

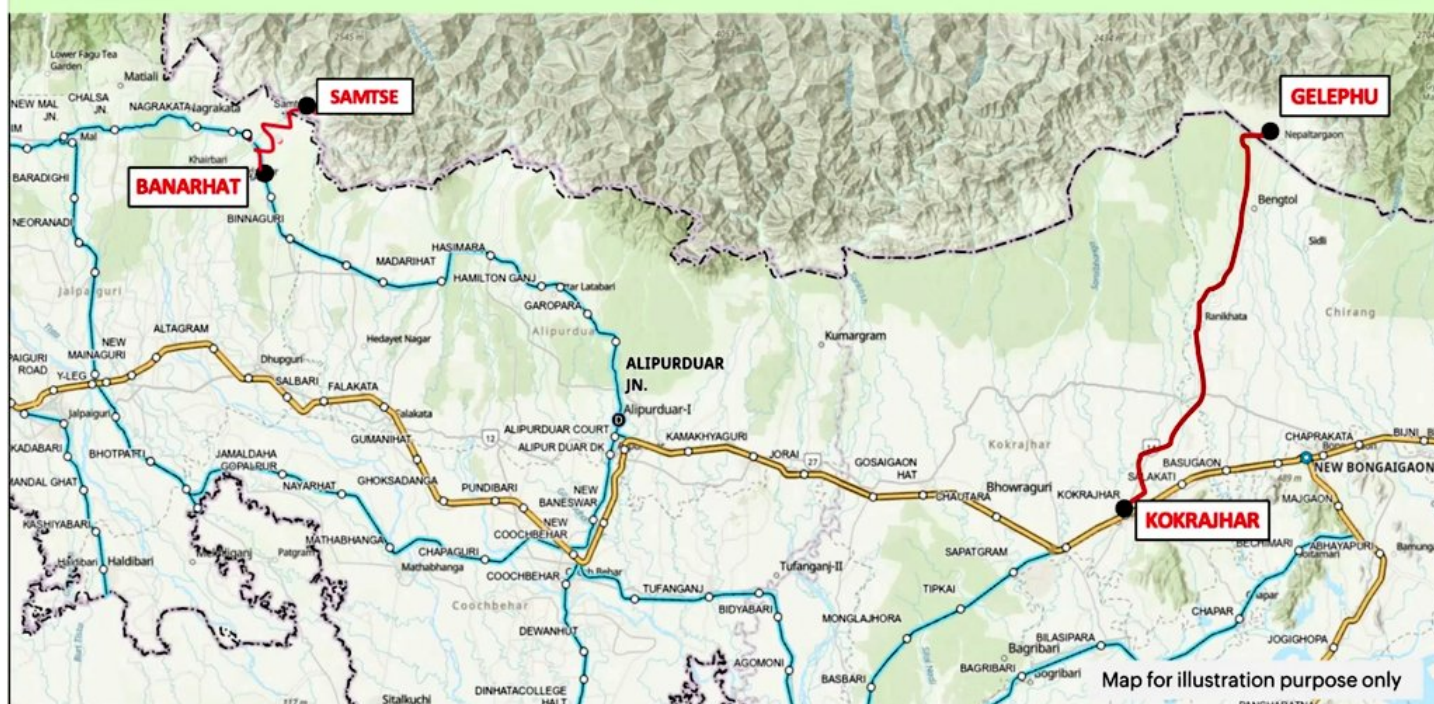


India's First Cross-Border Rail Links with Bhutan

Source: TH

India has announced the first-ever **railway links with Bhutan**, namely the **Kokrajhar-Gelephu** (Assam) and **Banarhat-Samtse** (West Bengal) lines, totaling **89 km**, marking a milestone in bilateral connectivity and regional integration.

India - Bhutan regional rail connectivity



- **Gelephu and Samtse:** Gelephu and Samtse are key export-import hubs in Bhutan along the 700-km India-Bhutan border. Gelephu is being developed as "Mindfulness City".
 - Samtse is being developed as an industrial town by the Government of Bhutan. Enhancing connectivity between these towns and India will significantly boost India-Bhutan trade.
- **Strategic Importance:** These railway links reinforce [India's Neighbourhood First Policy](#), counters China's growing influence in South Asia, and deepens trust-based partnership.
 - For Bhutan, seamless rail connectivity to India provides access to **1.5 lakh km of the Indian Railways network**.
 - Since India is Bhutan's **largest trading partner, handling 80% of its total trade**, this link will enhance Bhutan's access to global markets via Indian ports while also boosting **tourism, industrial growth, people-to-people ties, and smooth movement of goods**.
- **India's Developmental Assistance to Bhutan:** India pledged Rs 10,000 crore for Bhutan's **13th Five-Year Plan (2024-2029) (double of the 12th Plan)**.
 - An integrated check post was inaugurated at Darranga, Assam, to facilitate the movement

- of third-country nationals, including those from Bhutan. Bhutan is also set to benefit from the Jogighopha [Inland Waterways Transport Terminal](#).
- The two nations have collaborated on **five major hydropower projects** — **Chukha, Tala, Mangdechhu, Kurichhu**, and the recently completed [Punatsangchhu II](#).

Read more: [India-Bhutan Relations](#)

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