



CENTRE FOR
JOINT WARFARE
STUDIES

GL/24/25

GUARDING THE EASTERN FRONTIER: CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

BY

MR SANJIV KRISHAN SOOD, ADG (RETD), BSF

ORGANISED BY CENJOWS
17 JULY 2025

GUARDING THE EASTERN FRONTIER: CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES ON
INDIA–BANGLADESH BORDER MANAGEMENT
BY MR SANJIV KRISHAN SOOD, ADG (RETD), BSF
ORGANISED BY CENJOWS ON 17 JULY, 2025

The India–Bangladesh border, extending over 4,096 kilometres, constitutes the longest international land boundary shared by India. Its diverse geography—ranging from riverine tracts and densely populated plains to forested and hilly terrain—presents significant challenges to border management. Seasonal variations, especially monsoonal floods, often alter river courses, impacting boundary alignments and complicating surveillance, infrastructure maintenance, and patrolling operations.

Geographical and Strategic Context

Effective management of this extensive and dynamic border requires a deep understanding of the terrain and associated logistical complexities. Variations in landscape necessitate tailored security solutions. Riverine sections, in particular, are vulnerable to encroachment and are difficult to monitor using conventional fencing methods. These areas demand specialized infrastructure and mobile surveillance platforms to maintain territorial integrity.

Cross-Border Threats and Security Challenges

The region continues to grapple with several cross-border threats, including illegal migration, smuggling of cattle, narcotics, and gold, and trafficking in arms and human beings. Such activities are often rooted in economic deprivation, but they are increasingly organized and facilitated by transnational criminal syndicates. These illicit networks not only undermine law enforcement efforts but also create vulnerabilities that can be exploited for subversive activities.

Despite a decline in large-scale militant movement due to sustained security operations, isolated incidents and the latent threat of infiltration persist. Porous stretches of the border remain susceptible to exploitation by extremist elements, necessitating continuous vigilance and intelligence-led operations.

Operational and Infrastructural Limitations

Substantial sections of the border remain unfenced due to natural barriers, historical land disputes (notably resolved through the 2015 Land Boundary Agreement), and difficult terrain. Even in areas where fencing exists, breaches can occur due to poor maintenance

or local complicity. The riverine and marshy zones demand innovative patrolling strategies, including the use of high-speed patrol boats and floating border outposts.

While technological tools such as thermal imagers, night vision devices, and unmanned aerial vehicles have enhanced surveillance capabilities, issues persist in terms of interoperability, integration, and real-time information flow. A robust command-and-control structure is essential to ensure that these tools are deployed effectively and efficiently across the operational landscape.

People-Centric Approach and Civil Engagement

Border security is not solely dependent on physical infrastructure or personnel deployment. Engagement with border communities plays a critical role in fostering a secure environment. Local residents, familiar with terrain and regional dynamics, often act as the first line of informal intelligence. Trust-building measures such as civic action programs, mobile medical units, and community infrastructure development help integrate these communities into the broader security framework.

Simultaneously, humanitarian considerations must guide enforcement efforts. In cases involving inadvertent crossings or vulnerable populations—including women and children—actions must align with legal safeguards and human rights standards, both domestic and international.

Policy Recommendations

An effective border management strategy must be multi-dimensional, incorporating the following components:

- Infrastructure modernization tailored to geographical realities.
- Deployment of advanced surveillance technologies with real-time integration.
- Enhanced coordination among defence, intelligence, and enforcement agencies.
- Sustained engagement with local populations through civic outreach and welfare initiatives.
- Continued collaboration with the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), including joint patrols and coordinated crime-prevention operations.

Such an approach ensures a balanced combination of hard security measures and soft-power engagement to address both immediate threats and long-term stability.

Conclusion

The India–Bangladesh border represents a dynamic and complex frontier shaped by geography, demography, security, and diplomacy. Effective management requires more than traditional defence mechanisms; it calls for integrated, adaptable strategies that incorporate technological innovation, inter-agency collaboration, and community participation. A holistic understanding of the region’s multifaceted challenges is essential for safeguarding national interests while promoting peace and cooperation across the border.