

The Haldibari – Chilahati rail link between India & Bangladesh

December 18, 2020

In news

Prime Ministers of India and Bangladesh jointly inaugurated a railway link between Haldibari in India and Chilahati in Bangladesh during the PM level virtual bilateral summit.

Background

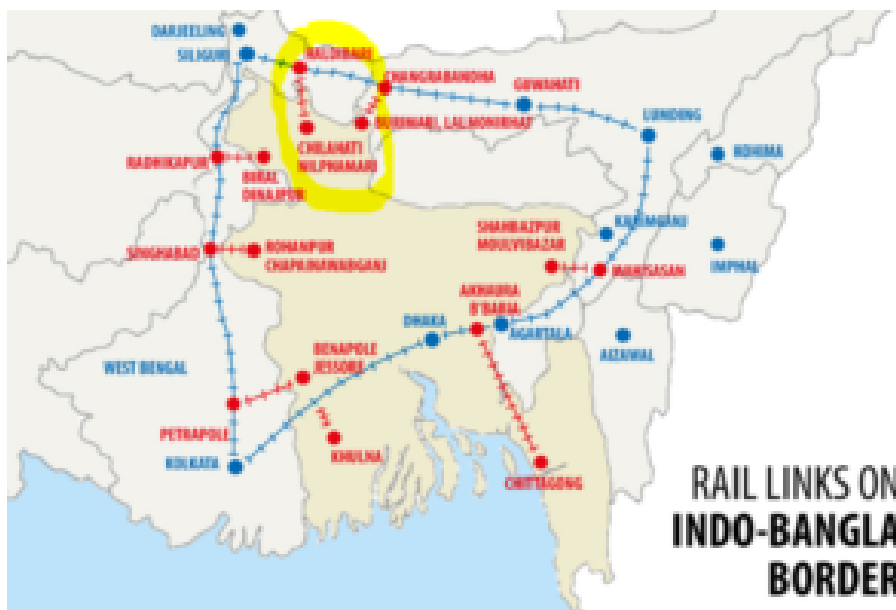
The Haldibari – Chilahati rail link was **operational till 1965**. This was part of the Broad Gauge main route from Kolkata to Siliguri during partition. Trains traveling to Assam and North Bengal continued to travel through the then East Pakistan territory even after partition. For example, a train from Sealdah to Siliguri used to enter East Pakistan territory from Darshana and exit using the Haldibari – Chilahati link. However, the war of 1965 effectively cut off all the railway links between India and the then East Pakistan. So on the Eastern Sector of India partition of the railways thus happened in 1965. So the importance of the reopening of this rail link can be well imagined.

About the Haldibari – Chilahati rail link

- In pursuance of the joint declaration in the Inter-Governmental Railway Meeting (IGRM) held in Delhi in May, 2015; Railway Board sanction for construction of a new BG line from Haldibari station to Bangladesh Border for connection with Chilahati (Bangladesh) [Length – 3.50 km] in 2016-17 in order to reopen this erstwhile rail link.
- Indian Railways has restored the tracks up to

international border from Haldibari station at a cost of Rs. 82.72 crores.

- Bangladesh Railways has also accordingly undertaken up-gradation and laying of missing tracks on their side from Chilahati station to international border.
- On Bangladesh side Chilahati – Parbatipur – Santahar – Darshana existing line is already in broad gauge.



Significance

- Haldibari – Chilahati route opened in December 2020 will be beneficial for transit into Bangladesh from Assam and West Bengal.
- This newly opened rail link will enhance rail network accessibility to the main ports, dry ports, and land borders to support the growth in regional trade and to encourage economic and social development of the region.
- Common people and businessman of both the countries will be able to reap the benefit of both goods and passenger traffic, once passenger trains are planned in this route.
- With this new link coming into operation, tourist from Bangladesh will be able to visit places like Darjeeling, Sikkim, Dooars apart from countries like Nepal, Bhutan

etc easily.

- Economic activities of these South Asian countries will also be benefitted from this new rail link.

What are the other rail links that India-Bangladesh is connected with?

- The railway network of India and Bangladesh are mostly inherited from British Era Indian Railways. After partition in 1947, 7 rail links were operational between India and the then East Pakistan (up to 1965).
- Presently, there are 4 operational rail links between India and Bangladesh. They are,
 1. Petrapole (India) – Benapole (Bangladesh)
 2. Gede (India) – Darshana (Bangladesh)
 3. Singhabad (India)-Rohanpur (Bangladesh)
 4. Radhikapur (India)–Birol (Bangladesh).
 5. The Haldibari – Chilahati rail link being made functional from 17.12.2020 is the 5th rail link between India and Bangladesh.