

India must stop border push-ins

Such attempts violate international norms and strain bilateral relations

A deeply troubling issue is unfolding along India's border with Bangladesh, which deserves far more attention than it has received. On Friday alone, India's Border Security Force (BSF) made at least ten separate attempts to push groups of people—men, women, and children—across the zero line into Bangladesh. The Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) thwarted each attempt. At least 88 people are now stranded in no-man's land. According to Human Rights Support Society, at least 166 people were pushed into Bangladesh in May alone.

These do not appear to be isolated or rogue incidents. Rather, they seem to reflect the blatant expression of a political campaign against particular groups. Since the Bharatiya Janata Party's recent electoral victories in West Bengal and Assam, anti-migrant rhetoric has hardened into policy. West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari announced a "detect, delete and deport" framework within days of taking office, directing police to hand detainees over to the BSF for removal and instructing district administrations to establish holding centres across border districts. In Assam, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma admitted to the practice, saying his government pushes alleged migrants across the border at night and at locations where Bangladeshi forces are absent, because formal deportation procedures are too slow.

International law does not permit one sovereign state to forcibly transfer people—regardless of their nationality or immigration status—into the territory of another without consent. Bangladesh's border authorities are therefore right to resist them and to insist on proper identity verification before accepting anyone. The BSF's assertion that the stranded individuals are Bangladeshi nationals is not, by itself, proof. India's own Supreme Court has previously found instances in which Indian citizens were wrongly pushed across the border, after being labelled as Bangladeshi. Besides, the push-in issue comes at a particularly sensitive moment in Bangladesh-India relations. Since the political transition in Dhaka and the formation of a BNP-led government under Prime Minister Tarique Rahman earlier this year, both countries have invested in a cautious reset. Meetings have taken place, and Indian authorities reportedly assured Dhaka that push-ins would cease. We now are witnessing the opposite of that assurance, thus giving way to avoidable diplomatic friction.

India may have legitimate concerns about irregular migration along its long and porous frontier. But the answer cannot be the extrajudicial transfer of human beings who may include stateless persons, trafficking victims, or individuals with lawful claims to remain in India. Therefore, New Delhi should make it clear that state governments and border authorities cannot circumvent established deportation procedures. Ongoing talks between Bangladesh and India should produce a credible framework for verification, repatriation, and legal cooperation. Equally, Indian officials should stop treating verification delays as a provocation for pushing people across the border. India's conduct along the Bangladesh border has become a test of its commitment to the rule of law and responsible neighbourly relations. At present, India is failing that test.

Every case of abuse should enrage us

Govt must deliver swift justice for all rape and abuse cases

Reports of serious human rights abuses overload the media daily, but perhaps no section of our society suffers as much abuse as women and children. They are not only unsafe in public but also in their own homes and in the company of relatives. The latest data from rights organisation Human Rights Support Society (HRSS) also validate this. The organisation found that at least 305 women and girls faced violence in May, up from 294 in April. In particular, rape cases rose to 83 last month, from 68 in April. Alarmingly, nearly 70 percent of the survivors and victims were aged under 18 years. Family-related violence left 63 women dead and 31 injured in May.

The HRSS report also highlights that six victims had died after rape. One of them was the eight-year-old schoolgirl in Dhaka's Pallabi, who was raped and then brutally killed by a neighbour on May 19. The incident sparked massive public outcry. Even the prime minister visited the grieving family and assured them that authorities would assist the court to ensure a speedy trial. Therefore, it would not be unfair to say that the strong public reaction prompted the authorities to take swift action to ensure justice. After all, the verdict on this case is set to be delivered today, less than three weeks after the child was murdered. But this raises the question: would we be seeing such a speedy trial if the child's case had not received the public outcry it did?

In the Pallabi case, the victim's father reportedly told the PM that his daughter suffered what she did because they were living in an unsafe environment, in response to which the PM assured him that better living arrangements would be ensured for the family. While it would be a much bigger task to carry out, we urge authorities to ensure that all children, irrespective of where they live, grow up in a safe environment. Children's safety must not be tied to social class, income, or locality.

Given the dire human rights situation across the country, the government must amplify its efforts to prevent abuse effectively. We also urge that laws and due procedures are evenly applied to all cases of sexual abuse against women and children, regardless of how widely discussed (or even dismissed) the incidents are on social media. The current atmosphere of fear that women and children live under in our country is unacceptable. Only consistent, decisive action from authorities can offer people the basic sense of safety that they so acutely lack.

Enough is enough. Time to take stern action against child rape



Professor Dr Mohammad Nurunnabi is director of the Center for Sustainability and Climate and associate dean for Quality Assurance at Prince Sultan University, Saudi Arabia, and an academic visitor at St Antony's College, University of Oxford. He can be reached at prof.mohammad.unescochair@gmail.com.

MOHAMMAD NURUNNABI

Following the rape and murder of eight-year-old Ramisa Akter in Dhaka's Pallabi area, Prime Minister Tarique Rahman visited the home of the victim, offering condolences and pledging swift justice. And as promised, the verdict on this case is set to be delivered by a special tribunal today, 19 days after the brutal incident, which is quite rare in Bangladesh's criminal justice system. It shows that the system can act with urgency when there is sufficient public attention and political will. Last year, eight-year-old Asiya's brutal rape and murder in Magura, which also sparked outrage across the country, saw the verdict delivered within 73 days after case filing.

However, there are hundreds of other child victims of reported and unreported cases of rape and murder, for whom justice remains elusive. Web-based platform Shishurai Shob documented 124 murders of children in Bangladesh in 2025, and found that only 35 resulted in formal charges, and just two ended in convictions. Often, the ritual that follows a heinous crime against a child is a flash of outrage, a street march or two, a televised promise of "zero tolerance," and then silence, a troubling sequence that fails to prevent the next attack in a system that often seems to only respond to pressure.

We must stop pretending this is normal. And we must stop telling ourselves that it will pass. The numbers no longer permit denial. According to the Bangladesh Mahila Parishad's 2025 annual report, 786 women and girls were raped or gang-raped last year—a 52.3 percent jump from 2024. Of those, 543 were children. The Human Rights Support Society (HRSS) found that of 6,305 rape victims recorded between 2020 and 2024, over 55 percent were under the age of 18. The HRSS's latest report shows rape cases rose by 22 percent between April and May this year. Besides, nearly 70 percent of rape victims/survivors were minors in May, up from 44 percent in April. This is a generational catastrophe in which our children are the principal targets.

The killing of Asiya in Magura in March 2025 should have been the moment the state woke up. The main accused's sentencing within months gave us the illusion of a working system.

But rapes did not stop. Early 2026 has already seen child rape figures rise sharply over the same period in 2024.

Why? Because we have built a country in which committing this crime is, statistically, almost free. A joint study by the Supreme Court of Bangladesh and BRAC, analysing 4,040 cases disposed of in the first half of 2025 across 32 districts, found that the conviction rate in cases of violence against women and children was just three percent. Seventy percent of the accused walked free. Fifteen districts recorded zero convictions. The average case took 1,370 days—

is, after charges are framed—from 180 to 90 days. The ambition is welcome but meaningless without the infrastructure to deliver it. Survivors need unglamorous things that deliver results on the ground rather than feel-good provisions that rarely work.

First, the number of Nari O Shishu Nirjatan Daman tribunals must be roughly tripled in high caseload districts, with dedicated forensic units attached. It is impossible to manage the existing caseloads with the number of judges currently assigned to these courts. Without judges, prosecutors, and trained investigators in adequate numbers, every reform will die at the court's door.

Second, it is crucial to further professionalise the investigation process. Too many cases collapse because forensic reports arrive late, evidence is mishandled, or police officers—mostly men—interview traumatised children in conditions that guarantee withdrawal. Every district needs a women-led specialised

criminal penalties for intimidation is overdue.

Fourth, end the culture of out-of-court "compromise." Many rape cases never reach a courtroom because village arbitration councils pressure families of victims to settle. This must be expressly criminalised in cases of sexual offences, with prosecutors empowered to pursue cases regardless of family withdrawal.

Fifth, address the demand side. Raising awareness of mandatory consent and respectful relationships from the secondary school upwards is not optional in a country where nearly 70 percent of rape victims are children. Curricula in madrasas and mainstream schools alike must teach, plainly, that the protection of a child's body is a non-negotiable moral and civic duty.

Sixth, properly fund all of the above. This is not a "women's issue." It is a safety issue of national importance as well as a test of whether Bangladesh still recognises its citizens as worth



FILE VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

nearly four years—to be resolved, although the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000 mandated disposal within 180 days. Over 35,000 cases have been pending in the system for more than five years. For the victims and their families languishing in uncertainty, this feels more like a waiting room with no exit than a justice system.

Passing tougher laws has not closed this gap, because the gap is not on paper. The Women and Children Repression Prevention (Amendment) Bill, 2026, passed in parliament in April, reduced the statutory time limit for disposal of rape cases—that

investigation cell, with mandatory rape-evidence protocols and statutory timelines for forensic reporting. Degrading and traumatising procedures like the two-finger test, banned by the High Court in 2018, must remain banned in practice rather than on paper.

Third, protect witnesses. Bangladesh has no operational witness protection law. Victims and their families face threats, *shalish* settlements imposed by local elites, and coercion from politically connected accused. A statutory framework including relocation, identity shielding in court, and

protecting. A country whose eight-year-olds cannot sleep safely in a relative's home or step outside home in the neighbourhood, unsupervised, has lost something no growth statistic can replace.

Press conferences that promise security and safety are not enough; the public demands a judicial system capable of convicting rapists and delivering justice swiftly, so that survivors do not have to spend years waiting for closure. This government—and all that follows—must understand that delivering swift justice is the bare minimum of societal decency, not an exceptional achievement.

Can our copyright law keep up with AI?



Samiul Huq is a doctoral researcher in law at City St George's, University of London, UK.

SAMIUL HUQ

Artificial intelligence is rapidly reshaping the digital world, and Bangladesh is increasingly becoming part of that transformation. Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, and Midjourney are now widely used to create written, visual, and software-based content with minimal human involvement. While these technologies offer significant opportunities, they also challenge the traditional foundations of copyright law, which has historically been built to safeguard human labour, creativity, and originality.

Although Bangladesh's Copyright Act, 2023 modernised several aspects of digital copyright protection, it remains largely silent on the growing problem of AI-generated work and the resulting questions concerning authorship, originality, and accountability.

Modern copyright law is fundamentally built upon the assumption that creative works originate from human intellectual activity. International copyright frameworks such as the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works and the TRIPS Agreement implicitly assume the existence of human authorship, without acknowledging mechanical or automated authorship.

J.A.L. Sterling, a significant figure

in the advocacy and teaching of copyright law and policy, explained that one of the major philosophical foundations of copyright originates from English philosopher John Locke's labour theory, wherein individuals acquire property rights over the products created through their own labour, skill, and intellectual effort. Sterling added that copyright law also developed through personality-based theories associated with philosopher Immanuel Kant, where creative works are viewed as extensions of the author's personality and identity.

AI-generated works destabilise this traditional understanding of "author-work" relationship, according to Paul Goold, because copyright law historically depends upon expressive content being traceable to identifiable human intellectual activity. Goold further argues that modern AI increasingly exposes the conceptual weakness of artificially assigning authorship where meaningful human creativity may not genuinely exist.

Additionally, generative AI creates structural instability within copyright law because machines are now capable of semantic and stylistic imitation at levels previously associated only with human creativity. The concern is therefore no longer limited to copying. AI systems increasingly imitate style, tone, structure, and expressive identity

itself.

A recent investigation by fact-checking organisation Dismislab found that two widely used AI models—Gemini and Grok—generated modified NID images using samples and prompts without flagging any concerns about sensitive personal data. In Bangladesh's current copyright framework, which is still fundamentally designed to assume human authorship and that still struggles to accommodate autonomous AI-generated content, such examples of AI reproducing highly realistic documents should raise concern. In a 2025 paper on the copyright paradigms in the age of AI, the authors observed that concepts such as originality and authorship become increasingly uncertain when expressive works are generated through systems capable of operating with minimal human intellectual contribution.

Therefore, artificial intelligence now requires the law to confront an uncomfortable question: if expressive works can increasingly be generated without meaningful human creativity, what exactly is copyright law protecting anymore?

What Bangladesh needs is not an overly complicated or technologically rigid copyright regime for AI-generated works. Instead, it requires a practical and human-centred framework capable of preserving the connection between copyright and genuine human creativity. Instead of requiring courts or authorities to scientifically determine whether every work is human-created or AI-generated, the law could gradually require creators, publishers, commercial users, or applicants for copyright registration to disclose whether generative AI tools were substantially used in producing

the work. The legal focus should then shift towards assessing whether meaningful human intellectual contribution remained dominant in the final output.

Such an approach would also preserve flexibility, as AI technology continues evolving rapidly. Courts could then assess disputes case-by-case by examining factors such as level of human creativity, selection, arrangement, editing, judgment, and intellectual control over the final work rather than attempting to determine whether AI was used at all.

At the same time, Bangladesh should avoid granting full traditional copyright protection to purely autonomous AI-generated outputs where meaningful human creativity is effectively absent. Doing so may gradually weaken the philosophical foundations of copyright law itself by protecting machine-generated production in the same way as human intellectual creativity. Instead, Bangladesh may eventually consider a limited *sui generis* framework for certain autonomous AI-generated outputs. The term "*sui generis*" simply means "of its own kind" or a special legal category created outside ordinary copyright law. In intellectual property law, *sui generis* protection is sometimes used where existing legal categories cannot comfortably address new technological or commercial realities.

Artificial intelligence is forcing copyright law to be reconsidered in terms of the meaning of creativity, originality, and authorship. Bangladesh now has an important opportunity to develop a balanced legal framework that encourages innovation while still preserving the human foundations upon which copyright law has historically depended.