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Howrah bridge designers in town for health audit

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STUDY TO BE ON FOR 2 MONTHS



The British team joined the inspection of the iconic bridge opened in 1943

- > Howrah bridge was designed by Rendel, Palmer & Tritton (RPT) of London and fabricated by Braithwaite Burn & Jessop
- > The sixth longest cantilever bridge in the world spans 1,500 ft between its two iconic towers
- > 26,500 MT steel was used to build it
- > Howrah bridge was built by the erstwhile KoPT between 1937 and 1942 and opened to traffic in 1943

Kolkata: Experts from the UK-based original designers of Howrah bridge—Rendel Ltd (formerly Rendel, Palmer & Triton, UK)—are in town for the health check-up of the iconic structure. They started the inspection of the bridge on Tuesday.

Senior consultant Michael J King, and bridges team leader and assistant technical director Omar Nabeel are an integral part of the health audit, being carried out to ensure long-term durability and safety of the historic bridge, officially called Rabindra Setu.

Shyama Prasad Mookerjee Port (SMP), custodian of Howrah bridge, world's sixth longest cantilever bridge, shut it down on the night of Nov 16 for the first health audit since the 1980s. Railways

consultancy RITES, which had conducted the last health audit between 1983 and 1988, is carrying out the job this time, too. The study will go on for the next two months and the report will be submitted by March 2025.

"According to the current contract, RITES has engaged Rendel Ltd with critical tasks, such as providing documents relating to the design and drawings, visual inspection, assessment reports, and review of rehabilitation and strengthening proposals of Rabindra Setu," Rathendra Raman, chairman, Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, said.

The last such audit for Howrah bridge was initiated in 1983 after the structure served continuously for 40 years. At that time, RITES collaborated with Rendel, Palmer & Triton (M/S RPT), the main designers of the bridge. The study

recommended ultrasonic and non-destructive tests, restoration and retrofitting for enhancing the bridge's life. These were executed in the next few years.

The Rendel team on Wednesday had a detailed discussion with the chairman, representatives from RITES and engineers from the port. "The team outlined their findings from the ongoing inspection and shared insights into the bridge's structural condition. The final condition assessment report, vetted by M/s Rendel, may be submitted by the first quarter of 2025," Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port spokesperson Sanjay Mukherjee said. "Based on this report, RITES will propose a comprehensive repair and rehabilitation scheme to strengthen the bridge, securing its legacy for future generations."

The bridge, designed by Rendel, Palmer & Tritton (RPT) of London and fabricated by Braithwaite Burn & Jessop, used 26,500 MT of steel. "The bridge has stood as a symbol of strength and innovation for decades. It will continue to do so in the years to come," Raman said.