BGB returns fire after BSF shoots, injures Bangladeshi

The man was reportedly shot inside Indian territory

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Kushtia*

Border Guard Bangladesh personnel returned fire after members of India's Border Security Force allegedly shot and injured a Bangladeshi national inside Indian territory opposite the Jamalpur border in Kushtia's Daulatpur upazila yesterday morning.

Lt Col Rashed Kamal Roni, commanding officer of the BGB-47 Kushtia Battalion, said the shooting took place around 9:30am, approximately 300 yards inside Indian territory, opposite the battalion's Jamalpur Border Outpost.

The injured person is believed to be a Bangladeshi national, he said, citing preliminary information.

According to a BGB press release, a patrol team responded promptly and returned fire in self-defence to ensure the safety of people on the Bangladesh side of the border. Border patrols and surveillance have also been intensified.



Dancers portray the mythical battle between Goddess Durga and the demon Mahishasura at Dhakeshwari National Temple in the capital yesterday, marking Mahalaya, which heralds the arrival of Durga Puja -- one of the biggest religious festivals of the Hindu community. The performance depicts the goddess's triumph over evil. PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

Considering Makkah pact for sake of Mideast peace

Says state minister for foreign affairs

UNB, *Dhaka*

Bangladesh is positively considering the Makkah Defence Agreement in view of peace and stability in the Middle East and the Muslim world, said Humaiun Kobir, the state minister for foreign affairs.

Besides, Bangladesh could deploy its peacekeeping expertise more effectively and extensively across the world, he told reporters yesterday after attending a seminar yesterday titled "From workforce to strategic partnership: reimagining Bangladesh-KSA relations".

The seminar was organised by the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies and the Centre for Migration Studies of North South University.

The next chapter of Bangladesh-Saudi Arabia relations should therefore be defined by value creation rather than volume alone, he said.

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman has accepted an invitation from Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to visit the kingdom.

Salman has also expressed interest in visiting Bangladesh, according to Humaiun.

The proposed visits reflected growing political ties between the two countries, he said, while describing Bangladesh as a strong partner of Saudi Arabia in maritime security.

Calling for a comprehensive economic and strategic

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Buy planes first

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Biman said the same day that it was unaware of any such decision, while senior officials told The Daily Star that the techno-financial committee was also unaware.

As the new government proceeded with the plan after the election, Biman's first 14 Boeing aircraft were contracted in April this year, while 11 more were added through a supplemental agreement in September. The Airbus agreement for 10 planes followed on October 7.

These orders came through separate decisions, and it is unclear whether they were ever under one fleet plan covering delivery, deployment, staffing, maintenance, and financing.

The government had itself asked for such planning.

On April 22, eight days before the first Boeing order, Biman was directed to prepare an integrated action plan based on route-wise revenue and expenditure. The same meeting discussed expanding the fleet to around 47 aircraft by FY2034-35.

Whether that action plan was updated for the additional 11 Boeing planes and the Airbus package has not been made public.

No public year-by-year schedule shows when new aircraft will arrive, when existing ones will retire, how long interim leases will last, or how much of the new capacity will replace older aircraft rather than expand the network.

The first Boeing deliveries are scheduled from 2031, while the Airbus agreement disclosed no schedule. Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister M Rashiduzzaman Millat has said Bangladesh wants Airbus deliveries to begin before 2030 and asked the planemaker to deliver at least one aircraft by 2026-27.

Biman could thus move from leased capacity to a concentrated cycle of owned-aircraft deliveries in the 2030s.

EXPOSURE

The $3.7 billion figure associated with the first 14 Boeings is a list-price estimate by Reuters, and the government puts the additional 11 at around $2.7 billion. Boeing has not disclosed the contract value of either order.

New aircraft will bring in more revenue, but the payments are large compared to what Biman earns today.

Before the April agreement, the government estimated annual payments for the first 14 aircraft at Tk 1,500 crore to Tk 2,000 crore.

Biman reported revenue of Tk 11,559 crore, operating profit of Tk 1,602 crore and net profit of Tk 785.21 crore in FY2024-25.

Biman has said the first Boeing purchase would be supported by US Export-Import Bank financing and a sovereign guarantee.

The amount financed and repayment schedule have not been detailed, while financing for the additional 11 aircraft has not been disclosed.

The aviation minister has said Biman would meet costs from its own earnings and suitable financing, with payments made gradually as aircraft are delivered.

The Airbus order has been linked to European export-credit financing covering around 85 percent of the cost, but the final amount and terms were not disclosed.

Biman earns foreign currency from international operations, but long-term dollar or euro liabilities could become more expensive if the taka weakens.

Without the currencies, repayment schedules, and financing costs, the scale of that exposure cannot be judged.

OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES

Introducing Airbus aircraft into a mostly Boeing fleet requires separate pilot and engineer trainings, tooling, spares, and maintenance arrangements.

Airbus has reportedly offered training and maintenance support, but the costs have not been disclosed.

The commercial case for the new aircraft will also depend on the assumptions behind Biman's fleet planning.

In 2024, an initial assessment of two A350-900s by a Biman committee found a negative net present value over 25 years. Net present value shows whether an investment will be profitable or not over a period of time and is calculated considering all future cash inflows and outflows.

A reconstituted committee later found the proposal viable using more optimistic load-factor and fuel assumptions.

Those assumptions are now under pressure.

Jet fuel prices in Bangladesh have risen for three consecutive months, and global carriers warn that elevated costs could persist for another 12 to 18 months.

Any long-term fleet plan needs to show how Biman's route economics would hold up under higher fuel prices in the future than those assumed when earlier assessments were prepared.

NETWORK, GEOPOLITICAL RISKS

The April roadmap mentioned potential destinations including Yangon, Malé, New York, Kunming, Bahrain, Sydney, Wuhan, Jakarta, and Seoul.

What is missing is a clear mapping of which aircraft will serve which routes, at what frequencies, with what expected load factors, yields, cargo contribution, and operating costs, and how quickly those routes will mature as financing payments begin.

Biman is also heavily dependent on Middle East routes, where recent conflict has already raised airspace risks.

It is unclear whether the plan has been tested against prolonged airspace disruption, rerouting costs, higher fuel burns, or sudden demand shifts across the Gulf.

Some plans also depend on clearances not yet secured.

The proposed New York route would require Bangladesh to obtain Category 1 status under the US Federal Aviation Administration's International Aviation Safety Assessment programme.

Flights cancelled

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An injured traveller told Reuters they saw something fly across the sky outside the airport before part of the ceiling near a departure gate collapsed.

Following the attack, US President Donald Trump, speaking to reporters outside the White House, was asked whether the United States planned to join Saudi strikes on the Houthis.

"We may. We're going to look at it. We just found out about the recent attack, so we'll make a decision. We move very quickly," he said.

Flight-tracking site flightradar24 showed all flights to Riyadh had either been diverted or cancelled, with only a helicopter hovering over the airport at one point.

Several carriers, including Kuwait Airways, Etihad Airways and Qatar Airways, said they had cancelled flights to and from the Saudi capital due to what it described as the closure of Riyadh airport because of the "security situation" there.

Meanwhile, Biman Bangladesh Airlines said in a press release yesterday that it suspended two Dhaka-Riyadh-Dhaka flights, BG339 and BG340, "until further notice due to unavoidable operational circumstances".

"Passengers booked on these flights are advised not to proceed to the airport. Biman management is actively reviewing the situation, and we will officially communicate a comprehensive update on the rescheduling or status of these flights tomorrow, October 11, 2026," it said, expressing "sincere apologies for the unexpected disruption".

Affected passengers have been advised to contact the Biman call center or visit their nearest Biman sales office for immediate assistance.

Thousands held

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Yesterday morning, police boarded Dipke's plane as it landed at Delhi airport and detained him, alongside several other senior figures in the Cockroach movement. In a video recorded just before police detained him, Dipke said: "If you think you can stop us by threatening us with jail, then you have it wrong. Put us in jail if you want ... but we will keep fighting to protect the democracy of this country."

One of India's most popular YouTubers, Dhruv Rathee, who has 33 million followers and has become a supporter of the CJP, was among those put under house arrest.

Four former chief ministers from the opposition camp were also briefly detained. Former Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee, former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, former Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan and former Tripura chief minister Manik Sarkar were detained as they tried to join the CJP protest.

In Mumbai, more than 400 protesters, including actor Imran Khan, were detained for "unauthorised gathering". It is not clear if they were released.

A group of lawyers, who were protesting in front of the Supreme Court, were also detained, but were released after the chief justice of India intervened.

Representatives of two digital news outlets said police briefly detained four of their reporters while they were covering the demonstrations. A Reuters journalist was also detained briefly before being released.

Meanwhile, India yesterday slammed the UN office for the high commissioner for human rights for its "arbitrary detention" comment as "unwarranted interference".

"We are concerned by reports of mass detentions in India of demonstrators, protest leaders, members of civil society organisations, lawyers and journalists, before and during today's large-scale demonstrations in Delhi," the UN office said in a statement.

"All those arbitrarily detained must be immediately and unconditionally released."

Student groups, who have also been calling for Kumar to resign, had described the march as India's "second freedom struggle", akin to Mahatma Gandhi's fight for independence. As police began mass detentions on Friday night, Neha Bora, a student leader at the forefront of the protests, said: "History is repeating itself. Just like in 1942, the arrest of leaders could not stop the Quit India movement; this movement will also not stop."

By yesterday afternoon, Bora had been detained.

Over its 14 years in power, the Modi government has been rigidly intolerant of dissent. However, few protests have prompted such a nationwide crackdown, signalling the government's concern that this unrest could present a serious political challenge.

In major disruption to travel, all trains arriving into Delhi's two main stations were cancelled yesterday for 10 hours, and almost 50 metro stations were shut. Delhi's schools and courtrooms were instructed to go online for the day, and hotel owners were told to turn away customers.

Traffic diversions were in place across Delhi, and police checkpoints were set up along the main highways from neighbouring states into the capital, with passengers being stopped and interrogated about their final destination. Delhi police told Uber drivers not to drop people near the protest area and said they were "tracking and stopping" bulk orders on food delivery services to Jantar Mantar.

Around Jantar Mantar, which had previously been Delhi's designated protest site, most of the main thoroughfares were shuttered and barricaded, surrounded by police and paramilitary officers. Riot-control vehicles and trucks fitted with water cannons stood nearby.

The revision of electoral rolls, in a process known as "special intensive revision (SIR), began last year and attracted criticism from civil society groups and the opposition alliance after it emerged that about 130 million names were deleted.

Opposition parties say the deletions affected the outcome of recent state elections won by the BJP. The commission says the removals relate to entries identified during the draft revision process and that any eligible voter incorrectly deleted can re-enrol.

The backlash grew when SIR was held in the state of West Bengal, and it became clear that Muslims and other minorities, who traditionally do not vote for BJP, were being disproportionately stripped of their vote.

Yet it didn't become an issue of national outrage until late last month, when the Indian Express newspaper published an investigation that exposed multiple irregularities in the SIR process, which had been flagged in more than a dozen internal objections but had been unilaterally overruled by Kumar.

Opposition parties, the Cockroach movement and student groups began to call for the resignation of Kumar, who was appointed by a committee led by Modi. This week, India's main opposition Congress party also tried to reach Jantar Mantar to protest but was blocked by police, and the Congress leader, Rahul Gandhi, was detained twice.

This week, the Indian Supreme Court ordered the Modi government and the election commission to respond to the allegations.

A child should never suffer twice

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hearings. How does this prolonged delay compromise justice for child survivors?

Fowzul Azim: Delay is not merely an administrative bottleneck; time directly erodes evidence.

Over nearly four years, a child's memory can fade, witnesses may relocate or become unavailable, and families may succumb to social pressure, financial exhaustion or coercion to settle. Repeated court appearances also re-traumatise children.

Out-of-court settlements should therefore not be mistaken for survivors voluntarily abandoning cases. They are almost always driven by economic dependency, intimidation, procedural fatigue and lack of state protection for witnesses.

Although the 2025 amendment reduced the statutory trial limit from 180 to 90 days, halving the deadline achieves nothing unless underlying systemic and procedural bottlenecks are addressed.

TDS: How does the system fail when the alleged perpetrator is a parent, relative or trusted guardian?

Fowzul Azim: When a guardian, caregiver, teacher or family member is the alleged perpetrator, the child's primary avenue for seeking help is severed.

Such children face double vulnerability: first, when abusive family members silence them through intimidation or beatings; and second, when their own guardians accept money to settle with the accused during court proceedings.

If a father is accused, the question "Who will file the complaint?" exposes the inadequacy of simply advising the child to approach police. Children cannot navigate police procedures alone, are financially dependent, and other family members may rely on the accused for survival. State intervention therefore becomes essential.

Although the Children Act 2013 provides for child affairs police officers and probation officers, a vast gap remains between statutory provisions and implementation.

The most critical reform must be that an accused guardian immediately loses legal and protective guardianship over the child for the duration of proceedings.

The state must then arrange an independent legal guardian, social worker, probation officer, safe shelter, legal aid and emergency protection orders.

We need an unbroken protection pathway, from disclosure, immediate risk assessment, safe placement, independent legal representation and medical support to investigation, prosecution, child-sensitive trial and rehabilitation.

If one link breaks, the entire protective structure collapses.

TDS: If witnesses drop out or medical and DNA evidence is weak, what are the boundaries of a judge's role? Should judges take a more proactive stance?

Fowzul Azim: A judge cannot independently fill evidentiary gaps or assume the prosecution's role. The judiciary must remain neutral while ensuring the prosecution discharges its burden of proof.

However, judicial neutrality does not mean passivity. Under existing law, including safeguards under the Children Act 2013, courts can issue protective orders, compel witness attendance, recall key witnesses, record serious investigative lapses and direct corrective action.

But a judge cannot become a prosecutor. If investigators fail to secure crucial physical evidence or prosecutors fail to produce key witnesses, judges cannot build the case. Investigation quality remains the most important determinant of conviction rates.

Judges must instead exercise proactive case management within the bounds of judicial neutrality.

This requires rejecting repeated, unjustified adjournment requests; establishing structured witness calendars at the start of trials; and digitally monitoring investigation deadlines, charge-sheet submissions, forensic reports and reasons for adjournment.

Prosecutors must also be evaluated objectively using performance indicators, as recommended by the Supreme Court–BRAC study. Forensic and DNA laboratories should prioritise court-related work, while tribunals must be expanded in high-caseload districts. Otherwise, overwhelming caseloads will render the statutory 90-day limit meaningless.

TDS: What statutory reforms are necessary to make trials faster and genuinely child-sensitive?

Fowzul Azim: Existing laws already contain progressive provisions, including specialised court environments, child-sensitive seating, probation assistance and testimony safeguards under the Children Act 2013.

The question must shift from how strict new laws are to how effectively existing laws are enforced.

Bridging the gaps requires several reforms: a comprehensive Witness Protection Act; an independent child advocate or guardian system; mandatory psychosocial referrals upon disclosure; specialised, non-intimidating interview rooms with video-recorded evidence; pre-trial depositions for vulnerable child witnesses; procedures to shield children from accused guardians' influence; and mandatory coordination protocols binding police, social services, prosecutors and the judiciary.

Low conviction rates in child sexual violence cases cannot be treated as an isolated judicial issue. They reflect failures across a long chain involving families, educational institutions, police, medical services, forensic facilities, prosecution and rehabilitation systems.

Our ultimate objective must not merely be faster disposal of cases, but timely, accurate justice that prevents secondary victimisation.

Success means building a system where a child is never forced to suffer a second time in pursuit of justice.

Tk 60,000cr of taxpayers

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two crore need state support.

The same sum could fund a Tk 2,500 monthly subsidy for two crore families, or pay for two projects the size of the Padma bridge every year, he said.

"Rest assured, every depositor will get their money back," he said.

However, the damage to the economy and the financial system is serious and would take five to eight years to repair and would need public subsidies, he said.

"We want your cooperation so that this kind of plunder never happens again."

Roughly one-third of the money in the banking system had been plundered by the time he took charge in February, he said.

Withdrawal restrictions at Sommilito Islami Bank and National Bank have been eased, but the cost is high.

Regulations have been changed over the past four months to let firms such as Google Pay, Stripe and PayPal operate, he said, adding that their offices are not fully set up yet.

The central bank is also making sending money abroad easier and legal, and has permitted local providers to do so, which he said will shrink the demand for grey market transfers.

Printing and moving physical cash costs about Tk 20,000 crore a year and Bangla QR could cut this by at least 50 percent initially, he said.

Asked whether unlimited QR transfers invite fake payments to merchants who then hand back cash, he said the problem is temporary.

Person-to-person transfers are due from November, after which people will no longer need cash for them, he said, noting that China, India, Pakistan and Brazil went through the same transition.

A nationwide shift to Bangla QR could raise government revenue by up to Tk 2 lakh crore by closing leakages in tax and VAT collection, he said.

Cash-based trade makes evasion easy, particularly of VAT, while a digital transaction leaves a record, he said.

Citing Pakistan, where the tax-GDP ratio reached 10.3 percent in fiscal year 2025 amid wider digital and enforcement reforms, he said Bangladesh could expect a rise of at least 2 percentage points.

The real taxpayer is the consumer since businesses pass on costs and taxes, he said.

Charges of around 2.5 percent on other cashless methods are ultimately borne by buyers and QR payments are meant to lower that burden.

PM likely to visit Japan

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partnership: reimagining Bangladesh-KSA relations" at the Foreign Service Academy.

Describing Japan as one of Bangladesh's largest and longest-standing development partners, he said Japanese investment in several mega projects had helped strengthen economic ties and the broader relationship between the two countries.

At the invitation of the Japanese premier, Tarique previously joined an energy summit in Japan virtually when the country was facing an energy crisis.

The engagement had helped build the Japanese government's confidence in Bangladesh's PM, Humaiun said.

The forthcoming visit would feature detailed discussions on sector-specific cooperation and opportunities for reciprocal investment.

About the proposed visit to Saudi Arabia, he said the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman had invited him and Tarique had accepted the invitation.

Salman has also expressed interest in visiting Bangladesh, according to Humaiun.