

TRAINS GO FROM CALCUTTA TO DHAKA AGAIN



Trains are operational between the capital of Bangladesh, Dhaka and the capital of the Indian state of West Bengal, Calcutta, once again.

The connection in both directions was suspended after the 1965 war between India and Pakistan. Bangladesh is no more part of Pakistan as it has gained its independence in 1971. The service between the two cities was agreed on to resume in 2001. However, after the Bangladesh Nationalist Party of former premier Khaleda Zia, came to power, the planned agreement was not fulfilled. Only now the route is again operational after more than 43-year long pause.

The inaugural service took place on the Bengali New Year's Day on Monday (04/14/2008). The inaugural train is called the Maitreyi, or Friendship, Express. Trains went in both directions.

The initiative is not only about restoring the train service between the two cities it is also about improving the political relations between the two neighboring nations. It is also important to mention that Bangladesh and India's West Bengal state used to be a single state in the past therefore the language of the two states is the same.

Many people have relatives in the other state. According to Indian railway spokesman Samir Goswami, the inaugural service has been started in a hurry and people are still not aware of where to get the tickets. This will, however, improve with time. One way ticket costs \$8.

It is expected that the Calcutta-Dhaka Friendship Express will be a huge success. People will travel to visit their relatives or places of origin. Bangladeshi nationals will probably come to India looking for jobs, shopping or seeking medical treatment.

Not everyone is, nevertheless, happy with the reopening of the route. Hindu refugees from Bangladesh tried to stop the train because they do not want any relations with Bangladesh, which is in majority a Muslim nation. A group of Hindus was accused of planting three bombs on the route on Sunday. Bombs were defused and a number of members of the group arrested.

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