

Press Release: Texmaco Rail & Engineering Ltd. Celebrates Milestone Achievement with the Inauguration of the Akhaura-Agartala Railway Link Project

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In Tripura-Bangladesh railway link, new opportunities and old connect

DEBRAJ DEB
AGARTALA, NOVEMBER 1

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi and his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina Wednesday virtually inaugurated a rail link connecting Northeast India with Bangladesh. The Agartala-Akhaura project will cut down the travel time between Agartala and Kolkata too, from 31 hours to 10 hours.

The project is expected to boost tourism, trade, and people-to-people exchanges between the two countries.

EXPLAINED INFRA

What is the project?
In the 12.24-km Agartala-Akhaura railway line, 5.46 kilometres lie on the Indian side in Tripura, and 6.78 km in the Akhaura upa-zilla in Brahmanbaria district of Bangladesh. The train will start from Agartala and move to Nischintapur, on the Indian-Bangladesh border, where the immigration checks will be held. The first station on the Bangladesh side will be Gangasagar.

Who is funding the project?
The project, which had its MoU signed in 2013, started with Rs 972.52 crore in 2016, including Rs 580 crore sanctioned for work on the Indian side and Rs 392.52 crore for the Bangladesh side. However, the budget was later revised twice due to cost escalation and other ancillary expenses. The final project cost is estimated at Rs 1255.10 crore, with Rs 862.58 crore allocated for works on the Indian side alone. The entire project cost is being funded by India. The Ministry for Development of North East Region (DONER) funded the work on the Indian side, and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) funded the expense for the Bangladesh side as 'Aid to Bangladesh'.

The Indian Railway Construction International Limited (IRCON), a Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) under the Indian

NEW SECTION INAUGURATED
12.24-km Length of Agartala-Akhaura rail link
₹1255.1 cr Total Cost of the Project

Why is the project important to Tripura?
For land-locked Tripura, any connectivity project is of great practical significance. Tripura Chief Minister Dr. Manik Saha, who participated in the inaugural event virtually from Agartala, said the project was crucial for connectivity in the NE region and would make Tripura the gateway for tourism. "This day will go down in golden letters in the history of Indo-Bangla relationship. Tripura is going to be the gateway for tourism and transport between India and Bangladesh. Due to the Agartala-Akhaura railway project, the distance between Agartala and Kolkata will be effectively reduced from 1600 km to 500 km," he said.

However, connectivity with Bangladesh also holds emotional significance. Tripura shares an 856-km international border with Bangladesh, the second highest after West Bengal. The North Eastern state is surrounded by the country on all three sides except Assam on the fourth. During the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war and the creation of Bangladesh, Tripura, a state which then had only 14 lakh people, sheltered nearly 15 lakh East Pakistani refugees. It ran at least 8 ma-

For land-locked Tripura, any connectivity project, people on both sides can now hope for closer and smoother ties.

What other trains run between India and Bangladesh?
The latest train service is part of an ongoing effort to boost connectivity between India and Bangladesh over the past few years. Three trains, the Bandhan Express, the Maitree Express and the Mitai Express, run between West Bengal and Bangladesh. The Bandhan Express reboots an old rail link between Kolkata and Khulna, the third-largest city of Bangladesh. Until the 1965 war between India and Pakistan, this route was served by the Barisal Express. The governments of PM Modi and Sheikh Hasina restarted the service in 2017. The Bandhan uses the Petrapole-Benapole border crossing. The Maitree Express between Kolkata and Dhaka Cantonment started in April 2008. The Mitai Express, announced by PM Modi during his visit to Dhaka in March 2021, connects Siliguri in North Bengal with the Bangladesh capital.

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‘Historic’: PM Modi, Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina inaugurate cross-border rail link

In his inaugural speech, Modi said his government signed the Indo-Bangla land boundary agreement that had been pending for decades and resolved the maritime boundary issue.

Written by [Debraj Deb](#)

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Terming India to be "Bangladesh's biggest development partner", Modi said while the bilateral relations have strengthened connectivity between India and Bangladesh, it has also boosted the neighbouring country's energy sector and regional connectivity. (File)


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