

## **Need for preservation and development of Karnasubarna, a heritage site in Murshidabad district, West Bengal.-laid**

**SHRI YUSUF PATHAN (BAHARAMPUR):** I wish to draw the attention towards the need to preserve and develop the ancient heritage site of Karnasubarna, the capital of Shashanka, the first independent ruler of Bengal. Located in present day Murshidabad district, the site finds mention in Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang's accounts, who described it as densely populated and prosperous. Excavations in the 1960s by archaeologists from the Calcutta University revealed ruins of Shashanka's citadel as well as that of a Buddhist monastic complex. These included the ruins of Raktamritika Mahavihara, considered to be older than the Nalanda Mahavihara. These ruins were subsequently declared a site of national importance. However, they lie in neglect today and are gradually weathering due to climate change. The absence of basic tourist infrastructure and amenities discourage tourist footfall. The local community is also reluctant to preserve this site due to the lack of revenue generation opportunities. Fresh excavations of this site could shed more light on an important chapter of our history. Further development could encourage visitors to Karnasubarna and support the local economy. Hence, I request the Government to take immediate steps to conserve and promote Karnasubarna and protect Bengali and Indian cultural heritage.