



# Tea Horse Road

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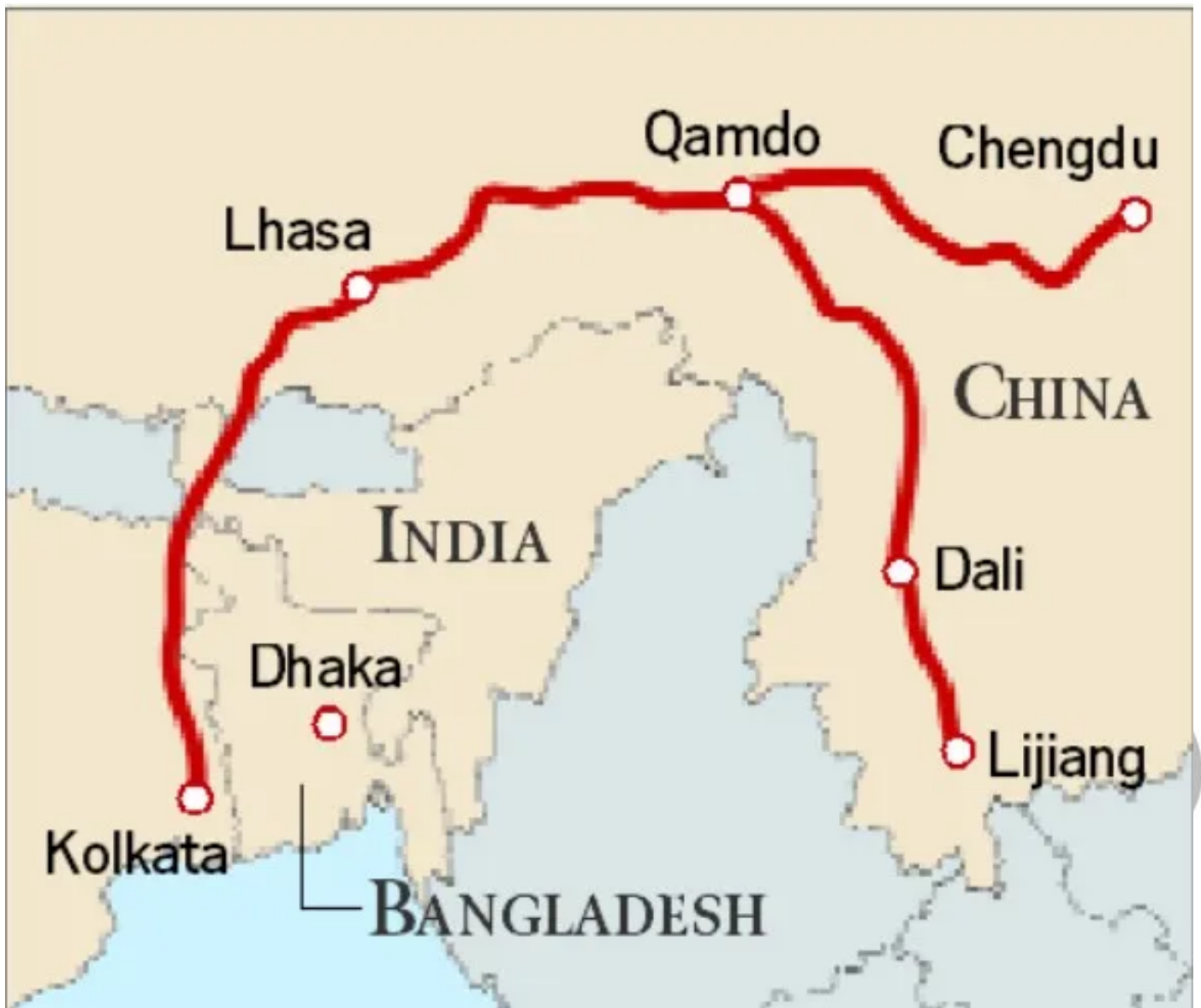
## Why in News?

China's Ambassador to India highlighted the **Ancient Tea Horse Road**, connecting **China to India via Tibet**, emphasizing its centuries-old role in facilitating **exchanges between China and the Indian subcontinent**.

## What is Ancient Tea Horse Road?

- **About:**
  - **Tea Horse road**, often referred to as the **Southern Silk Road**, is a network of **caravan paths** and a crucial **trade route** that **connected China, Tibet, and India** for centuries.
- **Pathway:**
  - It stretches from **southwest China (Yunnan & Sichuan)**, passing through **Tibet, Nepal, and India**, eventually reaching **Kolkata**.
  - **Key Centers:**
    - **Lijiang & Dali (Yunnan, China):** Tea processing and trade hubs.
    - **Lhasa (Tibet):** A major convergence point for tea and Tibetan goods like horses.
    - **Kalimpong & Kolkata (India):** Final trade destinations before export to Europe and Asia.
- **Major Routes:**
  - **Route 1:** Originated from Ya'an (near Chengdu), passed through Kangding, Lhasa, and extended to Nepal and India.
  - **Route 2:** Started in central Yunnan, passing Lijiang, Zhongdian, and Deqin, reaching Lhasa before extending into India.

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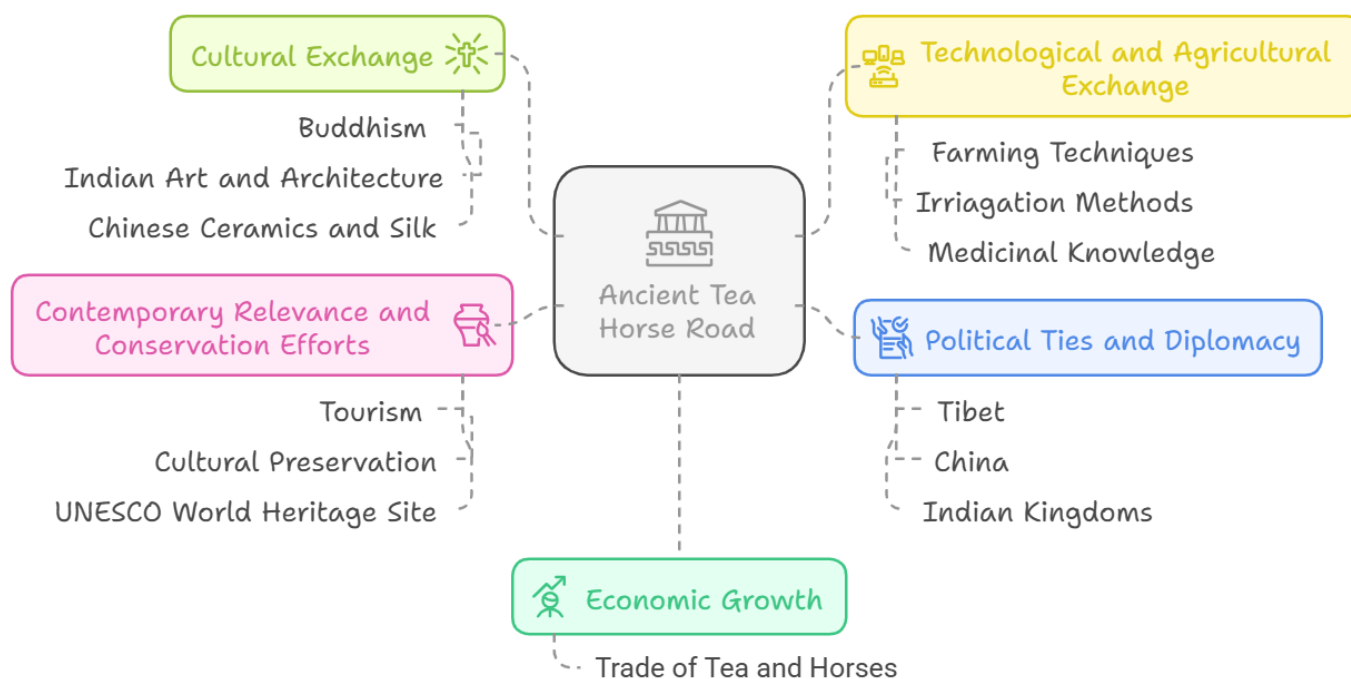
#### ▪ **Origin & Evolution:**

- The **Tea Horse Road** dates back to the **Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE)** and initially **facilitated the trade of sugar, textiles, and rice noodles** from China to Tibet and India, while horses, gold, saffron, and medicinal herbs were traded in the opposite direction.
- The trade eventually centered around **tea and horses**, leading to the route being named the "**Tea Horse Road.**"
- **Song Dynasty (960-1279 CE)** formalized the trade, regulating the exchange of Tibetan horses for China's military and Chinese tea for Tibet.
  - The **13<sup>th</sup>-century Mongol expansion** further **heightened the route's importance** for supplying horses.

#### ▪ **Decline of Tea Horse Road:**

- **End of the Qing Dynasty (1912):** Political instability weakened control over trade routes.
- **Modernization of Infrastructure:** Modern transportation networks made traditional routes obsolete.
- **World War II and Economic Shifts:** Though briefly revived for military logistics, industrial production and mechanized transport led to its decline.
- **Establishment of Modern China (1949):** Land reforms and road construction made the traditional portering system redundant.

## Significance of the Ancient Tea Horse Road



Read More: [What is the Silk Road?](#)

### UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

#### ***Prelims***

**Q. Belt and Road Initiative is sometimes mentioned in the news in the context of the affairs of (2016)**

- (a) African Union
- (b) Brazil
- (c) European Union
- (d) China

**Ans: (d)**