



Rural Craft and Cultural Hubs

An initiative of Department of MSME&T, Government of West Bengal
in collaboration with UNESCO, New Delhi Office

Rural Craft and Cultural Hubs Of Bengal

Developing Rural Creative Economy
in West Bengal



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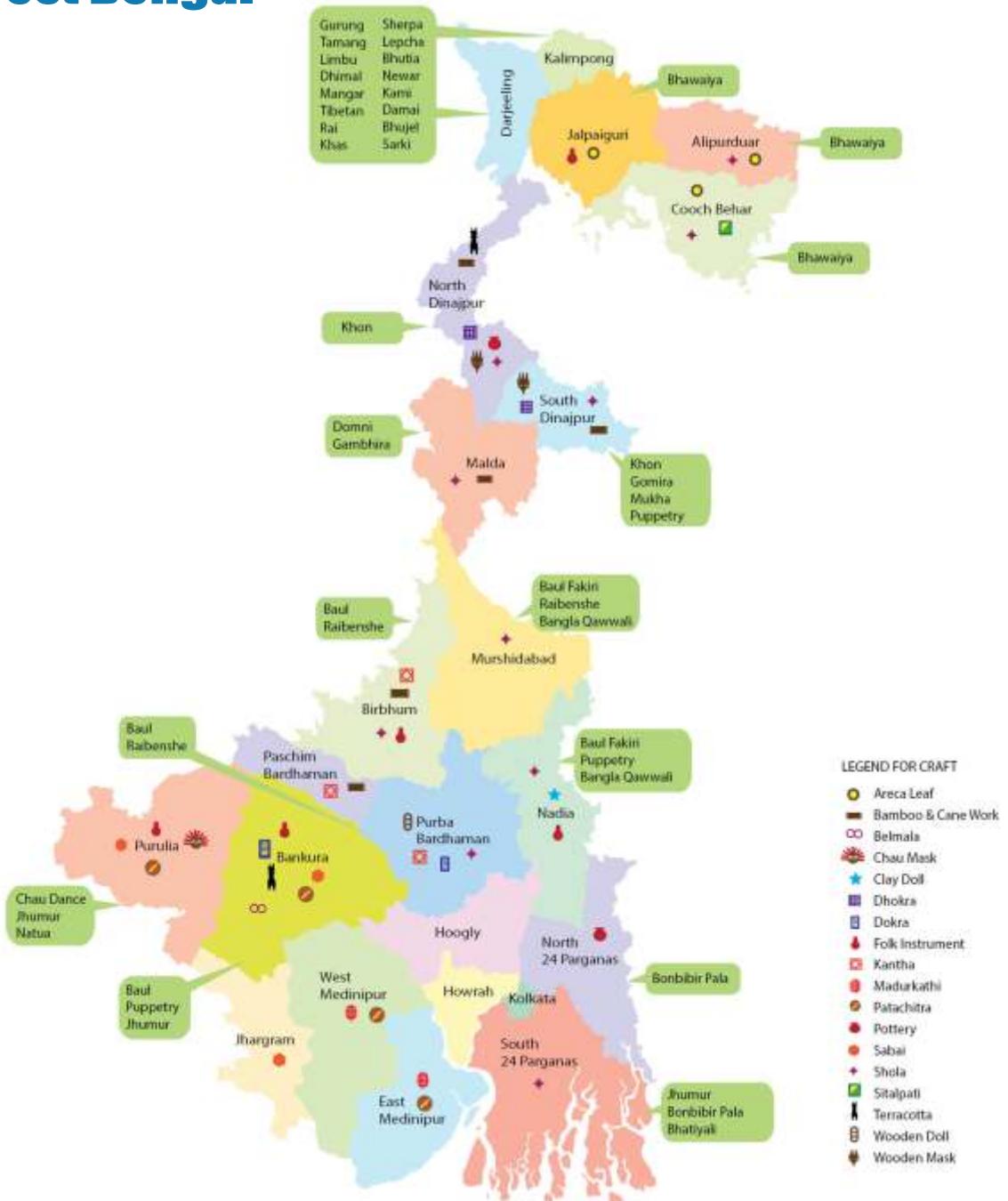
Background

The Rural Craft and Cultural Hubs (RCCH) are unique centres of craft enterprises and cultural professionals spread across 19 districts of West Bengal. In September 2013, the Department of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises and Textiles (MSME&T), Government of West Bengal signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with UNESCO to safeguard intangible cultural heritage of the state as a way to foster cultural sustainability and viability. The first project, Rural Craft Hub (RCH) from December 2013 - September 2016 of Bengal covered 10 craft traditions and 3000 traditional crafts persons. Seeing the positive impact of the project, the Rural Craft and Cultural Hubs (RCCH) initiative was rolled out as its successor to cover 15 districts and 12000 tradition bearers. Dept of MSME&T also supported creation of cultural spaces at villages for preserving and practicing respective arts and crafts. Dept of MSME&T also supported West Bengal Khadi and Village Industries Board (WBKVIB) in rejuvenation of natural fibre-based traditions like Madur and Sabai covering 5 districts from 2015 to 2019.

The success of the Rural Craft and Cultural Hubs project is a testimony to the investment that has been made in the small and micro enterprise sector of West Bengal and was reconfirmed by external evaluation. With the support of the state government in rejuvenating the skills of the artists and crafts persons & in developing traditional art/ craft based micro-entrepreneurship at grass-root level, a major transformation has occurred not only in their individual lives but also in the community as a whole. The government worked towards uplifting the communities through investing in skill transmission, safeguarding, promotion through festivals and cultural events. With hope instilled minds, communities have been invigorated to pursue their art form. Through this, they have not only become confident to preach and practice their traditions but have also developed into independent artists and crafts persons. The socio-economic status of the communities has been reinforced capacitating them to work collectively through community mobilization, improved awareness of and access to infrastructure. Now, they have a better quality of life with respectable and decent work; have bank accounts and credit linkage, enhanced access to market and better exposures and opportunities. Income has increased 2.5 times for handicraft-persons and twice for the performing artists. Women, from being the ones within domestic walls, have successfully put their step forward to cross national boundaries. Revitalization of the craft economy has led to inclusive growth. Safeguarding of art and craft has contributed to progress towards several Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs).



Rural Craft & Cultural Hubs of West Bengal



Development of Eco System for Creative Economy in Rural Craft and Cultural Hubs

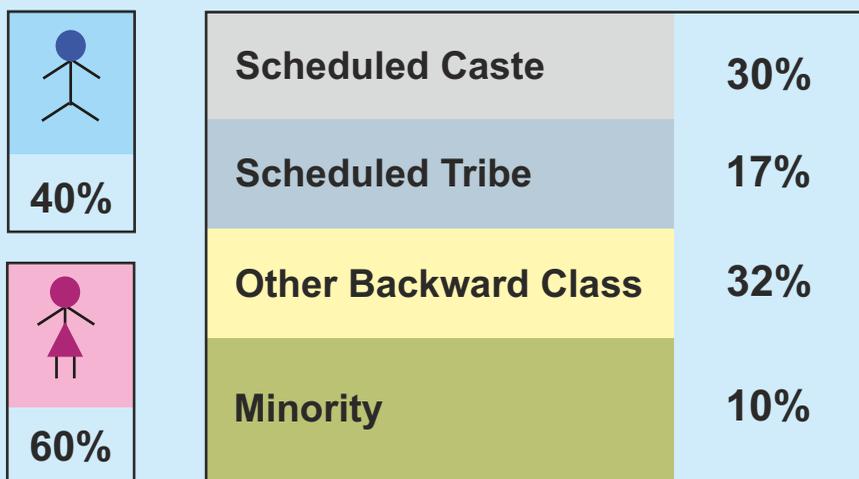
The second phase of the initiative in 2021 aims to scale up the Rural Craft and Cultural Hubs to foster socio-economic empowerment of 50000 artists and crafts persons and develop an eco-system to nurture creative entrepreneurship for holistic growth of arts and crafts, crafts persons and artists and the larger community in the villages where they live. The aim is to build sustainable livelihood for the communities through rejuvenation of the rich intangible cultural heritage of Bengal, strengthen grass-root entrepreneurship, promote economic empowerment of women, youth and underprivileged groups.

The project will empower existing 25,000 beneficiaries to scale up their business, represent and leverage their ICH in the marketplace using digital and heritage sensitive marketing tools and strategies. It will also provide sustainable livelihood opportunities to another 25000 crafts persons and artists through the safeguarding of occupational forms of performing arts and crafts in West Bengal.

Key Activities

- Capacity building of rural artists to transform into cultural professionals and large businesses with skills to develop and innovate cultural products and services, improve production process and quality management, use digital technology, protect their artist rights using intellectual property based tools etc.
- Supporting the creative entrepreneurs with tools, equipments, infrastructure, audiovisual, digital and printed promotional tools
- Fostering sustainable market access and linkage to national and international markets
- Developing enabling eco system for villages to operate as destinations for formal and non formal heritage education and tourism
- Strengthening resilience through access to Government programs for financial, technical and marketing support as well as social security and welfare schemes
- Provide international visibility to lessons learned and good practices
- Making a few villages ready for Cultural Tourism

Total No. of Artists: 50000



Intangible Cultural Heritage of West Bengal

Intangible Cultural Heritage or ICH are living expressions inherited and transmitted through generations and also contemporary rural and urban practices in which diverse cultural groups take part. They include oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe and the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.

A beautiful spatial spread of rivers and rivulets in its veins, the panoramic hills at its edge and stretches of lush green forests, Bengal is indeed a treasure trove of art and aesthetics. Every facet of its life is touched with a tinge of art. While there exists an array of handicrafts like Wooden masks, Terracotta, Dokra, Madur, Sitalpati and others, there are also oral traditions like Patachitra, the mellifluous folk songs and tunes, rapturous dances and the thematic theatres of Bengal. Our festivals and folklores, customs and rituals is a manifestation of this enormous miscellany in culture.



What the Hubs Offer

The hubs offer young people and women opportunity for economic empowerment utilising local skills and resources. The hubs are a single window opportunity for businesses to collaborate with folk artists. They also facilitate onsite production and design development as well as bulk purchase of handicrafts at competitive rates.

The hubs provide a unique opportunity to learn the traditional arts and crafts directly from the practitioners. Workshops and art and music residencies are hosted with the traditional artists for urban and foreign artists, researchers and enthusiasts.

Folk Art Centres at the hubs showcase the art and craft forms, their production process and history. There are also sales counters for visitors to collect souvenirs and CDs.

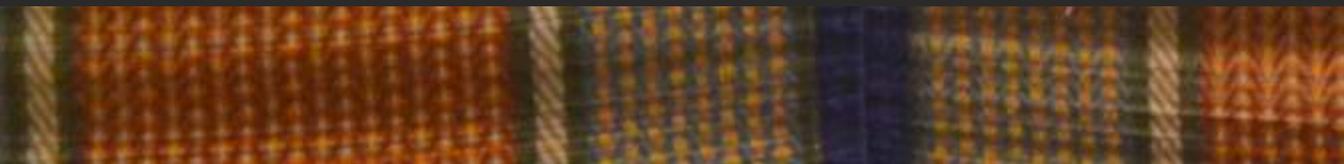
The hubs host an annual three-day village festival and they include performances by other rural artists and musicians. These events facilitate the expansion of the folk artists' network and offer visitors an authentic experience of the intangible cultural heritage and rural creative enterprises of Bengal. With the hubs emerging as cultural tourism destinations, the Folk Art Centres also offer accommodation facilities to visitors. The hubs also encourage Heritage Education tours and provide an excellent scope for creative photography initiatives.





CRAFTS OF BENGAL

Bengal has a variety of handicrafts which stand out for their creative charm and aesthetic appeal. From bamboo-cane works to Shola decorations, Dokra metal craft, amazing pottery of various shapes and sizes, musical instruments, and weaves from natural fibres, such as Madur, Sitalpati and Dhokra... the range includes utilitarian as well as décor items.



Bamboo & Cane

Bamboo craft has come a long way since the days of simple utilitarian cane baskets for households. There is a plethora of colourful and eco-friendly products now, including winnows, hand-held fans, sieves, lamp shades, coasters and even jewellery!



437 artists from Purba Bardhaman, Birbhum, Malda, Uttar Dinajpur and Dakshin Dinajpur (expected another 1500 artists to be included)



Artists have travelled to Lithuania.

Pottery

Pottery, an ancient clay craft, is practiced in many parts of Bengal. Potters' clusters at Kunoor in Uttar Dinajpur is already within the ambit of the RCCH intervention. It is a flourishing craft and the main source of livelihood for most artists. The product range is diverse from flower vase, incense stick holder, bowl, tea kettle, fruit basket etc.



171 artists from Uttar Dinajpur (expected another 100 artists to be included)



Sholapith

Shola (*Aeschynomene aspera*) also referred as Indian cork is a pure white delicate plant that grows in the moist and marshy lands of Bengal. Shola craft-persons are called Malakars. Various products including but not limited to religious artefacts as well as decorative items are made out of Shola. Miniature idols and figurines of deities, chariots ornaments and head-gears of idols, idols of mythological figures, floral designs like marigold and rose, Chandmala, Manjusha, home décor such as flower vases, wall hangings, decorative items used on terracotta item, the Topor and Mukut worn by bridegroom in weddings, miniature boats, elephants and palanquins, and many other diverse items are made of Shola. The light and easy to cut nature of Shola makes it possible for a multitude of products to be crafted out of the same.



171 artists in Purba Bardhaman (expected another 3000 artists to be included from South 24 Parganas, Alipurduar, Coochbehar, Birbhum, Murshidabad & Dinajpur)



Shola artists have visited Norway.

Dokra

Dokra craft is one of the earliest methods of non-ferrous metal casting known to human civilization. The lost or vanishing wax casting method (*cire perdue*), popularly known as Dokra, can be traced back to the Indus valley civilization. Dokra statues are revered all over the world for its primeval simplicity and enthralling folk motifs.

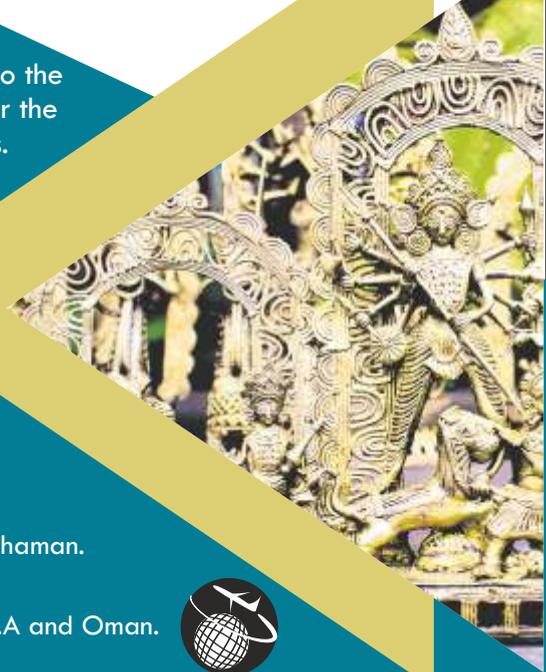
In West Bengal, the crafts persons are concentrated in Dariyapur of Bardhaman and Bikna of Bankura district. In Dariyapur there are 36 families and in Bikna, 58 families practicing the craft.

296 artists in Bankura and Purba Bardhaman



Folk Art Centre: Bikna, Bankura and Dariyapur, Bardhaman.

Artists have visited France, Lithuania, Denmark, U.S.A and Oman.



Wooden Mask

The ecstatic Wooden Masks have ensued from the animalistic practices of the Rajbongshi community of Uttar and Dakshin Dinajpur. The masks are objects of worship and are integral to the Gomira Dance or Palas which are performed to appease the village deity to usher in 'good forces' and drive out the 'evil' during the harvest season.

The craft of mask making in its pristine form caters to the needs of the dancers or any devotee willing to offer a mask to the deity, Goddess Chandi. Over the years, the Gomira masks have evolved into coveted collectors' item. Wooden Mask received GI status in 2018.

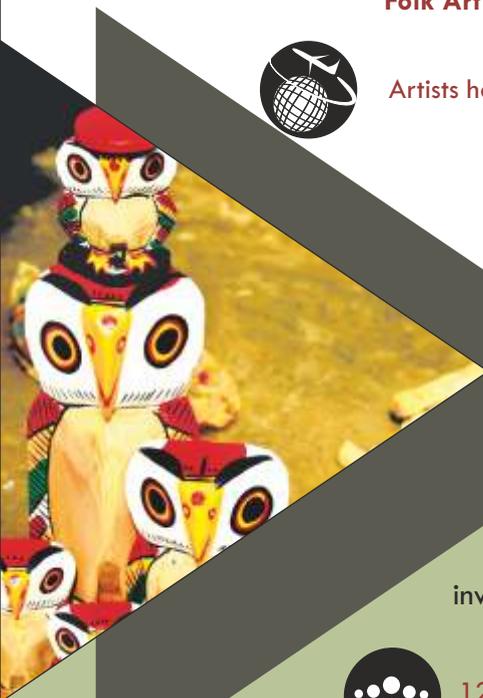


170 artists in Dakshin Dinajpur (expected another 50 artists to be included from Uttar & Dakshin Dinajpur)

Folk Art Centre: Kushmandi, Dakshin Dinajpur



Artists have participated at fairs in France and UK.



Wooden Doll

Vibrant colour, intricate design and ethnic style, are the characteristic features of the Wooden Dolls made by the rural artisans of Natungram. The traditional designs based on culture and mythology, the richness of ideas, the brilliant combination of pure simplicity and glamour combined with the master craftsmanship of the crafts persons, result in an amazing work of art. The Owl sculptures from Natungram shares the iconic status in representing Bengal's handicraft. There are about 51 families involved in doll making.



126 artists in Purba Bardhaman

Folk Art Centre: Natungram, Bardhaman



Artists have visited France.

Terracotta

The archetypal horse of Bankura Terracotta, has over the time gained recognition among art lovers of the world. It is regarded as a symbol of the artistic excellence of Indian rural handicrafts.

Originally, the horses of Bankura were made for ritualistic purposes. The rural community offer horses to the village deities once their wishes were fulfilled. Terracotta received GI status in 2018.



270 artists in Bankura



Artists have visited France.



Folk Art Centre:
Panchmura, Bankura

Clay Doll

The art of doll making has always been an integral part of Bengal's culture. The magic element of craft of Clay Doll making is a combination of the brilliance of human imagination which transforms the mundane into magnifque. From realistic and naturalistic to symbolic, the clay dolls of Ghurni are recognized worldwide. The perfect detailing of form, feature and stance, the meticulous realism and the marvelous expressions make the dolls a collector's item.



277 artists in Nadia



Artists have visited France and Taiwan.

Chau Mask

The art of Chau mask making started in Charida village during the rule of King Madan Mohan Singh Deo of Baghmundi around 150 years back. The ornate and elaborate masks are integral to Chau dance. The masks are made of clay and papier-mâché with elaborate ornamentation done at times with peacock feathers as well. The masks are attractive and have a bold look.

The masks depict various mythological characters, animal and birds. The mask makers are now making masks to fit in as home décor and lifestyle items. Chau Mask received GI status in 2018.



308 artists in Purulia



Folk Art Centre:
Charida, Purulia



Artists travelled
to Norway

Achievements (2013 - 2019)

- Capacity building in making high value and wider range of products
- Showcasing of craft traditions in Norway, Sweden, Lithuania, France, Taiwan, Oman, UK, USA etc.
- Regular heritage education and tourism at Dokra, Wooden Mask, Wooden Doll hubs
- Enabling infrastructure with folk art centres, improved tools and equipments
- Villages like Charida, Panchmura and Bikna have evolved as tourism destinations
- Crafts persons are exporting abroad
- Dokra and Chau mask makers are earning from online heritage education programs





Weaves and Stitches

There is a refreshing array of weaves and stitches when it comes to traditional crafts of Bengal. There is a wonder world of products made from jute called Dhokra, the evergreen Madur, the cool and soothing Sitalpati, and magic creations from Sabai, a local grass, apart from utility items made from Areca leaves in districts of Alipurduar, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar.



Dhokra

Dhokra is the craft of weaving jute mats on back strap looms, done exclusively by women at home. It is the livelihood for thousands of women and the main hubs are in Uttar and Dakshin Dinajpur districts. Products include traditional mats, colored floor mats, bed sheets, shawls, wall hangings and more.



1,957 weavers from Uttar Dinajpur and Dakshin Dinajpur.
(expected another 2000 artists to be included)

Madur

Madur is a generic term for floor mats in Bengal. It is an integral part of Bengali lifestyle. The main hubs are in Purba and Paschim Medinipur districts. Women are at the forefront of the craft. The main raw material is Madurkathi, a rhizome-based plant. The range of products includes table mats, wall décor, coasters, bags, purses, curtains, table runners and jackets. Madur received GI status in 2018.



4,432 weavers in Purba and Paschim Medinipur
(expected another 2000 artists to be included)



Artists have visited South Korea, Sweden, Lithuania, Denmark, Kyrgyzstan, Oman, Hungary, UK, Norway and China.



Folk Art Centre: Sarta, Sabang, Paschim Medinipur.
8 Production centres developed at Sabang and Pingla.



Sitalpati

'Sital' means cool and 'Pati' means Mat in Bengali. Sitalpati are mats made from soft cane slips of the *Maranta Dichotoma* family, split lengthwise into fine strands. This is a traditional, family-based craft and the main hub is at Ghugumari in Cooch Behar district. A considerable number of the weavers are women. Apart from traditional mats, they are now engaged in design development to compete in the global market.



528 weavers in Cooch Behar
(expected another 2600 artists to be included)



Folk Art Centre: Ghugumari, Cooch Behar.



Artists have visited France.



Sabai

Equipped with Green Skills, thousands of women have made the journey from ordinary rope-makers to finest weavers of a wide variety of products with Sabai. A tufted perennial grass with whitish hairs, Sabai (*Eulaliopsis Binata*, family Poaceae) is called Babui Ghash in Bengali and grows in abundance in the forest fringe areas of Purulia, Bankura and Jhargram districts of south Bengal.

Sabai weaving is a women's domain. The main hubs are in Purulia's Bandwan and Manbazar-II blocks, Bankura's Ranibandh and Khatra blocks, and Jhargram's Nayagram, Binpur-II, Jhargram and Gopiballabhpur-I blocks.



3,894 artists in Bankura, Purulia and Jhargram
(expected another 2000 artists to be included)



Centre of Excellence, Jhargram



Kantha

Kantha is unique in its ethnicity, traditional appeal and contemporary allure. It is a form of personal expression, an art-craft that was made spontaneously or even whimsically at times. The embroidery sessions are an opportunity to socialize and a welcome break from the drudgery of everyday chores. The craft is customary of rural women and the end products are exemplary in beauty and skill.



603 artists in Birbhum
(expected another 2500 artists to be included from Birbhum and Purba Bardhaman, Paschim Bardhaman)



Artists have visited Japan, UK, France, Lithuania, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, South Korea and Oman



Folk Art Centre: Nanoor, Birbhum



Areca Leaf

Areca palm is botanically known as *Dypsis lutescens*. It is a species of flowering plant in the family *Areaceae*.

In Alipurduar and Cooch Behar the availability of Areca trees is very high. A large number of leaves are wasted as people are not accustomed to the ways of utilisation. In some of these areas about 1000 individuals have taken up the project of making plates from these leaves. The main time of collecting Areca leaves is from March to June, though it is also available throughout the year. An average size of a leaf is 12-16 inch and from it 1 big plate, 2 bowls and 4 spoons/forks can be extracted. Plates, bowls and cutlery items are made from the leaves.

Expected around 1500 artists to be included from Alipurduar, Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri





Art of Storytelling

Bengal has a unique oral-visual art form of scroll painting called Patachitra. The artists, called Patuas, are painters, lyricists and singers — all rolled into one. They narrate the stories painted on the scrolls through their songs. Patachitra is now being done on different products as well as exteriors and interiors of buildings. Many Patuas continue the tradition of using natural colors made from flowers, leaves and stones.

Bengal is also known for its unique tradition of story telling through puppetry. The puppeteers use string puppets and hand puppets to narrate different stories on social as well as mythological subjects.



Medinipur Patachitra

Pingla is a thriving Patachitra hub in Paschim Medinipur district. Chandipur in Purba Medinipur district is another Patachitra hub where the tradition is being revived under the RCCH initiative. Many Patuas of Medinipur continue the tradition of using natural colours made from flowers and leaves. Patachitra of Bengal received GI status in 2018.



493 artists in Purba and Paschim Medinipur (expected another 100 artists to be included)

Folk Art Centre: Naya in Pingla, Paschim Medinipur & Chandipur, Purba Medinipur.



Artists have visited USA, U.K, France, Germany, Lithuania, Taiwan, Italy, Denmark, U.S.A, Japan, China, Bahrain, Hungary, Sweden, Czech Republic.

Purulia Patachitra

The Patachitra form found in Purulia district is strikingly different from the one in Medinipur. Purulia's Patachitra stands out for its simple style and compositions, minimal background decoration, and use of natural colours made from stones.



71 artists in Purulia (expected another 50 artists to be included from Purulia and Bankura)

Achievements (2013 - 2019)

- Revival of lost Patachitra songs and paintings
- Rejuvenating skill base for Santhal Patachitra
- Diversification through developing composite products with other traditions
- Patua women giving leadership and enjoying mobility
- Increasing internal collaborations
- Naya is now a cultural tourism and heritage education destination
- Artists are earning from online heritage education programs and online sales
- Community promoting art using social media





Puppetry

There are three styles of puppetry in West Bengal and string puppetry (Suto Putul in Bengali) is the most popular. The puppets here are moved with strings by artists who operate from behind the curtain. New stories are being developed to regenerate the art form under the RCCH project. The main puppetry hub is in Muragacha of Nadia.



187 artists in Nadia



Artists have visited France.

Achievements (2013 - 2019)

- Composition of new stories
- New productions developed
- Workshop on song and music compositions
- Learning techniques on puppet movements
- In 2017, Putul Naach Mela was organised at Muragacha
- Educating young using graphic novel on Puppetry





Folk Dances of Bengal

Traditional dances reflect a region's cultural history, ethnic roots and life in tune with nature. Bengal is no exception. The folk dances of the state radiate the vibrancy of its communities and give a feel of the land and its people.

Purulia Chau



Chau is a martial mask dance performed in the villages of Purulia district. It features on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of Humanity. Physical twists, turns and acrobatics are an essential part of Chau. The performances begin by invoking Lord Ganesha. The stories are based on mythological tales that propagate moral and ethical values. The dancers wear colourful masks representing particular gods, goddesses, demons, monsters and various animals, such as lion, tiger, bear and monkey. These masks are made in Charida village. Gambhir Singh Mura was a legendary Chau exponent and recipient of the Padma Shri award from the Government of India.



1,987 Chau artists in Purulia
(expected around 3000 more artists to be included)



Folk Art Centre: Bamnia, Cheliama, Maldi in Purulia.



Artists have visited the USA, UK, France, Germany, Norway, Lithuania, Japan, China and Sweden.

Mukha Dance

Mukha Naach, locally called Gomira Naach or Pala, is a ritualistic dance of the Rajbangshi community in Uttar and Dakshin Dinajpur districts. It is performed to appease the village deity, Goddess Chandi. The underlying belief is that the masks are imbued with life.



75 artists from Dakshin Dinajpur



Folk Art Centre: Kushmandi, Dakshin Dinajpur



Raibenshe

Raibenshe is a traditional martial dance that combines acrobatic movements and balancing tricks. Its origin lies with the Bhil warriors of Rajasthan who came to Murshidabad as part of an army backed by the Mughals to overthrow a local tribal king, Fetejadi, in late 16th century. The Bhil warriors settled in Murshidabad after the battle and introduced Raibenshe to Bengal. As the original performers were soldiers, the dance was traditionally performed with spears, in accompaniment with vigorous body movements. It involves acrobatics by the dancers with a Raibansh, a long bamboo pole from which the dance takes its name. Bratachari is a modern variant of Raibenshe, introduced by the eminent nationalist intellectual of Bengal, Gurusaday Dutta, who breathed a new lease of life into the art form.



288 Raibenshe artists in Murshidabad, Birbhum & Purba Bardhaman



Artists visited Czech Republic



Achievements (2013 - 2019)

- Revival of Guru-Shishya skill transmission
- Skilling in choreography, song writing, music and developing production
- Chau dance as sustainable livelihood has led to reduction in migration
- Equipping groups with costumes and instruments
- Chau innovations in multicultural collaborations
- Women Raibenshe and Chau dancers are travelling abroad
- Raibenshe performing first time ever at Czech Republic
- Young Chau dances are pursuing higher education and the benefitted by the Chau curriculum at Sidhu Kanhu Dahar University

Hill Art and Craft

The diverse indigenous communities of Darjeeling and Kalimpong districts have a wide and amazing range of folk music, dance and craft. The vibrancy of the traditional songs and dances are integrally related to their lifestyle. The communities are Gurung, Tamang, Limbu, Dhimal, Mangar, Tibetan, Rai, Khas, Sherpa, Lepcha, Bhutia, Newar, Kami, Damai, Bhujel and Sarki. The communities make different kinds of wood work, traditional handloom, bamboo and cane work, carpet weaving, folk instruments and thangka painting.



898 artists are involved in Darjeeling and Kalimpong.
(Expected another 400 artists to be included)

Gurung

The community performs Ghatu Naach during Lossar and Buddha Purnima. Rodhi dance is performed by men and women together. Satighatu Naach is a ritualistic dance performed after a person's death. Music instruments of the community include Murchunga, Madal, flute.

Tamang

Sang Shergem is a dance performed as part of rituals during Lossar and weddings. There is also Damphu Selo, a romantic Tamang song and dance performed by men and women. The music instruments are Damphu, Tungna, Patak Duhi and flute.

Dhimal

Dhimals perform Deradir Puja to worship goddess Lakshmi. Poyanpoka Le Hiyaka is a dance performed before going for fishing. Then there are Um Cheka Le, a harvest song, Shikarkhaka Le Hiyaka, a hunting song, and Mandachaka Le Hiyaka, a romantic dance. The main music instruments include Murchunga, Binai, Dotara, flute, Chong Mridong, Dhol, Urmi, Dhak and Tunjai.

Mangar

Hurra is a dance performed by the Mangar community during harvests and weddings. Koura Naach is a romantic dance-song performed by men and women. Maruni Naach is a wooden mask dance by men and women. Music instruments include Madal, flute, Murchunga and Sarangi.



Tibetan

Ngonpai Dhon is a ritual hunting dance of the Tibetan community. There is also Sharchok Potala, performed in praise of Buddhism and the Potala Palace in Tibet. The Snow Lion Dance is a colourful art form that combines energetic body movements with masks. Incidentally, the Snow Lion is a mythical creature. The music instruments of the Tibetans include drums, Dranye, flute and cymbals.

Rai

Rais have two dances with songs: Sakela Sili or Sakewa Sili is performed during sowing and harvesting seasons by men and women together, and Chowan Sili, a traditional dance. Their music instruments include Yele, Binayo, Murchunga, Dhol and Jhyamta.

Limbu

The traditional Manglang dance is performed during the worship of god Yuma with songs. Ke Lang is a traditional dance performed in accompaniment with Chyabrung drum. Ye Lang is a harvest dance performed by men and women together. Mama Lang is another Chyabrung dance with a catchy rhythm. The main music instrument of the community is Chyabrung.

Sarki

The Sarkis are a group of people proficient in tanning leather and mending leather items like shoes. They are experts in playing a musical instrument called Madal and performing dance in a group called "Khayali Maruni." They wear traditional dresses like Daura Suruwal, waistcoat Birkhe Topi and leather shoe (men); Dhaka Sari, Chaubandi Cholo with Fariya (women).



Khas

The Khas community has the Sangini dance performed by women with songs. They also have Balun dance, based on stories from the epic Ramayana. The main music instruments include Madal, cymbal and flute.

Sherpa

The Sherpa Dance is performed with songs and unique in the sense that it is performed to appease the groom and his family during weddings. Nadin is another dance of the community performed on auspicious occasions like weddings. There is also the Sileba dance, performed to welcome guests. The main music instrument is Dranye.

Lepcha

Naamban and Namaal Geet is a song-dance combination performed to usher in the New Year. Chyu Rum Faat Alak is a traditional dance performed to pay obeisance to the mighty Himalayas. Padam Baino is a traditional Lepcha dance. The main music instruments include Tungna, flute, drums and cymbal.

Bhutia

The Bhutia community has many dances and songs. Pow or Lappay Dance is to welcome guests, Dukpa Kazokpa is a traditional song-dance combination performed at weddings and other happy occasions. Lungpa Chung Zung is a traditional dance performed exclusively by men. Gosa Dho Dho and Dukpa are two traditional Bhutia dances.



Newar

Newars perform Lakhe, a vigorous mask dance accompanied by songs, during Indrayatra. There are two types of Lakhe - Mepu Lakhe and Majjipa lakhe. Kathi Pyakha (stick dance) is another dance, performed at weddings and similar happy occasions. The main music instruments include drum, Madal and flute.

Kami

The Kami community is better known for making the Khukhri, a traditional knife-like weapon that is synonymous with Darjeeling and Nepal. The Kamis perform Maruni dance, which enjoys great popularity across communities. The main music instruments include Madal and cymbal.

Damai

The community has a unique music genre Naumati Baja, which is an ensemble of nine traditional musical instruments. These are Narshingha, Karnaal, Shehnai, Voice Shehnai, Tyamko, Dholaki, Jhyamta, Bautaal and Dama.

Bhujel

Bhujels are one of the indigenous tribes that have their own distinctive language, culture, religion, and strong identity. Rhin, Takyo Binayo, Murchunga are the musical instruments. They perform Gah-tu dance, Chutku dance and Pangdurya dance. Gah-tu dance shows the glorious past of Bhujel King and Queen, Chutka song and dance is performed during festivals and social gatherings and Pangdurya dance is performed as a mark of the winter harvest.





Folk Songs of Bengal

Bengal has a rich variety of folk music genres. This includes Baul-Fakiri — the music of love and peace borne out of a confluence of Hindu Vaishnavism and Islamic Sufism — as well as Bhatiyali, Bhawaiya and Jhumur, each resonating an earthy simplicity in captivating melodies.

Baul

Bauls and Fakirs are the best known international folk music icon of Bengal. They are a tribe of musicians who preach love, peace and universal brotherhood, and owe their origin to a historic confluence and assimilation of the humanist philosophies of Vaishnavism and Sufism.

There are many Bauls today who perform at international events and the RCCH project regularly facilitates such exchanges and collaborations.



1,152 Bauls in Birbhum, Purba Bardhaman, Paschim Bardhaman, Nadia, Murshidabad and Bankura (expected around 1000 more artists to be included)

Folk Art Centre: Gorbhanga, Nadia, Hariharpara and Jalangi, Murshidabad



Artists have visited the UK, France, Germany, Denmark, Poland, Sweden, Norway, Czech Republic, Switzerland, Netherlands, Lithuania, U.S.A, Tunisia, Japan, China, Hungary and Syria.



Bhawaiya

Bhawaiya is a music genre of the Rajbanshi community who live in north Bengal and adjoining parts of north-eastern Bangladesh. It is sung in the Rajbangshi dialect of Bengali. There are three views about the origin of the word Bhawaiya. One school says it comes from the word "Bhava" or emotion. Another suggests the word "Bhawa", meaning low lying land, while the other says the root word is "Bao" or breeze.

Singing legend Abbasuddin Ahmed (1901-1959) popularized Bhawaiya songs all over undivided Bengal. His daughter Ferdousi Rahman and son Mustafa Zaman Abbasi followed him and became famous Bhawaiya singers. Among the other popular voices were Abdul Karim, Pratima Barua, Nayeb Ali Tepu, Harish Chandra Pal and Dr. Sukhbilas Barma.



2,282 Bhawaiya artists in Cooch Behar and Alipurduar (expected another 2500 artists to be included from Cooch Behar, Alipurduar and Jalpaiguri)



Bhatiyali

Bhatiyali is the music of the mystic river and the lives of boatmen. The metaphor of the river and search for direction are interminable in Bhatiyali. The origin of the word is “Bhata” or the ebbing tide.

Historically, Bhatiyali was popular in Mymensingh and Sylhet, now in Bangladesh. Later, it spread as far as Sundarbans in south Bengal and Assam in the northeast. However, cyclone Aila in 2009 devastated large parts of Sundarbans, resulting in many artists moving out of the region.

Several legendary folk singers have rendered Bhatiyali in their unique styles. Abbasuddin was the most prominent of them. Amar Pal, Malay Ganguly, Bari Siddiki, Nirmalendu Chowdhury and Hemanga Biswas were among the other great Bhatiyali singers. Music maestro Sachin Dev Burman introduced Bhatiyali to Bollywood Hindi films with great success.



61 artists in North 24 Parganas
(expected around 40 more artists to be included)

Jhumur

Jhumur is an exclusive oral music tradition of the tribal communities of Purulia and Bankura. During two centuries of British rule, youths from this region migrated to the Sundarbans in south Bengal to work as wage labourers. They carried Jhumur along and gave birth to the Sundarbans variant of Jhumur over time. Unfortunately, some Jhumur artists of Sundarbans moved to other regions after the devastating cyclone Aila in 2009.

Jhumur is often accompanied by dance. Sung in tribal dialects, it is an integral part of festivities, including harvests and weddings.



1,057 artists in Bankura, Purulia and South 24 Parganas
(expected around 2500 more artists to be included)

Achievements (2013 - 2019)

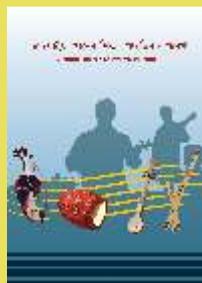
- Revival of Guru-Shishya skill transmission and structuring of curriculum
- Skilling in presentation to national and international audience
- Greater number of youth earning from performance
- Revival of instrument playing traditions like Dotara, Sarinda
- 10+ exchange and collaborations with musicians from Denmark, Portugal, Switzerland, Argentina, France, Hungary, Ireland, USA etc.
- Publication of Bhawaiya curriculum
- The artists are performing online
- Access strengthened via Folks of Bengal android application
- 1800+ folk songs documented

Baul
1000

Jhumur
250

Bhawaiya
450

Bhatiyali
100





Folk Theatres of Bengal

Traditional drama forms reflect the cultural and aesthetic heritage of a community. Bengal is home to many such genres, some marked for their satire and humour. These folk drama forms are increasingly being used for social communication by both government and non-government agencies with great success.

Gambhira

Gambhira is a social satire drama form popular in Malda district. One actor dresses up as Lord Shiva and, essentially, represents the feudal lord or the government. With a mix of songs and dance, the characters “convey” common people's worries to god!



139 Gambhira artists
(expected another 180 artists to be included)



Domni

Domni is a traditional, all-male folk drama form that presents social satire in Khottai language, a mix of Bengali, Bhojpuri and Maithili. The men actors enact the role of women characters in Domni. It evolved from the Diyara area bordering today's Malda and Bihar.



143 artists in Malda

Folk Art Centre: Manikchak, Malda



Bonbibir Pala

Bonbibir Pala is synonymous with the Sundarbans, one of the largest mangrove forests in the world. It is a mythology-based folk drama with its origin in man-animal conflict in the Sundarbans. The story revolves around a few characters including Bonbibi, the forest goddess, Dakshin Rai, the tiger god, a trader dealing in honey collected from the forest, and a little boy. The drama invokes the goddess to save all from the predatory tigers when they venture into the forest to collect honey or wood.



374 artists in North and South 24 Parganas



Folk Art Centre: Pakhiralay, Gosaba, Sundarban



Khon

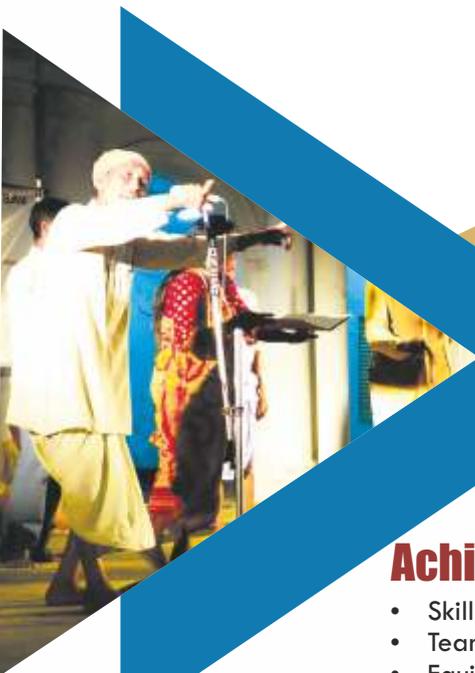
Khon is a traditional folk theatre of the Rajbangshi community in Uttar and Dakshin Dinajpur districts. It presents social satire in the Rajbangshi dialect of Bengali.

157 artists in Uttar and Dakshin Dinajpur



Achievements (2013 - 2019)

- Skilling in story writing, acting, script writing
- Teams developing compact and new productions
- Equipping groups with costumes and instruments
- Bonbibi and Jhumur teams are enriching tourism experience at Sundarban and also earning



Rural Cultural Centres and Community Museums

Many of the villages of West Bengal now have Folk Art Centres embodying the way of life and cultural heritage of the community. Set up by West Bengal Khadi and Village Industries Board, these are centres for practice, training, promotion, exhibition and collaboration. The community museums in craft villages showcase exemplary works of art and detail the process through interesting exhibits. They provide workspace for workshops, community meetings and networking. The living museums in the villages of Chau dancers and Baul singers are shared community spaces for regular practice and learning by younger generations. Artists, art lovers, students, researchers, photographers, bloggers, film makers and tourists enjoy visiting these cultural spaces for information, research, exchange, workshops and collaborations with the artists. The community museums are the pride of the people and are playing a key role in safeguarding heritage. They are managed by artist collectives. Cultural spaces like the folk art centres and the nucleus of the art form - the artists' houses and workspaces - have added to the charm of these locales.



Resource Centre

Kushmandi
Balarampur
Jalangi
Hariharpara
Gorbhanga
Pingla
Bikna
Dariyapur
Natungram
Panchmura
Charida
Sabang
Ghughumari
Pakhiralay
Jhargram

Pingla



Natungram



Kushmandi



Sunderban



Ghughumari



Charida



Bikna



Maldi



Sarta, Sabang



Panchmura



Rural Cultural Tourism

A familiar adage in Bengali is 'banglaye baro maashe tyaro parbon' (thirteen festivities in twelve months), signifying the multiplicity of festivals and celebrations in every month of the calendar. Apart from the prominent festivals like Durga Puja, Bengali New Year, Dolyatra, Rathayatra, Raash and Poush Parbon, rivers to rituals, trees to tradition, personality to play, there is nothing that Bengal does not have a gala around. The festival-crazy Bengalis have presented a pretty persuasive logic behind these celebrations. They give three reasons – festivals for an escape from drudgery, festivals for a satisfaction to the senses and festivals as not only an offering to the Supreme Being but to welcome, remember or be grateful to someone's beloved. Recognizing this intrinsic strength of festivals, Rabindranath Tagore initiated the Basanta Utsav and Poush Mela in Shantiniketan and also social festivals like Raksha Bandhan and Shibaji Festival.

In the Rural Craft and Cultural Hubs of Bengal, village festivals have evolved as a means to provide a new context for celebration of local art and craft. Annual festivals are organized by the artist collectives in weekends between September and March. The festivals provide opportunity to experience the rich art and culture, understand and participate in the making of craft and listen to discourses on the meaning and value of heritage from the masters. Artist villages which had nil footfall a decade back have now emerged as cultural destinations. Drawing crowds in thousands from the neighbouring towns and villages and also national and international visitors, some of the most prominent village festivals evolved so far are Pot Maya, Chau Jhumur Utsav, Dokra Mela, Baul Fakiri Utsav, Bhawaiya Mela, Charida Chau Mukhosh Mela and the Mukha Mela.



Impact (2013 - 2019)

Improved viability of ICH

- Grassroot training system is established.
- Young generation is participating in cultural enterprise.
- Tradition bearers are enjoying increased opportunity to performance and sale.
- New audiences and markets are created
- Cultural skills have supported resilience building during Covid-19 pandemic

Improved income

- Income from the performing art forms was practically nil and income from craft was seasonal or low with artists working as wage based labourers. Artists now enjoy direct market linkage and connected to national and international networks.
- Identity has changed from unskilled daily labour to artist.
- Increase of income is 2.5 times for handicraft and twice for performing & visual art.
- 1000+ traditional bearers have participated in 150+ exhibitions and festivals.
- 150+ artists have travelled abroad, mostly to Europe, followed by Asia.

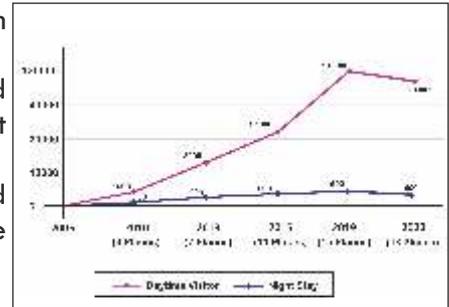


Enterprise Development

- Thriving entrepreneurs and cultural enterprises are created who are energising entire community.
- Artist collectives are managing quality production and supply.
- Intellectual Property Rights is protected through Geographical Indication. Madur, Chau Mask, Wooden Mask, Dokra, Patachitra, Terracotta collectives are registered users. 120 artists are registered with GI.
- Craftmark certification acquired for Sitalpati, Wooden Mask, Dokra, Chau Mask, Patachitra, Sabai and Madur.

Villages transformed into cultural destinations

- Village festivals are calendarised and are held between October and March.
- Day time visitors have crossed 120000 per year and 1500 stayed overnight in last 2 years across 15 artist villages.
- WBKVIB has developed 15 Resource Centres and community museums strengthening village tourism at the art and craft villages.



Fostered Sustainable Development

- Communities of artists are taking ownership in achieving SDG goals.
- 55% of artists have their own land.
- 93% of artists are linked to bank.
- 75% of handicraft artists and 22% of performing artists are credit linked.
- 99% of artist homes have electricity.
- 98% of artist homes have sanitation.
- Children of artists are completing school education.

Positive Change in %	Electricity	Education	Sanitation	Lifestyle	Savings & Investment habit
Handicraft	30	33	40	27	14
Performing Art	24	10	39	20	11
Visual Art	9	49	26	34	13

(Data from endline assessment in 2019)

Women Empowered

67% of crafts persons and 22% of performing artists are women. Women are enjoying improved production and marketing skills, increased income and mobility.



Media Stories

hindustantimes 11
NET OF BEHAVIOR

ht insight

Reweaving economy of Bengal's folk craft




CELEBRATING TAKRI AND LIT

শিল্প হিসেবে, মুক্তিযুদ্ধের পরবর্তীকালে উদ্ভূত এই পুরনো পেশার পুনর্জীবন ঘোষণা করেছেন। হাতেটি মতো করে, মতো করে উদ্ভাবন করে নিয়ে গিয়েছেন। এই পুরনো পেশার পুনর্জীবন ঘোষণা করেছেন। হাতেটি মতো করে, মতো করে উদ্ভাবন করে নিয়ে গিয়েছেন।

প্রতিদিন Date 09 Jul, 2019

কুম্বার নারের মলকাজা থেকে উদ্ভূত পুরুলিয়ার ছৌ-শিল্পীদের পালা এবার দেখবে জার্মানি

পুরুলিয়ার ছৌ-শিল্পীদের পালা এবার জার্মানিতে অনুষ্ঠিত হবে। কুম্বার নারের মলকাজা থেকে উদ্ভূত এই পুরনো পেশার পুনর্জীবন ঘোষণা করেছেন। হাতেটি মতো করে, মতো করে উদ্ভাবন করে নিয়ে গিয়েছেন।



FOUNDS OF BENGAL

এই ছৌ-শিল্পীদের পালা দেখা যাবে জার্মানিতে। কুম্বার নারের মলকাজা থেকে উদ্ভূত এই পুরনো পেশার পুনর্জীবন ঘোষণা করেছেন। হাতেটি মতো করে, মতো করে উদ্ভাবন করে নিয়ে গিয়েছেন।

অন্য সময়



বাউলের ভিটেয় সুইডিশ সান্স

বাউলের ভিটেয় সুইডিশ সান্স। এই পুরনো পেশার পুনর্জীবন ঘোষণা করেছেন। হাতেটি মতো করে, মতো করে উদ্ভাবন করে নিয়ে গিয়েছেন।



বাউলের ভিটেয় সুইডিশ সান্স

এই সময়




বাউলকাব্য বাংলা

বাউলকাব্য বাংলা। এই পুরনো পেশার পুনর্জীবন ঘোষণা করেছেন। হাতেটি মতো করে, মতো করে উদ্ভাবন করে নিয়ে গিয়েছেন।




millenniumpost

Raihenshe Mela kicks off in Murshidabad



Raihenshe Mela kicks off in Murshidabad. এই পুরনো পেশার পুনর্জীবন ঘোষণা করেছেন। হাতেটি মতো করে, মতো করে উদ্ভাবন করে নিয়ে গিয়েছেন।

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Diversification helps us earn: Patachitra artist

Traditional pix get a modern 'pat'

Traditional pix get a modern 'pat'. এই পুরনো পেশার পুনর্জীবন ঘোষণা করেছেন। হাতেটি মতো করে, মতো করে উদ্ভাবন করে নিয়ে গিয়েছেন।




মিলেনিয়াম পোস্ট

Folk Festival to be icing on cake for Hill tourists this season




Folk Festival to be icing on cake for Hill tourists this season. এই পুরনো পেশার পুনর্জীবন ঘোষণা করেছেন। হাতেটি মতো করে, মতো করে উদ্ভাবন করে নিয়ে গিয়েছেন।

Mask Village



Mask Village. এই পুরনো পেশার পুনর্জীবন ঘোষণা করেছেন। হাতেটি মতো করে, মতো করে উদ্ভাবন করে নিয়ে গিয়েছেন।



বাবুই ঘাসের বুড়ি



বাবুই ঘাসের বুড়ি। এই পুরনো পেশার পুনর্জীবন ঘোষণা করেছেন। হাতেটি মতো করে, মতো করে উদ্ভাবন করে নিয়ে গিয়েছেন।



হিমালয় দর্শন

৪ দিবসীয় কার্যশালাকো সমাপন



হিমালয় দর্শন ৪ দিবসীয় কার্যশালাকো সমাপন। এই পুরনো পেশার পুনর্জীবন ঘোষণা করেছেন। হাতেটি মতো করে, মতো করে উদ্ভাবন করে নিয়ে গিয়েছেন।

Media Stories

SUNDAY TIMES

Humble mats from Sabang floor Europe

Handmade mats from Sabang floor Europe

THE MATS have a long history in Sabang, a small town in the hills of Assam. The mats are made from natural materials and are known for their durability and beauty. They are used for a variety of purposes, from floor coverings to wall hangings.

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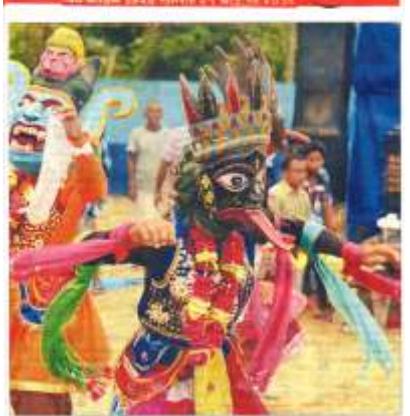
MILLENNIUM POST | Kolkata | Thursday, 23 August, 2018

Thanks to MSME dept, remote hamlet of wooden doll makers comes up as Rural Craft Hub

MSME DEPT has set up a Rural Craft Hub in a remote hamlet of Sabang, Assam. The hub is a joint venture between the MSME department and the local community. It aims to promote the traditional craft of wooden doll making and provide a market for the products.

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মালদহ - উত্তর ও দক্ষিণ দিনাজপুর আনন্দবাজার পত্রিকা



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MILLENNIUM POST | Kolkata | Saturday, 1 September, 2018

Patchitra painters gaining momentum thanks to Rural Craft Hub in Pingla

MSME DEPT has set up a Rural Craft Hub in Pingla, West Bengal. The hub is a joint venture between the MSME department and the local community. It aims to promote the traditional craft of patchitra painting and provide a market for the products.

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এই সময়

ছয় গ্রামীণ শিল্পে জিআই শিরোপা

জিআই শিরোপা জিতেছেন ছয় গ্রামীণ শিল্পী। এঁরা হলেন: সুনীল কুমার, অরুণ কুমার, অক্ষয় কুমার, অমল কুমার, অমল কুমার, অমল কুমার।

জিআই শিরোপা জিতেছেন ছয় গ্রামীণ শিল্পী। এঁরা হলেন: সুনীল কুমার, অরুণ কুমার, অক্ষয় কুমার, অমল কুমার, অমল কুমার, অমল কুমার।

এই সময়

ছৌ বুমুর উৎসব

ছৌ বুমুর উৎসব শুরু হয়েছে। এটি একটি ঐতিহ্যবাহী উৎসব যা গ্রামীণ শিল্পীদের মাঝে পালিত হয়। এতে বিভিন্ন ধরনের ছৌ বুমুর তৈরি করা হয়।

এটি একটি ঐতিহ্যবাহী উৎসব যা গ্রামীণ শিল্পীদের মাঝে পালিত হয়। এতে বিভিন্ন ধরনের ছৌ বুমুর তৈরি করা হয়।

The Statesman



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MILLENNIUM POST | Kolkata | Saturday, 1 September, 2018

Art and Tradition

ART AND TRADITION is a collection of traditional art forms from various regions of India. It includes folk art, handicrafts, and traditional painting techniques.

It includes folk art, handicrafts, and traditional painting techniques.

MILLENNIUM POST | Kolkata | Tuesday, 23 October, 2018

Gomira masks to woo visitors from across the globe at Kushmandi during 'Mukha Mela'



গোমিরা মাস্ক বিক্রি করছেন বিক্রেতারা। এটি একটি ঐতিহ্যবাহী শিল্প যা গ্রামীণ শিল্পীদের মাঝে পালিত হয়।

নদিয়া জেলা



নদিয়া জেলায় পালিত হচ্ছে একটি ঐতিহ্যবাহী উৎসব। এতে বিভিন্ন ধরনের শিল্পের প্রদর্শন করা হয়।

THE HINDU



THE HINDU

Graphic novels give a push to Bengal's dying folk arts

Three books were published in Bengali and English in 2018

GRAPHIC NOVELS have become a popular medium for preserving and promoting traditional folk arts in Bengal. Three books were published in Bengali and English in 2018.

Three books were published in Bengali and English in 2018.



Rural Craft and Cultural Hubs

An initiative of Department of MSME&T, Government of West Bengal
in collaboration with UNESCO, New Delhi Office

Rural Craft & Cultural Hubs

Experience Bengal's folk traditions in rural hinterland.

Partner with the creative entrepreneurs.

Organise Heritage Education tours.

Learn about cultural heritage in the Folk Art Centres.

Enjoy the Village Festivals at the hubs with friends & family.

Innovate in art and design residencies with traditional artists.

Indulge in creative photography.

Promote cultural diversity.

18 Craft traditions

13 Performing art traditions

20 Districts

15 Folk Art Centres

15 Village Festivals

Designed and Developed by



CONTACT BASE
www.banglanatak.com

(National partner of UNESCO &
Implementation Partner of Rural Craft & Cultural Hubs project)