



Prime Minister of India & Prime Minister of Bangladesh Jointly along with Chief Minister, West Bengal Flag off New Cross-Border Train between India & Bangladesh, “Kolkata-Khulna Bandhan Express” from Kolkata through Video Conferencing

Two Rail Bridges in Bangladesh and International Rail Passenger Terminus at Kolkata Station also Inaugurated

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Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, the Bangladesh Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh & the Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee, in an historical event today **flagged off Cross Border Train between India & Bangladesh, the Kolkata-Khulna Bandhan Express** through video conference from Kolkata station. The leaders unveiled jointly an e-plaque to inaugurate the following:

(i) Second Bharirab & Titas Railway Bridges in Bangladesh,

(ii) International Rail Passenger Terminus with End-to-End Immigration and Customs Clearance Facilities (for the passengers of Maitree Express and Bandhan Express) at Kolkata station.

Shri Sudip Bandyopadhyaya, Member of Parliament & Chairman, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways, Smt. Mala Saha, MLA, Shri Harindra Rao, General Manager, Eastern Railway, Mr. Toufique Hassan, Dy. High Commissioner, Bangladesh Deputy High Commission, Kolkata were also present to grace the occasion at Kolkata station.

In his address, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi said that the close connection and understanding between two countries requires connectivity between the people across the border and Maitree Express and Bandhan Express trains will further add to connectivity between India and Bangladesh and strengthen and strengthen our bonding. He underlined the fact that India has emerged as the most trusted partner of Bangladesh by undertaking and completing a series of developmental projects in Bangladesh.

The Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, lauded the initiative and expressed hope that there would be more such initiatives for increasing rail link & connectivity between the two countries. She also highlighted the fact that it would result in reducing the journey time for the passengers of Maitree and Bandhan Express trains with the introduction of International Passenger Rail Terminus with End-to-End Immigration and Customs Clearance Facilities.

The Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee said that this new Passenger Train link between Kolkata & Khulna will strengthen the ties between two countries. She expressed happiness on introduction of the new train between the two countries & recollected the traditional bonding with Bangladesh.

The Bandhan Express train is the second train to be flagged off after the introduction of Maitree Express' between Kolkata and Dhaka Cantonment stations in April, 2008. It covers the distance between Kolkata and Khulna through Petrapole & Benapole route to cater to the demands of the people from both the countries to enhance the connectivity.

The Bandhan Express will be a weekly service on every Thursday. The Kolkata - Khulna Bandhan Express (13129 Up) will depart from Kolkata at 07.10 hrs.(IST) and arrives at Khulna at 12:30 hrs.(BST) on the return journey the Khulna-Kolkata Bandhan Express (13130 Down) will depart from Khulna at 13.30 hrs. (BST) and arrive at Kolkata at 18.10 hrs.(IST) on the same day. The immigration and Customs checks will take place at Kolkata International Passenger Terminal for the Indian side and at Benapol border station for Bangladesh side.

The journey time of Maitree Express from Kolkata to Dhaka will be 08 hrs.25mts while from Dhaka to Kolkata it will take 08 hrs.15mts. The journey time would be reduced by 2 hours. It will depart from Kolkata at 7.10 hrs.(IST) (on Mon, Tue, Fri & Sat) and arrive at Dhaka at 16.05 hrs.(BST) instead of earlier arrival at Dhaka at 18.05 hrs.(BST). On the return journey it will depart from Dhaka at 08.15 hrs.(BST) (on Wed, Fri, Sat & Sun) instead of earlier departure from Dhaka at 08.10 hrs. (BST) and arrive at Kolkata at 16.00 hrs.(IST) instead of earlier arrival at Kolkata at 18.10 hrs.(IST).

In order to reduce the en-route journey time of the passengers of the existing Kolkata - Dhaka Cantt. Maitree Express and newly introduced Kolkata - Khulna Bandhan Express, Ministry of Railways, with the coordination of Department of Immigration & Customs has opened an **International Rail Passenger Terminus** at Kolkata station with proper infrastructure and facilities of end-to-end immigration. With this new facility at Kolkata Terminal, the passengers of Maitree Express and Bandhan Express will be immensely benefitted.

The second Bhairab Bridge and Titas Bridge in Bangladesh built under the assistance of Government of India are two of the most important projects in Bangladesh for infrastructure and rolling stock development. The one kilometer long second Bhairab Railway Bridge was built over the mighty Meghna river at a cost of around USD 75 millions by Indian contractors and consultants. Similarly, the Titas bridge over river Titas in Eastern Bangladesh was built with a cost of around USD 25 million. Both these bridges are on the main Chittagong to Dhaka Trunk Rail Line which will help in faster movement of both passenger and freight trains of Bangladesh.

Following is the text of the Prime Minister's address on the occasion:

“इस प्रसारण से जुड़े सभी लोगों को, और विशेषकर बांग्लादेश में रहने वाले सभी भाइयों और बहनों को नमस्कार।

कुछ दिन पहले दोनों देशों में दीपावली, दुर्गा पूजा और काली पूजा के महोत्सव मनाए गए।

मैं दोनों देशवासियों को इस festival season की शुभकामनाएं देता हूँ।

मुझे प्रसन्नता है कि video conference के माध्यम से आपसे एक बार फिर मिलने का अवसर मिला।

आपके स्वास्थ्य के लिए हमारी शुभकामनाएं आपके साथ हैं।

मेरा शुरु से ही मानना रहा है कि पड़ोसी देशों के leaders के साथ सही मायने में पड़ोसियों जैसे संबंध होने चाहिए।

जब मन किया तो बात होनी चाहिए, visits होने चाहिए।

इस सबमें हमें protocol के बंधन में नहीं रहना चाहिए।

कुछ समय पहले हमने South Asia Satellite के launch के समय इसी प्रकार video conference की थी।

पिछले वर्ष हमने मिल कर Petrapole ICP का उद्घाटन भी इसी प्रकार किया था।

और मुझे प्रसन्नता है कि आज हमारी connectivity को मजबूत करने वाले महत्वपूर्ण projects का उद्घाटन हमने video conference के माध्यम से किया।

Connectivity का सबसे महत्वपूर्ण आयाम है हमारी people-to-people connectivity.

और आज international passenger terminus के उद्घाटन से कोलकाता-ढाका मैत्री express और आज शुरु हुई कोलकाता-खुलना बंधन express के यात्रियों को काफी सुविधा होगी।

इससे उन्हें न सिर्फ़ customs और immigration में आसानी होगी, बल्कि उनकी यात्रा के समय में भी 3 घंटे की बचत होगी।

मैत्री और बंधन, इन दोनों rail सुविधाओं के नाम भी हमारे shared vision के अनुरूप हैं।

जब भी हम connectivity की बात करते हैं, तो मुझे हमेशा आपके pre-1965 connectivity बहाल करने के vision का खयाल आता है।

मुझे बहुत खुशी है कि हम इस दिशा में क़दम-दर-क़दम निरंतर आगे बढ़ रहे हैं।

आज हमने दो rail पुलों का भी उद्घाटन किया है। लगभग 100 million dollars की लागत से बने ये पुल बांग्लादेश के rail network को मजबूत करने में सहायक होंगे।

बांग्लादेश के विकास कार्यों में विश्वस्त साझेदार होना भारत के लिए गर्व का विषय है।

मुझे प्रसन्नता है कि हमारे 8 billion dollars के concessional (कनसे-शनल) finance के commitment के अंतर्गत projects पर अच्छी प्रगति हो रही है।

Development और Connectivity दोनों एक साथ जुड़े हुए हैं, और हम दोनों देशों के बीच जो सदियों पुराने एतिहासिक links हैं, विशेष रूप से पश्चिम बंगाल और बांग्लादेश के लोगों के बीच, उन्हें मजबूत करने की दिशा में आज हमने कुछ और क़दम उठाए हैं।

मुझे पूरा विश्वास है कि जैसे-जैसे हम अपने संबंध बढ़ाएंगे और लोगों के बीच रिश्ते मजबूत करेंगे, वैसे वैसे हम विकास और समृद्धि के नए आसमान भी छूएंगे।

इस काम में सहयोग के लिए मैं प्रधानमंत्री शेख हसीना जी का, और मुख्यमंत्री ममता बनर्जी जी का हृदय से आभार प्रकट करता हूँ।

धन्यवाद।

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