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## **Afroza repatriation changed perception about BSF in Bangladesh, says former DIG**

*The documentary showcases the lives of children of undertrials and convicted prisoners and how they try to triumph over social ostracism.*

The repatriation of Afroza, the child of an illegal Bangladeshi immigrant caught in tragic circumstances, helped change the perception of Indian border guards among Bangladeshis, a former BSF DIG has said. “For some Bangladeshis, BSF is unpopular since it has to do the job of arresting people who cross over to this side illegally. But since Afroza was handed over to Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) in 2013, our force gained goodwill among all sections of people in that country,” B D Sharma, former BSF DIG and also former IG, Correctional Services, West Bengal Police, said.

Sharma had initiated the making of ‘Flickering Angels’, a moving documentary on the lives of children of imprisoned parents in West Bengal, which was screened at a FICCI ladies organisation programme. He said India’s act had helped in improving relations between the two neighbouring nations. The documentary showcases the lives of children of undertrials and convicted prisoners and how they try to triumph over social ostracism. In particular, it depicts the life of Afroza, the Bangladeshi child who was repatriated from West Bengal to her home country after a long struggle. “She is studying now and still calls me IG ‘Kaku’ (uncle),” Sharma said.

Afroza was only 5-years-old when her mother Manowara Begum was arrested in 2009 while crossing the Indo-Bangladesh border illegally. Manowara died while serving her term in prison and nobody had any idea where her father was. While Afroza’s brother Munna was sent back to Bangladesh in 2011, the ball set rolling for her after the screening of ‘Flickering Angles’ in 2013 at the behest of the IPS officer, who was instrumental in introducing culture therapy for inmates of correctional homes during his tenure as IG, Correctional Services.

“It hurts me that very little has been done for children of prisoners back home...it is a very sad thing...In a post like IG, Prisons you are sensitive and you come across cases and feel disturbed,” Sharma said recalling his stint. Director Subhrajit Mitra said at first, the story of Afroza and the others girls may seem to be fiction “but at the end of the day it is a real story”.

“I’m happy with the power of the film which made all the difference in her life,” Subhrajit said describing the experience of making the film an ‘emotional journey’.