

Emerging Indo-Bangladesh Military Relations: An Analysis

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Abstract:- Since 1971, India has had a close relationship with Bangladesh. Both nations' relation has anxiety after 1975. Later it came to cordial government initiated by Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in 2010. India always wishes to continue with its outstanding relations with Bangladesh. To strengthen defence cooperation, India made a "Neighbourhood First" policy. To boost joint understanding between Indo-Bangladesh many bilateral co-operations in all the fields extended frequently. Since 2014 onwards, for more expansion of friendly military relations, both nations are signed bilateral MoUs and regularly engaged in mutual Port Visits; Personnel Exchanges; Staff Talks and Interactions; Exercises with Armed forces; Maritime Assistance; Operational Interactions and High-Level Maritime Strategic Interactions to enhance inter-operability and lift up of mutual defence cooperation's. This paper gives an outline of emerging India's military relationship with Bangladesh in detail.

Keywords:- BCG, BIMSTEC, Exercise SAMPRITI, HADR Exercise, Joint Maritime Cooperation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Indian military leaders won various great victories against foreign troops. King Porus, Chandra Gupta Maurya, Rajaraja Chola –I, Rajendra -I, Prithviraj, Krishnadeva Raya and SHFJ Manekshaw are some vigorous sampling challengers who fought against enemies with brave and courage with various war strategies. In the future war may be too short time; war technology and weapons are too advance; reaction time also very less, and sacrifices of lives on the battlefield for the nation also may more but the development of international relations diplomatic deals and foreign policy play a significant role.¹ Rajaraja Chola –I have an amazing ruler who destroyed the Chera ruler Bhaskara Ravivarman Tiruvadi Naval power in Kandalursalai and established a new beginning of the Chola power in the South. Also his son Rajendra -I was able to be successful the in Naval Campaign South East Asia and controlled the kingdom of Srivijaya and cleared a trade relationship with China.²

The topographical sites and connectivity of Indian states create challenges on the development and security fronts. India has 15,106.7 kilometres (km) of land border³ and 7,516.6 km of coastline as well as 1197 Island territories.⁴ Out of the total border of India, its broader border shares with Bangladesh by 4,096.7 km. The Indian side of the Indo-

Bangladesh border passes through West Bengal by 2216.7 km; Tripura by 856 km; Meghalaya by 443 km; Mizoram by 318 km and Assam by 263 km; The entire border consists of plains, riverine belts, hills and jungles. The area is heavily populated and is cultivated up to the border.⁵ India wishes to continue with its outstanding relations with Bangladesh as a neighbour, strengthen defence security cooperation and made a pillar "Neighbourhood First" policy. India and Bangladesh's bilateral co-operations in all the fields extended such as of Annual Defence Dialogue, Staff Talks, Training Courses, High-Level exchanges, visits etc. is now in place to facilitate engagements between both Armed Forces. We discuss this "Emerging Indio-Bangladesh military Relation: An Analysis"⁶ in the succeeding paragraphs.

➤ Objectives

The main objectives of this research study concentrate:

- To review the existing literature of the study area.
- To find Maritime Security with Bangladesh.
- To examine IN and ICG mutual visits; personnel exchanges; High-Level Maritime Strategic interactions and cooperation etc.
- To analyse India's Maritime Exercises with Bangladesh.
- To examine Naval Assistance with India and Bangladesh.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The understudy research paper has been focused on systematic and analytical. Through the approach of research methodology, vital evidences are collected. For this research, mostly primary sources like the Government of India, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Home Affairs Annual Reports and Sainik Samachar information are incorporated. Also, secondary sources like published research papers and books have been analysed and incorporated. The collected data is tubulated and utilized in a persuasive way for the maritime relation study. Similarly, the scrutiny of the recent literature provides a solid base for India's military relationship with Bangladesh.

III. INDO-BANGLADESH VISIT AND BORDER POST

➤ Bangladeshi Visit to India

Since 1971, India has had a close relationship with Bangladesh. Both nations have had an anxious relationship after the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman in 1975. Later it came to cordial government by Indian Prime Minister

Manmohan Singh and Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Also, a positive relationship continued. But, 'Visa issue works as a major impediment in elevating Bangladesh-India relations at people to people contact level'⁷. According to statistical data, Bangladeshi Immigration visited India from

2014-15 to 2018-19 detailed⁸ as in Table 1. In 2014-15, Bangladeshi nationalists visited India only 7.53% but, in 2018-19 it hopped to 20.94 % and maintained a cordial relationship. It boosts the relationship between both friendly nations.

Table 1: Bangladeshi Visited India Since 2014-15

Ser. No.	Year / Duration	Total Number of Foreigner Visited India	Bangladeshi Visited in India	Percentage of Bangladeshi Visited in India
1	2014-15	69,67,601	5,24,923	7.53%
2	2015-16	76,79,099	9,42,562	12.27%
3	2016-17	88,04,441	13,80,409	15.67%
4	2017-18	1,00,66,401	21,55,711	21.41%
5	01.01.2018-31.03.2019	1,37,30,282	28,76,064	20.94%

➤ *Homeland and Border Security Management*

Homeland Security in India is spread across Central, State Governments and Private sectors. The major segments of homeland security are Critical Infrastructure Protection, Paramilitary, Police & Urban Area Security, Ground Transportation, Port & Maritime Security, Cyber Security, Border Security Management etc. The total budget allocation for Union Home Ministry for 2016-17 was Rs 92,170 Crores; in 2017-18 was Rs.97,187 Crores;⁹ in 2018-19 was 1,07,573 Crores¹⁰ and in 2019-20 is 1,03,927 Crores. A larger amount of this allocation was expended for the modernisation of Police Forces and Border Security.¹¹ Which include border management solutions requirements along India-Pakistan and India-Bangladesh. Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) is planning to address the Border Management solution requirements as part of the Homeland Security business.¹² A three-tier mutual institutional mechanism was set up between India and Bangladesh in 1994 to resolve security and border management problems. The first level is at Director General (DG), Border Security Force (BSF) and DG, Border Guards, Bangladesh (BGB) level. The second is a Joint Working Group (JWG) at the level of Joint Secretaries of both countries and the third is at the Home Secretary level.¹³

➤ *Border Out Posts*

Indian Armed Forces and Para Military forces are protecting land, Air and Marine boundaries. In Bangladesh boundaries, Indian Border Security Force (BSF) are deployed in 24x7 atmosphere conditions. Border Out Posts (BOPs) are the main workstation of the BSF. These defence outposts with a specified area of responsibility are established along the entire land borders. The BOPs are to prevent trans-border criminals, infiltration and aggressive elements activities of interruption/ infringement besides boundary violations. BOP is providing with the essential setup for living accommodation, logistic support and combat functions. At present, 1011 BOPs are held by BSF along the Indo-Bangladesh Border (IBB). Also, a proposal for the

construction of 326 Composite BOPs is to be constructed along the IBB has targeted.¹⁴

➤ *Fencing*

For good communication and operational flexibility of BSF in border areas, a total of 3660.7 km of border roads have been constructed. Also, to control the infiltration, smuggling and other anti-national activities from across the IBB. The Government has undertaken the construction of fencing along this border. Out of the total length of IBB, around 3052.014 km has been covered by a physical barrier. The remaining about 1044.686 km will be covered by physical and nonphysical barriers.¹⁵

IV. MARITIME COOPERATION AND MILITARY EXERCISES

➤ *Maritime Cooperation*

Indian Navy (IN) and Indian Coast Guard (ICG) have been fully responsible to protect Indian Ocean Region (IOR) in multiple ways. To boost communal understanding, India has frequently conducted mutual Port Visits; Personnel Exchanges; Staff Talks and Interactions; Exercises with Foreign Navies; Maritime Assistance; Operational Interactions and High-Level Maritime Strategic Interactions, cooperation, and inter-operability¹⁶ with friendly countries.

➤ *High-Level Meeting*

High-Level Maritime Strategic Interactions are frequently held with friendly countries to expand tactical communication, share maritime strategic perceptions and review measures for maritime cooperation. High-Level Meeting (HLM) between ICG and Bangladesh Coast Guard (BCG) delegation was alternatively conducted by India and Bangladesh. The meeting focused on developing operational and training linkages between the two Coast Guards. A glimpse of details of HLM conducted since 2015 is as under:

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Year	Host	Participant	HLM Duration
2015 ¹⁷	ICG Headquarters (HQs), New Delhi	BCG	HLM on 5 th -10 th April 2015.
	BCG	ICG HQs, New Delhi	HLM 7 th -11 th on December 2015
2016 ¹⁸	ICG HQs, New Delhi	DG-BCG	HLM on 8 th December 2016
2017 ¹⁹	ICG, Kolkata	BCG	1 st Regional Commanders' Level Meeting on, 27 th -30 th August, 2017.
2018 ²⁰	ICG, Kolkata	BCG	2 nd Table Top Exercise between ICG-BCG on 26 th -30 th July, 2018
	ICG HQs, New Delhi	BCG	Annual HLM on 26 th -30 th August 2018.
	Dhaka, Bangladesh.	ICG	14 th HACGAM forum held on 23 rd -27 th October, 2018

➤ Foreign Ship Visits/Conference

IN and ICG ships, invites friendly countries to our ports to improve mutual cooperation with the development of friendly nations. Details of the Indian ship visited aboard and the Bangladeshi Coast Guard ship that visited India is as per Table 2.

Table 2 : ICG and BCG Port Visit

Ser. No.	Ship	Duration of Visit	Remarks
1	ICGS Vishwast ²¹	August 24 to September 2, 2016	Overseas Deployment of ICG Ships, Bangladesh
2	BCGS Tajuddin ²²	Chennai on 14 th -17 th February 2017.	“Mitrata Setu” ²³ with ICG at Goa and Chennai
3	Tajuddin, Bangladesh Coast Guard ²⁴	May 25-28, 2018 (Chennai) May 30 to June 2, 2018 (Vizag)	Professional interaction and exercises with ICG under the provisions of MoU

Also, India has conducted Annual National Conference on the Marine Medicine and Allied Sciences with foreign-friendly nations. Bangladesh also participated in the conference. The 33rd conference was conducted by INHS Asvini from 31st August to 1st September 2017 and around 8 Friendly Foreign Navies including Bangladesh Navy participated.²⁵ 34th conference conducted by INHS Asvini from 6th -7th October 2018. In the conference Bangladesh, Thailand and Brazil participated.²⁶ India is provided medical treatment to the armed forces personnel of friendly foreign countries. In 2018-19, India sanctioned medical treatment for 96 Bangladeshi Armed Forces Personnel's and treated 56 personnel till May 2019.²⁷

➤ Joint Exercises

Exercises with Foreign Navies at bilateral/multilateral levels to enhance our capabilities against international standards, develop mutual friendship and respect. The Indian Army is continuously engaging in combined training/exercises with friendly foreign countries. Operational Interactions with friendly maritime forces International Maritime Boundary Line Meetings, and Anti-Piracy cooperative mechanisms which enhance mutual understanding, operational coordination and maritime security cooperation. Since 1974, Bangladesh is having regular training interaction with IN and the same has seen a steady increase in the recent past. 'Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina played a decisive role in choosing an India-positive foreign policy orientation. She continues to play a leading role in the continuation of the policy option that was adopted at the beginning of her government in 2009'.²⁸ An Indo-Bangladesh Joint Exercise SANDHI-2010 was conducted at Jorhat from 3rd to 14th November 2010. The Bangladesh Navy(BN) participated in Indian Naval Exercise

MILAN 2010, in February 2010'.²⁹ The IN conducted 'Exercise SAMBANDH', from 24th to 27th October 2017, wherein the IN capabilities were showcased to 'Observers' from 18 Friendly Foreign Countries, which included, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Mauritius, Maldives, Seychelles, Mozambique, Oman, Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, UAE, Malaysia, Qatar, Tanzania and Madagascar have participated.³⁰ In Indian Ocean Region, the Indian Coast Guard conducted Search and Rescue Communication Exercises (SARCOMEX) with 12 countries including Bangladesh is one of the participants in 2018-19.³¹ Joint India-Bangladesh Naval Exercise 'CORPAT' was conducted in 2018.³²

➤ India - Bangladesh Special Forces Exercise SAMPRITI

India - Bangladesh Combined Special Forces Exercise SAMPRITI' series started in 2009. Exercise SAMPRITI' strengthens and broadens interoperability and collaboration between the Indian and Bangladesh Armies and special bonds between the two nations. The combined Special Forces mutual exercise SAMPRITI'-IV was conducted alternatively between India and Bangladesh. In 2014, this exercise was conducted in Jalalabad Cantonment, Shylet, Bangladesh from 19th to 30th October 2014. Thirty members of the Indian Army Special Forces participated in the exercise.³³ Subsequently, SAMPRITI'-V was conducted from 26th October to 8th November 2015 at Counter Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School (CIJWS), Vairengte and Binnaguri under Eastern Command to build and promote relations between the armies of India and Bangladesh.³⁴ The 6th joint exercise 'SAMPRITI' was held in Bangladesh from 6th to 20th November 2016.³⁵ Also, the 7th Indo-Bangladesh Platoon Level Training/ Exercise SAMPRITI'-VII was held at Umroi and Vairengte from 6th to 8th November 2017.³⁶ Exercise

SAMPRITI'-VIII, a joint military exercise participation of a Company of 9th Battalion the Rajputana Rifles from the Indian Army and the Company of 36 East Bengal Battalion, Bangladesh Army concluded at Tangail, Bangladesh on 2nd – 15th March 2019. It is the 4th Indo-Bangladesh exercise at Tangail, which was a close coordination and on-ground operational joint field training executed.³⁷ During the exercise, both Countries engaged in in-depth discussions to understand transnational terrorism develop interoperability and conduct joint tactical operations. This exercise is to develop mutual cooperation and enhance the defence potential of both nations.

➤ *HADR Exercise*

Indian Ocean Naval Symposium on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) was conducted at Headquarters Western Naval Command, Mumbai in August 2015. The event witnessed the participation of six member navies, which included Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Australia, Maldives and Oman. Also, a Table Top Exercise (TTE) was conducted based on a HADR contingency in the IOR³⁸ Based on the directives of the Prime Minister during the Combined Commanders Conference 2016, the Tri-Service HADR exercise has been coordinated by the IN on an annual basis. Annual Tri-Service HADR Joint exercise 2017, with the theme 'Response to Tsunami', was held at Karwar from 18th – 20th May, 2017. During the exercise Bangladesh along with three friendly foreign countries attended.³⁹

V. INDO- BANGLADESH MUTUAL VISITS

➤ *Mutual Visits*

Military-to-military interaction was at an all-time high, with visits by all three Services Chiefs from India to Bangladesh. Personnel Exchanges with maritime forces, training, experience, developing skills, construction of interoperability and solidification maritime negotiation. Bangladesh continued in regular training interaction with IN and the same has seen a steady increase in the recent past. 'General Muhammad Abdul Mubeen, Chief of Army Staff of Bangladesh visited India from 15th to 19th March 2010. Lt General Abdul Wadud, Armed Forces Division, Bangladesh visited from 31st October to 6th November 2010. The 2nd Army to Army Staff Talks were held at Dhaka from 20th to 23rd December 2010. An Indo-Bangladesh Joint Exercise SANDHI-2010 was conducted at Jorhat from 3rd to 14th November 2010'.⁴⁰ ICG ships Vajra and Raziya Sultana visited Chittagong, Bangladesh from 24th to 28th April 2011 for the 3rd Indo-Bangladesh Coast Guard Joint Exercise. During the visit of the ships, high-level interactions with Maritime Law Execution were held.⁴¹ IN ships of the 1st Training Squadron visited Thailand, Myanmar and Bangladesh in October-November 2016 as part of sea training of cadets.⁴²

The Chief of Naval Staff visited Bangladesh for the IONS HADR Exercise hosted by Bangladesh in November 2017. The Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Air Staff undertook bilateral visits in May 2017 and March-April, 2017 respectively. From Bangladesh, the Chief of Naval Staff, BN visited India from 26th to 31st August 2017 and the Chief of Army Staff, Bangladesh Army visited from 6th to 10th December 2017. Annual staff talks between the navies were held in January 2017, air force staff talks in May 2017 and army staff talks in January 2018. Military training and capacity building continues to be a cornerstone of bilateral cooperation. Indian armed forces personnel availed several training courses in Bangladesh during the year. Over 400 Bangladesh armed forces personnel trained in Indian military training institutions this year.⁴³ The Army Chiefs of the UK, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar visited India. A 'Conclave for Chiefs of BIMSTEC Countries' was also organised in India from September 15 to 16, 2018.⁴⁴ Bangladesh Naval Ship (BNS) Somudra Joy visited Visakhapatnam to the Eastern Naval Command on 4th September 2018 and a variety of professional interactions, cross-deck visits and social interactions between IN and BN personnel were conducted.⁴⁵ Also, a team of BN came to Southern Naval Command, Kochi on 13th -14th December 2018. The intention of the visit was to understand the methodology being adopted by the IN for the conduct of Operational Sea Training of ships. The team visited the Damage Control Training Facility at Seamanship School and Water Survival Training Facility at INS Garuda.⁴⁶ Annual Staff Talks between the Air Force, Navy and Army of India-Bangladesh were held during 22nd -24th July, 8th -10th August, and 1st-3rd November 2018 respectively. A delegation led by the Chief of Air Staff; Bangladesh Air Force visited India from 13th -19th October 2018. A delegation led by the Chief of Air Staff, visited Bangladesh from 11th - 14th February 2019.⁴⁷ Also a team of BNS Dhaleshwari of BNS a friendliness visited in Kochi from 1st to 4th February 2019. The team interacted over professional subjects of common interests to both navies and avails a wide range of advanced and Technical Specialisation courses for officers and sailors.⁴⁸

VI. INDO-BANGLADESH MOU, SEARCH AND RESCUE COORDINATION

➤ *Indo-Bangladesh MoU*

Indo-Bangladesh relations had troubled later after the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman in 1975. However, a positive bilateral relationship began by Sheikh Hasina's visit to India in 2010 and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's return visit to Dhaka in 2011.⁴⁹ Subsequently, during a two-day visit to Dhaka (6th- 7th June 2015), Bangladesh by the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, 22 bilateral documents were exchanged.⁵⁰ Also, a defence Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between ICG and Bangladesh Coast Guard (BCG) on 6th June 2015 for the establishment of a collaborative relationship to fight international illegal activities at sea and develop regional cooperation between the two Coast Guards.⁵¹ Also established Standard Operating Procedures in April 2017. For the two-day exercise 25th-26th, July 2017 combined team carried out a dummy Mass Rescue Operation training.⁵²

In April 2017, a bilateral MoU on Defence Cooperation was signed during the visit of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina to India. Both nations have agreed to set up Annual Defence Secretary level Tri-Services Staff Talks. In 2017, a delegation from Bangladesh NDC visited India in August 2017 and signing of MoUs between DSSC, Wellington, India and DSCSC, Mirpur, Bangladesh for Military Education Institutional linkages in the field of Strategic and Operational Studies of both countries for cooperation in the field of national security, development and strategic studies.⁵³ The annual Defence Dialogue with Bangladesh was held on 7th-8th May 2018 in New Delhi. An MoU was signed on 8th May 2018 on Academic Exchange and Cooperation between the Army Public Schools of India and Cantonment Public Schools and Colleges of Bangladesh Army. In 2018, the Indian Naval Chief along with a team visited Bangladesh from 25th to 28th June 2018.⁵⁴ Also, India and Bangladesh, 6th Home Minister Level Talks were held on 14th -15th July 2018 at Dhaka. This meeting discussed issues regarding security, border management, bilateral cooperation in counter-terrorism and checking insurgency including intelligence exchange, operationalisation and implementation. Also, a MoU was signed for Cooperation between Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy, Hyderabad and Bangladesh Police Academy, Sardah for capacity building.⁵⁵ During Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India, on 3rd - 6th October 2019, seven bilateral documents/MoU were exchanged including an MoU for providing a coastal Surveillance system for both nations.⁵⁶

➤ *India's Search and Rescue Coordination with Bangladesh*

India always Maritime Assistance to friendly nations, either on their request or by the humanitarian interest for specific requirements like hydrographic surveys, diving assistance, ordnance disposal, removal of wrecks, sealift of critical stores, search and rescue, and overseeing ship construction. In 2016, due to bad weather, in the North Bay of Bengal, 22 fishing boats with 285 crew were missing at sea from 9th to 20th August 2016. In this miserable condition, the Indian Coast Guard conducted a search and rescue operation with Bangladesh Coast Guard. IN this mission 257 Indian fishermen and 66 Bangladeshi fishermen were rescued.⁵⁷ In May 2017, after the effects of Cyclone MORA, in North East India coastal states and Bangladesh fishermen were in a critical situation at sea. In this grave condition, the ingeniously developed Indian Naval patrolling Ship Sumitra (P59) has deployed on duty in the Northern Bay of Bengal. Meanwhile, the rescue operation, the INS Sumitra saved 33 Bangladesh fishermen at sea 100 miles south of Chittagong.⁵⁸ An aftershock violation in the Rohingya state of Myanmar, refugees entered Bangladesh. For assistance, the Indian government by caring for refugees, two C-17 aircraft airlifted 107 tons of relief material aid from Delhi to Dhaka, Bangladesh on 14th-15th September 2017.⁵⁹ Also, INS Gharial loaded with 777 tons of various relief materials was handed over to the Bangladesh Government between 25th & 28th September 2017.⁶⁰

VII. CONCLUSION

After 1991 onwards and Indian foreign relations, constitutes a new beginning including its diplomatic relations with Israel and others.⁶¹ Similarly, it is observed that from 1971 until 2004, India has the foremost transaction partner with Bangladesh. The relationship between the two countries during this sensitive period showed both positive and negative signs. By utilizing opportunity, China's trade with Bangladesh has been diverse from 2002 onwards. In 2002, Bangladesh has a Defense Cooperation Agreement with China. Subsequently 2004, it was seen that Bangladesh has taken 80% of military instruments and got two 0356 diesel-electric submarines from China. Bangladesh also sought Chinese assistance in constructing a highway, proposed to assist nuclear power, training police staff, water management and formed the Economic and Trade Commission in 2016.⁶² Especially, China is providing duty-free access to more than 4,700 Bangladeshi products.⁶³ Also, Bangladesh heavily depends on Chinese arms to modernize its armed forces and lift up Bangladesh's naval capability in the Bay of Bengal. China's arms selling to Bangladesh also takes into account its motive of discouraging India's influence in South Asia. Therefore, India also needs to open more consolidated military ties with Bangladesh as well. After a long gap, both nations enhanced their contacts, mutual visits, joint exercises, selling military hardware and instigated the non-firing policy at the border. However, to prevent trans-border criminals and infiltration, India should speedily complete fencing work at the border area of West Bengal and the North-eastern states of Assam, Tripura and Meghalaya. Also, India should need to monitor maritime security at the coastal border of Bangladesh in her third eye.

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