

Need to expedite granting the Geographical Indication (GI) tag to Sholapith Craft in West Bengal-Laid

SHRIMATI JUNE MALIAH (MEDINIPUR): Nearly 377 artisans across 12 districts of West Bengal are engaged in production and trade of Sholapith craft, an industry with an estimated annual turnover of about Rs 6 crore. Although the Government of West Bengal has already submitted an application for a Geographical Indication tag for Sholapith craft in 2022, it remains pending with the Union Government. Even after three years the GI tag has not been granted. Sholapith work is an integral part of Bengal's cultural heritage and identity, closely linked to religious rituals and practices. Even today, no puja is performed without floral decorations for deities or the topas made of Sholapith. The craft is even used for goddess Durga during Durga Puja, marriage and death rituals. Further, it is used in ornaments, toys, decorative articles, and utilitarian items such as packaging and repair materials. Renowned for its elegance, exquisite beauty, and fine craftsmanship, Sholapith craft represents one of Bengal's most distinctive and delicate artistic traditions. The delay in granting the GI tag is extremely concerning, as it deprives artisans of due recognition and protection of their heritage. It further raises serious concerns about the neglect of Bengal's cultural identity.