

India aims to revive 'Cotton Route' to counter Chinese Silk Route

HT SPECIAL
Joydeep Thakur
letters@hindustantimes.com

KOLKATA: Over the next three years, Indian researchers, including a maritime historian from Calcutta University, along with researchers from five other countries will try to trace the 2,000-year-old 'Cotton Route' that once existed between India and empires such as Rome and Egypt in Asia, Africa and Europe.

"Around 30 researchers from India and abroad, specialized in various fields — from history and economics to international relations and anthropology — will carry out a study to trace the 'Cotton Route' and various aspects of these routes, including the cultural ties and trade

that India had with the world," Sachin Chaturvedi, director-general of Research and Information System (RIS) for Developing Countries, a Delhi-based think tank of the ministry of external affairs, said. Experts from the RIS and a Kolkata-based organization, the Institute of Social and Cultural Studies (ISCS), will lead study. The project will be chiefly funded by the ministry of external affairs.

The Cotton Route Project was also discussed at length at an international conference attended by delegates from over 20 countries bordering the Indian Ocean.

With China planning to revive the ancient Silk Route — both over land and sea — experts feel India is out to counter the Chinese plan with the Cotton

Route. This is also a part of India's efforts to revive old ties with neighbors in the Indian Ocean region that has a platform in the Indian Ocean Rim Association.

"Historians and archaeologists have concrete evidence that reveals that huge bales of cotton were exported from India to Rome, Egypt and even to countries in Southeast Asia. In fact, they claim that Roman women could not even think of clothes, starting from apparel to home decors, without Indian cotton," SK Mohanty, a researcher at RIS, said.

Historically, the Silk Route was a key route between China and the Mediterranean that not only helped trade but formed a cultural bridge between China, India, Persia, Greece and Rome.

"Brahmanical inscriptions from stalagmite and stalactite caves on an island named Sacotra near Yemen and trade agreements written on papyrus that are still preserved in the Austrian Museum prove beyond doubt that cotton was exported in bulk from India," said Arindam Mukherjee of ISCS.

Historians say superior quality cotton was produced in areas like Bengal and western India. Chinese texts dating back to 1226 have recorded evidence on this.

Researchers said it would be wrong to say there was one exclusive route for cotton known as Cotton Route. Indian cotton and the dye which used to last for centuries (as found in Berenice port) were so popular that several routes originat-

ing from India could be traced, they said.

"Our task will be to trace all the 'Cotton Routes' dating back to the 1st Century AD to 12th Century AD period, by tracing and mapping the cotton plantations to dyer and weavers' communities and exploring the maritime trading route through which cotton was exported," the researchers said.

"Another historian, Radhika Seshan, of Pune will focus on the period between 12th to 17th centuries," said Suchandra Ghosh of Calcutta University who specializes in ancient maritime trade.

She said Periplus of the Erythraean Sea had described some of the ancient navigation routes through which cotton was traded from India.



The papyrus that reveals overseas cotton trade from India was on display in an exhibition that was organised on the sidelines of an international conference on Indian Ocean in Bhubaneswar.



Team India supporters turn bullish on Wednesday. Will the smiles last?

SUBHENDU GHOSH/HT PHOTO

Betting rackets busted in city, 6 held in Lake Town, Burrabazar

HT Correspondent
letters@hindustantimes.com

KOLKATA: As the World Cup frenzy was reaching its peak, the police busted a cricket betting racket and arrested six people on Tuesday and Wednesday. Cops said the racket was part of an inter-state network and ₹34 lakh in cash was seized, along with laptops and cell phones.

Bidhannagar police's detective department conducted some of the raids in Bangur and Burrabazar on Tuesday night.

"This racket has links with Delhi and Rajasthan. There may be international links too," Kankar Prasad Barui, deputy commissioner (detective department) of Bidhannagar City Police, said at a press conference on Wednesday.

Barui said around ₹35.27 lakh, 14 mobile phones, two laptops, three external hard disks, a cash counting machine, a calculator and some written documents were seized.



Bidhannagar police's finest hour.

TAPASI BASU

The police team, with assistance from Lake Town police station, raided one Sanjay Bagaria's residence at 200 Bangur Avenue, Block A, and arrested him and his manager Manoj Choudhury, a resident of Lake Town's Green Park.

The Bidhannagar police team, with help from Kolkata Police, also raided Gayatri Market in

Burrabazar and arrested one Vijay Kumar Gupta, a resident of Gariahat, Bappa Sharma, a resident of Girish Park, Rakesh Gupta, a resident of New Alipore and Debun Middy, a resident of Singur.

Barui said his team seized software through which betting used to take place during this raid. Daily statements of

betting during the World Cup were maintained with this software.

"We also got a list of people who placed bets. Gamblers betted mostly on New Zealand," Barui said.

The police have slapped sections 420 and 120B of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), apart from Section 66 of the IT Act and Section 34 of the Gambling and Prize Competition Act against those arrested.

The court sent all those arrested to police custody for further investigation. The betting rate for the India vs Australia match was 41/43 for Australia, police sources said. It means if one bets on Australia's win, he will get ₹41 on investing ₹100 if the Aussies win. On the other hand, if he bets on Australia losing, he will get ₹143 if the Aussies lose.

Barui said a special team from Bidhannagar Police might go to Delhi and Rajasthan for further investigation. The total amount of money involved in the betting had crossed ₹1 crore, he said.

Workers continue to clash near BJP HQ over poll pick

HT Correspondent
letters@hindustantimes.com

KOLKATA: The BJP state headquarters at Muralidhar Sen Lane turned into a battle zone for the second day as a clash broke out between party workers. BJP workers and district leaders continued to vent their anger on the state leadership over civic poll nominations, including Kolkata Municipal Corporation. Workers also burnt the effigy of state president Rahul Sinha in Topsia.

"Only three- to four-persons are our workers, the rest are outsiders who are trying to create chaos. Trinamool Congress controlled goons are trying to create trouble and are attacking us," said Sinha. "If this drama continues, will our workers sit idle? They had shown enough restraint," Sinha said when asked about his loyalists hitting out at protesters with bamboos and sticks.

Since Wednesday morning, workers from South 24 Parganas gathered in front of the party headquarters and started protesting. They had raised slogans against Sinha. The protesters alleged that district leaders are corrupt and the state president is harbouring such people. They also displayed posters and placards.

ONLY THREE TO FOUR PERSONS ARE OUR WORKERS, THE REST ARE OUTSIDERS WHO ARE TRYING TO CREATE CHAOS. TRINAMOOL-CONTROLLED GOONS ARE TRYING TO CREATE TROUBLE
RAHUL SINHA, state BJP president

Immediately, a group of workers and leaders, mainly from Howrah party unit barged out of the party office wielding bamboo poles and sticks. Initially, they got into a heated altercation with the protesters. The clash, then spread across Central Avenue and the police had a hard time controlling traffic in the busy thoroughfare. Later, they beat up the protesters leaving half a dozen casualties. The police personnel near the party office were silent spectators. Later they helped the injured.

In Topsia, (ward 57), a section of BJP workers took out a protest rally and later burnt an effigy of the state president. They protested that party old timers were neglected and tick-

ets are being given to newcomers from Trinamool Congress and CPI(M).

The discontent in rank and file also continued to spread in Siliguri, Malda, Murshidabad, West Midnapore, Birbhum and other districts. The party workers from districts claimed that they were unhappy with the candidates and many, they alleged, got tickets against cash.

Humayun Kabir makes 'U' turn
BERHAMPUR: Expelled TMC leader Humayun Kabir has again changed his mind. Kabir had earlier declared that he wanted to campaign against TMC candidates in the municipality poll across the district but now, has decided to stay away.

Talking to HT, Humayun said: "I decided to campaign against the TMC in the municipality election. But with the changing political scenario, I have decided not to go ahead. Neither I will campaign for the TMC, nor for any other political party. I will remain a spectator."

A few days ago, expelled CPI(M) leader and the founder of the Bharatiya Nayabchar Party (BNP), Rejjak Mollah met Kabir at his residence in Shaktipur and sought his help in the civic body election in Murshidabad. However, Kabir did not promise Mollah help.

Nun's rape: Woman, son detained by CID

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Arnab Ghosh, Nadia district police superintendent (SP), told HT on Wednesday: "Altogether, 35 persons have been detained and interrogated. I won't comment on the latest detentions. The CID will if it deems it fit."

CID sources said the woman, a housewife, and her Class 9 student son (now studying at a local school) are residents of Donbosco Para, an area adjacent to the convent. The sources further said that the boy was expelled from the convent school after uploading an obscene post about four months ago. The boy had also allegedly misbehaved with the nuns before his expulsion.

Sources said the mother-son duo lived in Chapra block of the district, close to Bangladesh border, before shifting to their present location 10 years ago.

"This family had a grudge. They may have Bangladesh connections. We are also trying to find out if anybody gave logistical help or shelter to the miscreants," a CID officer said.

The investigation has been pointing towards Bangladesh from the beginning.

The hint of a Bangladesh connection also forced the state government's hand in handing over the case to the CBI.

State govt not keen on taking central officers on deputation

STAND Despite shortage, Nabanna has said it has adequate officers

Sumanta Ray Chaudhuri
sumanta.choudhuri@hindustantimes.com

KOLKATA: The West Bengal government is willing to continue with a shortage of bureaucrats but is not keen on seeing central secretariat service officers come on deputation to fill up the gap in the state.

The Union government recently forwarded a proposal to the West Bengal government offering central secretariat officers to fill up vacant posts in the ranks of deputy secretary and joint secretary in the state.

However, chief minister Mamata Banerjee summarily rejected the proposal claiming that there is no requirement for central secretariat service officials in the state administrative machinery since that would upset the existing structure of the state bureaucratic machinery especially those under the West Bengal Civil Service scales.

Incidentally, the current secretary to the chief minister, Gautam Sanyal, is a retired central secretariat officer. In fact, he is the first non-Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer and a retired civil serv-

A NEW IT SPIN FOR BENGAL?

KOLKATA: The state government cleared the way for the newly appointed state commerce and industries secretary, S Kishore, to take additional charge of the state information technology department.

The development is being viewed in bureaucratic circles as a strategic move to use Kishore's experience in handling special economic zone (SEZs) affairs to spin policies and fulfill wishes of certain IT companies to get SEZ status but without compromising on Trinamool Congress's earlier stand.

Kishore, a 1988-batch IAS officer, was appointed as the commerce & indus-

tries secretary last week, replacing his predecessor, CM Bachawat. Kishore was earlier assigned as the development commissioner of the Visakhapatnam SEZ in Andhra Pradesh.

The major IT projects that could not take off in West Bengal because of the state government's refusal to grant them SEZ status, include the first campus of Infosys and the second campus of Wipro Ltd.

"These losses were major for West Bengal, which lost the chance to Kochi, to become a new national IT hub after Bengaluru and Hyderabad reached saturation level," said an official.

of the state personal & administrative reforms department is that the state government has no shortage of West Bengal Civil Service (WBCS) officers, whose total number is currently 1,700.

"What the state is lacking is the number of Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers," a state government official said.

A senior bureaucrat said that it is not just West Bengal that received offers from the Union government for sending central secretariat service officers on deputation.

"In my opinion, the Union government has sent the proposal to all the state governments, especially those like West Bengal, which are suffering from inadequate number of bureaucrats. Sending central secretariat officers on deputation to the state or sending IAS officers of state cadre on deputation for central services is a healthy practice. Firstly, this helps develop a healthy Centre-state relationship. Secondly, central officers on deputation have a wide range of experience and can perform well in a state," said the bureaucrat.

EXPERT VIEWS ON HR ISSUES.

shine.com
Great careers start here

hindustantimes Shine HR CONCLAVE
The Mumbai Chapter

26th MARCH '15, 5:30 PM ONWARDS

Follow the conclave :
@shinedotcom #ShineHRConclave

ANURANJITA KUMAR CITI SOUTH ASIA	DEBI PRASAD DAS CEAT INDIA	JAYESH PANDEY ACCENTURE INDIA	PRABIR JHA RELIANCE INDUSTRIES LTD.	RAJENDRA GHAG HDFC LIFE	RAJESH PADMANABHAN VEDANTA
--	--------------------------------------	---	---	-----------------------------------	--------------------------------------

'EMPLOYEE GROWTH IN TIMES OF ECONOMIC GROWTH'

ACADEMIC PARTNER NALSAR CENTRE FOR MANAGEMENT STUDIES	REAL ESTATE PARTNER Ravi GROUP The Name That Defines Trust	EVENT PARTNERS RIVALI PARK HOLIDAY RESORTS	FRB FIRST BRAND BANK	Authorized Partner Infiniti Cars
PLAYDAY	Edenred	IMCOST	sanskriti GROUP OF INSTITUTIONS	Express SUNDS

ENTRY BY INVITATION ONLY. FOR FURTHER DETAILS CALL: +91931177147 | EMAIL: SHINE2015@C2CM.COM
FOR SPONSORSHIP RELATED QUERIES, CONTACT CHIRAG MEWADA - +91 9920028036
LOG ON TO: HRSUMMIT.SHINE.COM