to-scout-for-new-border-haat-in-sylhet>. Accessed on 11 June 2020.

²⁹ "Backgrounder: Border Haats Boost Ties between India-Bangladesh", 23 January 2019. Cited in <https://www.sasec.asia/index.php?page=news&nid=975&url=border-haats-boost>. Accessed on 11 June 2020.

³⁰ "Killings at the Bangladesh- India border", 17 January 2020. Cited in <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/human-rights/news/killings-the-bangladesh-india-border-1855045>. Accessed on 8 April 2020.

³¹ *ibid*

³² "Border Violence (Jan-Dec 2019)", 6 January 2020. Cited in <http://www.askbd.org/ask/2020/01/06/border-violence-jan-dec-2019/>. Accessed on 6 April 2020.

Killings in Bangladesh-India Border by BSF: Data Insights

The United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials calls upon officials to apply, as far as possible, non-violent means before resorting to the use of force and firearms. Even in self-defense, intentional lethal use of firearms is permitted in order to protect life. Officials are required to exercise restraint and “act in proportion to the seriousness of the offence.”³³

Different security forces, specially the border security militaries have to follow these norms to avoid violence. The table and data below suggest that there is visibly non-compliance and violation by BSF.

Table 2: ASK Data on Violence by BSF across India Bangladesh Border
Source: Ain o Salish Kendra Periodic Report Compilation

Year	Incident	Death (Shot/ Torture)	Injured	Abducted	Returned
2013	335	26	84	175	49
2014	273	33	63	110	67
2015	209	46	73	59	31
2016	114	31	39	24	20
2017	112	24	35	40	13
2018	43	15	15	13	0
2019	127	43	48	34	2
2020	29	15	4	10	0
Total	1242	233	361	465	182

According to Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) officials, 95% of the total deaths are allegedly of cattle traders who trespass for making quick cash. While, after the ban on cow export by India back in 2014 and Bangladesh being almost self-sufficient in meat production, cattle import from India

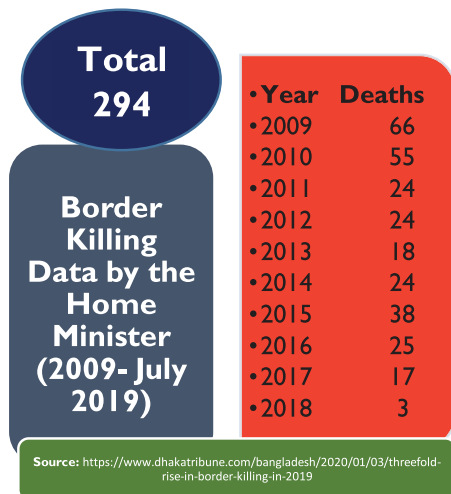
has significantly declined. Nonetheless, BGB data suggests that around 2.3 million cows entered Bangladesh in 2013 during the Eid-ul-Azha festival (the peak time for trading as the prime ritual is to sacrifice cattle). However, in 2019, the number was only around 92,000.³⁴ Therefore, such a

³³ Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, adopted by the Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, Havana, 27 August to 7 September 1990, U.N. Doc.

A/CONF.144/28/Rev.I at 122 (1990).

³⁴ “Threefold rise in border killing in 2019”, 23 January 2020. Cited in <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2020/01/03/threefold-rise-in-border-killing-in-2019>. Accessed 15 March 2020.

claim cannot properly substantiate the increase of death in 2019 after a gradual decline since 2016.



On the other hand, the term 'border killing' is carefully avoided by the BSF. During December 2019, in a meeting of the director generals of the BSF and BGB, Indian officials labeled this as “undesirable deaths” and said they would remain cautious and avoid it.³⁵ Also, it is claimed by the Indian side that these deaths occur in self-defense while various media reports suggest that BSF indiscriminately shoots unarmed and defenseless Bangladeshis, including children.³⁶ Moreover, it is noticeable that BSF mostly kills Bangladeshis inside the Bangladesh

territory.³⁷ This indicates that India is not keeping its promise to bring down the deaths to zero. It is also a violation of 2018 accord by BSF in which both India and Bangladesh agreed to refrain from using lethal weapons in case of cross border trespassing.

It has been noticed that there are some differences in data of BPO and other sources. There are noticeable variations in death rates on Bangladesh-India border published by organizations such as ASK. One of the reasons could be because ASK uses data from some newspapers which BPO does not cover usually. Another reason could be that many of the border killing incidents go under-reported. However, each of the data-set demonstrates that border killing has increased in the recent years on Bangladesh-India border.

Cattle Smuggling

Cattle smuggling is a common scenario on the Indo-Bangladesh border for decades. It is estimated that tens of thousands of cattle are smuggled to Bangladesh every year through West-Bengal part of India-

³⁵ “A forgotten promise: Border killings by BSF tripled last year compared to 2018 despite India’s assurance of ‘zero death’; 4 more killed”, 24 January 2020. Cited in <https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/forgotten-promise-1858264>. Accessed 15 March 2020.

³⁶ “Shocking rise in BSF border killings: India must deliver on its promise of “zero deaths” at border”, 4 February

2020. Cited in <https://www.thedailystar.net/editorial/news/shocking-rise-bsf-border-killings-1863139>. Accessed 15 March 2020.

³⁷ “Border violence must end”, 4 February 2020. Cited in <https://www.newagebd.net/article/101249/border-violence-must-end>. Accessed 15 March 2020.

Bangladesh border.³⁸ Perhaps, for this reason, the Indo-Bangladesh border has become a paradise for the cattle smugglers. Since most of the cattle trade is done illegally at the India-Bangladesh border, so a running fight between the smugglers and the BSF is a common scenario here. Furthermore, it is alleged that on many occasions, some law enforcers on both sides of the border keep a strong connection with the smugglers, which makes their life easy.³⁹ In addition, it is also noticed that mainly shepherds and cattle smugglers are the victims of border killing on the India-Bangladesh border.⁴⁰ There is no denying of the fact that rampant cattle smuggling is one of the main reasons behind border killing at the India-Bangladesh border.

Drug Smuggling on Bangladesh-Myanmar border

While Bangladesh has observed a disturbing spate of killing of its nationals at India- Bangladesh border over the years but such incidents are not a frequent happening on the border between

Bangladesh and Myanmar. However, there remain major challenges at the border between the two countries. The massive influx of Rohingya refugees from the Northern Rakhine state of Myanmar to the neighboring Cox's Bazar district of Bangladesh has downgraded the bi-lateral relations between the two countries. Bangladesh is currently host to a staggering 1.1 million Rohingya refugees.⁴¹ Apart from the Rohingya refugee crisis, large scale drug trafficking is a common feature in the border between the two neighboring countries. In addition, Bangladesh has become a hub for the drug traffickers who source the drug from factories in lawless northeastern Myanmar.⁴² According to various media reports, the Teknaf town, located in Cox's Bazar, has become a notorious passageway for transporting drugs mainly contraband 'Yaba' (a mixture of methamphetamine and caffeine).⁴³ Moreover, in majority of the cases, Rohingya women and children act as the favorite couriers since they remain lesser suspects.⁴⁴ Since majority of the Rohingya refugees do not have any scope of

³⁸ "Cattle smuggling on India-Bangladesh border in Bengal sets off alarm bells" 19 July 2019. Cited in <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/cattle-smuggling-on-india-bangladesh-border-in-bengal-sets-off-alarm-bells/story-rYPZogt05n7MkbgGgwwBzJ.html>. Accessed on 6 April 2020.

³⁹ "India- Bangladesh Border Management: The Challenge of Cattle Smuggling" July 2013. Cited in https://www.orfonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Special_Report.pdf. Accessed on 6 April 2020.

⁴⁰ "Why border killing has not stopped" 27 December 2017. Cited in <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2017/12/27/border-killing-not-stopped>. Accessed on 4 April 2020.

⁴¹ "Not a single Rohingya wants to go back: Buses back to Myanmar left empty as refugees mark second year since fleeing genocide" 22 August 2019. Cited in <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/myanmar-r-rohingya-crisis-muslims-refugees-genocide-bangladesh-a9074851.html>. Accessed on 5 April 2020.

⁴² "Drug Trafficking and Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh" 15 March 2019. Cited in <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/drug-trafficking-and-rohingya-refugees-in-bangladesh-49005/>. Accessed on 5 April 2020.

⁴³ *ibid*

⁴⁴ *ibid*

employment in Bangladesh, so they are easily engaged in drug smuggling. In one such incident, two Rohingya men were killed in a gunfight with a BGB team while the smugglers were bringing a Yaba haul from Myanmar through the border there.⁴⁵ Moreover, with consumption of Yaba booming in Bangladesh, in 2016, Government officials in Bangladesh estimated that the Yaba business in the country is worth an estimated \$3 billion annually. Understandably, the smuggling of contraband Yaba pills is one of the significant problems in Bangladesh-Myanmar border.

Rohingya issue:

A major contentious issue between Bangladesh and Myanmar is the influx of Rohingya refugees. It is estimated that currently, a staggering 1.1 million Rohingya refugees are living in Cox's Bazar, a southern coastal district in Bangladesh.⁴⁶ Rohingyas are known as the most

persecuted minority in the world. From the very beginning of the massive influx of Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh, rights groups across the world urged Bangladesh to give shelter to the Rohingyas. Bangladesh has taken the burden on its shoulder. However, on many occasions, it has been reported in the newspapers that Rohingyas are involved in different crimes, such as drug smuggling and human trafficking. This is a major concern for Bangladesh.⁴⁷ Since aid agencies are meeting their basic needs, a large number of Rohingya refugees remain unemployed and idle, which leads them to engage in different criminal activities. Moreover, many Rohingya refugees are actively engaged in drug trafficking in the Bangladesh- Myanmar border area. Factors such as statelessness, restricted movements inside the camp and lack of accessibility to basic services have acted as strong factors for Rohingyas to engage themselves in 'Yaba'- popularly known as madness drug- trafficking in Bangladesh.

⁴⁵ "BGB says two Rohingya men are killed in 'gunfight with drug smugglers'" 6 January 2020. Cited in <https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2020/01/06/bgb-says-two-rohingya-men-are-killed-in-gunfight-with-drug-smugglers>. Accessed on 5 April 2020.

⁴⁶ "Hosting 1.1m Rohingyas a big burden" 31 July 2019. Cited in [https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/bangladesh-pm-](https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/bangladesh-pm-sheikh-hasina-says-1-1-million-rohingyas-big-burden-1779535)

[sheikh-hasina-says-1-1-million-rohingyas-big-burden-1779535](https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/bangladesh-pm-sheikh-hasina-says-1-1-million-rohingyas-big-burden-1779535). Accessed on 11 June 2020.

⁴⁷ "What is behind the rising chaos in Rohingya camps?" 24 March 2019. Cited in <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/2019/03/24/crime-establishing-supremacy-and-internal-conflict-reasons-behind-rising-chaos-in-rohingya-camps>. Accessed on 11 June 2020

Analysis of Bangladesh Peace Observatory (BPO) Data on Border Issue:

Figure 9: Total Reported Border Related Incidents, Source: BPO

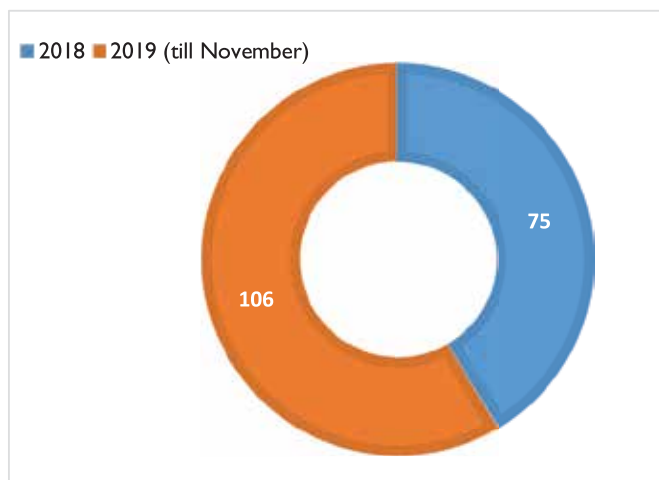


Figure 9 compares the number of border-related incidents in Bangladesh for two years- 2018 and 2019. It is evident that in 2019 border-related events were higher than the numbers of 2018. Moreover, the number of border-related incidents saw a sharp rise in 2019. While in 2018 altogether 75 incidents took place, then the numbers raised to 106 in 2019.

Figure 10 illustrate the scenario of torture of Bangladeshi nationals by BSF of India along India-Bangladesh border. In 2018, 8 people were killed on India-Bangladesh border while within one year the number has quadrupled. In 2019, at least 35 persons were killed at India-Bangladesh border by the Indian BSF. Moreover, in 2018 while 25 persons were injured and in

2019, at least 31 persons were injured in different incidents. In terms of number of abducted persons by BSF, both 2018 and 2019 saw almost a similar trend. In addition, there was a sharp rise in terms of number of arrested persons in 2019. While in 2018 at least 5 Bangladeshi nationals were arrested by the BSF and in 2019 the number rose to 29.

Figure 10: Torture of Bangladeshi nationals by BSF along India-Bangladesh border, Source: BPO

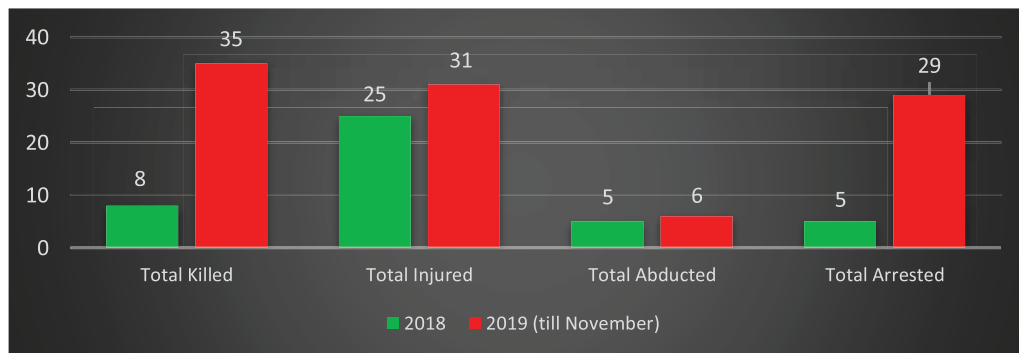


Figure 11: Division-wise distribution of people killed by BSF, Source: BPO

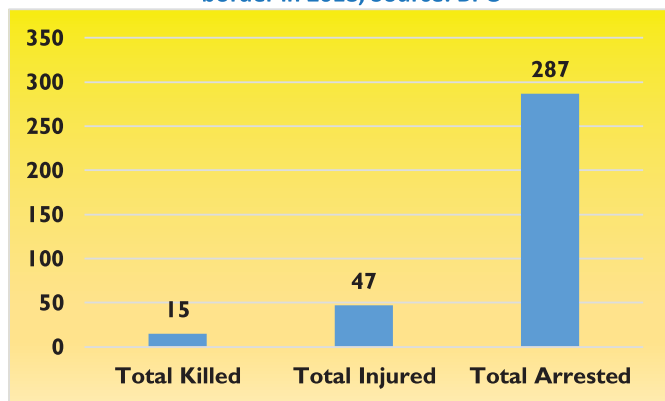


As mentioned earlier, the number of Bangladeshi nationals killed by BSF increased significantly in 2019. Division-wise segregation of number of people killed at the India-Bangladesh border in **Figure**

11 illustrates that Rangpur has the highest number of deaths in 2019. While in 2019 at least 11 people were killed in Rangpur then 10 and 9 people were killed respectively in Rajshahi and Khulna. Also, in 2018 Rangpur and Rajshahi have the highest number of deaths with 4 and 3 persons killed respectively in these divisions.

Figure 12 illustrates that in 2018, apart from border killing, at least 15 persons were killed at India-Bangladesh border adjacent areas in different incidents. Also, 47 persons succumbed to injury while 287 persons were arrested by the law enforcers of Bangladesh and India.

Figure 12: Total incidents took place at India-Bangladesh border in 2018, Source: BPO



In 2019, as reflected in **figure 13**, at least 41 persons were killed along border adjacent areas. Majority of them were mainly cattle traders and smugglers killed by the BSF and others were killed during a fight with the Bangladeshi law enforcers including BGB. At the same time, 36 persons were injured, and 497 persons were held by the law enforcers.

Figure 13: Total incidents took place at India-Bangladesh border in 2019, Source: BPO

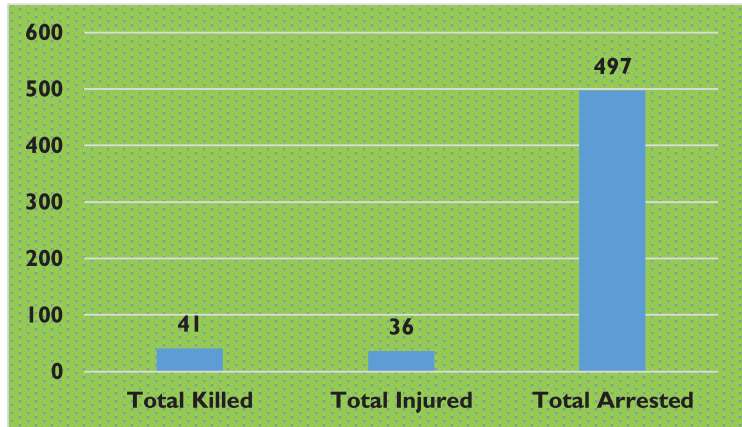
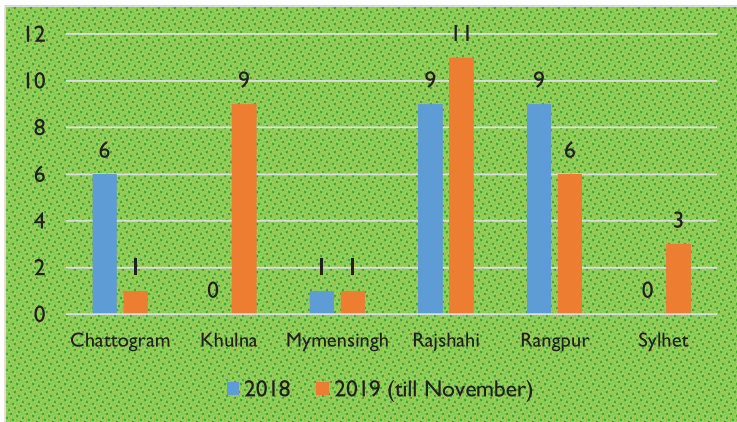


Figure 14: Division-wise distribution of persons injured by BSF, Source: BPO



A division-wise distribution of persons injured by BSF in **figure 14** shows that both in 2018 and 2019 Rajshahi has the highest number of injured persons. In 2018 Rajshahi and Rangpur had the highest number of injured persons with 11 and 9 injured persons respectively. In 2019, highest

number of persons were injured in Rajshahi division where the number stood around 11.

Numbers reflected in **figure 15** shows that comparatively the scenario at Bangladesh- Myanmar border is much more peaceful in 2019 than 2018. Both in 2019 and 2018 at least 1 Bangladeshi

national was killed by the Border Guard Police (BGP) of Myanmar. On the other hand, in 2018, while 8 persons were injured and in 2019 the number reduced to 1.

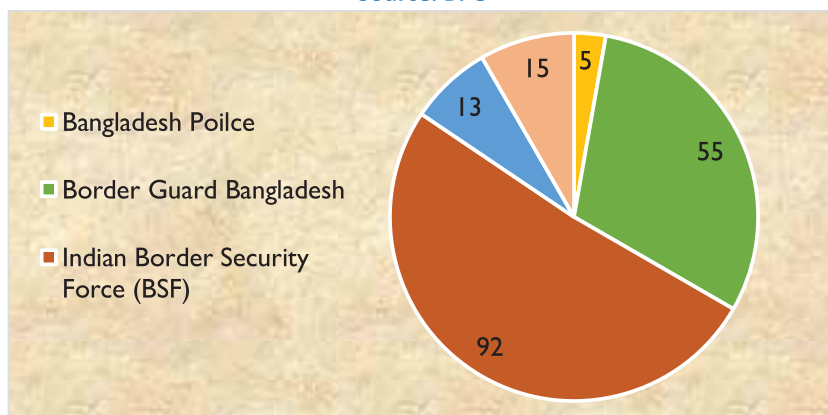
Figure 15: Persons injured and killed on Bangladesh-Myanmar border, Source: BPO



Finally, **figure 16** depicts the main actors involved in border-related incidents. The Pie chart shows that the BSF was the main actor at least in 92 incidents, which took place between January 2018 to November

2019. Also, the BGB was involved in many incidents, as it was engaged in different operations against the smugglers or illicit traders. BGB was engaged in at least 55 incidents during this period.

Figure 16: Major Actors involved in border related incidents (January 2018- November 2019), Source: BPO



Cross-Border Issues: A Global Overview

Nasrin Jabin & Tithy Mondal⁴⁸

The concept of border is one of the most widely discussed topics of political geography. Although in this era of globalization, the relevance of borders is questioned at times, it is of utmost importance to the countries, since it defines the state sovereignty. Scholars have defined the term 'border' in different ways. According to Lucius Cafilisch, "border is a way to identify areas where state sovereignty exists".⁴⁹ John W. Lee and Michael North observe that, "the border represents a relatively static model of territorial demarcation that can be expressed physically- whether through human- constructed border stones, walls, or fences- or through natural features such as rivers, mountain ranges, and even trees that become endowed with human-constructed meaning as border markers."⁵⁰ Border serves two basic purposes- protection from external and internal threats and determining territorial boundaries.⁵¹ This write-up gives an insight into some of the major contentious borders in the world, such as India-China, India-Pakistan, Arab-Israel and the United States-Mexico border.

India-China Border Dispute

India and China are the two powerful Asian nations who grew up in an atmosphere of mutual sympathy and determination to throw off the yoke of Western domination in the first half of the 20th century.⁵² They share a long border of 3,488 kilometers, but there is no mutually agreed borderline or the Line of Actual Control (LAC).⁵³ The contestation of the boundary lines claimed by India and China resulted in the first Indo-China war in 1962. Border activities in recent times such as deployment of defense apparatus, troop reinforcements, construction of rail and road links, and military exercises, by both countries, have risen the tension between them though their bilateral relationship is quite friendly and smooth-going, more particularly in terms of trade and commerce.

Since 1949, China experienced number of disputes with some of its neighbors among which China-India border dispute is worth mentioning, because it has become one of the most protracted border disputes of history.⁵⁴ Opinions vary on the length of the shared land border between China

⁴⁸ Research Data Analyst, Bangladesh Peace Observatory, Centre for Genocide Studies, University of Dhaka.

⁴⁹ Lucius Cafilisch, "Typology of Borders. International Symposium on Land and River Boundary Demarcation and Maintenance in Support of Borderland Development. Bangkok," 2006, pp.1-2.

⁵⁰ John W. Lee and Michael North, *Globalizing Borderlands Studies in Europe and North America* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), pp. 2.

⁵¹ David Newman and Anssi Passi, Fences and Neighbours in the Postmodern World: Boundary Narratives in Political Geography", *Progress in Human Geography*, 1998.

⁵² Joseph R. Stauffer, "Sino-Indian Border Dispute-1962", *Naval War College Review*, no. 9 (1967): 81-117.

⁵³ Mihir Bhonsale, "Understanding Sino-Indian Border Issues: An Analysis of Incidents Reported in the Indian Media", *ORF Occasional Paper*, February 2018.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

and India, though majority of the scholars agreed on it to be 3,380 km.⁵⁵ India claims that it shares over 4000 km land border with China while the latter believes it to be 2000 km only. However, the disputed land area of India-China border can be divided into three sectors, viz. Western, Middle and Eastern. The border dispute comprises areas in the Western Sector (proximate parts of Ladakh and Tibet, and a segment of Chinese autonomous region of Xinjiang), the Middle sector (part of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, with Tibet) and the Eastern sector (vicinity of Arunachal Pradesh with Tibet).⁵⁶

A total of 30 incidents along the India-China border were reported in the Indian leading newspapers from 2000 to 2018 but interestingly, none of those were major disputed incidents.⁵⁷ Among the 30 incidents, 19 took place in the Western region, 8 incidents took place in the Eastern region and only 3 in Middle region.⁵⁸ Most of the incidents reported in the Western Sector were on the disputed Ladakh-Tibet Autonomous Region boundary. The maximum number of incidents was reported in the Middle Sector. These were aerial incidents, which occurred over the state of Himachal Pradesh. In the Eastern Sector, incidents happened on the Arunachal Pradesh border and the other on Sikkim's. Among the 30 incidents, 24 were ground and only 6 were aerial incidents. The duration of

the incidents on the India-China border were of varied durations - they ranged from a few minutes to a maximum of three weeks.⁵⁹

Considering all the geo-political aspects scholars have estimated that India will barely allow any Chinese effort towards a China-led regional order in East Asia and vice versa. But it is also evident that they are not heading towards a strategic contest, which may strangle their bilateral ties. Again, both China and India have expressed their interests in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) initiative fronted by Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). This implies that both sides seem to be interested in participating in regional integration in East Asia. In recent years, the two countries have strengthened their cooperation in the context of the G20 and the BRICS, and other newly emerging multilateral institutions, in order to contend with Western powers for global influence and decision-making power.⁶⁰ Also, they both hold similar views on global policy responses on issues such as climate change, international trade and finance, and non-intervention in the domestic affairs of other countries.

India-Pakistan Border Dispute

Recently, India's central government has withdrawn the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, a disputed Muslim majority

⁵⁵ Hongzhou Zhang, Mingjiang Li, "Sino-Indian Border Dispute", *Institute for International Political Studies*, June 2013.

⁵⁶ Joe Thomas Karackattu, "India-China Border Dispute: A Historical Enquiry on the Political Selection of Boundary Lines", *Institute of South Asian Studies*, 21 August 2017.

⁵⁷ Mihir Bhonsale, *op.cit*

⁵⁸ *ibid*

⁵⁹ *ibid*

⁶⁰ Deep Pal, "India-China Relationship since 1988- Ensuring Economics Trumps Politics", *ProQuest LLC*, August 2014.

region administered by India.⁶¹ This made Pakistan to expel India's High Commissioner and suspend trade and commerce with India suddenly.⁶² Curfew was imposed, people protested and clashes took place. An environment of unrest prevailed, though this is nothing new in Kashmir, more particularly between India and Pakistan.⁶³

Unlike China-India dispute, Pakistan-India bilateral relationship is burdened with a number of disputed issues, which carry the baggage of history. Disputed national border is one of the irritants that has exaggerated the India-Pakistan conflict since their independence but there are other issues, for e.g. Siachen glacier dispute, Sir Creek and the Wullar Barrage or Tulbul Navigation project and also the differences in religions, ideologies and nationalistic sentiments.⁶⁴

Pakistan-India dispute has received enormous attention among the scholars since this hostility has caused economic backwardness and instability in South Asia.⁶⁵ Pakistan-India conflict has become

one of the worst protracted conflicts in the world, more particularly in this region.

Kashmir: The Root of Indo-Pakistan Border Dispute

India and Pakistan fought four times over territorial issues among which three are over Kashmir, though a number of hostile incidents were also found over other issues like water dispute, Siachen glacier dispute and Sir Creek dispute.^{66 67} After the partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947, Pashtuns, the local tribal militias, and irregular forces from North-West frontier province of Pakistan tried to take position in Srinagar, the capital of Jammu and Kashmir which had a Hindu Maharaja among the 565 princely states. An instrument of accession to India was signed and the Maharaja left Srinagar. He made a plea to India for assistance. Though Indian troops were deployed there but they could not adapt to the situation due to extreme cold weather and altitude.⁶⁸ However, Pakistan proceeded towards its own drive and India approached the United Nations (UN).⁶⁹ UN as an advisor demarcated the border line which is called the Line of Control (LOC) bringing a

⁶¹ "Modi's Kashmir surprise: India abruptly ends the last special protection enjoyed by Kashmir", 8 August 2019. Cited in <https://www.economist.com/asia/2019/08/08/india-abruptly-ends-the-last-special-protection-enjoyed-by-kashmir>. Accessed on 2 April 2020.

⁶² *ibid*

⁶³ "An area of darkness: In its struggle to subdue Kashmir, India is stripping it of liberties" Cited in https://www.economist.com/asia/2019/08/15/in-its-struggle-to-subdue-kashmir-india-is-stripping-it-of-liberties?utm_source=YouTube&utm_medium=Economist_Films&utm_campaign=Link_Description&utm_term=International_Politics_and_Current_Affairs&utm_content=Databite&linkId=100000007584850. Accessed on 20 April 2020.

⁶⁴ Mian T. Ashraf, "The Antecedents of Pakistan-India Conflict: Challenges and Prospects for Solutions", *ResearchGate*, 3 December 2018.

⁶⁵ *ibid*

⁶⁶ *ibid*

⁶⁷ "Whose map is it anyway: India-Pakistan Border Dispute" Cited in <https://www.mapsofindia.com/jammu-kashmir/india-pakistan-border-dispute.html>. Accessed on 14 April 2020.

⁶⁸ "A History of the Kashmir Conflict", 17 November 2009. Cited in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8rmUilW7kI>. Accessed on 13 April 2020.

⁶⁹ *ibid*

ceasefire in 1949 between Pakistan and India's border, but there was no final border. This international intervention allowed Pakistan to run its administration till Azad Kashmir⁷⁰ and Gilgit-Baltistan, on the other hand, India was allowed to extend its administrative rule over Kashmir valley, Jammu and Ladakh which constitutes two-thirds of the state. Nevertheless, Kashmir is still the bone of contention between these two countries because a complete border demarcation is yet to be achieved.

India and Pakistan fought for the second time over the boundary in 1965 immediately after the Operation Gibraltar conducted by Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir while India paid off with a full-scale military attack on the Western region of Pakistan.⁷¹ Though the war, widely known as Indo-Pakistani War of 1965, was fought for only two months, it costed thousands of lives and damages for both countries. However, this time they badly needed the intervention of USA and the then USSR, which forced them to withdraw their forces from the LOC in 1966.⁷² After many years, Pakistan and India confronted for the third time in 1999 in the Kargil district across the LOC. This confrontation raised panic of the threat of nuclear war among the international

community. However, Pakistan was pressurized to withdraw forces from the Kargil region.⁷³ Some diplomatic steps were taken among which Tashkent Agreement in 1966, the Simla Accord in 1972 and the Lahore Declaration in 1999 are worth mentioning, which aimed at sustaining peace and demilitarizing from the disputed regions.⁷⁴ All of these barely worked to lessen tension or build an environment of mutual trust and cooperation. The two countries continue to face problems regarding their bilateral relations, since these are rooted in history and are cause of uninterrupted distress.⁷⁵

Arab-Israeli Border Conflict

The flame of hatred and violence became the status-quo for Arab-Israeli border conflicts that none of the nations are willing to resolve over a peace talk. The decade long process of resolving the conflict only ignited several overlapping conflicts. Since 1947, with the partition plan, courses of invasion, transgression and illegal occupation among the Arab-Israeli countries twisted the relation into a never-ending conflict state. Since 2000, at least 10,002 Palestinians and 1,270 Israelis have been killed in factional wars.⁷⁶ Also, 99,968 Palestinians and 11,949 Israelis were injured till 2018.⁷⁷

⁷⁰ India calls this territory Occupied Kashmir, while Pakistan calls it Azad Kashmir, Azad means free/liberated.

⁷¹ "Whose map is it anyway: India-Pakistan Border Dispute" Cited in <https://www.mapsofindia.com/jammu-kashmir/india-pakistan-border-dispute.html>. Accessed on 14 April 2020.

⁷² "India and Pakistan Border Conflict" Cited in <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=776f6f2151e74c7cabc641fd3ab0802a>. Accessed on 15 April 2020.

⁷³ Ariel Rebele, *op.cit.*

⁷⁴ Mian T. Ashraf, "The Antecedents of Pakistan-India Conflict: Challenges and Prospects for Solutions", *ResearchGate*, 3 December 2018.

⁷⁵ Iram Khalid, *Pakistan India Conflicts: An Application of Crisis Decision Making* (Kolkata: Al Abbas International, 2013).

⁷⁶ Israel-Palestinian Timeline, 1 April 2020. Cited in <https://israelpalestinetimeline.org/charts/>. Accessed on 18 April 2020.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*

Historical Chronology of the Arab-Israeli Conflict

- Israeli War of Independence (1948) – Six nearby Arab nations Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia invaded Israel to keep Palestine unified. Israel won the war and emerged as an independent nation.
- Sinai War (1956) – Following the violation of Israeli-Egyptian armistice, military action erupted and backed up and planned by Britain and France. Israel invaded Egypt.
- Six Days War (1967) – Israel crushed the military forces of Egypt, Jordan and Syria and took two Palestinian territories, West Bank and Gaza under military occupation.
- Yom Kippur War (1973) – Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack on Israel on the eve of Jewish Yom Kippur holiday.
- Israeli invasion of Lebanon (1982-1984) – In response to the consecutive guerrilla attack from south Lebanon, Israel invaded to crack-down Yasser Arafat's force.
- First Intifada (1987-1993) – Series of Palestinian protests, violent riots took place against Israeli military occupations in the Palestinian territories.

- Second Intifada Uprising (2000) – It was the outburst of Palestinian frustration due to the failure of 1990 peace process. Palestinian militants deployed suicide bombing in Israeli buses and Israel responded with military crack-down that killed approximately 3200 Palestinians and 1100 Israelis.⁷⁸

Mexico-US Border Issues

From the very beginning a moving border exists between the United States and Mexico. In 1849, after the Mexican-American war, a line had been drawn but the border was never settled. This unsettled border line kindled several binational border crises; which ranged from illegal immigrants to drug trafficking, which the two countries handled through co-operation. In 1993, the Border Liaison Mechanism (BLM) was established in an attempt to resolve common border issues between the two nations. The United States and Mexico share a history of cooperation on environmental and natural resource issues, predominantly in the border area, where urbanization, industrialization, and rapid population growth caused environmental damages.

⁷⁸ "9 questions about the Israel-Palestine conflict you were too embarrassed to ask", 17 July 2014. Max Fisher. Cited in <https://www.vox.com/2014/7/17/5902177/9->

[questions-about-the-israel-palestine-conflict-you-were-too-embarrassed-to-ask](https://www.vox.com/2014/7/17/5902177/9-questions-about-the-israel-palestine-conflict-you-were-too-embarrassed-to-ask). Accessed on 18 April 2020.

Image 1: Mexico-United States Border



Source: BBC⁷⁹

Major Issues in the Mexico-United States Border

Drug Enforcement

The need for controlling the infiltration of illicit narcotic rackets from Mexico into United States has major implication for the Mexico-United States border settlement. The cross-border drug trading causes federal strife including corrupted law-enforcement officials, violence and money-laundering. The two countries consider drug trafficking as a threat to their national security. To fight against transnational drug trafficking, both countries have agreed to form a binational counter-narcotic strategy.⁸⁰ Currently Mexico is used as a transit route for most of the drug consignments of Cocaine, Heroin and foreign-produced Marijuana that is consumed in the United States. According to the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA),

nationwide around 7,979 kg heroin was seized in 2017, 39 % of which was seized at the Mexico-United States border.⁸¹ San Diego corridor is ranking high at the border seizures of narcotics, which is approximately 1,073kg in 2017, a 59 % increase from the previous year.

Illegal Immigration

Each year hundreds of thousands of people enter into the United States illegally using the Mexico-United States border. Employment opportunities in the United States is a major reason for such migration. Illegal immigrants are likely to increase the number of illegal activities and criminal offenses. The United States Immigration and Naturalization Service detained 1.5 million illegal immigrants on the southwest border in fiscal year 1998.⁸²

⁷⁹ "Trump Wall- all you need to know about US border in seven charts", 27 September 2019. Cited in <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-46824649>. Accessed on 19 April 2020.

⁸⁰ "US-Mexico Border: Issues and Challenges Confronting the United States and Mexico", 1 July 1999. Cited in <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO/NSIAD-99-190>. Accessed on 19 April 2020.

⁸¹ Lucy Rodgers and Dominic Bailey. *op.cit.*

⁸² "US-Mexico Border: Issues and Challenges Confronting the United States and Mexico", 1 July 1999. Cited in <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO/NSIAD-99-190>. Accessed on 19 April 2020.

In the fiscal year 2019, the United States authority detained more than 800,000 people for illegal trespassing on the southern United States border.⁸³ The volume of illegal immigrants in May 2019 outnumbered all previous records. Around 133,000 people were apprehended for undocumented immigration, which is the highest in thirteen years.⁸⁴ Another dimension of the increasing numbers of illegal immigrants in the United States are the “visa

overstayers” who were 660,000 in numbers in 2018.⁸⁵ Besides, tension regarding migration is noticeable in the United States-Mexico border over people seeking for asylum and applying for refugee status in the United States are instructed to wait across Mexico border for adjudication. In November 2018, around 7,000 migrants arrived at the United States-Mexico border claiming to be fleeing violence in countries like Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador.⁸⁶

⁸³ Lucy Rodgers and Dominic Bailey. *op.cit.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid*

⁸⁵ *Ibid*

⁸⁶ “Is there a crisis on the US-Mexico border?”, 11 July 2019. Cited in <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-44319094>. Accessed on 19 April 2020.



Interview:
Ishfaq Ilahi Choudhury Air Cdre (Retd.)

What are the key border issues Bangladesh is facing right now?

- Smuggling of consumer goods, cattle, drugs, country-made small arms
- Trespassing of border by individuals living along the border
- Human trafficking by organized gangs

How do you describe the rising trend of killings in Bangladesh-India border?

Since the BJP Government has come to power, it has taken very stern measures against all border incursions, especially in case of cattle smuggling. In fact, despite their declared policy of non-use of lethal weapons to curb border crossing, it appears that the BSF of India had been frequently using firearms, often on flimsy ground and killing Bangladeshi nationals. In a number of cases, the incident happened inside Bangladesh territory. Although most incidents happened in connection with cattle smuggling, the use of violent force against unarmed populace can never be condoned.

Why and how did this trend increase in recent months?

As I said earlier, this is the outcome of BJP's avowed policy of intolerance of all forms of illegal border crossing. They fail to understand the ground realities of border in Bengal and Assam, which zigzags through densely populated areas that had been connected for millennia. The government is paranoid about the influx of Bengali Muslims into India and has, therefore, nodded approval to their border forces to use undue force on anyone seen crossing the border.

Who are the main victims of border shootings by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF)?

The victims are always the poor, unemployed youths living along the borderlines, who are used as courier by powerful elites on both sides of the border. The smuggling ring extends from deep inside India to right in the Bangladesh capital. It is common knowledge that the smuggling goes on with the understanding of police, customs, border guards and

local representatives on both sides of the border. Violence happens only when the entente breaks down due to some reason.

What types of trafficking (goods, drugs, human, arms, etc.) are predominant in the Bangladesh-India and Bangladesh-Myanmar border?

The items are more or less the same. It all depends on profit margin. There used to be Phensydil trade along Bangladesh-India border, but that has been overtaken by Yaba trade along Myanmar-Bangladesh border. Cattle trade along Bangladesh-India border peaks during Edi-ul-Azha when domestic demand in Bangladesh increases. However, because of their growth of local cattle industry, in recent years, the smuggling is comparatively less.

How do you address the rising number of border trespassing from India to Bangladesh?

I do not know the exact statistics. However, if the trend is rising, it could be because of Indian Govt's promulgation of NRC and other suppressive measures against migrant populations. Our BGB has to be vigilant and take all necessary measures to protect the border.

How do you address the occasional land mine blasts in the Bangladesh-Myanmar border?

There have not been too many incidents of this nature. However, Bangladesh must take it up with the Myanmar government because this is a clear violation of International Law on the use of Land Mines. But I understand that Myanmar is not a signatory to this convention so that they might ignore such incidents. However, we, from our side, have to ensure that no Bangladeshi citizen illegally cross the border.

How do you evaluate the overall situation of the Bangladesh-India and Bangladesh-Myanmar border?

India-Bangladesh border has largely remained peaceful. Except for the border killings (which are connected with smuggling), there has been no other incident. In fact, hundreds of thousands of people are crossing through the border check-points every day. More visas are issued by the two governments than ever before. Border trade is booming; the land ports' earning is going up each year. Border Haats are doing better than before. On Myanmar-Bangladesh border, Rohingya issue is a serious problem. Despite this issue, however, the border trade between the two countries is increasing. A solution of Rohingya issue

would have eased the tension, and both countries could have increased their trade and commerce manifold.

How can Bangladesh reduce the number of border casualties?

Bangladesh must take strict measures to curb smuggling, especially cattle smuggling. This is a difficult task because of the vested interest on both sides of the border, who are beneficiary to the illegal trade. If we see the spots of border killing, we shall see they are all on the western border along a few routes that are notorious for cattle smuggling. Cattle smuggling not only encourages a chain of smugglers inside the country, it badly damages domestic cattle industry. So, the Government has to take

the lead here and enforce strict border management.

What role is the National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh playing in addressing the atrocities in the Bangladesh-India and Bangladesh-Myanmar border?

I doubt if NHRC could play any role in this issue except listing the incidents and informing the government. The Govt must take the lead. Domestically, Govt. needs to enforce proper border management and externally it needs to continue to impress upon India not to use violent force against trespasser, if any and to continue to negotiate with Myanmar on the need to solve the Rohingya issue for the mutual benefit of both the countries.

Border Issue: Selected Micronarratives*

“I live with my family in a village near the Indian border. The border, which I saw in my childhood and what I see now is completely different. It has gone through drastic changes following a number of border killings. We used to make fun, saying that our border relation is as friendly as the number of border killings. How friendly our border relations are with India? Count the ruthless torture and number of people killed by the Indian Border Security Force. In 2009 I was a class ten student, although many years have passed by, I can still recall a border killing incident. Drug peddlers used a ten years old boy from a nearby village of ours’ to carry illegal drugs, without his knowledge that the parcel had drugs in it. The BSF members shot the drug peddlers during their interaction. As a result, the boy died after being shot while other drug peddlers managed to flee.”

Mamun Reza, student, University of Dhaka.

“In border areas, especially in Teknaf upazila, drug business is not illegal for the people who are involved in it. If one can consider selling potatoes, rice, fish, as a business then why not drugs? Rather they believe this business is absolutely legal in order to maintain their family.”

Mashiat Jafrin Heea, student, University of Dhaka.

“The main reason behind killings and violence in Bangladesh-Myanmar border is refugee and unregulated human influx from Myanmar and vice versa. I cannot confirm the number of killings by the Myanmar military of the Bangladeshi citizens but recently there had been a death of a young man near the zero point in Ghumdhum border in Bandarban. The man was killed in a landmine blast in late 2019. This is one of the strategies of the Myanmar border police who planted landmines in the areas near the border which is covered with dense forest. If anyone goes near the area, s/he is likely to face the contorted death with landmines explosion.”

Chow Mong Marma, student, University of Dhaka.

*Note: These micronarratives are collected by Sharin Fatema, Tasnuba Tazrin Shaon, Afnan Nur Bhuiyan, Hazera Khanam from March 15th to March 25th, 2020.

“I am from Feni. I am well aware of the border situation, but violence albeit killing is not a regular feature in the border near our area. Recently BGB detained a number of locals and Indian citizens for illegally crossing the border and arrested a few drug peddlers. BSF also regularly detains Bangladeshi citizens, who live near the border for alleged trespassing. Sometimes BSF members cross the border and detain locals near the border pillar.”

Ayesha Akhter Nabila, Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies, University of Dhaka

“My family is from Thakurgaon near the border. I think the violence is still there in the border but the killing has gone down compared to the last year. BSF’s involvement in illegal trading and demanding commission from the traders is not unknown to the people who live near the border areas. Such illicit activities are yet to be addressed. The *Khatal* system and other illegal activities regarding cattle trading have created a network of cattle smugglers along the border areas.

Humaira Tasnim Moon, student, Bangladesh University of Professionals

“I was born in a Tripura refugee camp in the nineties. My family returned to Bangladesh after five years. As a child I did not see any barbed wire fence on the border. There was no problem in this area. In Khagrachhari, where the Feni river divides Bangladesh and India’s border, people know each other. Generally, the people cross the border to visit their relatives in Tripura and Mizoram for one-two days. They take permission from the BGB or BSF. At times, people living in border areas on Bangladesh side supply groceries to the other side. In the high mountains of Tripura, there is a shortage of these goods. From India, gold and silver ornaments and cosmetics are brought in because these goods are usually cheaper over there.”

Sagar Chakma, student, Khagrachhari

“I have been working in Cox's Bazar for the past six months. I have seen mainly drugs, robbery and human trafficking-related crimes over here. The border between Myanmar and Bangladesh is a long zigzag line connected by river, mountain, forest and sea areas; so, it is very difficult to guard the border. Nearly all the Yaba tablets in Bangladesh are trafficked from Myanmar. Drug and human traffickers on both sides are involved in these activities. Many Myanmar nationals involved in trafficking have been caught in the Bangladesh border areas. However, now the rate of human trafficking has come down. Rohingyas are also involved in drug smuggling. Generally, the second or third generation of the Rohingyas get involved in drug smuggling. Since they have been here for a long time, they know the trafficking routes very well.”

Anonymous, Member of Police, Cox's Bazar

“In Satkhira, we have a 271 kilometer shared border with India. Smuggling has been common in this area, since the partition of 1947. Usually, women and sometimes, cow's skin are trafficked to India from Bangladesh. We have a border point named Kolaroya, which is known for trafficking of girls and women. On the other hand, sarees, three-pieces, Kitkat chocolate, crockeries and medicines are smuggled into Bangladesh from India. In addition, the medicines that are not manufactured or even are banned in our country are smuggled from India. Also, Phensedyl, Indian liquor and other banned drugs are smuggled from India.”

**Asadullah Al-Galib, Satkhira, Former student of Law Faculty,
University of Dhaka**

Annex:

Some definitional clarification according to BPO Codebook.

Gunfight. Shootout opposing the police or security forces to criminals, militants or other irregular forces that do not match the definition of a non-state armed group.

Clash. Two-sided violence between groups, outside of the context of war or insurgency. *Example: supporters of rival political parties fight each other.*

Assault. One-sided violence by an individual or small group against another individual or small group. *Example: stabbing, shooting of someone by a perpetrator*

Fight. Two-sided violence between individuals or small groups. *Example: brawl between 3-4 people.*

Sexual assault. One-sided sexual violence, such as rape or attempted rape, by an individual or small group against another individual or small group.

Destruction of property. One-sided violence perpetrated with the intent of damaging property. *Examples: vandalism, arson.*

Mob violence (large group assault). One-sided violence by a mob or large group against an individual or a comparatively small and/or defenseless group. *Examples: lynching of a thief, looting of shops and houses owned by a religious minority.*



E-mail: cgs@du.ac.bd

Telephone: PABX 880-2-9661900, Ext. 4647



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