

Fifty-seven-year-old Beauty Rani, a resident of Dhaka's Wari area can still vividly recall the gruesome days of the partition of the Subcontinent, a time, when, she says, "Bad news was no longer news." She lost her father in a riot, one gory morning he went to keep the family-owned shop, never to come back again. Her maternal uncles left the country to settle in newly formed India, leaving Rani's mother with the shop. The chance of a family reunion was closed shut in 1965, when in the run up to the war of 1965 between India and Pakistan the passenger rail service between Dhaka and Kolkata (Calcutta) was shut down.

The restoration of the service is good news for Rani, who is now toying with the idea of using it to rekindle old relationships, memories that refuse to fizzle out so easily. Feelings like hers are reciprocated on the other side of the fence. Sumana Roy, an Indian writer, sees this as an opportunity to visit her ancestral home in Pabna, a place she has only heard about from her refugee father. "The house has lived on in my memory. I have heard so much about it from my father, the lush paddy field, the river nearby--everything feels so closer to my heart". Adyta Roy, her father, was not as lucky; he passed away a few days ago, leaving the tumultuous history of Bengal to his daughter.





Bangladeshi passengers go through customs and immigration clearance at the Gede station.

Mohammad Zamir, former secretary and ambassador, thinks the restoration of direct train service between Dhaka and Kolkata is a step in the right direction. He thinks, "It will foster tourism in Bangladesh and, given that we develop proper infrastructure, it will generate a real sustainable growth in the country's tourism sector. It will eventually contribute towards the interactive engagement in areas of culture, education and healthcare."

Sumana agrees. She thinks Bangladesh will be hugely benefited from it, as there are hundreds and thousands of Bangalis who live in her part of India who share the bonding of language and culture with the people of Bangladesh. "I have grown up hearing about Bangladesh. The *Doi* of Bogra and *Shutki Maach* of Chittagong I have only heard of but have never tasted. This opportunity I will not miss."

