Dhaka-Kolkata Maitree Express train may restart if India wants

Bangladesh Railway says the train would run via the Padma Bridge if New Delhi sends a formal proposal

JAGARAN CHAKMA

The Maitree Express train connecting Dhaka in Bangladesh to Kolkata in West Bengal may resume only after India makes a formal request through diplomatic channels, according to a senior Bangladesh Railway official, as the new service would take a shorter route via Padma Bridge instead of the previous lengthy route across the Jamuna river.

"If they [India] send a proposal, the government will consider the matter," said Al Fattah Md Masudur Rahman, additional director-general at Bangladesh Railway.

He, however, said no decision has been taken to resume the service so far.

The Maitree Express was launched in April 2008 to provide passenger rail connectivity between Bangladesh and India. It became popular among Bangladeshi passengers travelling to India, particularly for medical treatment and tourism.

Before India suspended the service in July 2024 amid the uprising, the Maitree Express ran from Dhaka Cantonment Railway Station through Tangail, the Jamuna Bridge, Ishwardi and Darsana. The 392km journey from Dhaka to Kolkata used to take about seven hours and 45 minutes.

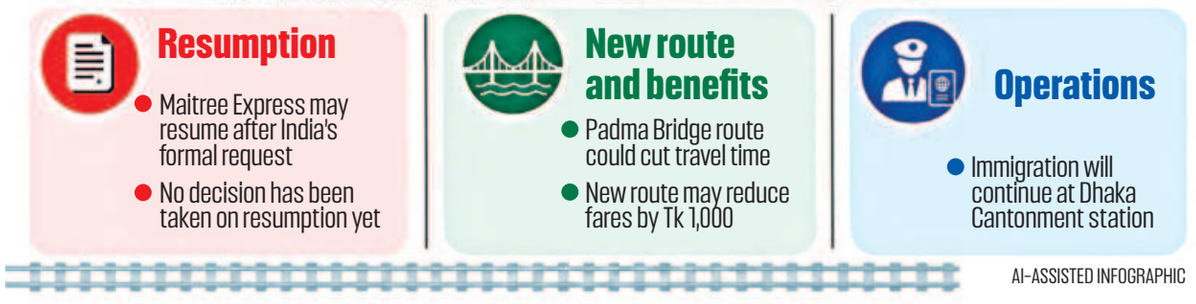
Indian authorities in September proposed that the train use a new route via the Padma Bridge, Jashore and Benapole. The shorter route could cut travel time to about six hours, while the fare is estimated to fall by about Tk 1,000 per ticket.

However, these are projections and would depend on the final route, timetable and operational arrangements.

Apart from the Maitree Express, services of two other trains, Bandhan Express and Mitali Express, have also been suspended between the two neighbours since 2024.

Bangladesh Railway Additional Director-General Masudur said Bangladesh Railway did not suspend the services. Rather, the Indian authorities suspended them.





He said that if the Maitree Express resumes via the Padma Bridge, immigration clearance would continue at Dhaka Cantonment Railway Station.

The Maitree Express previously departed from Dhaka Cantonment, where immigration formalities were completed for passengers travelling in both directions.

"The necessary arrangements for immigration are already there. If we do it at Kamalapur Railway Station, a new setup would be required," he said.

To run the train via the Padma Bridge, it would have to pass through Kamalapur before joining the new railway line towards the bridge.

In September, the proposal to run the Maitree Express through the Padma Bridge was discussed at a meeting between railway authorities from Bangladesh and India. But India has yet to send a formal proposal.

Following the three-day Inter-Governmental Railway Meeting, Railway Ministry Additional Secretary Ziaul Haque said on September 10 that Bangladesh would review the matter if India formally proposed restarting the services.

Ziaul said Indian delegates had proposed discussions on operating the Maitree Express through the Padma Bridge, but no formal proposal had been submitted.

He also said the proposed route would require assessment of several technical and operational issues, including route capacity, train movement arrangements, turning facilities, fare adjustments and immigration procedures.

Bangladesh Railway data show that 288,360 passengers travelled on the Maitree Express from fiscal year 2022-23 till July 19, 2024. About 95 percent of them were Bangladeshis.

Average occupancy was between 80 and 85 percent, rising above 95 percent during the Eid and Durga Puja holidays.

Bangladesh Railway received 75 percent of the apportioned earnings from the service under the cross-border passenger train arrangement, with the remaining 25 percent going to Indian Railways.

Promotion? No, thanks

MAHTAB UDDIN AHMED

A young executive is invited into the boss's room. The boss smiles, offers tea and announces, "Congratulations, you have been promoted." The employee asks four questions: How much more will I earn? How many people will I manage? Will I have greater authority? And must I answer WhatsApp messages at midnight? By the fourth answer, congratulations sounds suspiciously like condolences.

For generations, promotion simply meant success. A larger title, a bigger office and a new line on the business card confirmed progress. Refusing a promotion was unthinkable. Today, more young employees are saying, "No, thanks."

Deloitte's 2026 global survey found that only 25 percent of Gen Z and 21 percent of millennials prefer rapid career progression through promotions. Most favour steady growth, while some are willing to move sideways or step back for experience. This is not the death of ambition. Some 76 percent of Gen Z respondents and 67 percent of millennials remain interested in senior leadership. They want leadership, but not this version.

What do they see? Managers caught between ambitious targets above and anxious employees below. Gartner reports that 47 percent of managers are working harder than a year earlier. They spend about nine hours a week addressing employees' personal and emotional concerns, despite limited influence over pay, staffing or policy. The manager is expected to be a strategist, counsellor, firefighter and cheerleader.

In some companies, promotion brings a grander designation, a larger team, more meetings and a modest pay rise. In my last job, the salary adjustment was only 5 percent, while responsibility increased manifold. Authority remained with the owner or the boss's boss. An Assistant General Manager becomes General Manager and discovers that the only thing removed from the job is the word "Assistant".

Technology has made the burden clearer. Email once waited. WhatsApp has no such respect for office hours, weekends or family dinners. Instant replies signal commitment; pauses



Perhaps ambition has changed. Many now value skills over titles, wellbeing over visibility and sustainable achievement over theatre.

can look like a lack of it. Young employees watch this lifestyle and make a rational calculation. The ladder may still go upwards, but every step carries more weight.

Generations have rarely differed so sharply. A senior leader opens Excel, prepares PowerPoint and posts on Facebook, feeling modern; Gen Z considers all three museum pieces. Employers may mistake digital confidence for impatience, while younger employees mistake experience for obsolescence. Reverse mentoring must replace suspicion.

Companies promote technical performers into management without asking whether they can, or even want to, lead people. Gallup found that only 45 percent of frontline supervisors had received supervisory training in the previous year, while 23 percent had never received any. The younger generation is not entirely right. Leadership cannot become a permanent comfort zone. Greater responsibility requires difficult decisions, longer thinking and sacrifice. An organisation cannot build its future if everyone wants influence, but nobody accepts accountability.

However, companies must make promotions worth accepting. That means fair compensation, genuine authority, manageable teams, leadership training and protection from permanent availability. Technical specialists should have career paths that do not require becoming reluctant managers. Growth should have more than one path.

Senior leaders often complain that young people lack loyalty and ambition. Perhaps ambition has changed. Many now value skills over titles, wellbeing over visibility and sustainable achievement over theatre.

If the next generation refuses to climb, management should inspect the ladder before blaming the climbers. A promotion should recognise success and enable greater contribution. When "Congratulations" sounds like a punishment, the problem may not be the employee. It may be the promotion.

The writer is the founder of BuildCon Consultancies Ltd and BuildNation Ltd

Money changers can now sell up to $3,000 in cash

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Bank has raised the amount of US dollar notes and coins that licensed money changers can sell at a time to outbound Bangladeshi travellers to $3,000 from $2,000, to ease their foreign exchange needs.

In a circular issued yesterday, the central bank allowed licensed money changers to sell the higher amount against travellers' annual private travel entitlement.

Beyond the dollar cash limit, the balance of a traveller's annual travel entitlement may be released in notes and coins of other freely convertible or usable currencies, subject to availability and the traveller's remaining entitlement.

The revised facility is expected to give outbound travellers greater flexibility in buying foreign currency cash from money changers.

BSEC to allow financial advisers to curb rumour-based trading

Aims to reduce investors' reliance on unauthorised tips, hearsay and unverified market claims

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) plans to formulate and issue the "Registered Financial Adviser Rules" within the next one or two months to protect general investors from fraud and market rumours and promote professional investment guidance.

BSEC Commissioner Nafiz Al Tarik disclosed the plan at a seminar on Wednesday, saying the proposed rules would bring financial advisers under regulatory oversight and help investors make more informed capital market decisions.

The seminar was jointly organised by CDBL and Central Counterparty Bangladesh Limited (CCBL) at the DSE building in Dhaka to mark "World Investor Week 2026".

Under the new rules, investors will no longer have to rely on unauthorised tips, hearsay or unverified claims from brokerage house representatives when making capital market decisions, the commissioner said.

Instead, they will be able to seek structured, certified advice from licensed financial advisers operating under direct regulatory oversight and monitoring.

Addressing investor vulnerability, the BSEC commissioner said retail investors frequently suffer heavy losses by blindly following informal tips or advice from brokerage representatives.

He cited a recent instance in which a high-profile national cricketer entrusted his capital to a brokerage house based on personal trust, only to lose nearly 80 percent of his portfolio value and face severe financial distress while attempting to repay associated loans.

To build financial resilience, he advised general investors to shift towards diversified mutual funds managed by experienced asset managers, which can help cushion portfolios during market downturns compared with direct stock holdings.

At the event, Md Abdul Mutaleb, managing director of CDBL, said the company plans to launch a mobile application for investors this October.

Through the app, investors will be able to directly view information on their Beneficiary Owner (BO) accounts and portfolios, as well as receive transaction updates and notifications.

ACI Beverages launches MacCoffee in Bangladesh

STAR BUSINESS DESK

ACI Beverages, a business unit of ACI Foods Limited under Advanced Chemical Industries (ACI) PLC, has launched the globally popular instant coffee and beverage brand "MacCoffee" in Bangladesh.

To this end, the Bangladeshi company signed a strategic partnership agreement with Empire International Sdn Bhd, a member of Singapore-based Food Empire Holdings Limited, facilitated by Mitsui & Co (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd.

Zakir Ibne Hai, executive director and chief operating officer of ACI Food and Beverage, and Tan Boon Hua, general manager of Empire International Sdn Bhd, signed the agreement at a launch ceremony at a Shwapno outlet in Banasree, Rampura, Dhaka, on Wednesday, according to a press release.

The partnership marks another milestone in ACI Beverages' efforts to diversify its beverage portfolio in Bangladesh.

ACI Beverages entered the beverage category by distributing Sunquick fruit concentrates and fruit drinks, followed by the launch of ACI Electrolyte Drinks.

Recognising the potential of the hot beverage segment in Bangladesh, the company has now partnered with Empire International to introduce MacCoffee to consumers across the country. The initial rollout will feature MacCoffee Original and MacCoffee Gold in jars. The partners also plan to introduce local packaging in the longer term, alongside new products to expand the brand's presence in the market.

MacCoffee is available in more than 60 countries and aims to bring its global coffee experience to Bangladesh's growing consumer market.

Govt working for stable supply of Ramadan commodities: Muktadir

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Ctg*

Commerce Minister Khandakar Abdul Muktadir yesterday said the government is working to ensure an uninterrupted supply of essential commodities and reasonable prices for consumers during the upcoming Ramadan.

Urging importers and traders to play their roles in ensuring continuous supply and market stability, the minister said the government would not tolerate any attempt by traders to form syndicates and raise the prices of essential commodities during Ramadan.

He made the comments as the chief guest at a meeting with importers and traders organised by the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) at its office in the port city.

"There is currently an adequate volume of essential commodities like edible oil, sugar and others in the import pipeline ahead of Ramadan. Therefore, there will be no shortage of essential goods during Ramadan, and supplies will remain normal," the minister said.



Steps are being taken to rationalise duties on fruits and dates to reduce import costs, the commerce minister said. PHOTO: STAR/FILE

Steps are being taken to rationalise duties on fruits and dates to reduce import costs, while the government would discuss with the authorities lowering interest rates on loans for importing consumer goods and removing obstacles to the transportation and clearance of commodities, he said.

He said efforts are underway to reduce the duty on fruits and make them affordable for ordinary consumers.

A letter has been sent to the National Board of Revenue (NBR) seeking a reduction in the duty on dates, he informed.

Muktadir stressed the need for a planned supply system to ensure the availability of essential commodities, particularly vegetables, at relatively stable prices throughout the year.

At the meeting, businesses from Chattogram raised objections to the 13-tonne weight limit on transporting goods on roads connecting Chattogram with other parts of the country.

They said the restriction was increasing transportation costs, which in turn was driving up the prices of commodities.

CCCI President Mohammad Amirul Haque said businesses are committed to ensuring an uninterrupted supply of essential commodities during the upcoming Ramadan.

He also said the Chittagong chamber would hold regular meetings with importers and traders to monitor the supply and prices of key commodities.

The chamber president urged the minister to take steps to withdraw the discriminatory 13-tonne weight limit on transporting goods on highways only from Chattogram and to halt the serial system for allocating lighter vessels to unload import cargo from mother vessels.

These two systems are the main reasons behind rising costs of imported goods, Haque said.

He also called for a review of the system for fixing lighter-vessel freight rates and for greater competition in the sector.