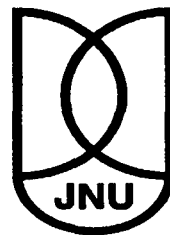


**FENCING INDIA'S BANGLADESH BORDER:  
PROGRESS AND PROSPECTS**

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University  
for award of the degree of*

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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**2011**



Date: 25<sup>th</sup> July, 2011

**DECLARATION**

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “**Fencing India’s Bangladesh Border: Progress and Prospects**”, submitted by me in partial fulfillment for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any degree of this university or any other university.

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**CERTIFICATE**

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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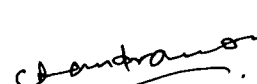
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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

ASSU	:	All Assam Student Union
BDR	:	Bangladesh Border Rifles
BRO	:	Border Roads Organization
BSF	:	Border Security Forces
CAG	:	Controller and Audit General of India
CPWD	:	Central Public Works Department
EE	:	Executive Engineer
MoHA	:	Ministry of Home Affairs
NPCC	:	National Projects Construction Corporation Limited
PWD	:	Public Work Department
KM	:	Kilometers
EPIL	:	Engineering Projects (India) Limited

## CHAPTER-1

### Introduction:

The concept of territoriality as it is understood today came into use no less than 300 years ago. History has it that the treaty of Pyrenees between France and Spanish was the first recorded treaty which fixed boundary based on the watershed principle (Kristof 1959:269). Boundary or borders are regarded as the framework of the nation states. Clearly demarcated boundaries have become crucial elements in an increasingly global state system since the seventeenth century. The significance of the borders derives from the importance of territoriality as an organizing principle of social life. Border refers to the legal lines separating different jurisdictions or to frontier area of variable width on either sides of this legal line or simply to a broad zone of transition between different societies and centre of powers. However, the functions and the meanings of the borders remain inherently ambiguous and contradictory with the claims of the emerging border less world (Anderson and O'Dowd 1998:594).

Over the period, borders are recognized as an important agent of state security and sovereignty and physical records of states past and present relations with its neighbors (Donnam and Wilson, 2001:9). It has three elements such as the legal borderline which simultaneously separates and joins states, the physical structure to deter and protect borderline, and other is people and institutions which often penetrate into the territory of state and frontiers and territorial zones within which people negotiate a variety of behaviors and meaning associated with the membership in the nation states. Borders are characterized with highly variable degrees of permeability or porosity, and the border regions are peripheries of infiltration, transition and separation, defence for the purity of the centre (Anderson and O'Dowd 1998:594-95). A border areas comparative standing with the region and institution in the neighboring state has crucial bearing on the nature and extend of its cross-border.

Therefore, an unequivocal definition of national borders is essential for any modern state because the global state system is based on the territorialization of state power

and on each state's striving to exercise exclusive sovereignty over a delineated, self enclosed geographical space. As borders forms a clear linkage between geography and politics, state's pursuit of territoriality, its strategy to exert complete authority and control over social life in its territory procures borders and make them into crucial makers of success and limitation of that strategy. Borders are reproduced by transnational reconfiguration. They play central role in regulating transnational flows and are in turn deeply influenced by them. As a result border merges with work on identity, citizenship and culture (van Schendel 2005:3).

Oscar Martinez has suggested four models to understand the importance, or its absence thereof, of the borders. They are alienated borderlands, coexistence borderlands, interdependence borderlands and integrated borderlands. In alienated borderlands, routine cross border infiltration do not take place because of the enmity between the bordering states. In coexistence borderlands interaction exist in spite of the enmity between the bordering states. In interdependence borderlands economic and social interaction are common across the border. In integrated border cross border movements are legally recognized. In case of South Asia all these four models exist. India Pakistan borders in Jammu Kashmir and Punjab belongs to the first model. To the second belong the India Pakistan border in Rajasthan and Sindh and the Indo-Myanmar border when the relations between the two states were not good. India and Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka and India and Bhutan where the cross border movements of people take place so also social and economic interactions though they are not officially sanctioned represents the third category. The Indo-Nepal border, which is legally and effectively open, belongs to the last category (Ghosh 2004:143-44).

Over the time border and boundary come into rapid transformation. The 1990s have witnessed a renewed interest in boundaries and frontiers within diverse academic fields. Territorial transformation at a global scale and the deinstitutionalization of territories in Eastern Europe and elsewhere raised the questions relating to boundaries and territorial identities (Newman and Paasi, 1998:186-87). The globalization and internationalization of the world economy has led to an inevitable reshaping of boundary functions of state. The most obvious change has been the shift from boundaries that are heavily protected and militarized to those that are more porous,



permitting cross-border social and economic interaction. Although, there is much truth in these claims, trends along the boundaries between developed and less developed countries suggest a more complex and paradoxical dynamic. The expansion of cross-border economic activity and the decline of geopolitical tensions are paralleled by a rapid expansion of border policing and rising tensions over prohibited cross-border flows. This is evident, most strikingly, along the United States-Mexico border and along the external borders of the European Union and other developed and developing nations. These borders are increasingly protected and monitored, not to deter armies or impose tariffs on trade, but to confront a perceived invasion of illegal immigrants, drug traffickers, and other clandestine transnational actors (Andreas, 1998-99:591) In an era, when states are relaxing controls over cross-border economic exchange and military challenges to borders are declining, many states are expanding their efforts to police prohibited cross-border flows. In other words, concerns over cross-border law evasions, not military invasions, are raising on the security agendas of many states. Setting up and policing frontiers involve a variety of fairly modern social practices-continuous barbed-wire fencing, passports, immigration laws, inspectors, currency controls, and so on (Jones, 2008).

The political sovereignty of post colonial South Asian states, as many scholars have observed, continues to be reliant upon a proactive territorialism, a territorialism of which visible control over borders is a crucial component (van Schendel 2005). The porous border is perceived as a security threat from migration perspective. Therefore how migration has perceived the security threat over the time and demand extraordinary measures to protect border need to be mention here. This can be understood from Copenhagen Schools of Security. The theory is briefly presented here.

The border control to deter migration has given rise to new security concern which justifies extraordinary measures (like the border fencing) towards even with relatively peaceful and good neighbor. When an issue is 'securitized', it becomes an importance political agenda, thereby justifying extraordinary policy responses. The threats to societal security, such as drugs or migration indicates an expansion of previously state-centered security agendas to encompass issues that may be seen as somehow jeopardizing certain notions of society or culture in particular national identity which have traditionally not been approached in this way (Ackleson 2005).

According to the Copenhagen School of Security theory, “the main threats to security come from competing identities and migration” (Buzan 1993: 43). Identity as a concept is also crucial to the study of security. In migration discourse identity of the host population is often used as an argumentation justifying securitization and hence extraordinary measures. When issue of identity ‘securitized’ their negotiability and flexibility are challenged, denied, or suppressed (Glebova 2009). A key concept born out of the Copenhagen School is that of ‘securitization’. In ‘securitization’ theory any issue can be constructed as a security issue through speech acts and when issue is successfully securitized then shifted from normal politics to emergency politics. An issue is securitized when audience accept it as such. Barry Buzan and Ole Waever - define securitization as

“The staging of existential issues in politics to lift them above politics. In security discourse, an issue is dramatized and presented as an issue of supreme priority; thus, by labeling it as security, an agent claims a need for and a right to treat it by extraordinary means” (Buzan et al 1998:26). ‘Security’ is thus a self-referential practice, because it is in this practice that the issue becomes a security issue – not necessarily because a real existential threat exists but because the issue is presented as such a threat (Buzan et al 1998: 24-26).

Copenhagen School presented that, the rhetorical structure of a securitizing act needs to contain three necessary building blocks: (a) existential threats to the survival of some kind of referent object that (b) require exceptional measures to protect the threatened referent object, which (c) justify and legitimize the breaking free of normal democratic procedures. Thus, through a securitizing act an actor try to elevate an issue from the realm of low politics (bounded by democratic rules and decision-making procedures) to the realm of high politics (characterized by urgency, priority and a matter of life and death) (Buzan et al, 1998: 21-26). So, according to the Buzen and Waever, “for a phenomena to be securitized the issue must be presented as an existential threat , requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedures”( ibid:23-24)

When an issue is presented as posing an existential threat to a designated referent object then the special nature of security threats justifies the use of extraordinary

measures to handle them. The existential threat can only be understood in relation to the particular character of the referent object in question. In the societal sector the referent object is large scale collective identities that can function independent of the state, such as nation and religion or migration. Security thus a self referential practice, because it is in the practice that the issue becomes security not necessarily because the real existential threats exists but because the issue is presented as such a threat (ibid 24).

Moreover, the relationship between migration and security is complex. It is based on the initial premise that migration presents a potential danger to security. Migration is not solely a phenomenon of the single individual. Instead, it can be best understood in the context of networks: family, friends, transnational human smuggling and these global economic structures which are considered as security threats (Ackleson 2005:165-184).

Weiner identifies five broad categories of migrants that may be perceived as a threat: 'as opponents of the home regime', 'as a political risk to the host country', 'as a threat to cultural identity', 'as a social or economic burden' and 'as hostages, risks for the sending country' (Weiner 1993: 10-18). ). Most of these frames are of a non-military nature and as such do not present existential threat to the concerned states, which can be taken to indicate acceptance of the broadened understanding of security. However, the question of how these perceived threats can be measured and assessed remains unsolved. Of particular relevance to this study is Weiner's category of 'threat to cultural identity', although other categories – especially that of 'economic burden' and 'political risk'. Cronin (2003) makes the connection between migration and terrorism saying that free movements across boundaries facilitating potential terrorist attacks. Migration is also linked with weapons smuggling, drug trafficking and other transnational criminal activities. So, in this way migration issue get securitized and demand extra ordinary measures (Glebova, 2009). The border fencing gets justified to check them.

## **Indo-Bangladesh Border: Historical Perspective**

To understand the Indo-Bangladesh border fencing in a better way, it is important to know about the history and problems associated with Indo-Bangladesh border. The Indo-Bangladesh Border (till 1971, it was part of Pakistan) is not clearly demarcated on the ground. It was an artificial creation by the British official. So, this border always remains as a problematic concern from borders management perspective. History has that the partition of India plan was actually translated by the Bengal Boundary Commission chaired by Sir Cyril Radcliffe. The commission was constituted on June 30, 1947 under section 3 of the Indian Independence Act, 1947. The commission was required to prepare a report and submit it to the Governor General of India before August 15, 1947. Radcliffe commission submitted its report on 12 August 1947. The border was created within six week times on the basis of Muslim and non Muslim majority areas which did not follow any ground reality of border demarcation principle.

As a result of partition, no less than 197 minuscule territories, or enclaves in the north Bengal were created. At that time 74 Pakistani enclaves were located within the territory of India, and 123 Indian ones within that of Pakistan. In brief, Boundary Commission's territorial surgery of Bengal resulted not in the simple bisection that is usually imagined but in the creation of no less than 201 territorial units (van Schendel 2005:43). However, over the time some enclaves were exchanged but majority were not. There are 52 Bangladeshi enclaves in Indian Territory and 111 Indian enclaves in Bangladesh exist even today (Mohammed 2005:5).

Any border demarcation principle says that border has to be demarcated on the physical ground. But the India-Bangladesh border did not give importance to this principle. As a result, border of about 1000 km, run crosscuts; dozens of rivers flowing from the surrounding mountains into the great Bengal delta. There are 54 rivers flowing into Bangladesh from India and Burma. A smaller number flow from Bangladesh territory to India and few weave in and out of the two territories (Nazem 1994:101-10). Study of the Bengal Boundary commission reveals that, it had omitted to specify their definition of the river border. Since none of the rivers had been demarcated before, so many border disputes between India and Pakistan, now

Bangladesh, focus on riverine border.

Although it was supposed that partition would resolve all territorial issues rationally, it turned out to be the edifice of complete rationality. The new boundary lines created political compulsions of their own, resulting in remorseless hunt for spatial claims (Benerjee, 1998:181). Therefore, India-Bangladesh have been unable to transform their border into a border of eternal peace and friendship as they pleaded in 1972. It is said that the relationship between modern states heavily depend on complete control of well defined territories. But in the contemporary Bangladesh border, territorial confusion resulted from unresolved Radcliffe issues miss this point (van Schendel 2005:70).

### **Problems in the Management of the Indo Bangladesh Border:**

The artificial creation of Indo-Bangladesh border brings many problems in its proper management. Some problems relating to the Indo-Bangladesh border management are discussed below.

#### **Topography:**

The Indo–Bangladesh border is 4,096.7 km long, covering the states of West Bengal (2,216.7 km), Assam (263 km), Meghalaya (443 km), Tripura (856 km), and Mizoram (318 km). It crosses 25 districts of these five states with a range of natural and cultural landscapes. The terrain along the border is a mix of hilly and jungle tracks, plains, riverside, and low-lying land.

There are 54 rivers running through this border. The riverside border along with multiple river channels makes surveillance of the entire stretch almost impossible. They could move their main channel unpredictably from year to year, taking way one bank and throwing up land on the other; creating char land<sup>1</sup>, which get inundated during floods. This natural process has always been the cause of population

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<sup>1</sup> Chars are sandy tracts of land which lie in the middle of the river or adjacent to it. These tracts are created in the form of both lateral point bars and medial bars, by a complex process of continuous erosion and accumulation of sand and other solid materials over a period of time. Sand bars created middle in the rivers is called island chars whereas those formatting adjacent to it are called attached chars.

movement. Though inhabited, these lands are weather-bound, and there is an inadequate presence of security forces. Most of the rivers constantly shift their courses inundating older land and uncovering new land masses. This creates problem of identification of the boundary line.

The Indo-Bangladesh border area is heavily populated, and the cultivation is carried out till the last inch of the border line. On the other hand, the ethnic composition of the people is similar on both sides of the border; therefore, it is quite difficult to differentiate between the citizens of India and Bangladesh. Moreover, traditional trans-border ethnic and socio-cultural ties continue even today. This factor has helped migrants from Bangladesh to crossover to India illegally as they find a welcoming population across the border (Das 2008:369)

#### **Undemarcated Boundary Issues:**

Undemarcated boundary issues are another area of concern regarding Indo-Bangladesh Border. Well demarcated border on the ground is necessary to avoid border conflict among states. But the India Bangladesh border lacks this feature on many places. For example, the border in the Berubari sector in the West Bengal at Daikhata Mouza- 56 Khupudia-Singhapara, about 1.5 km long has not yet demarcated due to the differences of opinion between the Governments of India and Bangladesh. Comila Sector, in Tripura, with an area of 6 km has the same problem. The Lathitilaa/Damabari area in Assam with 2.5 km length is also cause of concern as this area is under administrative control of Bangladesh while land revenue is being paid to the government of Assam. Though there had been various border agreements concluded between India and Pakistan and later with Bangladesh, since aftermath of the partition, they were unable to resolve these problems. India has 111 enclaves in Bangladesh (17,158.13 acres) and the latter has 51 enclaves (7,110.02 acres) inside India. That's why, undemarcated stretches, enclaves and adverse possession along the India-Bangladesh border have been causing constant friction between border guarding forces of India and Bangladesh. There are 2853.50 acres of Indian land under adverse possession of Bangladesh while 2154.50 acres of Bangladeshi land under adverse possession of India (Kamboj 2006, 23-27). Although a tacit understanding regarding the existence of de facto boundary exists along these adverse possessions and undemarcated stretches, tensions do flare up occasionally.

### **Illegal Migration:**

The porous nature of the Indo Bangladesh border brings the migration issues forefront in Indian politics. Bangladeshi migration has become the most important question regarding political identity debates in India (Samaddar 1999:44-45). Large scale immigration of Bangladeshi, particularly into the North-East India, has led to massive popular uprising. The tribal-outsider dichotomy has generated violence in Meghalaya, Tripura and Assam. The trend of illegal migration from Bangladesh into India has continued since independence. Political upheavals, religious persecutions, demographic pressures, environmental crises, and so on are some of the 'push' factors that have contributed to large-scale influx of Bangladeshis into India. The 'pull' factors that attract migrants from Bangladesh to India are availability of land and facilities like employment opportunities, medical care, education, and similar cultural landscapes (Das 2008:371). This issue will be dealt in detail while analyzing border fencing and migrations in the third chapter.

### **Insurgent Base in Bangladesh and Trans Border Crime:**

Insurgent base in Bangladesh and trans border crime is another area associated with Indo-Bangladesh border. There are complains that the extremists and the terrorist organizations are able to establish themselves firmly in Bangladesh from India's Northeast. Some reports reveal that due to the military operations against Indian insurgent groups by Myanmar in the early 1990's, Bangladesh emerged as their preferred destination. Presently, the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), the All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF), the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT), and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) along with other insurgent outfits from the Northeast have their bases in the Chittagong, Khagrachari, and Sylhet districts of Bangladesh. The forested tracks in Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram provide them ideal routes to sneak in and out of the Indian territory.

Another problem attached to the India Bangladesh border is that of the trans border crime. Smuggling of cattle, arms, and other essential items, human and narcotics trafficking, counterfeit currency, kidnapping, and thefts are visible along the India-Bangladesh border. While the river route helps cattle smuggling, items like sugar, salt, and diesel are carried through the land route.

### **Border Management:**

Border management is a mechanism to ensure that security of national borders, and to regulate legitimate movements on borders to meet the various needs of a nation by cultural, social economical, interaction which is performed through the borders. Border management denotes controlling the administrative affairs of borders including ensuring their sanctity. The most important players in the border management are people residing in the border areas. Without active participation of the border population it is virtually impossible in effective management of the border. Significance of the border management has gained after the end of the cold war. The trans border activities specially, illegal migration has compelled states around the world to strict implementation of the border management practice.

The exact nature of the cross border management depends upon the kind of political and economic relationship with neighbours and the religious and ethnic ties between the people across the border. If we see the world scenario, than find that the US-Canada border is open border. On the other hand incentive vigilance along the border of India-Pakistan, US-Mexico are going on because of infiltration or cross order terrorism (Singh 2003:67)

Border management concerns the administration of borders. Its precise meaning varies according to national context, but it usually concerns the rules, techniques and procedures, regulating activities and traffic across defined border areas or zones. Effective management of the border depends on various measures such as cooperation among states, institutional mechanism, surveillance, deployment of the military or border guards, with the resolution of the border conflict, or putting physical barriers like fencing or wall. Gerarld H Blake states that the objectives of border management strategy will be determined initially by national foreign policy objectives. The boundary may even be used as an instrument of foreign policy particularly if relations between the neighbors are poor.

### **Border Fencing: An Inquiry:**

The construction of a fortified wall across the border or frontiers goes back to the Roman Empire in 122 A.D.; emperor Hardrian ordered to build wall on the northern frontier. The purpose of the structure was not holding back an invading army; rather



its function was to control an imposed political boundary and to check smuggling and other illicit activities. The wall had fortified gate, watchtowers, and a deep ditch on both sides and occasional Roman legion garrisons (Ganster and Lorey 2005:1). We also witness the Great Wall of China which was the major defence system of ancient China and save country from the incursion from the nomadic groups from the north (ibid: 11). The Berlin Wall which was erected through the heart of the city of the Berlin by the government of the East Germany to prevent its citizens from fleeing to the west. So ,over the time countries around the world such as Botswana, Brazil, Brunei, Egypt, India, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Ireland, Kuwait, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, United States, and Uzbekistan etc. have initiated barbed wire fencing projects in order to prohibit cross border flows and terrorist activities (Jones, 2008).

So, nations around the world have experienced with physical barriers to restrict movement of terrorists, illegal migrant, cross border activities in order to discourage them. France experienced some success in the 1950's when it constructed a fence, complete with minefield, in Tunisia that separate members of Algerian Liberation Army operated in Algeria (Frisch 2007:6-7). In US, the US Border Patrol first began erecting physical barriers in 1990 to deter illegal entries and drug smuggling in its San Diego sector. The project first implemented in San Diego. As San Diego was considered the epicenter of illegal migration, it was the first sector to construct significant fencing from 1992. The fence formed the centerpiece of the US Border Patrol's Strategy of Prevention through deterrence. In response to the new threat to border security, Bush signed the Secure Fence Act in October 2006. The legislation authorized the construction of 700 hundred miles of double layered fencing in addition to cameras, ground radar and improved lightening along the US Mexico Border. The illegal Migration Reform and Immigration Act of 1996 authorized the construction of a secondary fence parallel to the primary fence (Browning 2008). In America it is the legally recognized problems and is dealt with accordingly. Israel has also built a fence surrounding the Gaza strip and is now in the process of building another separation barrier along the West Bank in an attempt to restrict the flow of terrorist from the occupied territories. The Gaza Fencing is repeatedly cited as a successful barrier to terrorism, a claim that was central to Israel's justification of

barrier (ibid). Since 2001, the United States has fenced 550 kilometers of its borders with Mexico with an additional 700 kilometers planned, and Israel has created a *de facto* border with its contentious 700 kilometers security barriers in the West Bank. These countries have done the extraordinary measures to deter the migration by erecting fencing as they have strong laws which allow doing so. In US migration is regarded as a national problem. Though US border fencing is the strongest in the world and has strong immigration act, it has been unable to check the migration completely. In India migration is not regarded as a national problem and there is no strong migration act. A strong law is required to deal with the migration. The Indo-Bangladesh border was created to deter migration but without any legislation or act. It was sanctioned without considering ground realities. So, the present study is initiated to study the Indo-Bangladesh Border fencing, its problem and prospects.

#### **Context of the Study:**

The Indo-Bangladesh border fencing is regarded as an instrument to check illegal migration from Bangladesh side. The reason of the border fencing is cited as same as that of US-Mexican border. Due to vibrant anti immigration movement, Indian government has sanctioned the fencing project to deter the migrants. Though the Indo-Bangladesh border fencing was sanctioned, there is no effective monitoring agency or laws compare to other countries who constructed border fencing, for example US. Indian government initiated fencing project in 1987 and planned to finish it in 2007 but could not finish till now. Therefore, question arises if it is so important to check illegal migration, why Indian government does not look into it seriously. It makes us think whether it works only as an image management of the people rather than part of border management. These questions need detailed analysis.

The India's Bangladesh border fencing project also deserves understanding from diplomatic perspectives. From the very beginning, Bangladesh has been opposing the idea of India's erecting a fence along the border, which they consider to be a defensive structure and according to them, it is a clear violation of the joint India-Bangladesh border guideline agreed in 1975(van Schendel 2005,238). The border guideline prohibits the defensive work of any nature within the 150 meters of the either sides. The Bangladesh Rifles has always raised serious objections to the fencing within 150 yards of the border. Bangladesh asserts that construction is infringing Bangladesh's

sovereignty, as the zero line belongs to both the countries. Bangladesh rejects the barbed wire fence as it was incompatible with the spirits of good neighborhood, cooperation, mutual understanding and friendly relation between the two countries. So, they urged India to refrain from constructing fence for the sake of good relations from the very beginning. It is also witnessed that border-related conflict has been an ever initiating issue since the fencing project. On the India-Bangladesh border, there are 265 disputed places over which both countries differ on the actual location of the boundaries. However, Indian authorities claim that barbed wire fence is being erected within the Indian territory. How these diplomatic puzzles have been dealt by Indian authority needs an inquiry.

There are many criticisms that fence could be easily crossed. An Assam Home Ministry survey covering a stretch of 100 kilometers of the border fencing spoke of rusty, brittle structure, and, the senior official admitted that portion of the fencing have gaping holes big enough for Patton tanks to pass. The Tripura border fencing also display the same situation. The Meghalaya Chief Minister, in 2003, said that whoever wished to cross the border could either simply become dependent on the mediation of the local bodyguards or custom officials, or cut the fence and cross over the fence less section. So, the fence has not served the purpose for what it was constructed. Whether these problems are taken seriously on the part of the fencing project deserves attention.

The fencing also created many problems regarding the survival of the displaced people. There are many places where boundary line runs through the middle of the village. In such a situation, how to build fence and how much it would be effective always remain a matter of contention. On the other hand, Indo-Bangladesh border is flood prone. Every year, floods submerge the area and destroy the fence. How to deal with these situations on the part of fencing project essentialize an academic study.

There are many villages or farm land in every state, which touch border with Bangladesh, namely West Bengal, Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya and Mizoram which fall over no man's land and have farm land there. This means, once the fence comes up, villagers living in this zone will find their movement restricted. Gates on the fence will be opened only twice or thrice a day. The fencing on the border had profound

impacts on livelihood of farmers, villagers. Therefore, it is essential to investigate the social implication of the fencing.

So, this study initiates to understand all these issues relating to India-Bangladesh border fence. The Indo-Bangladesh border fencing is much talked about but there are no sufficient academic literature available pertaining this specific subject. Although, Border management as a subject and India's relations with its neighbours although have been discussed by scholars, there are very few academic literature on this specific question of Indo-Bangladesh border fencing. Most of such information is available as news items, newspaper articles which are highly repetitive. Therefore, the dissertation will address this virtually unexplored subject. So the present study is initiated to deal with these problems. The following are the research questions and hypotheses of the study.

#### **Research Questions:**

- I. Is the fencing of India-Bangladesh border necessary?
- II. What are the financial and diplomatic implications of the project?
- III. What are the challenges faced in completing the project?
- IV. Will fence be able to check illegal migration from Bangladesh?
- V. What are the human consequences of the fencing?

#### **Hypotheses of the Study:**

- I. The fencing of India's Bangladesh border has reduced the flow of illegal migration from Bangladesh.
- II. The fencing has complicated the relation between India and Bangladesh.

#### **Methodology:**

The methodology adopted is both qualitative and quantitative, and the research design is analytical and empirical. The study covers the Indo-Bangladesh border fence on the five border states of India, namely, West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura. The work is based on both primary and secondary sources. Field visits to Assam, particularly, Dhubri district which share international border with Bangladesh, talking to the people and observation of the area are the primary sources apart from

census reports and Annual Report of Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. Content analysis of the newspaper, articles, journals, books, and analysis of data on websites in different sources were the secondary sources of the study.

With regard to chapterization utmost care has been taken to discuss all the objectives of the research work as mooted in the introduction itself, in detail; so that hypothesis could be experimented and reviewed elaborately. Hence all chapters are designed in such way so as to discuss the above objectives and hypotheses of the present work.

### **Chapter 1. Introduction:**

The introduction of the study has discussed the border and related problems. The Indo Bangladesh border and related problems have been dealt with. In this chapter it is also discussed how the issue of migration is securitized and demand extraordinary measures by using the Copenhagen approach of the security. Briefly the border management issue and the world experience on fence have been explained briefly. The objectives and hypotheses of the study have also been presented in the chapter. Moreover, outline of the study has provided in this chapter.

### **Chapter 2. Indo-Bangladesh Border Fence-Plan and Progress:**

This Chapter investigates the planning and progress of Indo-Bangladesh border fencing. This chapter also investigates the problems relating to the construction of the border fencing and related issue.

### **Chapter 3. Issues and Concerns:**

This chapter will be a detailed discussion on the issues and concerns regarding the border fencing. The various issues related to the border fence such as migration, diplomatic relations, and social and financial implications will be analyzed.

### **Chapter 4. Conclusion:**

The concluding chapter will be a summary of the findings of the study.

Therefore the prime concern of this research work has been to analyze border fencing from different dimensions and to evaluate it.

## CHAPTER-2

### **Indo-Bangladesh Border Fencing: Plan and progress**

The idea of protecting the border with a fence goes back to partition of British India. Soon after partition, short stretches of border, especially near custom posts, for example in Hilli, a border crossing in Dinajpur/West Dinajpur, a fence was put up by Pakistan in 1955 with a view to preventing free movement of smugglers. However, both Indian and Pakistani residents of the area protested against the move (van Schendel 2005:212-236). Later regional politicians of Assam for the first time proposed for erecting fence along entire borders so as to isolate the population from the East Pakistan, in the early 1960's. The first suggestion of a complete sealing of the border appeared in 1964 (Kar 1997:120). In March, 1964, Assam Congress Parliamentary Party submitted a memorandum to the Home Minister of India, Gujrati Lal Nanda regarding infiltration from East Pakistan to Assam and made following points and demanded for border fencing.

- I. Large scale Pakistani infiltration and its continuance had posed a serious threat to the law and order situation and a grave danger to the security of the state. The party therefore, demanded the detections and expeditious deportation of unauthorized Pakistani infiltrators.
- II. Large scale espionage and a network of spy rings had been operating in the state. The party did not believe that the intelligence branch of the state police department could cope with the huge task and so it should be considerably strengthened.
- III. Strengthen police with additional police equipment and requirement.
- IV. Complete sealing of India Pakistan border.
- V. Clearance of an area in insufficient depth along the border to control Pakistani infiltration.

It was the Assam Congress Parliamentary Party that advocated clearing an area along the border to control Pakistani infiltration which was taken up by the Government of India, but not acted upon. Till the 1960s, the political class in Assam could not push

Delhi beyond sanctioning 180 additional police watch posts on Assam East Pakistan border and erecting barbed wire fence in selected places. In 1964, Government of India formulated a four-point plan that included clearing a half mile belt along the border in the Assam sector and constructing 300 miles of border roads to facilitate movement of the security forces. However, the plan was not implemented (Kar 1997: 120-21). The then Chief Minister of Assam, Bimala Prasad Chaliha, wanted to increase the number of border outposts, greater communication facilities for mobility of the BSF and a better intelligence gathering system in order to check illegal migration and their apprehension. In the meantime, a Muslim member in the legislative assembly from the Dhubri was of the view that lack of clear cut boundary is the main impediment for immigration policy (Kar 1997:121).

Though, from the time of partition, the issue of migration was a dominant issue in the politics of Assam, but in the later stage, it is considered as a systematic invasion and perceived that because of migration, Assamese were losing their identity. Therefore, a large scale movement against the illegal migration started in Assam in the late 1970's known as Assam Movement<sup>1</sup>. Initially the movement was peaceful but in later stage it became violent in nature. The movement was led by student organisation called All Assam Student Union (AASU). The ASSU held the view that the original people of Assam were being marginalized by the relentless flow of illegal migrants from Bangladesh. They said that the migrants are largely Muslim and their presence in Assam is threatening to overwhelm the local ethnic groups and over the time they will take political economic and social power out of the Assamese. "Save Assam to save India" was a rallying cry of the movement. The movement was one of the greatest awakenings of regional identity in the history of India, threatening the tenuous balance between federal and regional authority (Hazarika 2000:64). During the period (between 1979 to 1985), ethnic and religious riots, demonstration and general civil disorder resulted in as many as 5000 deaths and dislocation of one million people. The two large massacres of migrant Muslims in Nellie and Chalkhowas Chapori gave the anti migration forces increasingly xenophobic tenor.

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1 Assam movement started in 1979 and it became violent in the later stage. The movement was led by All Assam Student Union and supported by almost all the people of Assam. The velocity of the movement was high in Brahmaputra valley. It lasted for long six years and came to end in 1985, 15 August, after Memorandum of Understanding signed between Government of India and ASSU

The massacre was a critical movement in Assam demonstrating anti migration sentiment (Sadiq 2010:147-48).The six year long movement came to an end with the signing of the Assam accord between the Government of India led by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in Delhi and regional anti migration group led by Prafulla Kumar Mahanta of ASSU. There were various demands of the movement and among them detection, deportation of migrants and sealing of the border with fence were prominent. The clause 9.1 and 9.2 of the Assam accord solely pleaded-

The international border shall be made secure against the future infiltration by erection of physical barriers like barbed wire fencing and other obstacles at appropriate places. Patrolling by security forces on land and riverine routes all along the international border shall be set up. Besides the arrangements mentioned above and keeping in view security considerations, a road all along the international border shall be constructed so as to facilitate patrolling by the security forces. Land between border and roads would be kept free from human habitation, where possible.

It is, therefore, due to the Assam movement, the Government of India took the infiltration issue seriously and proposed the border fencing along India Bangladesh border.

The question of the border fencing was brought up for detailed discussion in the Indian parliament during 1984. Regarding Indo-Bangladesh border fencing, the then Ministry of State of Home Affairs, P Venkatasubbaiah, in response, told in Rajya Sabha on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March, 1984 that a technical committee had appointed to recommend the type and manner of the wire fence constructed, and government would sanction the construction of the barbed wire fence after a detailed reconnaissance survey for identifying the area and all alignments. The minister said that proposed fencing initially would recommend for the 200 kilometres of the area covering 100 km each in Dhubri (Assam) and West Dinajpur in West Bengal (Bhasin 1996:827-28)

The scheme was drafted by a committee of expert drawn from the Union Home Ministry, the BSF, the BRO, the army and the Central Public Work Department. According to the draft utmost layer will be the strongest, made of the thickest and tightly knit wire, 2.6 meters high and with a goose neck to make it more difficult for people to jump over. The tip of the goose neck will coincide with the borderline. The two successive layers will be 1.2 meters away and 1.5 meters high. To make the



cordon even stronger, the gap between the three layers will be filled up with strong one meter high rolls of thick barbed wire, called concertina in military parlance. The fence was not following uniform configuration all along. In regions prone to water logging and flooding, there will be only one layer of the fencing. In areas that remain under 10 feet of flood waters, the height of the fencing will be 16 to 17 feet. These were the suggestions of the expert groups regarding the border fencing (Times of India 12 November, 1984).

It is worth mentioning that proposal for the border fencing was moved in 1983. Since then, Bangladesh started opposing it. The very initiative of the government of India's proposal to erect fence had questioned on November 20, 1983, when the Bangladesh Government came to know about the proposal through the press. The spokesperson of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Bangladesh on the question of the barbed wire fencing on the India Bangladesh border, said that Bangladesh Government expressed concern at the Indian decision to erect the barbed wire fencing without even consulting a friendly neighbor country. Bangladesh rejected the proposal by saying that it is not in the spirit of the good neighborhood. General Ershad said that it would strain the relation between the two countries (Bhasin 1996: 824).

Bangladesh had lodged a strong protest with the Government of India when India initiated a survey work in Bhurungamari for the border fencing. According to Bangladesh the proposed border fencing was the deliberate violation of the Indo-Bangladesh Border Agreement by the Indian side in Bhurungamari area under Kurigram District. The acting Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka was summoned to the foreign ministry on April 2, 1984 and it was pointed out that the action was a flagrant violation of the border guideline between the two countries which prohibits defensive work of any nature within 150 yards on either side (Bhasin 1996: 831). They urged to refrain from erecting any structure in the interest of friendly bilateral relations between the two countries. According to the Ground rules established between the two states, no permanent posts or defence works of any nature can be constructed within 150 yards of the borders<sup>2</sup>. The ground rules stipulated (Bhasin 2003):

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2 The Ground Rules formulated by the Military Sub-Committee of India and Pakistan Delegations on 20 October 1959. However, this Ground Rules were confirmed in the Joint India-Bangladesh Agreement for Border Authorities for Two Countries in 1975. This Joint Border Agreement stressed the same provision of 1959 Ground Rules (Bhasin 2003:1902-1907)).

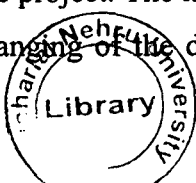
After an identifiable boundary line where real or working has been demarcated, neither side will have any permanent or temporary border security forces or any other armed personnel within 150 yards on either sides of this line. Also no permanent posts will be constructed till the final demarcation has been done... if defensive works of any nature including trenches exist in the stretch of 300 yards (150 yards on either side of the working boundary they must be destroyed or filled up.

Despite the issue of Ground Rule and protest from Bangladesh, official instructions were issued on 24 March, 1984 to the CPWD unit at Guwahati to take up construction work of fencing immediately of one km on experimental basis at the tri-junction of Assam, Bangladesh and West Bengal at the Rai Kuti Village in the Dhubri district of Assam. As the CPWD started the survey work on 27 March, 1984 near the boundary pillar 1001, on the Indian Territory, Bangladesh Rifles Personnel were came and started shouting slogans against the Indian initiatives. Some of them pulled down bamboo poles fixed by the PWD on the Indian Territory to mark the alignment for the fence. However, the CPWD erected 2 test pillars for fencing on 5 April, 1984. At the same time, the strength of the Bangladesh rifles post at Behalguri was raised to check the India move of border fencing. In another word, in the initial stage BDR tried to disrupt the process (Bhasin 1996: 846-47).

Though the process of border fencing started from the late 1983, the Government of India sanctioned the project of Indo-Bangladesh Border Fencing only in 1986. The Project was sanctioned in two phases: Phase I (1987-1999) and Phase II (2000-2007). The project was expected to finish by 2007(MoHA, 2005-06). But, in reality, the picture is different. The second phase work is still going on and yet to finish the work of 3438 km fencing proposed as per project. The third phase of fencing work initiated in 2006 at the cost of 850 crore rupees. This is due to damage of the fence constructed under Phase-I. The India Bangladesh border is the longest border of 4096 km running through five states namely Assam, West Bengal, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. However, the whole area cannot be fenced because of difficult terrain conditions. As a result, vast area would remain open despite border fencing. The various construction companies were entrusted in the task to finish the project. These are as such Central Public Works Department (CPWD), Border Roads Organization (BRO), National Building Construction Corporation (NBCC), Tripura Public Works Department (PWD), Assam Public Work Department (PWD), Engineering Projects (India)

Limited (EPIL) and National Projects Construction Corporation Limited (NPCC) .The entire project was expected to be completed by 2006-07 except Mizoram according to the government sources (MoHA, Annual Report, 2005-06:37). Government of India, in January 2004, also created the Department of Border Management within the Ministry of Home Affairs to coordinate the overseeing of the border areas and to facilitate the construction of the fence roads, and floodlights along the borders.

Officially the project was sanctioned in 1986. At the Phase I (1987-1999) government had planned to finish the fencing of 894 km on the three states namely Assam, West Bengal and Meghalaya. But, the actual work of the project began in 1989 and by the end of the October 1991, 207 km of roads and 37 km of fencing has been constructed in Assam at the cost of eight crore rupees approximately and 507 km has been identified in West Bengal for erecting the fencing. Earlier this 507 km of area was not considered necessary to fence (MoHA, Annual Report, 1991-92:13). Till 1991, fencing was constructed in Assam only. During the period of 1992-93, with expenditure to the tune of 97 crore rupees, 360 km roads and 77 km of fencing was completed. Here it should be mentioned that though the government has stated that by 1992-93, 77 km of fencing has been erected but it was not clear whether it was in Assam, West Bengal or in Meghalaya or in combine. The 1992-1993 Annual Report of the Ministry of the Human Affairs, mentioned that government would finish the construction of Phase-I by March 1998. During 1993-94, it was stated that fencing would finish by March 1996. But, by the end of January 1994, only 216 km fencing including 624 km of roads constructed by spending Rs. 264 crore. A further look at the Annual Report of the Ministry of Home Affairs, found that by February 1996, 578.37 km of the fencing has been completed at the cost of Rs.531.28 crore. By 28 February, 1998, 753.6 km of fencing and 2136.50 km of roads (including Bridges) had completed out of the approved target of the 2784 kilometers roads and 896 km fencing at the cost of Rs 709.45 crore (MoHA, Annual Report:1997-98). A detailed analysis of the annual report of MoHA makes it unclear as to how much of work was actually sanctioned by the government during the first phase. We found in some reports that it was 896 km of fencing while in other report that is 854 km and still some reports reveal it is about 857 km of fencing. This indicates government has no clarity and plans about the project. The lack of planning on the part of the government can be seen from the changing of the date of completion of the project. In 1994 it



stated that the phase-I work would finish by March 1996. Later it again mentioned it would finish by March 1998. But it was only in 2003 March that the proposed work of the Phase -I was completed.

A further analysis of the project in 1998-99 reveals progress as following

Table: 2:1

	Phase- I Sanctioned (length in km)	Completed (length in km)
<b>ASSAM</b>		
Border fencing	158	134.26
Border roads	192	119.09
<b>Meghalaya</b>		
Border fencing	231	198
Roads	208	211.29
<b>Tripura</b>		
Border fencing	-----	.....
Roads	514	414.38
<b>West Bengal</b>		
Border fence	505	458.38
Border roads	1770	1298.8
<b>Mizoram</b>		
Border roads	100	90.19
<b>Total</b>		
Fencing	894	776.64
Roads	2784	2133.75

Total sanctioned:

Roads: 2784km

Fencing: 894km

Source: Annual Report, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India 1998-99:24

From the above table, it is clear that that during the first phase 894 km of the border fencing was sanctioned. Out of this 776.64 km fencing has been constructed by 1998-99. The first phase of the work officially ended in 1999 with the completion of the following work. The progress of the work during 1999-2000 is as follows:

Table: 2:2

ASSAM	Approved	Finance (in Lakh)	Physical Achievement	Finance (in Lakh)
Roads(km)	186.32	4546	119.95	8164.94
Fencing(km)	152.31	2173	139.46	1713
bridge(meter)	4683	5468	3871.11	---
Meghalaya				
Roads(km)	211.29	4323	211.29	5566.42
Fencing(km)	198.06	2840	198.06	2830.3
bridge(meter)	1479.73	1475	1359.75	---
West Bengal				
Roads(km)	1770	37900	1425	39298.63
Fencing(km)	507	8366	482.44	8499.55
bridge(meter)	12562	14069	12384	---
Tripura				
Roads(km)	545.37	14877	423.65	2647.05
Fencing(km)	---	-----	-----	-----
bridge(meter)	1914.23	2757	1324.27	
Mizoram				
Roads(km)	153.4	3727	105.78	407613
Fencing(km)	-			
bridge(meter)	1078.64	1533	772.64	-
Total				
Roads(km)-	2866.38	65373	2285.67	463290.04
Fencing(km)-	857.37	13379	819.37	13042.85
Bridge(meter)-	21717.6	26128	19711.77	----

Source: Annual Report, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India 1999-2000:36

During the period of 1998-99, in Assam, fencing of 158 km along with 192 km roads was sanctioned (MoHA, Annual Report 1998-99). But, in 1990-2000, it was reduced to 152.31km and 186.32 respectively. This indicates that lack of proper planning or delay in on sanctioning money must have had the plan changed. Similarly, in Meghalaya, 231 km fencing was sanctioned 1998-99, but in 1999-02 it was reduced to 198 km. However, in West Bengal, the proposed fencing was increased from 505 to 507 km. It should be mentioned that 1999-02 was the target period for the completion of the project. Therefore, government must have seen that project would not be completed in 1999-02, so they reduced the target of coverage. It also points out that government was not clear or had no stock of ground reality of the border areas, or had no idea how much of the fencing would be constructed during the initial stage. As 1998-99 report specifies that 894 km fencing was sanctioned but later reports of the Ministry reveal the different pictures. In the 2005-06, report of MoHA, it was reported that in the phase-I, fencing was sanctioned for 854.354 km because only that portion was completed during the phase. Though the 1999-02 was the completion year of the project in that period only 819.96 km fencing, 2285.67 km road and 19711.77 meters bridges were constructed.

The second Phase of work was commenced from 2000 onwards. During this phase, the project was extended to Tripura and Mizoram too. Previously only border roads were constructed in these states. By 2002-03, 1502 km border area had been fenced including in Phase-I&II. Here it should mention that the actual work of first phase was completed only by 2003 instead of 1999 as initially.

Status of the border fencing till 31<sup>st</sup> March 2004

Table 2:3

State	Works	Sanctioned in Phase II	Completed as on 31/3/2004
West Bengal	Fencing (km)	1021	477.00
	Roads(km)	-----	-----
	Bridges(meters)		
Assam	Fencing (km)	71.50	4
	Roads(km)	77.50	24.48
	Bridges(meters)	300	-----
Meghalaya	Fencing (km)	201	26.48
	Roads(km)	204	17.65
	Bridges(meters)	2027	--
Tripura	Fencing (km)	736	140.60
	Roads(km)	269	-----
	Bridges(meters)	200	-----
Mizoram	Fencing (km)	400	---
	Roads(km)	246.50	21.39
	Bridges(meters)	1535	210.6
Total	Fencing(km)	2429.50	684.08
	Roads(km)	797.00	63.52
	Bridge(meter)	4062.00	201.60

Source: Annual Report, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India 2003-04:152

The above table presents the progress of the work till 2004 March. The table illustrates that 797 km road has been sanctioned for states- Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura and Mizoram. But, by March 2004, only 63.52 km was completed. In the second phase (till march 2004) West Bengal had constructed 447 km fencing out of sanctioned 1012 km, while Assam had put up 4 km out of 71 km and Meghalaya was

able to construct 26.48 km out of sanctioned 201 km and Tripura , 140.60 km out of 736 km. Though, in 2000-01, 400 km fencing was sanctioned for Mizoram, fencing was not constructed till 2004. So, out of sanctioned 2429.5 km fencing under Phase-II, only 648.08 km area fencing was put up by March 2004. During, this period government announced that the entire work would be completed by March, 2006.

Table: 2:4

Status of the fencing till January 2005

Name of the State	Phase-I completed(in km)	Phase-II Sanctioned(in km)	Completed (in km)
West Bengal	507	1021	545.27
Assam	149.294	71.5	4
Meghalaya	198.06	201	37.36
Tripura	-----	736	271.24
Mizoram	----	400	----
Total	854.354	2429.5	857.87

Source: Annual Report, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India 2004-2005.

The above table points out that out of sanctioned 2429.5 km of fencing, till January 2005, only 857 kilometer had been constructed. During 2003-04 periods, it was projected that the entire work would finish by 2006. The table informs that, in West Bengal, out of sanctioned 1021 km, only 545.27 km of fencing constructed till 2005, while in Assam, only four kilometers had finished out of the sanctioned 71.5 km in the second phase. Likewise, Meghalaya had erected 37.36 km, and Tripura, 201 km fencing out of sanctioned 201 km and 736 km respectively. In Mizoram, work was not started till January 2005.



Table: 2:5

## Status of the border fencing till January 2006

( Length in Kilometers)				
Name of the State	Border Length (in km)	Phase-I completed (in km)	Phase-II Sanctioned (in km)	Achievement (in km)
West Bengal	2216.7	507	1021	629.29
Assam	263	149.294	71.5	16.117
Meghalaya	443	198.06	201	99.67
Tripura	856	.....	736	505.498
Mizoram	318	.....	300	24.48
<b>Total</b>	<b>4096.7</b>	<b>854.354</b>	<b>2429.5</b>	<b>1275.415</b>

Source: Annual Report, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, 2005-06:160

Till 2006 January, 1275.415 km of the fencing had been constructed out of sanctioned 2429.5 km. During the period, it was decided to replace entire fencing constructed during the first phase of the project due to damage caused by adverse climatic condition. So the Government of India has decided to replace the entire 854 km. of fence constructed under Phase-I in West Bengal, Assam and Meghalaya (MoHA, Annual Report 2006-07:37).

Table: 2:6

Status of construction of fencing on Indo-Bangladesh border as on December 31, 2006.					
Name of the state	Length of border (in km)	Phase-I Completed (in km)	Phase-II sanctioned (in km)	Phase-II completed (in km)	Total in Phase I&II, completed (in km)
West Bengal	2216.7	507	1021	660.88	1167.88

Assam	263	149.29	71.5	40.68	189.97
Meghalaya	443	198.06	201	169.86	367.92
Tripura	856	---	736	650.21	650.21
Mizoram	318	---	400	79.82	79.82
Total	4096.7	854.35	2429.5	1601.45	2455.8

Source: Annual Report, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India 2006-07:146

From the above table it is clear to know that till December 31, 2006, 1601.45 km of fencing had constructed out of sanctioned 2429.5 km during the second phase. Overall 2455.8 km fencing has constructed. It should be mentioned that government had planned to complete entire work by 2007 which did not happened. During this period, government also installed 277 km of flood lighting along the border. So these show lack of planning with regard to the border fencing construction. It also reveals that the project was sanctioned without considering the ground reality.

Table: 2:7

Status of border Fencing on Indo-Bangladesh Border as on 31st December 2007					
Name of the state	Length of border (in km)	Completed Phase-I (in km)	Phase-II sanctioned (in km)	Phase-II completed (in km)	Total in Phase I&II completed (in km)
West Bengal	2216.7	507	1021..0	674.05	1181.05
Assam	263	149.29	71.5	51.45	200.71
Meghalaya	443	198.06	201	180.19	378.25
Tripura	856	-----	736	668.04	668.04
Mizoram	318	-----	400	107.75	107.05
Total	4096.7	854.35	2429.05	1681.45	2535.8

Source: Annual Report, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, 2007-08:145

The above table shows that by December 2007, 1681.45 km of fencing had been constructed under second phase. Overall a total 2535.80 km of fencing had been erected. Though 2535.80 km was erected in combination of phase-I&II, it should be remembered that the government has announced to replace the entire fencing constructed under Phase I i.e 854 km due to damage. In addition, 277 km. of floodlighting has been completed in West Bengal as a pilot project. During this period Government had decided to undertake floodlighting in 2,840 km. along the entire length of Indo-Bangladesh border, in the stretches where the fencing had been erected at estimated cost of Rs.1,327 crore. The floodlighting works are expected to complete by the year 2011-12 as per planned.

Table: 2:8

Status of border Road on Indo-Bangladesh Border as on 31st December 2007				
Name of the State	Phase-I Completed (in km)	Phase-II sanctioned (in km)	Phase-II Completed (in km)	Total Completed Phase I&II (in km)
West Bengal	1616.57	-----	-----	1616.57
Assam	176.5	77.5	61.7	238.2
Meghalaya	211.29	204	200.85	412.14
Tripura	480.51	269	210.14	640.65
Mizoram	153.06	245.5	139.98	293.04
Total	2637.93	797	612.67	3250.6

Source: Annual Report, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India 2007-08:145

The above table explains the progress of the border roads along the India Bangladesh border. During the second phase, border roads were not initiated in West Bengal. The report says that only 612.67 km roads had been constructed in last seven years. So, the progress is of work very slow in this respect.

Table: 2:9

Status of border fencing on Indo-Bangladesh Border as on 31st December 2008

Name of the state	Phase-I sanctioned (in km)	Fencing completed in Phase-I (in km)	phase-II sanctioned (in km)	Phase-II completed (in km)	Total in Phase I&II (in km) completed
West Bengal	507	507	1021	686.29	1193.29
Assam	152.31	149.29	77.72	70.09	219.38
Meghalaya	198.06	198.06	272.17	180.19	378.25
Tripura	-----	-----	855.97	708.67	708.67
Mizoram	-----	-----	352.33	105.15	105.15
Total	857.37	854.35	2579.19	1795.39	2649.74

Source: Annual Report, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India 2008-09: 26

2007 was the final year of the completion of the project as proposed by the government, but that had not happened. The Annual Report, Ministry of the Home Affairs stated that till December 2008, only 1795.39 km of the fencing was put up out of sanctioned 2579.19 km. In 2008-09, in Assam, border fencing extended to 77.5 km. Likewise, in Meghalaya, another 71 km fencing was sanctioned. In Tripura, fencing was sanctioned for 736 km previously but during 2008-09 periods, it was extended to entire 855.95 km area of border. It is interesting to note that till 2007-8, 400 km fencing was sanctioned in Mizoram, but in 2008-09, it was reduced to 352.33 km. It indicates that no proper survey was conducted before initiating the projects. Otherwise it would not have sanctioned 400 km till 2007-08. It should mention that Mizoram shares 318 km of border with Bangladesh. During this period, government again extended the time limit and decided to complete the work by end of March 2010.

The Status of the Border Roads during the Period of 2008-09

Table: 2:10

Status of border Road on Indo-Bangladesh Border as on 31st December 2008						
Name of the State	Phase-I sanctioned (in km)	Phase-I Completed (in km)	Phase-II sanctioned (in km)	Phase-II Completed (in km)	Phase I&II Sanctioned (in km)	Total Completed Phase I&II(in km)
West Bengal	1770	1616.57	-----	-----	1770	1616.57
Assam	186.33	176.5	168.7	74.56	325	238.2
Meghalaya	211.29	211.29	327	200.85	539.16	412.14
Tripura	545	480.51	564.12	252.45	1109.45	732.96
Mizoram	153.4	153.06	429.16	161.03	528.56	314.09
Total	2866.39	2637.93	1495.85	688.89	4326.24	3326.82

Source: Annual Report, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, 2008-09:26

During the periods of 2008-09, 76.4 km of the roads had been constructed. Out of 4326.24 km sanctioned under phase I and II, the table shows that only 3326.82 km road has been constructed by 2008-09. Almost 1000 km of roads remains to be constructed.

Table: 2:11

Status of Fencing on Indo-Bangladesh Border as on 2009-10

Name of the state	Phase-I sanctioned (in km)	Phase-I completed (in km)	Phase-II sanctioned (in km)	Phase-II completed (in km)	Total in Phase I&II (in km)
West Bengal	507	507	1021	712	1219
Assam	152.31	149.29	77.72	72.27	221.56

Meghalaya	198.06	198.06	272.17	182.00	380.06
Tripura	-----	-----	856	730.50	730.5
Mizoram	-----	-----	352.33	158.27	158.27
Total	857.37	854.35	2579.22	1855.04	2709.39

Source Annual Report, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India 2009-10:29-30

The Table 2.12 shows that out of sanctioned 2579.22 of fencing by 2009-10 only in 1855.04 km area of border, fencing was put up. Overall 2709.39 km border had been fenced, out of sanctioned 3436.59 km.

#### Border Roads in the 2009-10 periods

Table: 2:12

Name of the State	Phase-I sanctioned (in km)	Phase-I Completed (in km)	Phase-II sanctioned (in km)	Phase-II Completed (in km)	Phase I&II Sanctioned (in km)	Total Completed Phase I&II (in km)
West Bengal	1770.16	1616.57	0.00	0.00	1770.00	1616.57
Assam	186.33	176.50	138.70	74.56	325.03	251.06
Meghalaya	211.29	211.29	327.87	200.85	539.16	412.14
Tripura	545.37	480.51	564.12	255.95	1109.49	736.46
Mizoram	153.40	153.06	429.16	161.03	582.56	314.09
Total	2866.39	2637.93	1459.85	692.39	4326.24	3330.32

Source: Annual Report, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, 2009-10:29-30

Table: 2:13

Status of border fencing on Indo Bangladesh Border as on 2010-11

Name of the state	Phase-I sanctioned (in km)	Phase-I completed (in km)	Phase-II sanctioned	Phase-II completed (in km)	Total in Phase km)
West Bengal	507	507	1021	712	1219
Assam	152.31	149.29	77.27	72.09	221.56
Meghalaya	198.06	198.06	272.17	182	380.25
Tripura	-----	-----	855.97	730.5	730.67
Mizoram	-----	-----	352.33	184	184.15
Total	857.37	854.35	2579.19	1880.77	2735.12

Source: Annual Report, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, 2010-11:39

The above table shows that 2735.12 km fencing was completed by 2010, of which, 25km was constructed in 2010. According to the plans, it would have finished the whole work by this year.( it had extended the year of completion. Previously it was thought that the fencing would be completed by 2007). The table makes believe that the progress is slow and if such trend of slow progress continues, more time will be required to complete it.

A detailed study of the Indo-Bangladesh border fencing indicates the lack of seriousness and planning on the part of government. This is apparent from the process of completion of the work. The extended time frame for completion is because of the problem related to the border itself. Though the project was sanctioned in 1986, the work is still going on. Now another extended time frame is March 2012, but it is not clear that it would happen because till 2010, the trend of slow progress has continued.

For a better understanding of year wise progress of Indo-Bangladesh border fencing, a separate table is presented. The table is compiled by me, by including year-wise data from annual reports of MoHA. In the table, however, only the work of second phase is analyzed. In Phase-I, 854 km fencing was completed and this is not included in the table. Further, the table presents the work from 2003-04 onwards.

A state wise Progress of the border fencing in phase-II, is analyzed below

**West Bengal:**

West Bengal shares 2216.7 km border with Bangladesh. Out of nineteen districts, ten district of the state have borders with Bangladesh: Cooch Behar (561 km), Jalaphaiguri (157km), Darjeeling(21km), North Dinajpr and South Dinajpur(combined 538km), Malda(173km), Mursidabad(125km), Noida(263km), North 24 Paraganas( 280km), and South 24 Paragans(63km). In Phase -I, 507 km fencing was completed and another 1021 km in Phase-II, was implemented from 2000. Though, West Bengal has 2216 km border with Bangladesh, fencing could be put up only in 528 km. For the rest part, fencing is not possible because of riverine border. The table is presented here to understand the progress of the work.

Table: 2:14

Year	phase-II (in km)sanctioned (in km)	Phase-II (in km)	Year wise completion (in km)
2003-04	1021	477	--
2004-05	1021	545.27	68.27
2005-06	1021	629.29	84.02
2006-07	1021	660.88	31.59
2007-08	1021	674.05	14.88
2008-09	1021	686.29	12.24
2009-10	1021	712	25.71
2010-11	1021	712	0

Source: Annual Report, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.



From the above table, it becomes clear that the year wise progress is slow. Till 2003-04, 477 km fencing was constructed. In other words, in the three year period 477km border was fenced; work of Phase-II started from 2000. But in the next seven years, (till December 2010) only 236.71 km fencing was constructed. In 2005-06, a total 84.02 km fencing was constructed which was the highest compared to other years. From 2006-07 onwards, the work has slowed down. In 2007-08, 14 km fencing was erected. During 2008-09, another 12.24 km was put up. In 2010-11, no work was done. The progress of the work was satisfactory till 2003-2004. However, thereafter the progress has slowed down.. Out of the proposed 1528 km including Phase-I&II, only 1217 km fencing was completed in West Bengal. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Indo-Bangladesh border in West Bengal is a virtually open border despite fencing.

**Assam:**

Assam was the first state to demand for complete sealing of the Indo-Bangladesh border with barbed wire fencing. The Assam movement compelled the government to initiate the project. Three districts of Assam share border with Bangladesh namely, Dhubri, Karimganj and Cachar of 263km .Under the Phase-I, 149.29 km border was fenced and another 77 km was sanctioned in Phase-II. The table presented the year wise progress under Phase-II.

Table: 2:15

Year	Phase-II sanctioned(in km)	Phase -II completed (in km)	Year wise completion(in km)
2003-04	71.5	4	--
2004 05	71.5	4	0
2005-06	716.5	16.18	12.18
2006-07	77.2	40.68	24.58
2007-08	77.2	61.7	14.88
2008-09	77.2	70.9	9.2
2009-10	77.2	72.9	2
2010-11	77.2	72.9	0

Source: Annual Report, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

From the table, it is clear that till 2004-05, only 4 km fencing was constructed under phase-II. It becomes clear that in that four-year, only 4 km fencing was erected. However, 2005-06 onwards government accelerated the work and progress is somehow noticeable compared to the previous year. A 24 km area was fenced during 2006-07 and a total of 40 km till that period. In 2010-11 periods no work was done.

**Meghalaya:**

Meghalaya is another state which shares 443 km border with Bangladesh. Out of seven districts of the state, four namely, West Garo Hill, East Khasi Hill and West Khasi Hill and South Garo Hill share border with Bangladesh. Under the Phase-I, 198.06 km fencing was put up and another 272 km was sanctioned in Phase-II, out of which 184 km was completed. The table is being presented to evaluate year-wise completion of the work.

Table: 2:16

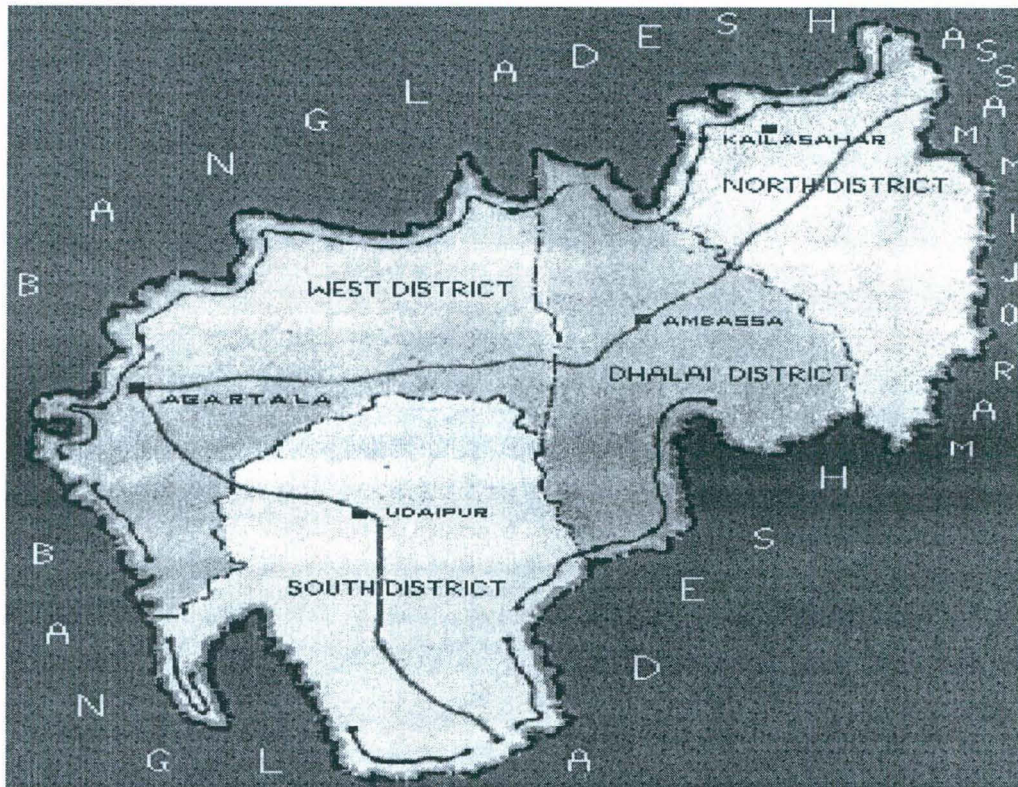
Year	phase-II sanctioned (in km)	Phase-II Completed (in km)	Year wise completion (in km)
2003-04	201	24.48	--
2004-2005	201	37.36	12.88
2005-2006	201	99.67	62.31
2006-2007	201	169.68	70
2007-2008	201	180.19	10.51
2008-09	272	180.19	0
2009-10	272	182.19	2
2010-11	272	184	2

Source: Annual Report, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India

The table explains that till 2003-05, 24.48 km fencing was put up in Meghalaya, under Phase-II. The table indicates that, in 2006-07, 70 km fencing was put up and was the highest under Phase-II period. In 2005-06, it was 62.31 km. However, 2007-

08 onwards the progress has slowed down. In the last four years, only 14 km fencing was put up. In Meghalaya out of sanctioned 470 km (including Phase-I&II) only in 382 km border fencing was completed and 88 km of the border area remain open.

### Tripura



Tripura is the only state in India, which is mostly surrounded by Bangladesh. All of its four Districts, namely North Tripura, Dhalai District, South District and West Tripura shares border of 856 with Bangladesh. Till 2000, border fencing was not constructed in the state. However under Phase-II, government has sanctioned 730 km fencing and extended to all the area of 856 in 2007. In Tripura 730.60 km fencing is completed till 2010. But interesting to note that, border fencing in many places of the state is for namesake only. The photographs presented in the annexure reveal the actual conditions. Besides 125.33 km border remain open till date.

**Mizoram:**

Table: 2:17

Year	Phase II sanctioned(in km)	Phase -II Completed (in km)	Year wise completion (in km)
2004-05	400	----	--
2005-06	400	24.48	24.48
2006-07	400	79	58.52
2007-08	352.33	107.75	28
2008-09	352.33	150.15	42.4
2009-10	352.33	158.27	51.21
2010-11	352.33	184.15	25.88

Source: Annual report, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

Mizoram shares 318 km border with Bangladesh. Project was sanctioned in 2000, but the actual work began only in 2005, and was expected to finish by 2007 (MoHA, annual report 2007-08, pp 29-30). In 2000, 400 km fencing was sanctioned (border is 318 km and it must have considered geographical condition). But from 2007-08 onwards it is reduced to 352 km. It makes us to think that the project was sanctioned without a proper survey. Over the period only 184 km border had been fenced. A look at the year-wise progress indicates that, in 2007, 58 km border was fenced and was the highest under Phase-II. In 2008-09, progress shows 42.4 km. In 2009-10 periods, the progress was quite well as 51 km of the fencing was built. In 2010-11, 25.88 km fencing was put up. Despite the work of border fencing, half of the portion of border still remains open. It is mentionable that the CBI is investigating the corruption related to the border fencing work in Mizoram.

The above picture gives us an idea about the progress of the fencing, which government of India considers as an important instrument of security. In the last 24 year, only 2735.82 km border was fenced, out of sanctioned 3436.59 km. In 660 km, fencing could not be built because of the adverse climatic condition or due to riverine border. Therefore, Indo-Bangladesh border virtually remains open despite border fencing.

According to the Group of Minister report, presented after the Kargil war, coordination and concrete action by administrative, diplomatic, security, intelligence, legal, regulatory and economic agencies of the country is needed to secure our frontiers, The GoM made several recommendations relating to effective management of land borders, including effective monitoring and surveillance of illegal cross border activities; deployment and restructuring of the Border Guarding Forces, all round development of border areas, issues relating to illegal migration and subversive activities in the border areas etc (MoHA, Annual Report 2006-07:36). Along the above measures the border fencing has been considered important.

An analysis of the plan and progress of the Indo-Bangladesh border fencing makes it clear that the government is not serious about the implementation of the project in proper way. Despite, spending a lot of money and time, why fencing was not completed in time need to be analysed. As it is already mentioned that, the Indo-Bangladesh border is an artificial construction and have inhabitation up to the zero line of the border, construction of the border fencing remains problematic. On the other hand, the Government of India has to follow Ground Rule established by the Indo-Bangladesh border agreement, while constructing the border fencing. The Ground Rule were confirmed in the joint India Bangladesh agreement for Border Authorities of the two countries in 1975 (Bhasin 2003), stated that no permanent post will be created within 150 yards of the borders from both sides. As a result, in many places, fencing could not be put up by following the prescribed norms because of inhabitation up to the zero line. This is one of the main causes of the slow progress. For example, when the West Bengal government speed up the border fencing to restrain illegal migration in 1990, it was found that no less than 450 villages were within 150 yards of the border. Since these villages would lie in the fenced off no man's land, they had to be relocated. The government soon found that borderlines were not prepared to take their relocation lying down or to put national interest before their own. According to the officials these village could not sifted (Times of India 4 November 2002). As a result, the fencing work has stopped in such places.

Beside this, in West Bengal the work also halted due to the corruption on the part of the contractor entrusted with the work. Look at the audit report reveals the phenomenon. The EE, CPWD awarded the work to provide security fencing along

Indo-Bangladesh Border in Malda district of West Bengal from border post 179/5-5 to 182/4-5 (7.70 kilometres) to a contractor at a cost of Rs 85.34 lakh in April 1994. The work was to be completed by April 1995. The contractor started the work on 23 April 1994 but abandoned it in February 1995, when only about 12 per cent of the work was done. He resumed and abandoned it again in January 1996; thereafter the contractor's whereabouts were not known. Finally EE, CPWD rescinded the contract on 6 April 1996 at the risk and cost of the defaulting contractor. The balance work was yet to be executed as of August 1998. The contract was even entrusted to the contractor, who had no experience of the border area. In the report, CAG stated that an inexperienced contractor was assigned the job. As a result, though the working site and the materials were made available timely to the contractor, yet, the progress of the work was very slow. The EE, CPWD did not initiate any action against the contractor for the slow progress. The EE, CPWD took action only in May 1995 when the work had been abandoned by the contractor in February 1995. This type of irresponsibility on the part of contractor and Construction Company delayed the work of the fencing. It is further reported that aggregated Rs 25.81 lakh was lost due the contractor fault and no action had been taken against him<sup>3</sup>.

E.N.Rammohan, a former Director General of the BSF, has explained the situation of the border in Malda district of West Bengal. He said that the issue of Indo-Bangladesh border is complicated by the fact that the border cuts through the middle of Bengal, for instance, there are more than 100 villages right on the zero line, and in many villages there are houses where the front door is in India and the rear door opens into Bangladesh. As, Hilli in the Malda district of West Bengal, is located right on the border, a row of houses in the town have their front doors in India and their rear doors opening on to the railway platform of Hilli in Bangladesh. More than 200 villages, situated right on the borderline are opposed to the project. The villages claim that erecting a barbed wire along the border would make them refugees in their own land (Malhotra-Khana, 2009). These are complicated issues and have remained as constraint in progress of the work. Further, in border villages like Haipu, there are villages, houses on the zero line, hugging each others. This is a common feature of the South Dinajpur stretch of Indo-Bangladesh border. Border population has to move

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3 The audit observations on Union Finance Accounts and Union Appropriation Accounts for the financial year 1997-98, prepared by the CAG.

back from zero line and buffer zone by at least one kilometer for proper border fencing by following norms (Kumar 2009). In Nadia Sector combination of riverine and land terrain has created unusual situations along Indo-Bangladesh border. The complexity of the geography of this place makes the traditional concept of sovereignty indistinct and makes it difficult to manage border through the lenses of security (Kumar 2009). Moreover, out of a total of 268 pillar, positions covering Bagge Sheet No. 1-18 in the Murshidabad sector of Indo-Bangladesh border, 57 pillars have been found missing or demolish during the Ganga-Padma erosion due to the monsoon season. In the 157th and 158th Boundary Conference between India and Bangladesh for West Bengal sector held at Dhaka in August 2006 and at Kolkata in November 2006, it was decided that the missing or demolished boundary pillars in Bagge Sheet No. 1-16 numbering 52 would be constructed under the responsibility of India, for which an amount of Rs. 5, 85,688 was allocated to the Government of West Bengal. The remaining missing pillars in Bagge Sheet no. 17-18 numbering 5 were to be constructed by Bangladesh. The construction work of missing or demolished pillars in this sector was likely to be completed by May 2007(Mehrotra-Khanna 2009:19). Until and unless these problems are resolved, the progress of the work will remain stagnant.

On the other hand, the issue of land acquisition further complicated the progress of work. In West Bengal, the acquisition of land took years and even today, it is held up in litigation in several sections. It was witnessed that in many times, West Bengal authorities abandoned the border fencing when the question of sovereignty and citizenship were involved in addition to the destruction of social and economic life. This was the case of in char Meghna, an area where about 1500 Indian citizen lived illegally on Bangladeshi territory and many people of both sides of the border have their places of work on the other side.

In Assam, partial diversion of funds released for fencing work to other works by the Government of Assam has resulted in extraordinary delays of fencing work ( Malhotra-Khanna 2009:22). The slow progress of the fencing makes people and politicians dissatisfied (The Assam Tribune, 3 March 2002). According to the Assam Accord, sealing of the border is the utmost priority. So the AASU, whenever the issue of infiltration is raised, brings back question of border fencing. The Government fixed

time frame over and again, and extends to another year when the proposed time lapsse. For example, March 31, 2006, was the proposed date of completion of the fencing (Times of India 4September 2007). But when the date was crossed, December 2007 was fixed as an ultimate date of completion. But, when the limit of December 2007, crossed February 2008 was fixed as another time frame for completion (Kalita 2007). Like this, every year time frame has been renewed and ultimately it is fixed the fencing would finish by 2012. This extension of the time frame itself indicates the issue is complicated in case of Assam. Regarding Assam, complaint is raise for that the fund of the fencing is not released in time which resulted slow progress of the fencing.

According to a report, the work come into standstill since September 2008 in Masalabari sector in Dhubri District, due to delay on fund released by the Ministry of Home Affairs. Due to this reason, no progress could be achieved till 2009. After the release of the fund, though the work resumed, monsoon started and progress of work was hampered till August 2009 due to the rise of the water level in river Brahmaputra. When the work was in September 2009 restarted, progress was adversely affected due to the decrease in water level causing transportation problem of material through river. So target of the completion could not achieve<sup>4</sup>. Due to delay on fund release, many problems as mentioned above come up and ultimately result in slow progress.

Another most complicated problem is that, in many places, the border crosses through middle of the villages and town. For example, in Karimganj, the border passes through the town. It is not possible to construct the fencing by following the ground rule. The resident of the area protested against the border fencing due to loss of their livelihood. An organisation called 'A Resistance Committee against Barbed Fencing' opposed the project in Karimganj and argued that there should not be any barbed wire fencing along the 3.5 km stretch in Karimganj town at the cost of the residents (The Assam Tribune, 15 September, 2008). The work on the area was not held till 2008, and ultimately government proposed to deal with the situation diplomatically with Dhaka, so that border could be built in zero line (The Telegraph, 2 June 2008). But until August 2010, the work had not begun. According to a survey, fencing structure

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<sup>4</sup> Report collected from Deputy Commissioner office, Dhubri Assam



would cause the loss of livelihood of 25000 residents of these border areas (Telegraph, 26 August 2010).

On the other hand, there are many *chor* areas in Assam and they are viewed as a corridor for the infiltrator. The existence of *chor* areas further complicated the construction of fencing, as it is difficult to clearly demarcate and manage the border in such places. The rivers change their courses with each monsoon and make the fencing tricky. The river border, mostly in Dhubri district in Assam and southern West Bengal, presents peculiar problems, as it is difficult to locate permanent border outposts in the area due to swelling of the Brahmaputra and other rivers that go deeper by about 30 feet. According to Sreeradha Datta, “a maritime border of 180 km which poses serious problems because the shifting river routes, soil erosion or frequent floods which make it difficult to demarcate borders, especially when they form numerous islands and chars in the Sunderbans delta region. River-line borders tend to change course periodically leading to a host of disputes, associated with the difficulties in establishing ownership of the newly created territories” (Datta 2004:127-28). Erosion by the mighty rivers also damages border roads and fencing which appeared in areas like Kedar, Sisumara and New Dewaner Alga areas of Dhubri district (Chaudhury 2008). As a result protecting and constructing border fencing in such places become difficult, and if the fencing is even constructed, its existence remain unsure. Despite this, in the *chors* areas the project was started in 2006 which is 9.3 km of Moslabari char in Dhubri District. However, only 60 percent work has been completed by 2010. The fencing currently extends from Mantrirchar (border post 1039) to Moslabari (border post No. 1040/2S) (The Telegraph, 24 November, 2010 ). But how effective it would be in flood prone like *chor*, remain questioned and construction of border fencing in such area is the only waste of public money.

Timely completion of the work has become problematic due to the no availability of the link roads to carrying the materials. In the south bank of the Dhubri District work in places such as Tistarpar and Baladoba area have been hampered due to non availability of the link road for movement of the construction materials ( still September, 2010). In almost every monsoon session, sever erosion threaten the existence of the border fencing. Though, the temporary measure has taken up, no

permanent measure to protect the fencing is available. Some affected areas where border roads and fencing are vulnerable from erosion are Kedar post II, Binnachara, Ghewmari, Tisterpar, Kalairalga, Moshlabari and no permanent measures have been taken till September 2010<sup>5</sup>.

Meghalaya also displays more or less the same problem. In Meghalaya, fencing is completed on 382 km out of sanctioned for 470 km. However, from time to time, the fencing work has to stop because of problem associated with demarcation and adverse possession. In Meghalaya, protest against the fencing is for the issue of 150 yards. People are against the stipulated norms. Then deputy chief minister, Donkumar Roy, said that “No fencing will take place in areas where there are complaints by locals about losing cultivable land.” Farmers and NGOs have been campaigning against Delhi’s decision to erect fences 150 yards inside the zero line of the Indo-Bangladesh border. Their argument is that residents of the border area will lose “vast tracts of cultivable land” if the fence comes up” (Telegraph, 28 March 2007). In Meghalaya, the adversely held areas are Lyngkhat, Kurinallah, Pyrdiwah in East Khasi Hills and Tamabil, Baljuri, Rongkhong, Amki, Amjlong and Muktapur in Jaintia Hills. Boro Hills in Khasi Hills sector and Labhacherra and Nuncherra Tea Gardens in Jaintia Hills are “adversely held areas” in Bangladesh (Telegraph, 23 November 2008). These issue complicated the matter and progress remained slow.

Again the demarcation of several stretches of the 443 km border that Meghalaya shares with Bangladesh has long been a disputed issue. The “Co-ordination Committee on International Borders” which opposing the border fencing focused on the disputed territory on the 40-km stretch from Nongjri in the East Khasi Hills to Jaliakhola in the Jaintia Hills. Residents of the border villages therefore, have demanded proper demarcation of the boundary before continuing the project. Several NGOs, under the banner “Co-ordination Committee on International Border”, had opposed construction of the fence in Khasi-Jaintia Hills till the borders were properly demarcated ( Telegraph 5 February 2010,).

Mizoram also displays more or less the same problems. Due to lack of planning and

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5 Report collected from Deputy Commissioner office, Dhubri, Assam

proper rehabilitation policy, people go against the project. The people are complaining about the project since its implementation, which obviously stands as an obstacle in the progress of the fencing. Corruption also looms large on the project<sup>6</sup>. In Mizoram “Indo-Bangladesh Border Fencing Affected Resettlement Committee” has been opposing the fencing; as fencing would affect 5790 Chakma Families. They accused that the four implementing agencies of the border fencing – the National Building Construction Corporation Ltd, Border Roads Organization, Engineering Projects India Limited and National Projects Construction Corporation Ltd have been violating the rules of the land acquisition. According to them, these four implementing agencies refused to follow the guidelines for acquisition of the land set by the Ministry of Home Affairs prior to construction of the fencing. The NBCC is the only implementing agency which has failed to provide any compensation to the affected families so far. The grievances of the matter can be gauged from the fact that the NBCC is constructing fencing along 147 km out of total 318 km Mizoram border (Chakma 2008). This type of the issue and irresponsibility in the part of the project cause difficulties and destabilise the livelihood of people and in such situation people always try to challenge fencing if their livelihood is not secured. So the progress of the fencing remained slow.

The conservation team also opposed the fencing as construction along the border fencing in Dampa as it would impact on wildlife. Dampa tiger reserve shares international boundary with Bangladesh for about 127 km in the southern part of the reserve. Environmentalist said that “if the border outpost and concrete road and fence are constructed, the movement of animals across the border to use the suitable forest areas for ecological needs of the species concerned would vastly reduce if not completely stopped. This could hamper conservation of tiger and other key species in Dampa tiger reserve. If migration of species is stopped because of the construction of border outposts and concrete patrolling roads and fences within the reserve, this could attract disrespect for the conservation of migratory species at global level,”

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<sup>6</sup>The CBI has launched probe into multi crore India-Bangladesh border fencing scam involving several senior Congress leaders and NPCC in Lawngtlai district of Mizoram. The investigation was launched following a complaint filed by Laxmi Bikash of Chakma Autonomous District Council. The scam is involving more than Rs 503, 96,680 during the year 2008-2009 (Chakma, 2009).

(Telegraph, 2 November 2010). So they are opposing the work on the area and work remained halt. These are few problems associated with the fencing in Mizoram. The picture of Tripura also reveals that, without proper rehabilitation policy the project is going to implement. So under the banner of “Bhumi Surakha Committee” people are protesting against the fencing work, because consequent to fencing, many villages would fall on the Bangladesh side and they are not provided proper rehabilitation. If the fencing comes up their livelihood would be threatened. Their regress is that they are suffering from insecurity due to the fencing. They expressed “We suffer from insecurity perpetually. We fear attacks by miscreants from across the attack. Besides, every time we have to visit markets or send our children to schools that have now gone across the frontier, we have to face the BSF men manning the border. They grill us every time. Besides, Bangladeshi miscreants take away crop from our lands which fall in that country now” (Times of India 15 February 2011). Over 8500 families living along the Indo-Bangladesh border have been affected due to erection of barbed wire fencing (Assam Tribune 23 September 2008). According to the government sources in Tripura alone thirteen governmental institutions, five temples, four mosque forty-four irrigation projects, two government school and many more market falls on the 150 yards of zero line. The main demand is the fencing should be on the zero line. These are some reasons why despite spending lots of money the fencing has not yet completed.

Though fencing is supposed to be done 150 yards away from the international zero line, the notional boundary line separates Indian Territory from that of Bangladesh, but the rule is not followed in many places. As fencing is at times erected kms away from zero line, Indian territory is virtually abandoned by the Indian state (Prakash and Menon 2011:33). The existing border roads and fencing between two consecutive pillars were constructed at varying distances of about 900 metres, 700 metres, 500metres and 300 metres from the international boundary. The majority of the work is done in subcontracting and there is no effective monitoring institute. Due to this, a huge numbers of families fall outside the fence. NBCC has stated that the Ministry of Home Affairs has awarded the Phase III work by replacing existing single type of fencing with the composite type of fencing on the existing alignment. A total 5,205 crore have been spent on fencing project but viable result not comes up. The Indo-Bangladesh border fencing is not followed in a planned manner. It brought as an immediate measures to check migration without considering the ground reality. So

there are various problems looming on the way to effective implementation of the project.

The Indo-Bangladesh border has many problems in itself. On the other hand, the government had no fixed planned how to proceed. The problems of the land acquisition, the norms of the zero line even completed the matter. The issues of the adverse possession and the enclaves also created problems. If we look at the other countries, for example, America has Secure Fence Act and the fencing is constructed in tight vigilance and had full records of the work. But in India, there is no such act for constructing the fence. Again lack of planning and understanding of the border region on this part comes from the extension of the time of completion the project. As we have found in the reports that the finishing date of the fencing extended from 1996 to 1998 and again 1998 to 2000 for the first phase. But till 2003 the first phase work went on. The government though fixed the 2007 as the final years of the projects but would not able to do so and again extend time limits to 2010 and now 2012. However it is not sure, that within that time too work would be completed. These all explain lack of urgency or unimportant of the project. Without understanding of the ground realities and effective law as well as solving the border related problems and addressing the people concerns the fencing would not effective and even progress would remain slow..

By observation of Michiel Baud and William van Schendel the chapter is concluded.

National borders are political constructs, imagined projections of territorial power. Although they appear in maps in deceptively in precise forms, they reflect, at least initially, merely the mental images of politicians, lawyers, and intellectuals. Their practical consequences are often quite different. No matter how clearly borders are drawn on official maps, how many customs officials are appointed, or how many watchtowers are built, people ignore borders whenever it suit them. In doing so, they challenge the political status quo of which borders are ultimate symbol. People also take advantage of borders in a way they are not intended or anticipated by their creators. Revolutionaries hide behind them, seeking the protection of sovereignty; local inhabitants cross them whenever services or products are cheaper or more attractive on the other side; and traders are quick to take advantage of price and tax differentials. Because of such unintended and often subversive consequences, border regions have their own social dynamics and historical development (Baud and Scephndel; 1997:211-12).

## CHAPTER- 3

### **India Bangladesh Border Fencing: Issues and Concerns**

In this chapter basic issues and concerns relating to the border fencing will be discussed. Various issues and concerns directly or indirectly relating to the India Bangladesh border fencing such as migration, social and financial implication, and diplomatic relations are the main focus of this chapter. To deal with these issues and concerns, this chapter is divided into three sections: Migration and Border Fencing, Border Fencing and India Bangladesh Diplomatic Relations and Social and Financial Implications.

#### **Migration related issues and Border Fencing:**

Migration and border are intrinsically related. Even after the creation of the modern nation state in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries with defined borders, people have continued to move from one place to another. Earlier it was not questioned much, however, the problem of migration in to the host countries started when ethnic diversities become sharp and modern developmental processes made the possibility of social assimilation more difficult ( Ghosh, 2004: IX). Any question of migration is linked to the discourse on international borders. Borders or frontiers, throughout history, have been a controversial subject and have evoked strong emotion particularly among people and groups staying near them. In the entire third world, where the state formation and nation formation have taken paths very different from those followed by the European countries in the nineteenth century, border has become highly controversial (Ghosh 2004:14). It may be because of different reasons; like lack of proper demarcation, migration and so on. India has a long and convoluted history of migrations from across its eastern border, particularly large-scale flows associated with the formation of the independent states of India and Bangladesh in 1947 and 1971 respectively.

While studying this important issue of migration and Indo-Bangladesh border fencing, it is important to have knowledge about migration. According to the Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary, migration means movement of people from one place to go to live or work to another. Eisenstadt argues migration as the physical transition of an

individual or a group from one society to another. This transition usually involves abandoning one social setting and entering another one. Every migratory movement is motivated by the migrants feeling of some kind of insecurity and the inadequacy in the original social setting. Migration may be defined as a movement of persons involving a permanent change of residence or a migrant is, in general, a person who generally moves his residence either during the immigration, internal migration (Eisenstadt 1953:167-168). But to deal with the subject in case of Bangladeshi migrants along with these definitions more closely other concerns need to be addressed. Bangladeshis in India are recognized as illegal migrants or infiltrators. Even many Bangladeshis come to India illegally by crossing the border, to work as cheap laborers and return within few months or days. So, infiltration issues become a main concern from Bangladesh.

The issue of illegal migration from Bangladesh has been a controversial subject for a long time. In fact, migration has started from the late of the 19th century when the country was part of British India and subsequently became East Pakistan upon partition in 1947, and even after creation of Bangladesh in 1971. The issue of migration is now viewed as posing a threat to the internal security of India (Kumar, 2011:107). History has it that, between 1911 and 1931, more than a million Bengalis migrated from Mymensingh to low density districts of the Brahmaputra valley in Assam and by 1951 more than half million Bengalis had left East Pakistan to Assam. This influx continued through the 1950's and 1960's. Because of this influx, Assam population increased by 35.1 percent between 1951 and 1961 (compared with an all India decennial growth rate of 21.6 percent); between 1961 and 1971 according to the 1971 census population in Assam increased by 34.4 percent compared to the all India average of 24.6 percent (Franda 1982:106-07).

Though the migration was taking place from the nineteenth century, they were not reorganized as Bangladeshi migrants (until 1971) known as today. It was after the creation of Bangladesh, those who came from that country were considered as illegal Bangladeshi migrants. The Indira–Mujib Agreement makes 1971, as a cut off year for accommodating the migrants of Bangladesh as Indian citizens. But the problem remained because the migrant could say, therefore, they had come around mid 1970's at most but they could certainly not mention the 1980's (Samaddar 2004:

57-58).

Migration of Bangladeshis into India especially in Assam and Tripura has led to a number of physical and political clashes, most of which revolve around the land and language issue. The resentment of Bengali's in Tripura has led to even greater violence than in Assam, perhaps because of the fact that the original majorities of Tripura has now been reduced to the minority. A strong arms movement against the illegal migration was began in Assam in the late 1970's, whose presence subsequently spread to the other parts of the North-East India. Therefore, illegal migration from the Bangladesh is a concerning subject for India, particularly in North East. The unprecedented growth rate of the populations in the post-independent period in these states is viewed as due to migration (though there may be other factors). For example, in Assam the percentage of the share of the Hindu population has come down from 72.51 in 1971 to 67.13 in 1991, while the Muslim population increased from 24.56 in 1971 to 28.43 in 1991. The high growth rates of the Muslim population, as many academician claims attributed to the migration from Bangladesh. According to the report there are two million voters whose name has been deleted from voter list of Bangladesh during 1991-95. This obviously point towards large scale of immigration from that country to India (Kumar 2003:2)

The growth of rates the Muslim population, according to the 2001 census, "are the highest precisely in the districts that share a border with, or lie close to the border with Bangladesh, for example in Assam this is particularly in Dhubri, Barpeta, Karimganj, and Hailakandi." By contrast, in upper Assam, the "heartland of the indigenous Assamese Muslims," the growth rates for both Muslims and Hindus are quite similar. These contrasting figures, says Wasbir Hussain, lends "credence to the widely held belief that illegal migration from Bangladesh" has been the source of the gradual increase in the proportion of Muslims in Assam (Boruah 2009:960). Thus, migration continues unhindered, despite the barbed-wire fence being erected in stretches and the presence of the BSF along the border (Hussain 2004). This is because of the migrants getting support from politicians and therefore until and unless stances are adopted, it would be difficult to curb their influiux by fence. To justify that migration continues, Hussain has compared the growth rates of the Muslim population. In 1971, Muslims, for instance, comprised 64.46 per cent of the



population in Dhubri district. This rose to 70.45 per cent in 1991 - a total growth of 77.42 per cent between 1971 and 1991. By 2001, the proportion of Muslims had risen further to 74.29 per cent of the population in Dhubri. By 2001, the Muslim population in Barpeta rose from 56.07 per cent in 1991 to 59.3 per cent; in Goalpara, from 50.18 per cent to 53.71 per cent, and Hailakandi from 54.79 per cent to 57.6 per cent. Significantly, two new districts joined the list of Muslim majority districts in Assam by 2001: Karimganj, where the Muslim population raised from 49.17 per cent in 1991 to 52.3 per cent; and Nagaon, where the community's population grew from 47.19 percent in 1991 to 50.99 percent in 2001( Hussain,2004). In other states of the north east India Bangladeshi issue has captured the public attention. In Arunachal Pradesh, the illegal Bangladesh drive was launched by All Papum Pare District Students' Union (APPDSU) and All Nyishi Students' Union (ANSU) in September 2008<sup>1</sup>. In Nagaland the issue has been raised highly in recent times.

A further analysis of the growth of the population in the border district of the West Bengal is important to recognize whether migration is taking place or not. Ten Districts of West Bengal share borders with Bangladesh: Cooch Behar(561km), Jalaphaiguri(157km), Darjeeling(21km), North Dinajpr and South Dinajpur(combined 538km), Malda(173km), Mursidabad(125km), Noida(263km), North 24 Paraganas( 280km), and South 24 Paragans(63km). Some of these districts had a growth rate higher than that of the state in 1971-1981 and 1971-1991. The decadal variation in population of West Bengal in 1971-81 is +23.71 percent. During the period, Cooch Behar (+25.28), Jalaphaiguri (+26.49), Nadia (+33.29) and North Paraganas (+31.29) showed noticeable upward trends compared to the state average. In 1981-1991, the decadal variation was +24.55. Again, districts like West Dinajpur (+30.25), Malda (29.63), Mushidabad (+28.04), Nadia (+29.82), North 24 Paraganas+31.66, and South Paraganas (++30.08) showed remarkable growth. In one district South Paraganas, the difference between the decadal growth rates of 1971-81 and 1991-91 was as much as +10.66. The natural increase of India's population according the gap between the birth

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1 It started with All Papum Pare District Students' Union (APPDSU) and All Nyishi Students' Union (ANSU) serving quit notices on 6<sup>th</sup>September 2008, to illegal Bangladeshis to leave the state within 5 days. The first phase of 'Operation Clean Drive' was carried out on September 12<sup>th</sup> where the supporter's of students' union supposedly took the law into their own hands and physically went about evicting the 'illegal Bangladeshi migrants'.

URL: <http://arunachaldiary.com/2008/09/operation-clean-drive-and-backlash-2/> [Accessed On 15 March 2011]

and death rate, should be around 20-22 per 1000 population or 2.2 percent per year, or 20 to 22 percent in the decade. Compared to this, West Bengal growth rate was higher i.e 24.55 percent and it was even higher in some of the districts. This growth rate can be easily attributed to migration from Bangladesh. (Samaddar 1999:17-18). So the migration is taking place according to the author.

The decadal growth of the Muslim population in the some district in West Bengal and Assam is presented below.

Growth of the Muslim Population in some Border district of the West Bengal and Assam during 1991-2001

Table: 3.1

District	1991	2001
South 24 Paragana	29.9	33.2
North 24 Paragana	24.2	24.2
Nadia	24.9	25.4
Mursidabad	61.4	63.7
Malda	47.5	49.7
South Dinajpur	36.8	38.4
North Dinajpur	36.8	38.4
Jalpaiguri	10.	10.8
Cooch Behar	23.4	24.2
Kolkata	17.7	20.3
Total	23.6	25.2

Source: Census of India 2001

Table 3:2

Decadal growth rate of the population in border district or adjacent to the border district of Assam.

District	1991	2001
Dhubri	70.4	74.3
Guwalpara	50.2	53.2
Hailakandi	54.8	57.6
Karimganj	49.2	52.3
Barpeta	56.1	59.4
Nagaon	47.2	51.0
Marigoan	46	47.6
Cachar	34.5	36.1
Darang	32.0	35.6

Source: Census of India 2001

However, whether these growth rates are exactly due to the migration or not remain problematic due to methodological problem.

According to the 2001 census, in India there are 3,084,826 Bangladeshi migrants. However no concrete data on the illegal migration from Bangladesh to India is available. The Home Ministry Working Group on Border Management estimated the total number of the Bangladeshi in India to be about one crore. Godbole Committee Report of the Task Force of Border Management, estimated the number to be 1.5 crore, with about 13 lakhs Bangladeshi immigrants entering India illegally every year in a report submitted to the government of India in August 2000. In 2003 it was reported by the Indian Defence Ministry that, on an average more than 100,000 illegal Bangladeshi immigrants come into India every month (TheTimes of India, 29 September 2003).

The debates whether Bangladeshis are still coming to India even after the border fencing remain critical to evaluate. However the political leaders have believed their presence even today. As on April 2008, a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs, headed by BJP leader Sushma Swaraj, felt that the large presence of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants was posing a grave threat to internal security and required a critical review. Minister of State for Home, Sriparakash Jaiswal has also stated that rising illegal immigration from neighboring Bangladesh was posing a big threat to India's national security (Kumar, 2011:110). So it is very difficult to say whether border fencing is able to reduce migration or not because of unavailability of accurate data and lack of empirical research on the field.

Moreover, here it is equally important to study what factors are responsible for the migration from Bangladesh and to deal with these factors, whether border fencing is a sufficient measure without adopting other policies. As many studies reveal that the following are the most important factors of migration or infiltration (Kumar 2003).

- I. Competitive politics of vote bank and the patronage extended to them by the political parties/ vested political interest in India.
- II. Help rendered by the border people.
- III. Increased pressure on lands and mounting unemployment in Bangladesh due to rise of population
- IV. Faulty partition.
- V. Recurrent flood and cyclones uprooted large segment of population.
- VI. Better economic opportunities
- VII. Porous border
- VIII. Ethnic linkage among the people

The above mentioned factors are largely responsible for migration. Without addressing these issues properly, migration cannot be checked. Therefore, the viability of the fencing in checking infiltrators remains in doubt.

The people of the border region suffer from the lack of roads, schools, and other means of decent livelihood and hence look to trans border communication as a means of support. According to Samaddar, whatever may be the actual figures of migration

across the border the reality of trans border human flows have been so perennial and persistent and hence so overwhelming and real that the state had to succumb to it. Laws and legal practices have bowed down before these realities (Samaddar 2004: 58). People still don't know how many people actually crossed the border. In such situation the border fencing to check infiltration remains questionable.

Some studies reveal the link between migration and informal trade and that it inspires migrants to cross the border. A fairly new study on informal trade into the Khulna and Rajshahi subdivisions of Bangladesh from border points in West Bengal reveal interesting aspects linked to transnational migration process (Pohit and Taneja 2000:16-17). Cross-border traders from both countries interviewed for this research pointed out the minimal level of risks involved in informal trading, largely to bribes paid on a recurring basis to border security agencies and the low levels of fines imposed on confiscated goods. Much of the trade is one-sided, in that goods move from India to Bangladesh and the balance of payments is offset through remittances by Bangladeshi immigrants living in India. The informal capital markets straddling the borders is so well integrated that remittances reach various parts of Bangladesh the same day, at favorable exchange rates and with lower transaction costs compared to formal channels. Despite the border fencing, the process goes on.

Continuous demand for cheap labour from Indian side is one of the major factors behind the flow of Bangladeshi migration to India. Agriculture in Punjab, urbanization in New Delhi, cotton and diamond industries in Gujrat, irrigation projects in West Bengal have attracted main 'sweat labour' (Samaddar, 1999). It is argued that Bangladesh serves as a crucial reserve pool of cheap labour for the economies of Assam, West Bengal, Delhi, Mumbai and other parts of India. van Schendel (2005: 230) remarked: "If there were indeed 12 to 20 million unauthorized Bangladeshis in India, there were millions of Indians keen to employ them. The Indian state never developed schemes either to hold these Indian citizens accountable for their illegal practices of employing 'aliens', or to issue temporary work permits to labour migrants from Bangladesh". To quote van Schendel further (2005: 220): "Unauthorized migration took place within an extended community that transcended the border. Economic and political actors on either side were mutually dependent: earlier immigrants offer newcomers shelter and support, Indian employers were keen

to exploit cheap labour, and Indian politicians were interested in expanding their electorate”.

According to a projection in West Bengal's 292 assembly constituencies, Bangladeshi migrants could ensure a result in 52 of them and influence the poll in 100 others. (Telegraph, 5 November, 2001). The Communist Party of India (Marxist) had long reaped the political mileage by protecting these migrants, the increasing pressures from the local population and economic strains led to a policy reversal. For decades, it was ignored by the major political parties like the Congress (I) and the CPI (M) in West Bengal and the Northeast. It is alleged that these political parties treated the illegal migrants as a vote bank. According to one account, as many as 55 lakh ration-cards have been issued to Bangladeshis in West Bengal (Upadhaya 2004:13). This clearly shows that Bangladeshi is getting mileage from political class. In such a situation, the border fencing would not be effective in checking the infiltrators.

Destabilizing factors such as ecological vulnerabilities emanating from massive floods, drought, river erosion, cyclones and communal riots render millions homeless causing involuntary migration. Bangladesh suffers from many climate dependent riverine floods, riverbank erosion, tropical cyclones and droughts. Massive floods and riverbank erosion cause loss of land, displacement of human population and livestock, disruption of production, evacuation and loss of property. According to existing estimates, natural hazards displace millions of people each year of which riverbank erosion alone displaces 60,000-70,000 people on average (Afsar 2008:10). A study by Jahengir Nagar University, 18-20 million people every year are displaced by the flood in Bangladesh. There are flood and riverbank erosion over every year. Now all of these displaced people do not come to India, but it is possible that some of them would come (Hazarika, 2003).

Bangladesh, the world's most densely populated country, is therefore, one of the most environmentally vulnerable regions due to its geographical and spatial location. Bangladesh is a densely populated country and higher population density increases vulnerability to climate change because more people are exposed to risk and opportunities for migration within a country are limited. The country is composed largely of low-lying areas more land below sea level than above. About 80% of the land is

flood prone (Bommel, 2010:7). Bangladesh is one of many developing countries that are already suffering the consequences of climate change. The total number of climate displacees in Bangladesh is expected to be raised to 7.5 million by the end of 2010' (Musa 2010:1), and over 26 million by 2050 or earlier (Myers 2002:611). These developments convey that threat that migration into India is expected to continue at a fast rate (Bommel, 2010:7). With 'over 60% of its land less than 5 meters above mean sea level, Bangladesh is the most vulnerable country in the world to tropical cyclones and the sixth most vulnerable to floods' (EJF 2009:15). So possibility of migration cannot be ruled out in future.

Along with the above discussion, it should be mentioned that India-Bangladesh border is 4096 km long and according to the MoHA report 2010-11, only on 2735 km fencing has been put up. The rest of vast part of border remains open even today. The vast unfenced area questions the very objective of the fencing in checking militant, infiltrators or smugglers. Along with this in many places fence area is cut down by the villagers or destroyed by the flood or had rusted. People can easily cross from these parts.

Although, the fencing is constructed for checking illegal migration and stop cross border activities, fencing border could be easily crossed in many places. From V K Shashi Kumar observation (Kumar 2009):

To show how porous the border is and how easy it is for terrorists to infiltrate, I travelled along the South Bengal frontier from South Dinajpur till the Sundarbans. I crossed from India into Bangladesh at the Indian border town of Hilli to its namesake in Bangladesh and came back via the same route. Here we also caught on camera stunning visuals of smuggling and Bangladeshis waiting to cross over. Further down in Malda at the dead of the night I experienced firsthand how despite the 24 hours vigil by the Border Security Force (BSF), it is possible for terrorists to cross over. I visited border villages in Malda and Murshidabad sectors which are right on the Zero Line and found out how easy it is for Bangladeshi illegal migrants, smugglers and terrorists to enter Indian Territory....Each soldier has to guard a stretch of around 500 meters to 1 kilometre, armed with a gun and a torch. After sun down infiltrators are always waiting to make their move. "Yes they do. They watch our movements and when we cross a point or turn our back they cross over. Sometimes they also cause diversions to distract us and take advantage of the ensuing chaos..." Singh's voice

fades away as he walks into the darkness along the small patch of India's border in the Malda sector that he was tasked to guard on the day I met him

The social and family linkages on across the border also encourage the border crossing or the infiltration. Due to this factor border fencing could not check people to crossing border. An example can be cited here for the better understanding of the phenomena.

Visits to relatives across the border in Bangladesh are common and 'normal' occurrences. Relations with kin form the most enduring basis of continuing cross border interaction that has resiliently persisted since Partition. The frail, elderly lady whose son's house I was staying in was away, visiting her sisters and daughters married and living in Bangladesh, when I first arrived. She did not have a passport, let alone a visa, for travel into Bangladesh, and had 'illegally' crossed the border at a riverine point 6 in a nearby village. An overwhelming majority of the people I spoke to in this 402-household-strong village (Gobindopur Panchayat records 2009) not only had relatives across the border but professed to maintain contact with them by licit but illegal means (Ghosh, 2011:52).

Along with these, any person who wishes to cross the border can do so by paying the *dalal* too. "We paid the *dalals* (middleman). The amount varies depending on the present security condition from Rs 200-Rs 400. There are *dalals* on both sides who contact with the BSF and the BDR. Only the *dalals* know which officers of the BSF and BDR have to be bribed" (Kumar, 2009). While visiting to Dhubri district for observation of the fencing on February, it was found that crossing the border through the river routes is very easy even today. Many Bangladeshis infiltrate through the Bharmaputra river and it basically happens in the dark. These routes are used for smuggling activities. The Commander of BSF in Dhubri district also expressed the same problems but in tactical way. He said that tight vigilance is going on on the river border. But they (infiltrator) are expert in crossing the river. On the other hand the *chor* area also facilitate for the infiltration. It is extremely difficult to keep tight vigilance in the area and during the flood, it is not possible even to recognise border. Infiltration obviously takes place through these routes. This is just one example. There are many such places from where infiltration takes place. The riverine route is used for cattle smuggling. The Mankachar border area in Dhubri District is used as transit



point for the illegal cattle traders. Huge number of cattle, brought mostly from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, are illegally sent to Bangladesh through this border. The cattle are brought to border through road. Under the cover darkness they are lead to river where they swim across the border to Bangladesh soil.

It is also difficult to distinguish different forms of migration due largely to political reasons. Apart from historicity, the two countries are heavily motivated politically. Indian government branded all sorts of cross-border migration as illegal and Bangladeshi government refuses to acknowledge illegal cross-border movements by Bangladeshi nationals. Their negative attitudes have been posing serious problems in understanding the issues involved in cross-border migration in a comprehensive manner and dealing with those issues realistically (Afsar,2008).In such situation it is not possible to say that border fencing is able to check the illegal infiltration from Bangladesh. Without addressing the real issues of migration, fencing along the border would not work effectively. Right from the beginning of the twentieth century, migration of mainly peasants from East Bengal/Bangladesh (cross the border) has been taking place. The population settled in the *chor* areas and border area is mostly of such immigrant origin. Opinions regarding whether inflow of illegal immigration still continues at a significant scale are varied but none are based on concrete data. The faster rate of population growth in border district which is sometimes cited as an indicator of continued influx of illegal migrants is at least, in part, due to the higher fertility rate. The high density of the population on the border area has made land increasingly scarce. Under such circumstances, a large inflowing population is unlikely to find vacant land to settle down. Even if the illegal inflow of the population continues to take place across the porous border, the migrants move up further to interior places rather than settling in the border area. So by calculating the growth rate only in the border area it could not be said that migration has increased or decreased. Therefore, it remains doubtful that border fencing in Indo-Bangladesh border is foolproof measure to check illegal migration. Its very purpose has been questioned by the various factors of migration and the unfenced area. Human being is sufficiently clever and they cross from any place if they wish. They do not need 13600 km open border (still 2010, 13600 remained unfenced and on the 660 km fencing would not possible due to riverine border ,or adverse climatic conditions and this type of border is visible in every state sharing international border with Bangladesh) to cross it. A

meter or less open border is sufficient for them to cross it. In such situation, 1360 km open border is question the validity of border fencing. Therefore, despite the border fencing the Indo-Bangladesh border, migration would take place in a virtually open border.

### **India Bangladesh Diplomatic Relations and Border Fencing:**

In this section, attempt has been made to look into the India Bangladesh border fencing and the diplomatic relations between the two countries. In other word, this chapter investigates the impact of border fencing on diplomatic relations.

The Bangladesh border is the longest land border that India shares with any of its neighbors. Bangladesh covers a length of about 4,095 kilometers of land border with India. The border was, however, never demarcated on the ground (van Schendal 2005). As a result, the border passes through the middle of several villages, even houses. Bangladesh and India also share a maritime border of 180 km, which has created tensions due to issues like shifting river courses, soil erosion and frequent floods. Relations further worsened due to the controversy over newly-formed islands, like the dispute over the sovereignty of New Moore Island/Talpatty (Datta 2004: 128). These issue have important consideration while dealing with India Bangladesh border fencing and diplomatic relations.

To study the Indo-Bangladesh border Fencing and diplomatic relation, it is imperative to look into the Land Boundary Agreement of the 1974 and Joint Border Guideline of 1975, which was signed between India and Bangladesh. The Guideline stipulated that no permanent structure could be constructed within the 150 yards of the zero line. Along this, international norms, also prescribes the same regarding construction of border fencing between two sovereign states. Therefore, India has to construct the fencing on its own land beyond 150 yard of the border line. This is the major area of conflict regarding border fencing between India and Bangladesh. There are many places where border fencing would not possible by following this norm. For example, in Tripura along due to construction of fence (at 150 yards from the border line) over 8,730 Indian families homes, and over 19,359 acres of land, including paddy

fields, farms and other assets had fallen outside the fence<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, many border incident between India and Bangladesh (either small or big) happen due to this controversial issue and it creates hurdle in diplomatic relations.

Bangladesh has been opposing the Indian proposal or move of the border fencing since beginning. Along with the 150 yards norms, constructing border fencing without disputes, a well demarcated border/boundary is necessary. But in case of Indo-Bangladesh borders, in many places, border is not well demarcated. The question of adverse possession from both sides complicated the matter. Therefore, the border fencing brings back this question and complicates the relations.

A glance at 1980's reveals Bangladesh sentiment against the Indian's decision of border fencing. Bangladesh threatened that India Bangladesh relations would be adversely affected due to border fencing (Deccan Chronicle, 28 November, 1983). Dhaka's main objection to the fence was that it would show Bangladesh in bad light as far as the world is concerned and the whole idea therefore would be contrary to the professed friendly relations between the two countries. When India proceeded to border fencing and survey work in Assam in 1984, Bangladesh opposed it which resulted border incident. Bangladesh sent notes to the Indian diplomat in Dhaka about the incident related to the border fencing on April 2, 1984 at Bhurungamari. Bangladesh authority stated that India had deliberately violated the international border guideline and blatant disregarded the universally accepted norms that no structure can be erected unilaterally on the Zero line (Bhasin 1996).

The BDR repeatedly disrupted the survey work. As a result a flag meeting was held between the BDR and BSF on April 7 and 8 on the No Man's Land near the Sonahat Boundary Pillar No 1008(3) in 1984. Bangladesh said that they would persist in its effort to put it across to the world that a barbed wire fence is not necessary and an affront is evident from its assertion that there has been no exodus from Bangladesh into India (Hindustan Times, 14 April 1984). So in the beginning Bangladesh was severely opposed to Indian proposal of the border fencing.

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<sup>2</sup>URL:<http://www.inewsone.com/2011/05/12/tripura-villagers-affected-by-border-fencing-to-step-up-stir/49958>[Accessed on 15 March 2011].

A further look at the newspapers of 80' reveals Bangladesh reaction against the border fencing. The official irritation against the project being expressed through the national media. The influential Dhaka Weekly said:

Why is India violating the border guidelines between the two countries which prohibit putting up defensive structures of any nature within 150 yards on either sides of the common border? Does India have any other designs in mind?

The pro- Muslim League Bengali daily, Azad, has warned editorially:

The people of the Bangladesh have reached the limits of their patience and will no longer tolerate any nonsense. They will fight with their bare hand to defend the honor and dignity of their country. And, this fight will be the last final against the Indian impertinence.

The daily then tells India somewhat intriguingly

Your evil design has reached its final stage. You will now suffer the consequences of your misdeeds. You have already seen the people of Bangladesh in their struggle for liberation and you will see them again now. The rights of succession of Bangladeshi on the soil of the Bengal, Bihar and Orissa have not yet expired (Hindustan Times, 14 April, 1984).

Bangladesh even expressed that they were thinking to put the issue at the world level against Indian move. They said that “we still hope India will makes response to Bangladesh moves and do the needful at both the diplomatic and local levels to end the conflict. In case, however, Indian intransigence persists we should take along the either have a third party to help to resolve it, or take it formally to the international forum, i.e. the United Nations. Peaceful Coexistence is an essential part of Bangladesh Foreign Policy and that is one reason why we cannot understand India’s war size preparations across the border” (Bangladesh Times 1 May, 1984). This indicates Bangladesh disagreement against the border fencing since the beginning and that the Bangladesh India relation has worsen thereafter.

All activities relating to the building of the fence are being carried out entirely on the Indian land. For the most part the fence is located at, or beyond 150 yards from the zero line. However, in specific areas due the existence of villages or obstacles caused by terrain, the fence has to be built within 150yards. The BSF has offered to keep the BDR informed as and when construction of the fence is planned for execution in those stretches falling within 150 yards from the zero-line. The Government of India has formally conveyed to the Government of Bangladesh details of villages, houses and population falling within 150 yards of the zero line. (Bhasin 2005: 438). In carrying out activity of building a fence, the BSF has been experiencing resistance from the Bangladesh side. This has led to occasional tensions caused by unprovoked firing by BDR along the border.

India Bangladesh border fencing becomes problems with India Bangladesh relation when the issue of the undemarcated border comes up. As there are undemarcated long tract of land, adverse process on the both sides and the existence of the enclaves creates problems and in such situation when India proceeds for border fencing conflicts occurs. Here the border conflict of the 2001 is highly mentionable. In 2001, India and Bangladesh found themselves in the midst of a minor border confrontation. The conflict centered on the disputed border territory near Pyrdiwah village but remained contained to the border forces on both sides (Mohammed 2008:107-08). Another major incident took place in 2005 in Tripura. When BSF tried to construct border fencing in disputed area, BDR indiscriminately started firing and killed several securities personal on May 2005. Latter they agreed on coordinated patrolling but the question on fencing within 150 yards remains unchanged.

The issue of border fencing has always come up in most of the ministerial, secretary or military levels talks between two countries. For example, at foreign secretary level talk on December 2005, Dhaka consistently opposed the move of border fencing. During the meeting Bangladesh Foreign secretary said that "we are holding our stand that no border fencing will take place in the Indo-Bangladesh border" (The Statement 5 December 2005). Bangladesh Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, addressing a press conference on June 2005, viewed, that erection of the border fence along the border by the India would affect the relations between the two neighbor countries"(Bangladesh Observer 25 June 2000). The Foreign secretary level talks

held in June 2005 at New Delhi failed to bridge the gap between Indian and Bangladesh on fencing issues. However the two sides agreed on simultaneously patrolling of the border including the riverine stretches by the BDR and BSF (Prakash 2008:89).

Another area of diplomatic concerns regarding border fencing is shooting at the border region. Due to the border fencing border incident including shooting, tension at the border increased. Bangladeshi authorities have repeatedly complained about the killing of its nationals by the BSF, along with human rights groups in both countries. Odhikar has documented cases of nearly a 1000 Bangladeshi nationals that have been killed by BSF over the last decade. Describing the BSF as “trigger happy,” Bangladesh Home Minister, Sahara Khatun, said, in May 2010, that she would ask New Delhi to stop these incidents<sup>3</sup>. This incident has diplomatic implications. Killing of Bangladeshis infiltrators in the border area spark huge criticism in Bangladesh as well as around the world. According to HRW, while most of them were killed when they crossed into Indian Territory for indulging in cattle rustling or other smuggling activities, many were also killed in BSF's indiscriminate firing across the border. Killing of a young girl, Felani, whose dead body was exposed entangled in barbed wire, which Bangladesh mourned with deep anti-Indian rage. Bangladesh Government expressed deep concern about the attitude (Islam 2011). Bangladesh foreign ministry strongly condemned and protested the killing of Felani Khatun by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) on the Fulbari border under Kurigram district on January 7 in 2011 and demanded stopping of killing of Bangladeshi nationals by the BSF. The foreign minister said.

A diplomatic note was handed over to Indian High Commissioner Rajeev Mitter by summoning him at the ministry on January 16 and during the handing over the note, Additional Foreign Secretary Mustafa Kamal reaffirmed Bangladesh's condemnation and protest at the killing of Falani Khatun by the Indian border force,”. The issue rose during the visit of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to India (Khan 2011).

The problems relating to the No-man's land has been one of the most important causes of tension between the BSF and the BDR. However, in the BSF BDR conference of 2007 discussed the issue and agreed to allow developmental activities

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3 URL:<http://www.hrw.org/en/node/94641/section/3>[Accessed on 15 March 2011]

taking place within 150 yards of the border, tea plantations till the zero line barring certain stretches and offered cooperation in tackling cross- border smuggling of drugs and cattle (Kumar 2007).

The BSF and BDR have an informal agreement on not having defensive structures within 150yards of the zero line. As Bangladesh was adherent to the issues of 150 yards norm but in many place it could not to do so, the Indian government slamming Bangladesh for being insensitive and unresponsive to Indian security concern. BSF and BDR had occasionally engaged in firefights, especially when the relations were fraught. Whenever India tried to build fence within 150 meters of the zero line, the border BDR personnels opened fire on the ground that a 1974 boundary agreement and guideline agreed on in 1975 prohibited such construction (Bhasin 2003). However, since the Awami League came to power India and Bangladesh are exploring ways to converge and iron out their mutual differences. The relations between two countries are also improving. So, Bangladesh is allowing construction of border fencing in Zero line as fencing could not be placed by following the norms.

The border fencing becomes one important issue for Bangladesh to engage in conflict with India and shows uncooperative attitudes on different problems. However, it also depends on which government is in power in Bangladesh. The Awami League has good relation with India and if its government remains in power, the border fencing issue does not become issue of high politics between them. It is cooperative to India's security concern. However, the border disputes and other border incident including firing in the border area remain contentious issues between them. Without addressing this, diplomatic tension would persist between two countries. The diplomatic impact of the border fencing also could not be undermined because of the demand made by the Bangladesh in almost all bilateral talks.

#### **Financial and social implications of the fencing:**

Financial and social implication is another area of concerns regarding India Bangladesh border fencing. The border fencing has different impact on the social lives of the border lender. These issues itself question the very objectives of the fencing.

The Indo-Bangladesh border region is a densely populated one. A vast area of land could not be fenced due to the riverine and difficult hilly terrain. Most of the fencing in the riverine area gets submerged in flood every year and fencing gets destroyed. It increases the financial cost of the project. Again, due to border fencing, a vast area falls on the other sides of the fencing. People could not go to the area with their own wishes. To cultivating their land they have to depend on the border guard because they can go to the field only when the gate of the fencing is opened. The timing of the opening of the gate has impacted upon the cultivation of the land. The vast portion of the fence land in the Indo-Bangladesh border remain abandoned. As a result the fence Indian suffers economically.

The financial implications of the border fencing on the life of the people are another aspect which is ignored many times, due to the border fencing vast areas falling in no man's land. For example, in Tripura alone over 19,359 acres of land, including farmland, have fallen outside the fencing. The government had not provided compensation to the people whose land had fallen on the fence area. The fence land has lost the market value as it lost the potential purchaser. The economic life is destabilized by the fencing. Again the financial viability of the fencing is also questioned by the difficult terrain of the border region. The project was sanctioned at the cost of 13 billion but over the time cost has increased many folds. The government of India had already spent 5525.45 crore on the project<sup>4</sup>.

The border fencing also destabilizes the social life of the people residing on the border area. There is no protection for the people living on the no man's land. The villager who lives in the no man's land is totally cut from the mainstream and with constant threat as the two villages fall outside the barbed wire fence," (The Telegraph, 14 April 2010). People expressed anger and fear due to the border fencing. The fence d Indian people expressed: "We suffer from insecurity perpetually. We fear attacks by miscreants from across the attack. Besides, every time we have to visit markets or send our children to schools that have now gone across the frontier, we have to face the BSF men manning the border. They grill us every time. Besides, Bangladeshi

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4 It is till 2009, an information reveal in RTI seek by Anoop Prakash Awasthi, Chaitanya Safaya, Deeksha Sharma, Tanya Narulaand Satyajit Dey regarding India Bangladesh Border fencing Issue. URL: <http://www.ccsindia.org/nolandsman/> {Accessed 10 April 2011}



miscreants take away crop from our land which falls in that country now (The Times of India, 15 February 2011).” Over 8500 families living along the Indo-Bangladesh border have been affected due to erection of barbed wire fencing in Tripura along (Assam Tribune 23 September 2008).

The current scenario has created prison like-villages. The barbed wires have divided their homes, social lives, natural resources and means of livelihood, excluding them and forcing them into miserable subsistence. The wilful disregard of the border realities under the Indian state has created two categories of citizens, “mainland” and “fenced” Indians (Prakash and Menon 2011:34-35)

People are suffering in different ways from the fencing. They cannot go to their field as and when they required People have to take permission to travel the border roads in the dark. If someone fell sick at night and needed to be taken to the hospital by the road, they could not.

The lives of the fenced Indians are at the mercy of the gate timings which control their ingress and egress. The life cycle of the fenced villagers is dominated by the gate timings, which are from 6:00-7:00 am, and 9:00-10:00 am in the morning, and from 1:00-2:00 pm and again 4:00-5:00 pm in the afternoon. Their ingress into the Indian mainland is limited to these four hours in a day, and all entry and exit are recorded in a register. Their livelihood, social activities like marriages or recreation and even health issues are decided by the opening and closing of the gates. The fenced areas have no schools and the children are forced to attend mainland schools. If the school starts at 8:30 or 9:00 am, the child has to leave by 7:00 am or be perpetually late (Prakash and Menon 2011:35).

The situation of the people of the border areas is pathetic almost all the fence areas. An example can be cited here from the study of Prakash and Menon in case of Korimganj district, expressed by the villager

Earlier gate opening timings were morning 6:00 am to 6:00 pm, but now they are a few hours. Fencing has created enormous problems. Nobody gives us loans. The government does not give us grants; no roads, no Indira Awaas, no electricity. Bangladeshi thieves raid in nights and our BSF men do not help. These thieves

steal our cattle. No medical person visits us. In case of emergency, BSF men bring their vehicle. We have a drinking water problem; government should give us water by laying a pipeline; there is no other way. Work opportunities have been reduced after the fencing. If someone goes outside to work then how can he return in time? Rations, sugar, etc, are available in limited amount except during marriages. They think that we will send such commodities to Bangladesh. The rich have gone but poor are left. We cannot use our natural assets, we cannot sell our bamboo. We do not want to live here; we want to move to the other side. We should be given compensation and rehabilitated. I have half a bigha of agricultural land in the fenced area and four bigha outside the fences on the India side. I cannot construct a house there. Agricultural production is not sufficient to feed us even for a year, so we work in fencing to purchase the essentials. We are Indian citizens and our name is in the voters' list. The BSF company commander has issued identity cards to us. We showed the identity card to cast our vote. A couple of families from here have shifted and in such events, the BSF helps. We also help the BSF. This year we have given 100 bamboos to the BSF free of cost; a single bamboo costs Rs 70 (Prakash and Menon, 2011:35).

In the Indo-Bangladesh border social and family linkage has seen in both sides. Many families have been divided by the fencing. The social linkages along the border itself challenge the validity of the border. For example, during the festival times the border crossing is normal like open border.

Eid itself occasions an increased rate of border crossings in the days leading up to it: Bangladeshis in various parts of India make their way back across the border, and families in Prantapur and similar villages in the borderland with especially strong familial ties in neighboring villages in Bangladesh travel across to break the fast with their closest kin. This is, as it were, an open secret. 'This is the time when mayhem is in the air. What can you say to these people? How can we control all parts of the border? We can't just shoot at them [border crossers], not at this religious time.' On the eve of Eid-ul-Fitr, these words of the Company Commander stationed at Prantapur rang of desperation. The boat race itself marked a carnivalesque reprieve from border control. Despite the visible presence of uniformed and armed members of the BSF, both banks of the river, and the river itself, were crowded with spectators who had gathered from far and wide. With drums beating, music and announcements blaring on loudspeakers, and men, women and children bedecked in their festive best, it was a celebration in which Euphoria of transgression culminated. As we stood in the crowd, a group of young people from Prantapur who I had accompanied said, 'Didi [sister], today there is no fear. No ID card checks, no nothing – you can do whatever you like. Come and go across, take whatever you like, bring whatever you like. Who will stop whom? Just look at the crowds.' Their words captured the mood

of the moment – there was no doubts about the thrilling element of one-up manship in the open defiance of state border control that underlined the celebrations (Ghosh, 2011:57).

The people and their property are clearly at the mercy of another country as fencing impedes the exercise of sovereign jurisdiction by India. At places, fencing has divided the homesteads, fishponds and the village markets rendering people's life miserable. The Center does not have any rehabilitation scheme for the fenced Indian villagers (The Tribune 13 January 2009). So the border fencing which was supposedly to done stop the migration remains questionable both from financial and social point of view. The fence Indian pays for the security due to lack of proper lack of rehabilitation plan. Only effective rehabilitation policy can make the border fencing effective and reduce the social tension of the people

## CHAPTER-4

### **Conclusion:**

The closing years of the twentieth century have, no doubt, been dominated by issues involving borders. Every state claims the right to determine who shall be permitted to enter its territory and almost all exercise the right to set up restrictions on entry. The question of the settled and unsettled in and across the border or the cross border migration, has displayed the extreme sensitivity of the issue of security and insecurity in the post colonial state regarding in the politics of border (Banerjee 2010). Trans border population influx is being increasingly viewed as a challenge to the neo-liberal world order- a challenge that originated from combination of technological change, demographic growth, new notion of security are emerging on the basis of demographic resources and territory (Wiener 1983).

Large scale population movements across the border have become one of the defining characters of the post-Second World War global order. The history of the past 50 years in the region of South Asia showed that trans border and transnational migrations causes enormous political controversies. Migration has been so closely link to the issue of power, security and destiny of a state. Migration no longer remains simply an issue of demography or labor economic; it is now perceived as an issue concerning or threatening a nation's cultural consolidation (Samaddar 1999).

The cross border flows from Bangladesh to India are promoted by historical and social affinities, geographical continuity and economic imperative. Apart from political problems, environmental factors like water management and flood control have also contributed to homeless and consequently migration throughout south Asia. Flood action plan in Bangladesh shows the relations between flood in Bangladesh and foods discharges, eco- agriculture regions and flood intensity zone outside the political borders, land alienations, depletion of the natural resources, and fencing off area for military purposes and finally drought also prompt movements of people. People move when their survival is threatened and in such situation rigid border meant little. In such situation people questioned the nation form that challenge existence. If needed be they found illegal ways to tackle any obstacle that stood in

their path of moving when that made the difference between life and death (Samaddar 1999).

In order to check the illegal flow of migration India proposed the border fencing in Indo-Bangladesh border in 1986. Thought, India related the Indo-Bangladesh border fencing with the US-Mexico border fencing, it is not so. In America, border fencing is constructed by legal act. In other words, Fence Act of 2006 or Immigration Reform Act of 1996 allowed to do so. Along with this, they have strong Anti Immigration Policy and migration from Mexico to America is nationally recognized problem. On the other hand, proper monitoring agency about the progress of the work is done by US Border Patrol Agency. But, when we look at the Indo-Bangladesh border fencing, then it is found that it was initiated to check illegal migration in 1986 (Due to the vibrant Assam Movement), it is not empowered by law. There is no strong immigration law, or national migration commission to recognize migrants. Along with this, migration problem is not recognized as a national problem. In such situation, border fencing would not work effectively. On the other hand, Indian government has not shown seriousness in finishing the proposed work. The government is not able to deal properly the problems arising in the completion of the project due to no effective mechanisms. Still vast portion of the border remain open. Corruption on the part of the border fencing is also a dominant feature. In Mizoram, CBI is investigating the alleged corruption on the part of border fencing. Moreover, contractor also loot public money in the name of border fencing. In 1996, in West Bengal, according to the CAG audit report, more than Rs25 lakh was swindled by contractor without working. Besides, there is no effective vigilance system about the work of border fencing. All these raise questions about the fencing.

The associated problems of the Indo-Bangladesh border itself created problems for constructing the border fencing. As this border was created within six weeks of time before partition of British India, without following proper demarcation principles, controversies between India and Bangladesh persist even today. There are ethnic and social linkages along the border which complicated its effective management along with proper implementation of the fencing. The border displays the habitation of the people up to the zero line. Construction of the fencing in such place is difficult task. The Indo-Bangladesh Joint Border Guideline of 1975 does not allow fencing up to

150 yards from the zero line. In such situation, when India try to construct fencing, it faces huge protest even from Indians residing in the area. A strong protest is going on in Tripura about border fencing in such places. The same conditions are prevailing in other states also. On the other hand Indian government had not adopted proper rehabilitation policy to accommodate border fencing displaced people. Consequently, in such situation, if the government constructs fencing, people try to challenge it or bypass it. Construction of fencing in such place is only waste of the public money and challenges the life of these people.

Corruption in border crossing and innovative methods used by those who cross the border also play an important role in sustaining cross-border infiltration. Corruption along the border area is main obstacle to achieve the objectives of the border fencing. There are many evidences that corruption is rampant in India Bangladesh border area. If this practice is not strictly checked, border fencing lost its importance.

While dealing with the very purpose of the border fencing, it is necessary to lay importance on migration generating factors from Bangladesh. Without properly addressing migration generating factors, border fencing could not work. Therefore, by only putting border fencing it would not possible to say that migration has reduced. As Rights from the beginning of the twentieth century, migration of mainly peasants from East Bengal/Bangladesh, (cross the border) has been taking place. The population settled in the *chor* areas and border area is mostly of such immigrant origin. Opinion regarding whether inflow of illegal immigration still continues at a significant scale are varied but none are based on concrete data. The faster rate of population growth in border district which is sometimes cited as an indicator of continued influx of illegal migrants is at least, in part due, to the higher fertility rate. The high density of the population on the border area has made land increasingly scarce. Under such circumstances, a large inflowing population is unlikely to find vacant land to settle down. Even if the illegal inflow of the population continues to take place across the porous border, the migrants move up further interior places rather than settling in the border area. So by calculating the growth rate in the border area it could not say that migration has increased or reduced.

The border fencing is a dimension of prime concern in India-Bangladesh relations.

Bangladesh's stands on norms of 150 yards complicated the construction of the border fencing. Undemarcated boundary issues are another area of concern regarding Indo-Bangladesh Border. Well demarcated border on the ground is necessary to avoid border conflict among states. But the India Bangladesh border lacks this feature on many places. For example, the border in the Berubari sector in the West Bengal at Daikhata Mouza- 56 Khupudia-Singhapara, about 1.5 km long, has not yet been demarcated due to the differences of opinion between the Governments of India and Bangladesh-Comila Sector, in Tripura, with an area of 6 km has the same problem. The Lathitilaa/Damabari area in Assam with 2.5 km length is also a matter of concern as this area is under administrative control of Bangladesh while land revenue is being paid to the government of Assam. Though there had been various border agreements concluded between India and Pakistan and later with Bangladesh, since aftermath of the partition, they were unable to resolve these problems. India has 111 enclaves in Bangladesh (17,158.13 acres) and the latter has 51 enclaves (7,110.02 acres) inside India. That's why, undemarcated stretches, enclaves and adverse possession along the India-Bangladesh border have been causing constant friction between guarding the border forces. There are 2853.50 acres of Indian land under adverse possession of Bangladesh while 2154.50 acres of Bangladeshi land under adverse possession of India (Kamboj, 2006, 23-27). Although a tacit understanding regarding the existence of *de facto* boundary exists along these adverse possessions and undemarcated stretches, tensions do flare up occasionally. As rivers change its course over the time, it is impossible to maintain fencing in that place. When India constructed border fencing in such places, relations between them are threatened and border firing increases. The major incident of Tripura in 2005 was the result of India's construction of fencing in disputed place as claimed by Bangladesh. Without solving the border related disputes, construction of border fencing in such places generates ill will with Bangladesh.

Moreover, India-Bangladesh border fencing generates ill will between the two nations because of increasing border incident and border shooting at. Bangladesh complained that India is shooting Bangladeshi national in the border area indiscriminately. Odhikar has documented that 1000 Bangladeshi national has killed over the years as a result of cross border firing. As Bangladesh mostly defines its nationalism against India and Pakistan, any such effort bound to generate tension.

However, over the time, Bangladesh has recognized the India's border fencing and relaxed norms for constructing fencing in areas where it was not possible to build beyond 150 yards. The fencing which is constructed within zero line is guarded by both Indian security forces and BDR. The official level meeting between the BDR and BSF had reduced the conflict over the time. So it is said that though the relations had been affected previously due to border fencing it is not the case in the present time.

The border fencing has been opposed by Bangladesh from time to time as a defensive structure. Though the border fence issues come in almost every secretary or military level talks, the issue has now become normal. It is due to the change in the Government in Bangladesh. As the Sheikh Hassina government has good relations with India, so the matter has not soured owing the issue.

The border fencing has complicated the lives of the fenced Indian people. The current scenario has created prison like villages. In some places, fencing is constructed up to 900 meters along Indian territory. As a result, vast land remains in no man's land. The fence land has lost its market value. The fence Indian people do not have adequate facility and their life become miserable as a result. On the other word, their life is dominated by the security forces. Adequate facility to the fence Indian people and rehabilitation plans only can make fencing effective. So gates of the fencing should open according to the wishes of the farmer and adequate protection should provided to the fence Indian people.

Lack of the infrastructure in the border areas and their easy availability in the other side of the border make people to cross the border. This has also contributed in the process of smuggling. So the utmost priority of the government should to development of the adjacent to the border areas for better standard of their lives.

The local people of the areas should be empowered and made them aware about the consequences of the illegal migrations. So they should be provided with incentives at village levels so they are proactive in checking infiltration. Along with these, a strong anti migration laws should be adopted. Without strong anti migration law the migration cannot be stopped. It would not be easy to deport the migrants who come in to India without a strong law. So, immigration law or immigration commission to



determined migrants utmost urgency. Otherwise fencing which is supposed to protect the migration will be little value.

Migration happens due to the availability of job for them on the other and patronage they get due to the political leaders. If they are protected by the political leaders, neither the fencing nor the security personnels can cheek them. In such situation the fencing would not work properly and lost its value.

Protecting the riverine part of the border poses a special challenge. The border demarcation over the river is not entirely clear. On the other hand the *chor* islands spreading along the border some of which fall on India and some in Bangladesh, complicate the process of guarding the border. In the rainy session most of these get submerged and some of them eroded. Once the water recedes and old char may partly or fully disappear and new one may surface. Moreover the cultural continuity of the inhabitants of the Indian and Bangladeshi has complicated policing of these areas which are, in any case loosely administered and thinly policed owing the problems of poor accessibility. As the riverine border is an important route to cross the border, the river police should be well equipped; otherwise the fencing will have little value. As the area is considered high ground for infiltration, checking it is very important. The river route is used as an illegal cattle smuggling. The Mankachar border area in Dhubri District is used as transit point for the illegal cattle traders. Huge number of cattle brought mostly from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are illegally sent to Bangladesh through this border. The cattle are brought to border by road. Under the cover of darkness, they are led to river where they swim across the border to Bangladesh soil. Therefore tight vigilance on the river route is essential.

Policing is severely handicapped in the border areas due to the poor transport and communication infrastructure. Indeed the char islands are practically un-policed. Therefore there is urgent requirement to modernize the police force, and equip them with the latest equipments.

Construction of the border fencing, is however, by and large hailed by the local population as a positive development. Wherever fencing have been put up, incursions by the criminal elements from across the border have become difficult. Incident of

theft and dacoity by elements from across the border have reportedly come down sharply due to the border fencing.

This chapter can be concluded that the border fencing is not properly implemented. It was initiated without taking concern of the ground reality or addressing the vital issue. In such situation, completion along with effectiveness remains questioned. Though, the border is, by and large, hailed by the local population as a positive development, it will not be effective measure if the other concerns of migration addressed.

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## THE BENGAL BOUNDARY COMMISSION

By the Indian Independence Act, 1947, as from August 15th, 1947, two independent Dominions were set up in India, to be known respectively as India and Pakistan. According to Section 2 (2), it was provided that the territories of Pakistan should be inter alia the territories which, on the appointed day, were included in the Province of East Bengal, as constituted under Section 3. It was laid down in this section that the Province of Bengal, as constituted under the Government of India Act 1935, should cease to exist and that there should be constituted in lieu thereof two new Provinces, to be known respectively as East Bengal and West Bengal. The boundaries of the New Province of East Bengal should be such as may be determined, whether before or after the appointed day, by the award of a boundary commission appointed or to be appointed by the Governor General in that behalf, and the expression "award" should mean, in relation to boundary commission, the decisions of the Chairman of that commission contained in his report to the Governor General at the conclusion of the commission's proceedings. The Commission, known as the Bengal Boundary Commission, was constituted by the Governor General on June 30th, 1947. The Commission presented to the Governor General the following two reports dated the 12th and 13th August, 1947, respectively:

### REPORT OF THE BENGAL BOUNDARY COMMISSION

To

His Excellency the Governor General

1. I have the honour to present the decision and award of the Bengal Boundary Commission, which, by virtue of section 3 of the Indian Independence Act, 1947, is represented by my decision as Chairman of that Commission. This award relates to the division of the Province of Bengal, and the Commission's award in respect of the District of Sylhet and areas adjoining thereto will be recorded in a separate report.
2. The Bengal Boundary Commission was constituted by the announcement of the Governor General, dated the 30th of June, 1947, Reference No. D50/7/47R. The members of the Commission thereby appointed were

Mr. Justice Bijan Kumar Mukherjea,

Mr. Justice C. C. Biswas,

Mr. Justice Abu Saleh Mohamed Akram, and

Mr. Justice S. A. Rahman.

I was subsequently appointed Chairman of this Commission

3. The terms of reference of the Commission, as set out in the announcement were as follows: —

"The Boundary Commission is instructed to demarcate the boundaries of the two parts of Bengal on the basis of ascertaining the contiguous areas of Muslims and non-Muslims. In doing so, it will also take into account other factors."

We were desired to arrive at a decision as soon as possible before the 15th of August.

4. After preliminary meetings, the Commission invited the submission of memoranda and representations by interested parties. A very large number of memoranda and representations was received.
5. The public sittings of the Commission took place at Calcutta, and extended from Wednesday the 16th of July 1947, to Thursday the 24th of July 1947, inclusive, with the exception of Sunday the 20th of July. Arguments were presented to the Commission by numerous parties on both sides, but the main cases were presented by counsel on behalf of the Indian National Congress, the Bengal Provincial Hindu Mahasabha and the New Bengal Association on the one hand, and on behalf of the Muslim League on the other. In view of the fact that I was acting also as Chairman of the Punjab Boundary Commission, whose proceedings were taking place simultaneously with the proceedings of the Bengal Boundary Commission. I did not attend the public sittings in person, but made arrangements to study daily the record of the proceedings and all material submitted for our consideration.
6. After the close of the public sittings, the remainder of the time of the Commission was devoted to clarification and discussion of the issues involved. Our discussions took place at Calcutta.
7. The question of drawing a satisfactory boundary line under our terms of reference between East and West Bengal was one to which the parties concerned propounded the most diverse solutions. The province offers few, if any, satisfactory natural boundaries, and its development has been on lines that do not well accord with a division by contiguous majority areas of Muslim and non-Muslim majorities.

8. In my view, the demarcation of a boundary line between East and West Bengal depended on the answers to be given to certain basic questions which may be stated as follows: —

(1) To which State was the City of Calcutta to be assigned, or was it possible to adopt any method of dividing the City between the two States?

(2) If the City of Calcutta must be assigned as a whole to one or other of the States, what were its indispensable claims to the control of territory, such as all or part of the Nadia River system or the Kulti rivers, upon which the life of Calcutta as a city and port depended?

(3) Could the attractions of the Ganges-Padma-Madhumati river line displace the strong claims of the heavy concentration of Muslim majorities in the districts of Jessore and Nadia without doing too great a violence to the principle of our terms of reference?

(4) Could the district of Khulna usefully be held by a State different from that which held the district of Jessore?

(5) Was it right to assign to Eastern Bengal the considerable block of non-Muslim majorities in the districts of Maida and Dinajpur?

(6) Which State's claim ought to prevail in respect of the Districts of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri, in which the Muslim population amounted to 2.42 per cent, of the whole in the case of Darjeeling, and to 23.08 per cent, of the whole in the case of Jalpaiguri, but which constituted an area not in any natural sense contiguous to another non-Muslim area of Bengal?

(7) To which State should the Chittagong Hill Tracts be assigned, an area in which the Muslim population was only 3 per cent, of the whole, but which it was difficult to assign to a State different from that which controlled the district of Chittagong itself?

9. After much discussion, my colleagues found that they were unable to arrive at an agreed view on any of these major issues. There were of course considerable areas of the Province in the south-west and north-east and east, which provoked no controversy on either side; but, in the absence of any reconciliation on all main questions affecting the drawing of the boundary itself, my colleagues assented to the view at the close of our discussions that I had no alternative but to proceed to give my own decision.

10. This I now proceed to do: but I should like at the same time to express my gratitude to my colleagues for their indispensable assistance in clarifying and discussing the difficult questions involved. The demarcation of the boundary line is described in detail in the schedule which forms Annexure A to this award, and in the map attached

thereto, Annexure B. The map is annexed for purposes of illustration, and if there should be any divergence between the boundary as described in Annexure A and as delineated on the map in Annexure B, the description in Annexure A is to prevail.

11. I have done what I can in drawing the line to eliminate any avoidable cutting of railway communications and of river systems, which are of importance to the life of the province: but it is quite impossible to draw a boundary under our terms of reference without causing some interruption of this sort, and I can only express the hope that arrangements can be made and maintained between the two States that will minimize the consequences of this interruption as far as possible.

NEW DELHI;

The 12th August, 1947.

Cyril RADCLIFFE

The schedule

(Annexures A and B)

ANNEXURE A

1. A line shall be drawn along the boundary between the Thana of Phansidewa in the District of Daijeeling and the Thana Tetulia in the District of Jalpaiguri from the point where that boundary meets the Province of Bihar and then along the boundary between the Thanas of Tetulia and Rajganj; the Thanas of Pachagar and Rajganj, and the Thanas of Pachagar and Jalpaiguri, and shall then continue along the northern corner of the Thana Debiganj to the boundary of the State of Cooch-Bihar. The District of Daijeeling and so much of the District of Jalpaiguri as lies north of this line shall belong to West Bengal, but the Thana of Patgram and any other portion of Jalpaiguri District which lies to the east or south shall belong to East Bengal.

2. A line shall then be drawn from the point where the boundary between the Thanas of Haripur and Raiganj in the District of Dinajpur meets the border of the Province of Bihar to the point where the boundary between the Districts of 24 Parganas and Khulna meets the Bay of Bengal. This line shall follow the course indicated in the following paragraphs. So much of the Province of Bengal as lies to the west of it shall belong to West Bengal. Subject to what has been provided in paragraph 1 above with regard to the Districts of Daijeeling and Jalpaiguri, the remainder of the Province of Bengal shall belong to East Bengal.

3. The line shall run along the boundary between the following Thanas:

Haripur and Raiganj; Haripur and Hemtabad; Ranisankail and Hemtabad; Pirganj and Hemtabad; Pirganj and Kaliganj; Bochaganj and Kaliganj; Biral and Kaliganj; Biral and Kushmundi; Biral and Gangarampur; Dinajpur and Gangarampur; Dinajpur and Kumarganj; Chirirbandar and Kumarganj; Phulbari and Kumarganj; Phulbari and Balurghat. It shall terminate at the point where the boundary between Phulbari and Balurghat meets the north-south line of the Bengal-Assam Railway in the eastern corner of the Thana of Balurghat. The line shall turn down the western edge of the railway lands belonging to that railway and follow that edge until it meets the boundary between the Thanas of Balurghat and Panchbibi.

4. From that point the line shall run along the boundary between the following

Thanas:

Balurghat and Panchbibi; Balurghat and Joypurhat; Balurghat and Dhamairhat; Tapan and Dhamairhat; Tapan and Pathnitala; Tapan and Porsha; Bamangola and Porsha; Habibpur and Porsha; Habibpur and Gomastapur; Habibpur and Bholahat; Malda and Bholahat; English Bazar and Bholahat; English Bazar and Shibganj; Kaliachak and Shibganj; to the point where the boundary between the two last mentioned thanas meets the boundary between the districts of Malda and Murshidabad on the river Ganges.

5. The line shall then turn south-east down the River Ganges along the boundary between the Districts of Malda and Murshidabad; Rajshahi and Murshidabad; Rajshahi and Nadia; to the point in the north-western corner of the District of Nadia where the channel of the River Mathabhanga takes off from the River Ganges. The District boundaries, and not the actual course of the River Ganges, shall constitute the boundary between East and West Bengal.

6. From the point on the River Ganges where the channel of the river Mathabhanga takes off the line shall run along that channel to the northernmost point where it meets the boundary between the Thanas of Daulatpur and Karimpur. The middle line of the main channel shall constitute the actual boundary.

7. From this point the boundary between East and West Bengal shall run along the boundaries between the Thanas of Daulatpur and Karimpur; Gangani and Karimpur; Meherpur and Karimpur; Meherpur and Tehatta; Meherpur and Chapra; Damurhuda and Chapra; Damurhuda and Krishnaganj; Chuadanga and Krishnaganj; Jibannagar and Krishnaganj; Jibannagar and Hanskhali; Meheshpur and Hanskhali; Meheshpur and Ranaghat; Meheshpur and Bongaon; Jhikargacha and Bongaon; Sarsa and Bongaon; Sarsa and Gaighata; Gaighata and Kalarao; to the point where the boundary between those thanas meets the boundary between the districts of Khulna and 24 Parganas.

8. The line shall then run southwards along the boundary between the Districts of Khulna and 24 Parganas, to the point where that boundary meets the Bay of Bengal.

## REPORT OF THE BENGAL BOUNDARY COMMISSION

### (SYLHET DISTRICT)

To

His Excellency the Governor General.

1. I have the honour to present the report of the Bengal Boundary Commission relating to Sylhet District and the adjoining districts of Assam. By virtue of Section 3 of the Indian

Independence Act, 1947, the decisions contained in this report become the decision and award of the Commission.

2. The Bengal Boundary Commission was constituted as stated in my report dated the 12th of August, 1947, with regard to the division of the Province of Bengal into East and West Bengal. Our terms of reference were as follows: —

"The Boundary Commission is instructed to demarcate the boundaries of the two parts of Bengal on the basis of ascertaining the contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims. In doing so, it will also take into account other factors. "In the event of the referendum in the District of Sylhet resulting in favour of amalgamation with Eastern Bengal, the Boundary Commission will also demarcate the Muslim majority areas of Sylhet District and the contiguous Muslim majority areas of the adjoining districts of Assam."

3. After the conclusion of the proceedings relating to Bengal, the Commission invited the submission of memoranda and representations by parties interested in the Sylhet question. A number of such memoranda and representations was received.

4. The Commission held open sittings at Calcutta on the 4th, 5th and 6th days of August 1947, for the purpose of the hearing arguments. The main arguments were conducted on the one side by counsel on behalf of the Government of East Bengal and the Provincial and District Muslim Leagues; and on the other side, by counsel on behalf of the Government of the Province of Assam and the Assam Provincial Congress Committee and the Assam Provincial Hindu Mahasabha. I was not present in person at the open sittings as I was at the time engaged in the proceedings of the Punjab Boundary Commission which were taking place simultaneously, but I was supplied with the daily record of the Sylhet proceedings and with all material submitted for the commission's consideration. At the close of the open sittings, the members of the Commission entered into discussions with me as to the issues involved and the decisions to be come to. These discussions took place at New Delhi.

5. There was an initial difference of opinion as to the scope of the reference entrusted to the Commission. Two of my colleagues took the view that the Commission had been given authority to detach from Assam and to attach to East Bengal any Muslim majority areas of any part of Assam that could be described as contiguous to East Bengal, since they construed the words "the adjoining districts of Assam" as meaning any districts of Assam that adjoined East Bengal. The other two of my colleagues took the view that the Commission's power of detaching areas from Assam and transferring them to East Bengal was limited to the District of Sylhet and contiguous Muslim majority areas (if any) of other districts of Assam that adjoined Sylhet. The difference of opinion was referred to me for my casting vote, and I took the view that the more limited construction of our terms of

reference was the correct one and that the "adjoining districts of Assam" did not extend to other districts of Assam than those that adjoined Sylhet. The Commission accordingly proceeded with its work on this basis.

6. It was argued before the Commission on behalf of the Government of East Bengal that on the true construction of our terms of reference and section 3 of the Indian Independence Act, 1947, the whole of the District of Sylhet at least must be transferred to East Bengal and the Commission had no option but to act upon this assumption. All my colleagues agreed in rejecting this argument, and I concur in their view.

7. We found some difficulty in making up our minds whether, under our terms of reference, we were to approach the Sylhet question in the same way as the question of partitioning Bengal, since there were some differences in the language employed. But all my colleagues came to the conclusion that we were intended to divide the Sylhet and adjoining districts of Assam between East Bengal and the Province of Assam on the basis of contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims, but taking into account other factors, I am glad to adopt this view.

8. The members of the Commission were however unable to arrive at an agreed view as to how the boundary lines should be drawn, and after discussion of their differences, they invited me to give my decision. This I now proceed to do.

9. In my view, the question is limited to the districts of Sylhet and Cachar, since of the other districts of Assam that can be said to adjoin Sylhet neither the Garo Hills nor the Khasi and Jaintia Hills nor the Lushai Hills have anything approaching a Muslim majority of population in respect of which a claim could be made.

10. Out of 35 thanas in Sylhet, 8 have non-Muslim majorities; but on these eight, two—Sulla and Ajmiriganj (which is in any event divided almost evenly between Muslims and non-Muslims), are entirely surrounded by preponderatingly Muslim areas, and must therefore go with them to East Bengal. The other six thanas comprising a population of over 5,30,000 people stretch in a continuous line along part of the southern border of Sylhet District. They are divided between two sub-divisions, of which, one, South Sylhet, comprising a population of over 5,15,000 people, has in fact a non-Muslim majority of some 40,000; while the other, Karimganj, with a population of over 5,68,000 people, has a Muslim majority that is a little larger.

11. With regard to the District of Cachar, one thana, Hailakandi, has a Muslim majority and is contiguous to the Muslim thanas of Badarpur and Karimganj in the District of Sylhet. This thana forms, with the thana of Katlichara immediately to its south, the sub-division of Hailakandi; and in the sub-division as a whole Muslims enjoy a very small



majority being 51 per cent, of the total population. I think that the dependence of Katlichara on Hailakandi for normal communications makes it important that the area should be under one jurisdiction, and that the Muslims would have at any rate a strong presumptive claim for the transfer of the Sub-division of Hailakandi, comprising a population of 1,66,536, from the Province of Assam to the Province of East Bengal.

12. But a study of the map shows, in my judgment, that a division on these lines would present problems of administration that might gravely affect the future welfare and happiness of the whole District, not only would the six non-Muslim thanas of Sylhet be completely divorced from the rest of Assam if the Muslim claim to Hailakandi were recognised; but they form a strip running east and west whereas the natural division of the land is north and south and they effect an awkward severance of the railway line through Sylhet, so that, for instance, the junction for the town of Sylhet itself, the capital of the district, would lie in Assam, not in East Bengal.

13. In those circumstances I think that some exchange of territories must be effected if a workable division is to result. Some of the non-Muslim thanas must go to East Bengal and some Muslim territory and Hailakandi must be retained by Assam. Accordingly I decide and award as follows: — A line shall be drawn from the point where the boundary between the Thanas of Patharkandi and Kulaura meets the frontier of Tripura State and shall run north along the boundary between those Thanas, then along the boundary between the Thanas of Patharkandi and Barlekha, then along the boundary between the Thanas of Karimganj and Barlekha, and then along the boundary between the Thanas of Karimganj and Beani Bazar to the point where that boundary meets the River Kusiya. The line shall then turn to the east taking the River Kusiya as the boundary and run to the point where that river meets the boundary between the Districts of Sylhet and Cachar. The centre line of the main stream or channel shall constitute the boundary. So much of the District of Sylhet as lies to the west and north of this line shall be detached from the Province of Assam and transferred to the Province of East Bengal. No other part of the Province of Assam shall be transferred.

14. For purposes of illustration a map\* marked A is attached on which the line is delineated. In the event of any divergence between the line as delineated on the map and as described in paragraph 13, the written description is to prevail.

NEW DELHI;

The 13th August, 1947.

Cyril RADCLIFFE

Source: **Boundary disputes between India and Pakistan relating to the interpretation of the report of the Bengal Boundary Commission** 26 January 1950 VOLUME XXI pp. 1-51

The Photographs presented below are from West Tripura.



Border fencing on the zero line



The photograph shows the Indo- Bangladesh sub-border pillar. Men standing inside the Indian Territory.

The other side is Bangladesh. The village seen in the picture is in Bangladesh.



The main border pillar separating India and Bangladesh.



The border runs through the middle of the house. India Bangladesh sub border pillar in Sonamora of west Tripura



The men standing on the India side of the border. The opposite side is in Bangladesh. The pillar is in Zero line of the India Bangladesh border.



The situation of border in West Tripura Sonamora Block. This fencing is on Fencing in 150 yards of Indian territory.



Border fencing in Dhubri District



Border fencing in Tripura.



BSF guarding the open border





Man standing nearby the India Bangladesh border pillar running through his house.

