



Banglar

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Banglar Manabdhikar Suraksha Mancha (MASUM) is primarily working and addressing the issue of torture and extra judicial killings in West Bengal and having more particular focus at Indo- Bangladesh bordering areas; but during this journey we confronted with other specific issues of Indo- Bangladesh bordering areas of West Bengal affecting the lives and liberty of the populace.



India and Bangladesh has a long drawn international border, the major portion of this international border is with Indian state of West Bengal. The border in actual term is not a natural one. This border is manmade due to political settlements in and after the independence. The reality is that the populace living along the sides of the international border has unique similarity in their socio-economic as well as religious identities. Every type of demarcation is in abundant in this international border. In few places it is barb wiring, in few it is pillar and in some of the part it is nothing. We have international borders with other friendly countries; Nepal and Bhutan, where the movements are not restricted with the extent practiced in Bangladesh border, reason better known to

champions of border and its security. The livelihood option is shrinking in both sides of the border as overwhelming majority of the populace are agrarian and agriculture is no more a better financial proposition, driving the populace for better options in cities and metropolises, the transition of human being is not less than forced migration and it is a reality for the populace of both the sides of the border.

The day to day lives of the people are with fear and deprivation with minimum guarantee for livelihood. In Indian part of the border majority of the people are living in penury without or minimum administrative or governmental deliverances. The problem related with demarcation of border is one of the major issue to reckon with, so far no consolidated border has been demarcated and people has to cross over the fence or border outpost to reach their agrarian fields for harvesting and cultivation, in few cases even they have to cross the fences and posts to attend nature's calls, even the pregnant women being restricted to visit nearby medical facilities during their childbirth as the BSF would regulate their labour. While during this they have to mortgage their citizenship identities to posted personnel of BSF. The administration or BSF are deciding the timings for entry and exit from their own land. The whole bordering roads is generally propagated as the property of the BSF; while in actuality the roads were constructed by Central Public Works Department (CPWD) for common use, the guards restricting movements of bonafide citizenry, making obscene remarks to womenfolk and school going girls and nevertheless suspicious about the whole gentry as smugglers or subversives. Another major problem created by positioning of BSF well inside the Indian territory, in some cases they even stationed at 10-15 Kilometers inside from actual international border, and fencing has been done not in actual border rather inside the Indian territory resulting immense troubles for the villagers to visit their agrarian lands and other facilities.

The civil administration is systemically encroaching on personal liberty of citizens by promulgating the section 144 of Criminal Procedure Code throughout the border for decades without any respite, the civil administration never thought its legalities, only nodded in BSF's illegitimate demand. In this regard MASUM made a complaint in 2007 but no action has been taken. MASUM referred case references where the apex court of this country vehemently said that the practice is illegal.

The poor irrigation facilities, continuous river erosion and other repeated calamities in various part of this border which is unattended by the civil and state authorities put the populace in distress. This entire context has further aggravated by the poor administrative inputs for betterment of the lives of the people.

The contextual part of the economic reality of unfeeling by the government machinery aggravated with stationing of unsympathetic force within the close proximity of civil habitation created many social and other forms of malice. Although, a miniscule section of the populace are indulged with illegal and illegitimate acts of smuggling and other activities; BSF makes it a point to justify their regular subjugation and inhumane torture. The evident forms of tortures are extra judicial killings and intense physical torture but the hidden issues of their arrogant acts and behaviour only can match foreign invaders in nature. In this regard one can swear for regular humiliation of women, coercion to the children affecting their regular life. The number of drop outs regarding the girl child from schools can exemplify the situation. The women are being constantly harassed by the personnel with their gesture, verbal abuses and in few cases devastating their modesty. In this situation a minor section of population are indulged with cross border trafficking as well as trafficking from the area as pawn in the hands of real kingpins with various influences to various level, and the Indo Bangladesh border became infamous for women trafficking as source, destination and transit to various places of our country as well as foreign countries, and it has become a real concern in South Asian context. The BSF personnel are not only involved with illegal and inhumane act, but really controlling the whole affairs and accepting favours from the miscreants and on the other hand providing them all possible assistance. It is absolutely impossible to perform any illegal act of smuggling and trafficking without the permission from BSF. BSF have their own rate chart for every illegal activity. In cases of illegal movements, BSF and their counterpart in Bangladesh; Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) are equally involved. They are receiving huge amount against these movements and poor people from both the parts of the border are forced to pay in their journey for better pasture as well as other genuine purposes. Many a times, Bangladeshi nationals are crossing the border with genuine requirements as medical treatment. In Baharampur the private nursing homes are being flooded with such patients and one can find similar scenario in Malda and Basirhat. There are border out posts throughout the border, and distance between two out posts are mere 2-3 kilometres, all are manned by BSF with sophisticated weaponry. So, it is unimaginable that all wrongs are being done without their consent and support.

The experts on border and social organizations; including MASUM is demanding for legalization of cross border trade through 'border hat'; modalities were discussed and fixed by the neighboring countries of India and Bangladesh; but we confronted with the lackadaisical and callous attitude of the government which ruined the whole initiative. The initiative must have the potential to minimize the cross border smuggling and related violence at Indo Bangladesh border. Secondly, the whole approach to solve the problem with law and order angle is also faulty and cosmetic. The bordering districts of West Bengal are underdeveloped and without adequate labour opportunity. The marginalized populace are constantly being migrated to different parts of the country and abroad and exposed with worst forms of exploitation; in this given socio-economic situation, large section of people are getting involved with cattle and other smuggling activities to fend their families and risking their lives. The government has to plan and strategies economic upliftment of this marginalized section for long term cease of this evil.

In this contextual situation MASUM facilitated formation of a conglomeration of bordering people named 'AmraSimantabasi' (We Bordering People) last year and on the eve of 17th General Election (Lok Sabha) we organized this Civic Symposium and invited major political parties to include these issues in their respective election manifestos and concerned organizations to give these issues further impetus.



The symposium was addressed by Mr. KalyanBandyopaddhay of Communist Party of India, Mr. Dibakar Bhattacharya of Communist Party of India (Marxist- Leninist), Mr. Sarafraz Ahmed of National Law University- Hyderabad and Mr. SasankaSekhar Deb of DakkhinBangoMatsyajibi Forum. The objectives of symposium was introduced by Mr. Biplab Mukherjee of MASUM and the session was conducted by Mr. Kirty Roy; Secretary of MASUM, he also delivered the concluding speech. Later, a set of resolutions were read and adopted by the house.

Apart from these mentioned representatives of political parties and civil society organizations, the victims of state atrocities and family members of extra judicially killed along with the affected persons of illegal

restrictions by BSF also shared their views. The district leaderships of AmraSimantabasi also shared their views with representatives from MASUM. Later, a thematic procession consisting the participants of symposium walked to Gandhi Statue from Kolkata Press Club

Following political parties have sympathized with the concerns and made their consent to address these issues in coming election propaganda.

1. Communist Party of India
2. Communist Party of India (Marxist- Leninist)