KOLKATA: The Mamata Banerjee government's efforts to revive the traditional arts and crafts of Bengal has finally got international recognition. The two kinds of mats — sitalpati and madur — and the shalpata plate has received Unesco recognition for being traditional handicrafts.

The West Bengal Khadi and Village Industries Board, a statutory body under the state MSME and textile departments, has been working to revive and promote sitalpati, madur, shalpata plates and other such traditional Bengali handicraft items. The officials said they recently received a message from Unesco recognizing these handicap items. "We, along with Unesco, are working to revive these traditional Bengali art and craft," an official said.

According to government officials, madur sticks are primarily produced in East and West Midnapore, whereas sitalpati sticks are produced in areas of Cooch Behar. MSME officials said that earlier, lack of product promotions, artisans had to sell the products at a low cost and the industry was almost dying a slow death.

"The situation has now changed with the Khadi and Village Industries Board taking the initiative to form a number of societies comprising where artisans are trained and are given platforms to sell their products directly to consumers, like the fairs and exhibitions organized across the state," an official said.

The initiative taken by the MSME department has also helped revive Tantuja and Manjusha, the two state
government undertakings, which now churn out profit. Officials added that the reputation gained by the Biswa Bangla brand as a house of quality products has also helped in reviving the traditional art and crafts of Bengal.