UNESCO recognises Cooch Behar’s Sitalpati as an 'Intangible Cultural Heritage'

17/01/2017 11:29am

UNESCO recognises Cooch Behar’s Sitalpati as an 'Intangible Cultural Heritage’

Kolkata, Jan 17 (KNN) The Sitalpati from the Cooch Behar district of Bengal has been recognised as an 'Intangible Cultural Heritage' by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

Weaving sitalpati mats (‘sitalpati’ translates to ‘cool mat’, from the fact that it helps to keep cool, be it as a mat for sitting on or to hang on doors or windows during summer) is an age-old cultural tradition of Cooch Behar region.

It consists of weaving together the green cane slips of the murta plants, indigenous to the region.

Sitalpati has found a place in the UNESCO-sponsored Rural Craft Hub project, under which, at 10 locations in nine districts of the State, training and marketing centres and museums have been set up to help promote and market crafts indigenous to those regions, to national and international tourists.

Now, the traditional sitalpati-weaving families have earned respect and renown. Through 50 self-help groups (SHGs), promoted by the Department of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) of the State Government, the weavers have access to loans on easy terms.

They are given training to improve on the technical and marketing aspects. A museum showcasing the various types of sitalpati has been set up in Ghughumari, a well-known centre for the craft in Cooch Behar district. Importantly, the State Government is also promoting tourism centred on sitalpati.

"Through these measures, the State Government is acting as a facilitator between the artistes and their crafts, and helping in bringing long-term stability to the craft and the craftspeople,” Mamata Banerjee led All India Trinamool Congress has said.