**The Akhaura-Agartala railway**

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The Agartala-Akhaura international railway is an internationally recognised project to connect Bangladesh and India.
There was the train link between Agartala and other places prior to independence. The railway that connects Akhaura and Agartala is starting to thrive at this point. The project is being completed with the help of an Indian loan. Over 90% of the Akhaura-Agartala project’s work has been completed, according to project officials. The railroad track has been constructed entirely.
On November 1, 2023, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina are expected to virtually launch this railway. 6.78 km of the 12.24 km long Akhaura-Agartala dual gauge railway is located in Bangladesh. The whole portion has been lined with railroad tracks. On the other hand, the station platform and the Customs and Immigration building still need renovation.This idea is generating a lot of enthusiasm in both countries. This networking effort is expected to have a profound impact on Bangladesh and India. Goods from other sea ports in India can be transported to other states in the Northeastern region via Agartala via the ports of Chittagong and Mongla in Bangladesh. Trade will increase between these countries as a result, and carrying goods will become less expensive and more convenient.
The proposed 15.064 km railway line, spanning 5.05 km through India and 10.014 km via Bangladesh, would link the international immigration station at Nischintapur to the outskirts of Agartala and connect Akhaura in Bangladesh. The dual gauge Nishchintapur station facilitates the interchange of goods and people between Bangladesh and India.This station will have dual gauge to facilitate passenger and product movement between Bangladesh and India. A cheaper price for the goods may be offered to the customer if the cost of importation is decreased. This railroad will thus be crucial to the commercial industry. The project also includes one huge bridge and three smaller ones.
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina signed the Memorandum of Understanding in January 2010 while on a visit to India. After that, the 2016-started project will get a fourth extension, this time until June 2024. Stated differently, the completion of this project marks the culmination of 13 years of labor. Owing to land acquisition challenges and the Covid-19 pandemic, the project’s 2020 completion date was pushed back. An international immigration station would be situated on the 15-kilometer railway line that connects Bangladesh’s Akhaura to Nischintapur, the border between India and Bangladesh.When the railway is put into operation, it will take 10 hours instead of 31 to get from Agartala to Kolkata, creating a plethora of opportunities for tourism, commerce, and intercultural exchange.
The Indian Railway Ministry allocated Rs 153.84 crore for this project. The Ministry of DONER (Development of North Eastern Region) is funding the project, and Rs 708.74 crore of the total estimated cost has already been provided. One of the 16 approved transit routes that allows goods to be shipped from the ports of Chattogram or Mongla to Indian states is this train link.
If this railway link is constructed, Bangladesh would have quick access to two Indian states: Tripura and West Bengal.This proposed railway link will reduce the distance between the two Indian cities of Kolkata and Agartala. The railway will travel 500 kilometers via Dhaka to reach Kolkata from Agartala in around sixteen hours. When the project is completed, the current 31-hour trip from Agartala to Kolkata via Dhaka will only take 10 hours. The 15-kilometer railway connecting Agartala and Gangasagar will be extremely beneficial to the overall development of the Northeast region. The citizens of Mizoram, which is 150 kilometers away, as well as those from Agartala, will benefit from the current line. If the project is carried out, Bangladesh’s commerce with India’s Seven Sisters would increase, as will the growth of small enterprises that depend on exports. Additionally, the project will contribute to the creation of a new rail connection via Akhaura between Kolkata and Agartala, India.
Furthermore, an agreement between Bangladesh and India allows Indian traders to send goods via the Bangladeshi ports of Chattogram and Mongla. This railroad will enhance trade and support state and national economic development. In addition to enabling more mobility between the people of the two countries, it will be essential for the import and export of goods from Chittagong port. In addition, the tourism sectors of both countries would gain from this rail connection. The new train project will boost tourism in the northeast of the region, strengthen links between Bangladesh and India, and assist the growth of small businesses near the border. Increasing the rate of import and export of commodities would assist local producers in selling their products overseas.