



# drishti

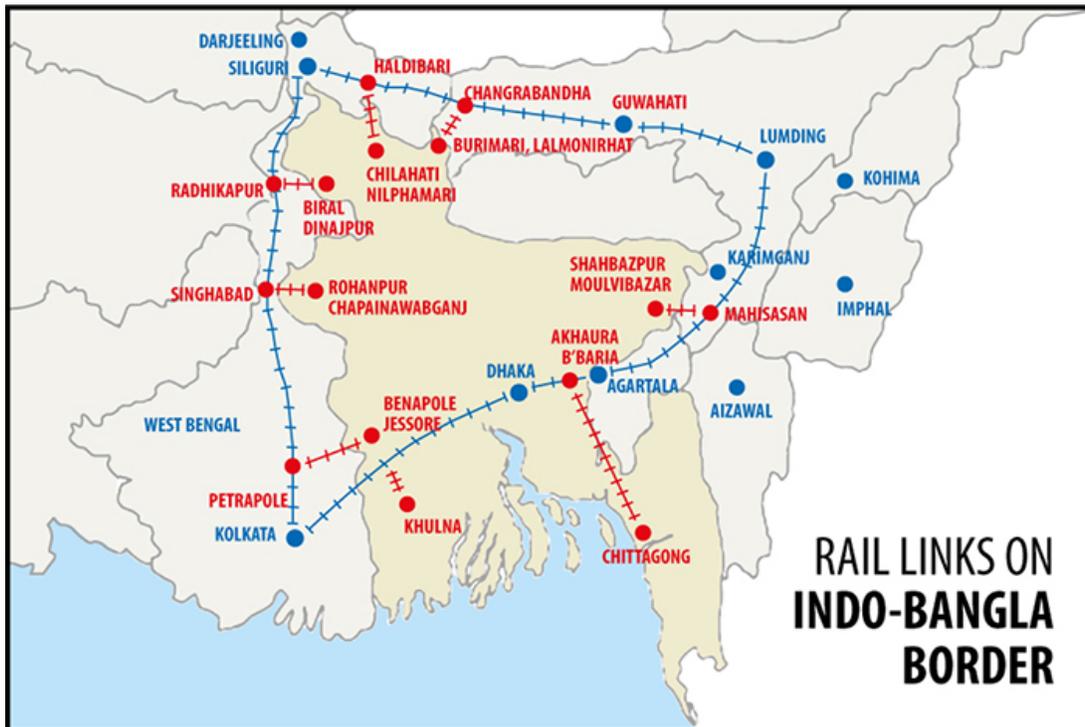
## India-Bangladesh Commercial Railway Link Restored

[drishtiias.com/printpdf/india-bangladesh-commercial-railway-link-restored](https://drishtiias.com/printpdf/india-bangladesh-commercial-railway-link-restored)

### Why in News

Recently, Bangladesh and India started **regular operation of freight trains through the restored Haldibari-Chilahati rail route after over 50 years**, which will strengthen railway connectivity and bilateral trade between the two countries.

- The Haldibari-Chilahati rail link is one such route that was operational till 1965.
- Another rail link, between Agartala-Akhaura, is scheduled to open by the end of 2021.



### Key Points

- **Background:**
  - **After the Partition in 1947, seven rail links were operational** between India and Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) **until 1965.**
  - Presently, there are **Five rail links** between Bangladesh and India that are **operational.**
  - They are Petrapole (India)-Benapole (Bangladesh), Gede (India)-Darshana (Bangladesh), Singhabad (India)-Rohanpur (Bangladesh), Radhikapur (India)-Biroi (Bangladesh), Haldibari (India)-Chilahati (Bangladesh).
- **Significance:**
  - The Haldibari-Chilahati route is **expected to enhance the connectivity to Assam and West Bengal from Bangladesh.**
  - It will enhance rail network access to the main ports and dry ports to **support the growth in regional trade** to encourage economic and social development of the region.
  - Common people and businessmen of both countries will be able to reap the benefit of both goods and passenger traffic, once passenger trains are planned in this route.
  - Economic activities (including tourist activities) of these South Asian countries will also be benefitted from this new rail link.
  - The 75-kilometre long track **will also help better integrate the rest of the country with the Siliguri corridor**, also known as the '**Chicken's Neck.**'
    - The corridor connects India with the North-eastern states, which has witnessed growing aggressiveness from another neighbouring country of China in recent times.

## Indo-Bangladesh Ties

---

- **Historical Ties:**
  - Fifty years ago, the **Bangladesh Liberation War** in 1971 had added the colours of victory for India as it led the charge towards the formation of the new nation of Bangladesh.
- **Defence Cooperation:**
  - **Joint exercises:**
    - **SAMPRITI** (Army).
    - **TABLE TOP** (Air).
    - **IN-BN CORPAT** (Navy).
    - **Exercise Bongosagar** (Navy).
    - **SAMVEDNA** (Multinational Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Exercise with Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and UAE)
  - **Border Management:** India and Bangladesh share 4096.7 km. of border, which is the longest land boundary that India shares with any of its neighbours.

- **Economic Relations:**
  - **Bangladesh is India's largest trading partner in the sub-continent** with the total bilateral trade between the two nations **standing at \$9.5 billion (2019-20), down compared to the previous fiscal (2018-19)**, having crossed \$10 billion.
  - **India's exports** to Bangladesh account for **more than 85%** of the total bilateral trade.
  - In December 2020, to further boost the bilateral trade cooperation, an **India-Bangladesh CEO's Forum** was launched.
  - Bangladesh has appreciated the Duty-Free and Quota Free access given to Bangladeshi exports to India under **South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA)** since 2011.
- **Cooperation in Connectivity:**
  - In March 2021, **Maitri Setu—a 1.9 km bridge** built over Feni river joining Sabroom in India and Ramgarh in Bangladesh was inaugurated.
  - Protocol on **Inland Water Transit and Trade** (PIWTT).
  - **Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicles Agreement** is in pipeline.
- **Partnership on Multilateral forums:**
  - **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation** (SAARC).
  - **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation** (BIMSTEC).
  - **Indian Ocean Rim Association** (IORA).
- **Other Developments:**
  - **Line of Credit:**

India has extended 3 Lines of Credits (LOC) to Bangladesh in the last 8 years **amounting to \$8 billion for development of infrastructure** in sectors including roads, railways, shipping and ports.
  - **Covid-19:**
    - Bangladesh is the biggest recipient of **Made-in-India Covid-19 vaccine doses**, accounting for **16% of the total supplies**.
    - India also offered collaboration in therapeutics and partnership in vaccine production.
- **Emerging Disputes:**
  - Bangladesh has already raised concerns over roll out of the **National Register of Citizens (NRC)** in Assam, an exercise carried out to identify genuine Indian citizens living in Assam and weed out illegal Bangladeshis.
  - Currently, Bangladesh is an active partner of the **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)** that Delhi has not signed up to.
  - In the security sector, Bangladesh is also a major recipient of Chinese military inventory, including submarines.

## Way Forward

---

- There should be efforts to resolve pending issues concerning sharing of waters, resolving continental shelf issues in the Bay of Bengal, bringing down border incidents to zero, and managing the media.
- Regular exchanges between younger entrepreneurs and civil society based on areas such as culture, music, sports, films, and sharing of best practices in sustainable development, human capital development, gender equitable growth, amongst others, needs to be pursued.
- Increasing tourist footfall at select border locations from both sides and facilitating a mechanism of exchange through the creation of a common entertainment zone at the border can help strengthen the camaraderie.
- There is a need to jointly work towards a new paradigm of security at the shared borders. A paradigm that enables borders to be not merely thick lines which demarcate national boundaries but act as “connector zones” for inclusive growth and prosperity.

**Source: IE**