

BENGAL FESTIVAL FAIR 2025

A Living Canvas of Bengal's Craft, Culture, and Enterprise



When the **Bengal National Chamber of Commerce & Industry (BNCCI)** – an institution that has carried the mantle of Bengal's trade and enterprise for **138 years** – announced, at its AGM in July, that it would host a festival fair dedicated to artisans, the idea seemed ambitious. Two months later, as the gates of **Khudiram Anushilan Kendra** opened on the 9th of September, it became more than an idea. It became a movement.

From Vision to Reality

The announcement was made by **Dr. Shashi Panja, Hon'ble Minister of Industry, Commerce & Enterprises**, at BNCCI's 138th AGM at The Park Hotel on **10th July 2025**. What followed was a whirlwind of coordination, partnerships, and groundwork. In just under eight weeks, BNCCI transformed a concept into the **Bengal Festival Fair 2025** – a vibrant confluence of artisans, entrepreneurs, students, government representatives, and citizens.

More than **80 artisans from 16 districts of Bengal** came forward, bringing with them stories woven in silk, etched in metal, carved in wood, and painted with history.

A Grand Inauguration

The fair was inaugurated in the august presence of **Shri Pradeep Kumar Majumdar, Hon'ble Minister of Panchayat & Rural Development**, and **Shri I. Jawahar, Deputy CEO, Khadi & Village Industries Commission**, alongside BNCCI President **Shri Ashoke Kumar Banik** and the Chamber's distinguished office bearers.

The inauguration wasn't just ceremonial. It was symbolic. It represented the idea that rural Bengal's artisans – often confined to local bazaars or small haats – deserve a central stage in Kolkata, where their work can reach policymakers, industry leaders, and everyday consumers.

RJ Ryan of Big Live brought his trademark energy to the occasion, making the atmosphere festive even before the first sale was made.



Bengal National Chamber of Commerce & Industry

A Walk Through the Stalls

Walking through the rows of stalls is like travelling across Bengal without leaving Kolkata – a gateway into Bengal’s living heritage and evolving enterprise.

- **In one corner, the Murshidabadi silk weavers** display the painstaking finesse that once clothed nawabs, their looms still humming with the legacy of royal courts.
- **A few steps away, the Dokra craftsmen from Birbhum** shape molten brass into intricate figurines – tribal deities, ritual pieces, and daily-life symbols – each one echoing centuries of oral tradition.
- **The shimmer of Jamdani sarees** catches the eye, threads of fine cotton and gold weaving together tales of Bengal and Bangladesh.
- **Terracotta artisans** bring earthy warmth, with clay lamps, temple panels, and figurines that carry the scent of red Bengal soil.
- **From Medinipur’s woodworkers** come intricately carved furniture and décor pieces – elegant chairs, centre tables, and almirahs that balance tradition with modern aesthetics.
- **Uttar Dinajpur’s cane and bamboo workers** present baskets, trays, and furniture that are both eco-friendly and fashionable, reminding us of how sustainability has always been a part of Bengal’s craft ethos.
- **Paschim Medinipur and Hooghly stalls** brim with handwoven mats, jute items, and home décor products – durable, functional, yet steeped in rustic elegance.
- **Regional food and produce** add another dimension: jars of honey, pickles, puffed rice, indigenous spices, and hand-rolled papads stand alongside lifestyle items, offering a taste of Bengal’s agrarian richness.
- **Lifestyle brands from different districts** showcase jewellery, home linen, leather goods, and modern adaptations of traditional crafts, proving how Bengal’s artisans are innovating for today’s consumers.



Each stall is more than a shop – it is a living story. A grandmother’s skill passed to her granddaughter at the loom; a craftsman’s patience chiselling wood into perfection; a farmer’s produce transformed into regional delicacies; a weaver experimenting with new designs for a global audience.

Together, these stories transform the Fair into a **living museum of Bengal’s identity**, where art, culture, and enterprise meet under one roof.



The Minister's Visit: Recognition and Resonance

On the **12th of September**, **Dr. Shashi Panja**, accompanied by **Shri Kunal Ghosh, Ex-MP and Editor-in-Chief of Sangbad Pratidin**, visited the fair. They walked stall by stall, speaking to artisans, listening to their challenges, and applauding BNCCI's effort to connect them directly with Kolkata's audience.

Their presence sent out a clear message: the work of rural artisans is central to Bengal's identity and economy, and platforms like this are vital in empowering them.

Students, Stories, and Spirit

The fair was not only about trade – it was about knowledge-sharing and celebration. Thanks to Smt. Shakuntala Sen, Executive Committee Member of BNCCI, students from the Calcutta Institute of Engineering and Management joined the festivities.

They took part in a quiz and storytelling session on Durga Puja's history and mythology, adding a youthful spark to the fair. Their participation reminded everyone that while artisans carry forward heritage, students and youth ensure its continuity.

The City's Embrace

Local puja committees, cultural groups, and citizens came together at the fair, acknowledging the artisans and their craft. They not only applauded but also bought, encouraged, and reassured. Artisans, many of whom had never exhibited in Kolkata before, experienced a sense of recognition that is often missing in their journeys.

BNCCI also felicitated many of these groups, making it clear that this fair is a collective celebration – of art, of culture, and of the people who keep it alive.



Why It Matters

For BNCCI, the Bengal Festival Fair 2025 is more than an event. It is an intervention.

- It **empowers district-based artisans** by giving them visibility and market access in an urban hub.
- It **connects rural craftsmanship with policymakers**, opening possibilities for collaboration, subsidies, and sustainable growth.
- It **strengthens Bengal's cultural economy**, ensuring that traditional crafts are not just preserved but made profitable.
- It **bridges the rural-urban gap**, allowing Kolkata's consumers to engage directly with artisans – without intermediaries.

This is why government departments, Zila Parishads, DRDCs, and district administrations across Bengal must take note. Supporting such initiatives is not charity – it is smart development. Every craft sold is not just an object exchanged; it is dignity restored, a household supported, and a tradition continued.

Looking Ahead

The Bengal Festival Fair will grow. That is the commitment BNCCI has made – to artisans, to government stakeholders, to the people of Bengal. The Chamber envisions greater participation from districts, stronger government collaborations, and more opportunities for artisans to thrive.

As **Durga Puja** approaches, the timing of this fair has special meaning. Just as the Goddess symbolises strength, renewal, and victory, the fair symbolises resilience, pride, and the enduring spirit of Bengal's people.

A Call to Action

BNCCI extends its hand to **government departments, district leaders, Zila Parishads, Panchayats, DRDCs, and citizens alike**: join us in this mission. Let us together ensure that Bengal's artisans are not left in the margins, but are celebrated, supported, and sustained.

Because when Bengal's artisans rise, Bengal itself rises.

Author: Pallabi Ray, Deputy Secretary